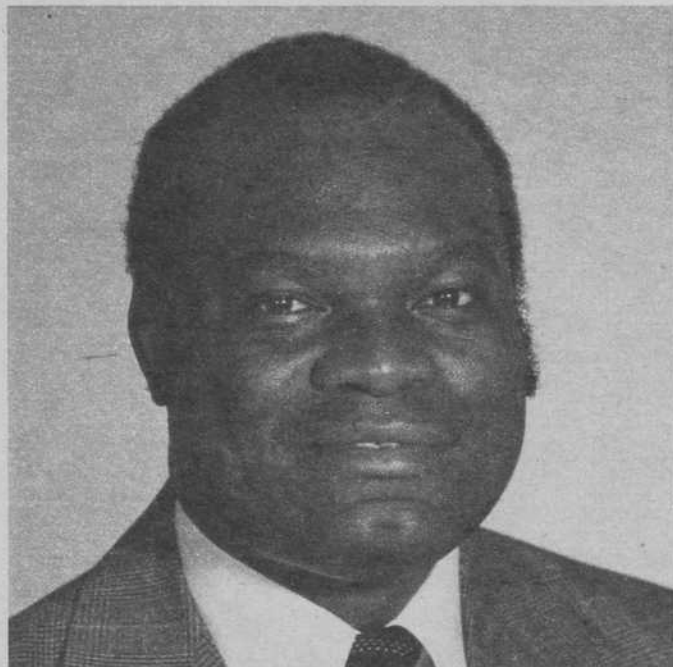


NC BS



Dr. Bertha Maxwell,
"Mother of the Black
Studies Movement" and
first Chairperson,
University of North
Carolina—Charlotte.



Dr. Joseph J. Russell,
Executive Director, In-
diana University—
Bloomington



Dr. William Nelson,
Jr., Third Chairperson,
Ohio State University—
Columbus

ity, is of questionable validity as a scholarly discipline.... The Black Studies concept is action-oriented, and to the extent that it is so orientated it is anti-intellectual." In time, however, Black Studies outgrew much of its earlier radicalism and strove to become a respected and rigorous discipline.

A Seed Is Planted

EARLY in 1969, Black students at the predominantly White University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNCC) decided to stop taking a "back seat" in the struggle for justice and equality. Twenty-one of these students presented university officials with a document known as the "Black Student Demands." Among other things, this document defined the basic objective of a Black Studies program to become the Afro-American and African Studies Department. The students called for a program that would be relevant in that it would address the academic, intellectual, social and economic life-needs of Black students. They also demanded that the program be *conceptualized, organized, implemented and evaluated by Black people.*

Institutionalization of the UNCC Black Studies program began in 1971 when Dr. Bertha L. Maxwell was appointed director. Afro-American and African Studies began offering the Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree in the fall of 1976. Departmental status was granted in 1983.

Even before obtaining degree-granting status for the Afro-American and African Studies Program, Dr. Maxwell coordinated a conference at UNCC on March 18–21, 1975. This conference was designed to review and analyze the structure and goals of Black Studies programs across the nation.

From the very inception of the Black Studies Movement, many scholars perceived the need to develop a cohesive national organization to promote the development and survival of Black Studies programs. During the North Carolina conference, the issue of evaluation of Black Studies programs emerged. Since there was no established Black professional organization that could conduct the necessary evaluation, the need for such a body became more evident. The participants were challenged to pursue with their colleagues the possibility of establishing such a national organization. They also agreed to re-convene at a future date.

The North Carolina Council on Black Studies was formed as a direct result of this conference. The council adopted as objectives the organization of new Black Studies programs in North Carolina and the improvement of the quality and outreach of

those already in existence.

In July 1975, at the invitation of Dr. William Harris, a meeting was held at the Educational Testing Service in Princeton, New Jersey. The tentative structure, mission, objectives and goals of the National Council for Black Studies were developed. Dr. Bertha Maxwell, now called the "Mother of the Black Studies Movement," was elected temporary chairperson.

The Princeton meeting was followed by others in North Carolina to develop a state model; a sub-group meeting in Atlanta, Georgia where Dr. Joseph Russell of Indiana University, who was to become the Executive Director, was present; and a meeting convened by Dr. William King at the University of Colorado at Boulder to develop a regional model. This latter meeting was highly significant in that Dr. Herman Hudson, Vice-Chancellor for Afro-American Affairs at Indiana University, offered the facilities of his institution to serve as an initial national office.

The initial work of these meetings focused on assessing the roles of the various participants (teachers, students, administrators, community, etc.) in Black Studies programs. Two national "work sessions" were convened. The Conference for the Development of the Constitution was held at Indiana University in April 1976. At this meeting, articles of the constitution were drafted, voted upon and accepted as guidelines for the national organization and its affiliates.

The Second Constitutional Conference was held at the Educational Testing Service in Princeton, New Jersey in July 1976 to further examine the roles of participants and the feasibility and viability of Black Studies programs as academic units. An end result was the formal organization of the National Council for Black Studies.

NCBS: The First Year

NCBS' First Annual Convention was held February 16–19, 1977 at the Fawcett Center of Tomorrow, Ohio State University at Columbus. It was said to be the largest convention ever held in that university. Ohio State's Black Studies Department was chosen to host the convention mainly because it was the largest department and, according to Dr. William E. Nelson, chairman of the department, it was "one of the most far reaching and well developed of all the [Black Studies] programs in the country."

The theme of this first convention was "Black Studies: Mobilization for Survival." The stated purpose was to evaluate

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