

Fisk study paints dim view of floundering race relations

By Tony Jones
Special to Sentinel-Voice

An alarming report from Nashville's Race Relations Institute points to an America burning with racial misunderstanding and conflict.

Sixty-three percent of a controlled study conducted over a week-long period agreed that, unless there is drastic change in how Americans relate on a daily basis, "serious and violent racial conflict in the near future" is inevitable.

The Race Relations Institute is an arm of Fisk University. Founded in 1942 by Dr. Charles S. Johnson, a pioneering Black sociologist and the first Black president of Fisk, the institute is comprised of a summer program that groups politicians, educators, health care workers and scholars who dialogue and develop public policy to address the insidious effect of racism.

"It is interesting to note that while we talk a lot about how to improve race relations, the numbers show that the reality of race and race relations has not changed dramatically, particularly among people of color," said

Raymond A. Winbush, head of the study.

One surprising result of the survey was that 73 percent of those questioned said they believe there is a national conspiracy against people of color, particularly African-Americans. Some believe that with the growing number of ethnic backgrounds comprising American citizenry, the lack of dialogue and real inclusion paints an ugly, non-cooperative future that could prove to be the unraveling of modern history's greatest democracy.

Several other national surveys support the institute's findings that white supremacy will be the cancer that will end the American dream.

A Gallup Poll unearthed a pessimism deep within the nation's core that lead to President Clinton's Advisory Panel on Race. The panel summarized its findings by saying "the country's history of white privilege" is the underlining race problem.

"The subtle impact of white privilege has really taken its toll. The data shows while we talk about improving race relations there is still a large and widening

gap on the issue between people of color and whites," Winbush said. "Racial reconciliation will be difficult to achieve, if we do not take adequate measures to prevent institutional racism in the future."

The institute commissioned Mind Matters, Inc., a Washington, D.C. firm, to generate responses from 106 participants, 18 years of age and older. Over the course of seven days, it found that 85 percent of those surveyed felt race relations between certain groups have worsened in the past decade. Latinos and African-Americans felt conflict was inevitable, while the majority of whites disagreed.

Some of the results:

- 62 percent feel President Clinton's race initiative has been ineffective
- 92 percent feel the government should be more involved in resolving racial discrimination
- 52 percent agree that people of color should focus on community efforts to change systems
- 89 percent feel affirmative action is still needed to remedy discriminatory practices of the



Photo special to LV Sentinel-Voice

During the turbulent '60's this "Turn Left of Get Shot" sign greeted motorists approaching a roadblock manned by National Guardsmen in riot-torn Watts section of Los Angeles in August, 1965. The Watts rebellion was a major turning point in race relations in America.

past

- 9 percent agree affirmative action policies should be extended to women and other ethnic groups
- 4 percent feel desegregation efforts have essentially failed
- 85 percent said they have been discriminated against in the past three months because of race and/or ethnicity

Participants in the

institute's studies have been drawn from seven countries and 27 states.

Its mission is to make recommendations on public policy for health care, education, media, law, politics, the economy and religion.

Discussions over the last two years have focused on church burnings and hate crimes, the plight of

historically black colleges and universities, the movie "Amistad," and mandatory sentencing.

The study was funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Pitney Bowes, Ford Motor Company, First Amendment Center, First American Bank and Xerox Corporation.

Tony Jones writes for the Tri-State Defender.

Program offers job experience, money for medical students

Special to Sentinel-Voice

HOUSTON — College undergraduates interested in careers in medicine can conduct research and earn money at the same time during a 10-week summer program.

The Summer Medical and Research Training, or SMART program, sponsored by the Graduate School at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, is designed for students interested in scientific research and offers first-hand work experience in laboratories conducting biomedical research.

"Students get to be involved in on-going research projects that directly affect the health of everyone," said Dr. Gayle Slaughter, SMART program director. "Students are matched with mentors based on their educational and laboratory experience and mutual interests."

The program offers daily seminars featuring Baylor faculty members discussing topics on the cutting edge of biomedical research. Students also have a chance to learn about career development and receive

counseling from Baylor faculty and administrators.

Applicants must have a minimum 3.0 grade point average. Approximately 80 students are selected for the highly-competitive program.

"The SMART program gives undergraduates from around the country an opportunity to interact with peers who are bright and committed to science," said Slaughter, a Baylor assistant professor of cell biology.

"Students walk away from the program with the confidence and determination necessary to make it through the challenge of medical or graduate school."

To apply, contact the SMART Program at (713) 798-5915 or write to: SMART Program, Baylor College of Medicine, One Baylor Plaza, N204K, Houston, TX 77030.

You can also contact the program by email at smart-program@bcm.tmc.edu or at <http://www.bcm.tmc.edu/smart>. The deadline for postmarking applications is Feb. 1, 1999.

Nappy Hair

(Continued from Page 3)

calm parents. He told Sherman to report to district headquarters instead of her classroom, pending further investigation, Davis said.

Sherman, who began teaching full-time this fall, could face disciplinary action or transfer. A phone listing for Sherman could not be found last Tuesday and her union said she did not want to comment. Herron, who plans to write a letter on behalf of Sherman, says the teacher called her for reassurance

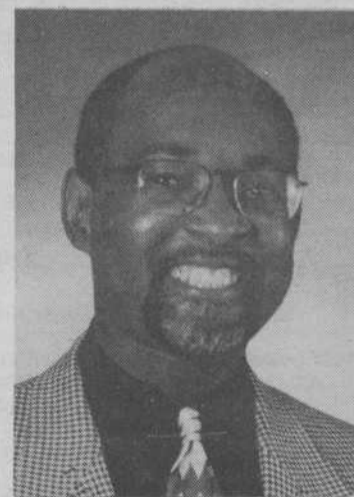
that she had used the book properly.

"She was doing the very thing I keep preaching here to my students who are going to be teachers: to use African-American literature, use Asian literature, use books that put all of us in there," the author said.

"She could have taught 'Mary Had a Little Lamb,' or some other books that had nothing to do with the African-American culture. Instead, she tried to relate to the culture of the children she was teaching."

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