



BLACK

AT CARLETON

Credits

BLACK AT CARLETON

Compiled and edited by Mario L. Small, '68

Preliminary screening with the help of Judith E. Brown, '69

Text and quotes from the members of

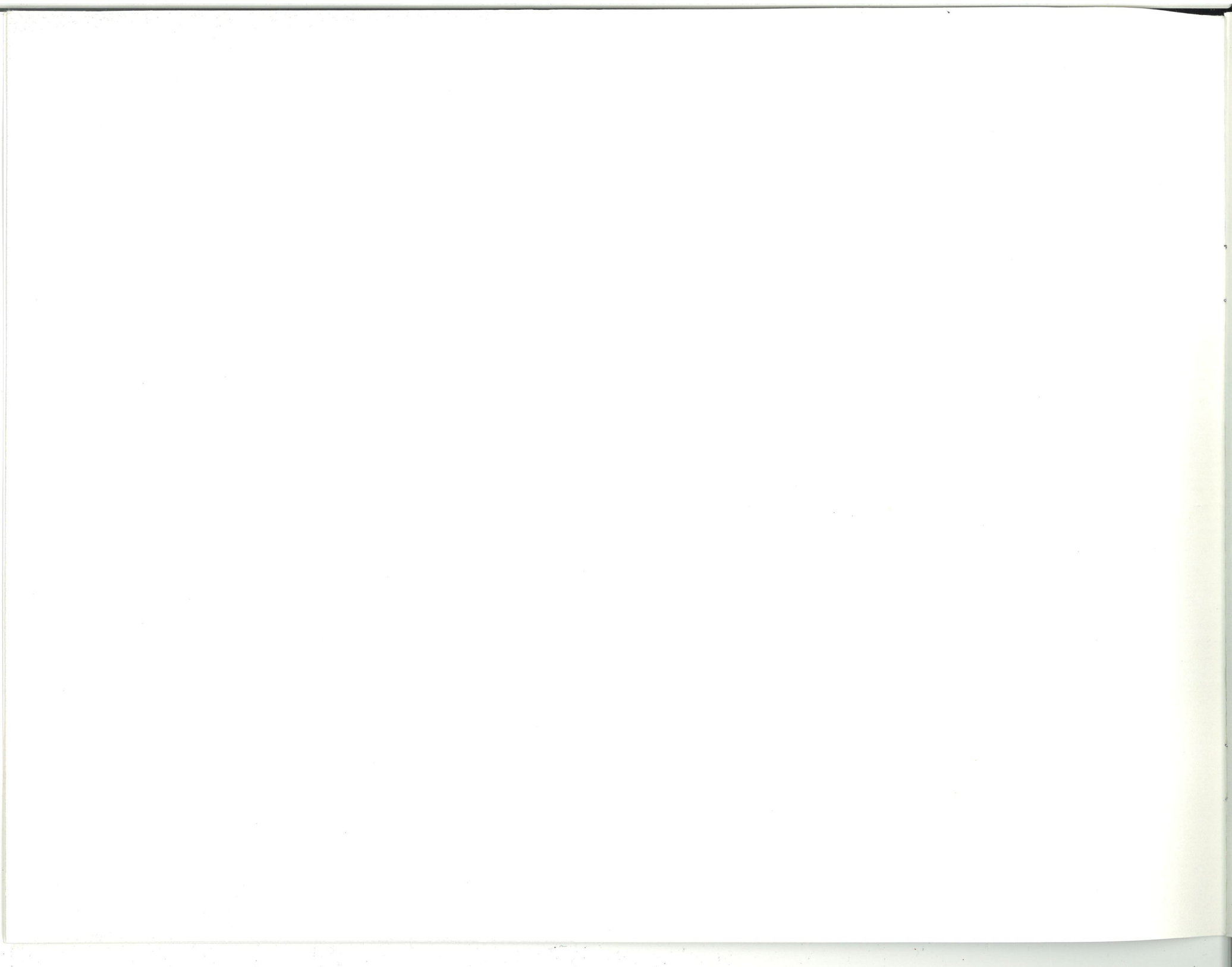
Students Organized for Unity and Liberation (SOUL)

Photography and design by Mario L. Small

Sponsored by Carleton College,

Northfield, Minnesota 55057 (1968)





"While I am learning about pattern variables I am beginning to understand the dynamics of American Society... While I am learning about the American Adam, I am listening to the mythology of a nation that thinks it has no past."



