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T.J. Rice responds to negative reactions

T.J. Rice

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TO: The Denison Community

December 1, 1975

FROM: T. J. Rice

As most of you know, remarks attributed to me in the November 13th issue of the Denisonian have, during the past two weeks, become the source of much misunderstanding. To clarify the context out of which these remarks were quoted and, therefore, to ease the misunderstanding, is the purpose of this letter.

After the Black Student Union spokesman read a list of demands to the Faculty Luncheon Group on November 6th, I readily signed a petition for a special faculty meeting to discuss the issues. I arrived at that Monday meeting with high expectations. What did I expect? I expected the speakers to articulate some core issues, beginning with a recognition that the plight of other minorities - Chicanos, American Indians, Poor Whites - is inextricably bound up with the concerns of Blacks as they relate to principles of social justice and human liberation. A second factor I expected to hear identified was the disproportionately high socio-economic backgrounds of Denison students and how this is clearly related to the dearth of Blacks here. (I.E., Since Blacks are collectively victims of discrimination in this country, Black students have a slim possibility of being able to afford an expensive degree.) A third issue I thought basic was that of the widely documented reversal in Black progress since the 1960's in the key areas of employment, education, housing and health-care. In short, I expected some recognition of a relationship between the subjective experiences of Blacks at Denison and the objective conditions of Blacks in the United States at large. These are just some of the issues I had hoped to see identified, since I think they are at the heart of the problem. The interrelationship of the Black experience at Denison and that of American Blacks in general calls for analysis, and I came away from the meeting feeling frustrated and disappointed by what I perceived as a lost opportunity.

That I was critical should come as no surprise to the student speakers who have worked with me. I know and respect their intelligence and their analytical ability. They would know that I believe one of my responsibilities as a faculty member is to hold Denison students to high standards of performance. I do not think this responsibility ends with the classroom.

If I was critical, perhaps too much so, it is certainly not because I think these concerns trivial. It was the disparity between my perceptions of the core issues and the speakers' articulation of their concerns which precipitated my response.