

To:

The Members of the E. P. C.

The students of the Afro-American Writers course wish to bring the following report to your attention, in the hope that this information may further stimulate & guide future educational policy at the college with regards to black studies.

From: The Members of the
Afro-American Writers Class
— E. P. C. representative:
Judit Wilson

End-of-Term E.P.C. Report:

Afro-American Writers

Mr. Stepto

Dec. 7, 1972

This course has demonstrated the problems of having a 'token' black course at this college. This literature course has had to squeeze the study of Afro-American literature in between the filling in of gaps of information about blacks relevant to such fields as sociology, history, and politics. It is ridiculous that one instructor should be compelled to devote extensive time to the development of a historical and social perspective, as for instance in our study of the works of W.E.B. DuBois, to the detriment of a literary one, for students who have no other source of such information. In addition, areas of interest to the students, and of significance to the course were often stifled by the limitations of the college library.

This is appalling because there is sufficient material, as revealed within the scope of this course, for numerous specialized lit. courses, such as a course on the poetry of the Harlem Renaissance, a course on the prose of the Harlem Renaissance, a course on black works dealing with the rural South, a course on black works dealing with the urban North, a course on the development of black poetry, a course on the development of black novels, a course on contemporary schools of black literature, etc....

It was striking that any one of the three authors focussed upon here, W.E.B. DuBois, Langston Hughes, or Richard Wright, has an extensive body of substantial works sufficient to constitute a term's study.

Because of the impossibility of studying the whole range of the tradition of black literature, at a college where black literature is not studied contin-

uously, from term to term, the perspectives of a course such as our own remain sketchy and unclear. It is felt that such a situation places an incredible burden on any instructor of black literature who comes here. Thus, we feel that whatever personal shortcomings exist in Mr. Stepto's teaching are immaterial because he was given a "mission impossible."

Despite these problems, we all profited from the material covered in the course. We are conscious of a sequence, a logical progression in Mr. Stepto's syllabus. His classes were well-researched and indicated that he had done a lot of supplementary work in preparation for each class.

The above report has the unanimous approval of all the members of the class.

In conclusion, the remarks of a contemporary Afro-American writer are, I think, relevant to the situation here:

Afro-American or Black literature is food for a deep, lifetime study not something to be squeezed into a quarter or semester as a concession to student demands, nor a literature to be approached one-dimensionally.... This is to deprive the student of Black literature of the broad universe the most creative Black authors have painstakingly structured in their work. Black writing requires the same multi-dimensional critical approach that has been traditionally applied to Western literature...

--Ishmael Reed, in 19 Necromancers from Now

Respectfully submitted,



Judith Wilson