TO THE BLACK PROSPECTIVE STUDENT

This booklet is an attempt to picture what college life will be for you at a white institution and Carleton College in particular. Your individual experiences may not be exactly the same, yet they will be as similar and related as the many you will find on the following pages.

There are many experiences you will have that every college student faces — frosh-soph fights, homecoming weekend, your English paper due in four hours and it is 4:00 A.M., cramming for that Soc. exam tomorrow with three books unread, stimulating philosophical debates, known personalities and performers on campus, and many others. These we have not dealt with because you will find them in the many other college publications we would be duplicating if we did. We have pictured for you our experiences and our thoughts as black Carleton students — in short, what it means to be BLACK AT CARLETON.

After reading this booklet you may decide that this is *not* the place for you, or you may decide that this is where you want to come. We cannot choose for you. All we can do is share with you, our belief on whether or not we have made the right choice. However, whatever your decision, we hope this booklet will give you valuable insight and be a helpful guide to you in making the right choice.





INTRODUCTION

Carleton College is found in Northfield, Minnesota, where *the winters are cold and the springs are chilly*. Carleton is a small, midwestern liberal arts college where the academics are demanding and the social life is what you make it.

Here you learn a little bit about practically everything. As far as courses are concerned you will spend your first two years here taking some you love and some you hate: foreign languages, rhetoric, math, science, philosophy, history, sociology, government, psychology. For two years you will be trying to decide what your major will be. In this process of decision-making you will experience both success and failure. Failure! You tell yourself that you are not coming to college to fail. But it may happen. Your dream is to be a math major and you fail your first Carleton math course. You want to be a doctor but you cannot pass Biology I. It is possible that you will fail a course. Don't let that mean you have failed at Carleton. Many of us came to Carleton with dreams of being doctors and mathematicians. Our plans did not always work out, so we simply made new plans. Dreams and hopes sometimes get shattered at Carleton, only to be replaced by new dreams and hopes. That is part of being black at Carleton.

A sharpened sense of perception about oneself and the world is considered the end product of a liberal education. In many ways Carleton gives this to its black students. Carleton is not the black world we have become used to. It is a world very alien to the black world. The way you talk, your sense of economic, social and political values, your living style, your beliefs about what is right and what is wrong are different. Coming from a black ghetto into a white ghetto is a jolting ex-

perience. Things you accepted as being normal, like a party on Saturday nights, are abnormal at Carleton. Your constant awareness of acts of discrimination and prejudice are overlooked by the citizens of the white ghetto. But in the midst of this we preserve ourselves, our values and our beliefs. We survive and we become stronger individuals because of that struggle for the survival of our black identities.

Most of Carleton's black students are here on scholarship. The majority of us work and borrow money from the school to further supplement the funds needed for a Carleton education. Besides our monetary concerns, we have to worry about making the grades to stay enrolled. Often the C's we make are not satisfying either to our grade points or our egos. Yet there are compensating factors that tend to neutralize these concerns. Many courses this school offers like history, sociology, psychology and government have something in them for each black student. Our only chore is to know what that something is and take every course we can that tells us more about it.

We want Carleton to give us knowledge we can use when college is over. We want to use our knowledge to delve into the psychology of this society. We want to find the reasons for the way a white man thinks and the way a black man thinks, and why they think differently. What we learn has to be used to improve black schools, to raise the economic and political status of black people and to teach the culture and heritage of black people. *We want to be the visible presence of black people in a classroom because in these classrooms there are many opportunities to destroy misconceived theories about black people.* Making accurate statements about outdated concepts changes courses. We want to teach while we learn.



