

April 1, 1971

The Trustees
Charles A. Froeseuff Foundation, Inc.
Seventy Pine Street
New York, New York 10005

Gentlemen:

A naming grant of \$15,000 is being sought to enlarge the Bennington College Library collection of books, pamphlets, periodicals and recordings related to the study of Black culture. We feel that such a grant would enable us to enrich and expand the teaching and studying of Black culture in the most productive way, and that such an enrichment and expansion is desirable as well as timely.

As a small liberal arts college where both the study of social issues and the expression of creative activity in the arts have been encouraged, there has been long standing interest in the Black experience and in Black cultural contributions. We have a small but growing number of Black students at the College; at the present time 3.4% of our students are Black as compared to 2.6% two years ago. Our present group of Black students receives financial aid equal to about 50% of total fees.

At the moment we have only one Black faculty member, but in plotting our needs in Black studies we have had the good advice of three members of our Board of Trustees who are Black: Ralph Ellison, the writer, Lisle Carter, now Vice President of Cornell, and Mrs. Archibald Murray, a Bennington alumna and educator.

Because our academic program is highly flexible and encourages the individualized programs of study and interdisciplinary approaches, we are convinced that the inclusion of Black studies in our normal framework of courses is more effective than a formal and separate Black Studies Program would be. For example, in the study of history and politics the emphasis on the Black experience has been expanded within existing courses; in other studies, such as Caribbean anthropology, where Black culture is a predominant theme, a course has been developed around that theme; and in literature and music, where the Black experience has led to distinctively Black contributions, we have added courses on Black American literature and Black music. All of these efforts have been rewarding (to both Black and White students) but repeatedly our efforts are hampered by a lack of resource materials, a lack which is keenly felt because our students do so much independent work involving heavy use of the library.

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Specifically, we would like to enlarge our library collection of materials on the history and anthropology of Africa; the social and political history of Blacks in America, with special emphasis on slavery and the civil rights movement; and the literature and music of Black people. Of the total requested grant of \$15,000 we would hope to spend \$3,000 for immediate acquisitions and use the remainder as an endowment to permit the annual updating of the collection. Our library staff and faculty stand ready to spend all the time needed to assemble a well-rounded collection on Black culture, and the whole college community stands ready to make extensive and productive use of such a collection.

In conclusion, we believe that a grant for the expansion of our library collection in the field of Black studies would have educational benefits far larger than the price would suggest. There is a pressing need for the actual material, while the impact of the grant itself should preserve and give thrust to the integration of Black studies within the framework of our regular curriculum.

I speak for everyone here at Bennington in expressing appreciation to the Trustees of the Freusuff Foundation for your interest in our affairs and consideration of this proposal.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Houstbin
President



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cc: Mrs. Mortimer, Keland, Nields, Meyer,
Messrs. Iseman, Agard, N. Y. Office
Files: Freusuff, Proposals