Yes, black students are teachers. Everytime we open our mouths in the classroom or in the dorm we are telling an oppressive society that we do not fit its stereotypes of us. Our mere presence on campus means we can do the work. And unlike most educational institutions in this country, what black students have to say as people and as teachers is accepted and respected by the administration and most of the faculty and students. For this very reason we have not had to take over buildings or make any similar threats. The black group is a respected voice on and off campus. We have sponsored all-campus meetings to discuss our views concerning the race issue. We have seen to it that movies like "A Time For Burning" have been made available to the college community. Ernie Chambers, Charles Hamilton, C. Eric Lincoln and others have been brought to Carleton to speak. At an all-school convocation black students talked about their thoughts and emotions about being black at Carleton. Carleton was the first midwestern college that had a black conference for the purpose of building a coalition of black students who go to schools in the Midwest. We have spoken at churches, schools and community centers about the race issue. Our voices have been heard, and it has been a good feeling to speak our minds and see concrete results come from what we have said. One result is the change we have begun to see in the curriculum. It is being altered so that it more accurately reflects American society. Courses about the Negro and the Constitution, Negro literature, folklore and music are now being offered. These are courses that should have been in the curriculum long ago, but because Carleton is a white institution, its curriculum, like the school, ignored the existence of black people as a significant and influential minority in this country. There are thirty five black students here now. There will be twenty freshmen in 1968-69 and they are aiming for a larger number in September of 1969. Because of us the institution is changing for you and because of you it will continue to change for others.

"You will become a reservoir of knowledge for the most often ignorant and naive white populace."









With all this academic activity, Carleton must mean something to black students socially. Many of the things that we do are products of our own inventions. In the dorms when we are in a group of all girls or boys, we play records or card games. Sometimes we order pizzas and shrimp dinners from restaurants in town. When we have open house a group of us may get together to buy food and have a party. We are often black people together doing the things we like to do. We play our music, we dance our dances, and even though we come from all over the country we can dance together. In the winter we have snowball fights. In the spring we have baseball games. These are some of the ways we entertain ourselves. Even those of us who are from big cities like Chicago have fun. We have to rely on our own resources for ways to find pleasure in our leisure moments; and our relaxation, in part, comes from knowing that we can make it as a group. In fact, it was our need for a social outlet that prompted the establishment and the growth of a viable black group at Carleton.



Carleton is a good school and any black student who is making it through this place will tell you he is getting a good education both academically and socially. The four years spent here will not be easy. You will have to work for everything you get. Nobody is going to give you special favors because you are black. But when it is all over you will have earned your degree and it will mean more to you because you will have the satisfaction of knowing that it fully belongs to you.



Being black and being at Carleton means you will have to endure a lot. You won't always have the clothes or the money that you want. It is yours to decide whether you want to sacrifice these things for an education that you can use later. Here you can learn, teach and try out new ideas that will clearly express things you have to say. You can set your goals and begin to realize them at Carleton. Here you can find the encouragement and the support that will make those goals a reality. *Carleton is the proving ground for black students who want to be heard as a powerful voice in this country.* Here you can either succeed or fail on your own merit. Black students at Carleton do not know what it means to fail totally and absolutely. We are here for a purpose, and whatever that individual purpose is, we are determined to succeed.





"In the class room, I did not feel especially dumb, but became very aware of the fact that I was not the smartest person in the world either. Yet, I had as much native ability as my white peers. The difference came in the kind of high school you attended."





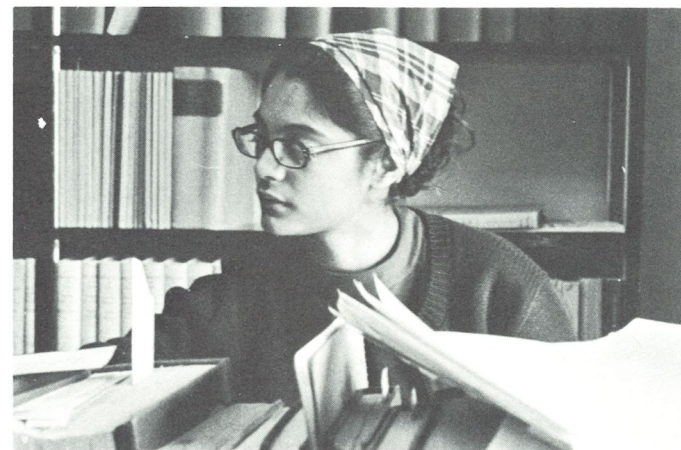
"When you live on a white campus you are able to observe closely white society in operation. Your notions about its assets and its greatness soon begin to crumble after first hand observation. I now realize that black people can only expect minimal aid and assistance from the white society, because this society is one with its own serious problems and it must cope with them before it can begin to help those who lie outside its boundaries. I have learned that black people must stay together and fight together, because in togetherness lies the path to freedom — social freedom, economic freedom, political freedom, psychological freedom."





A FRESHMAN SPEAKS...

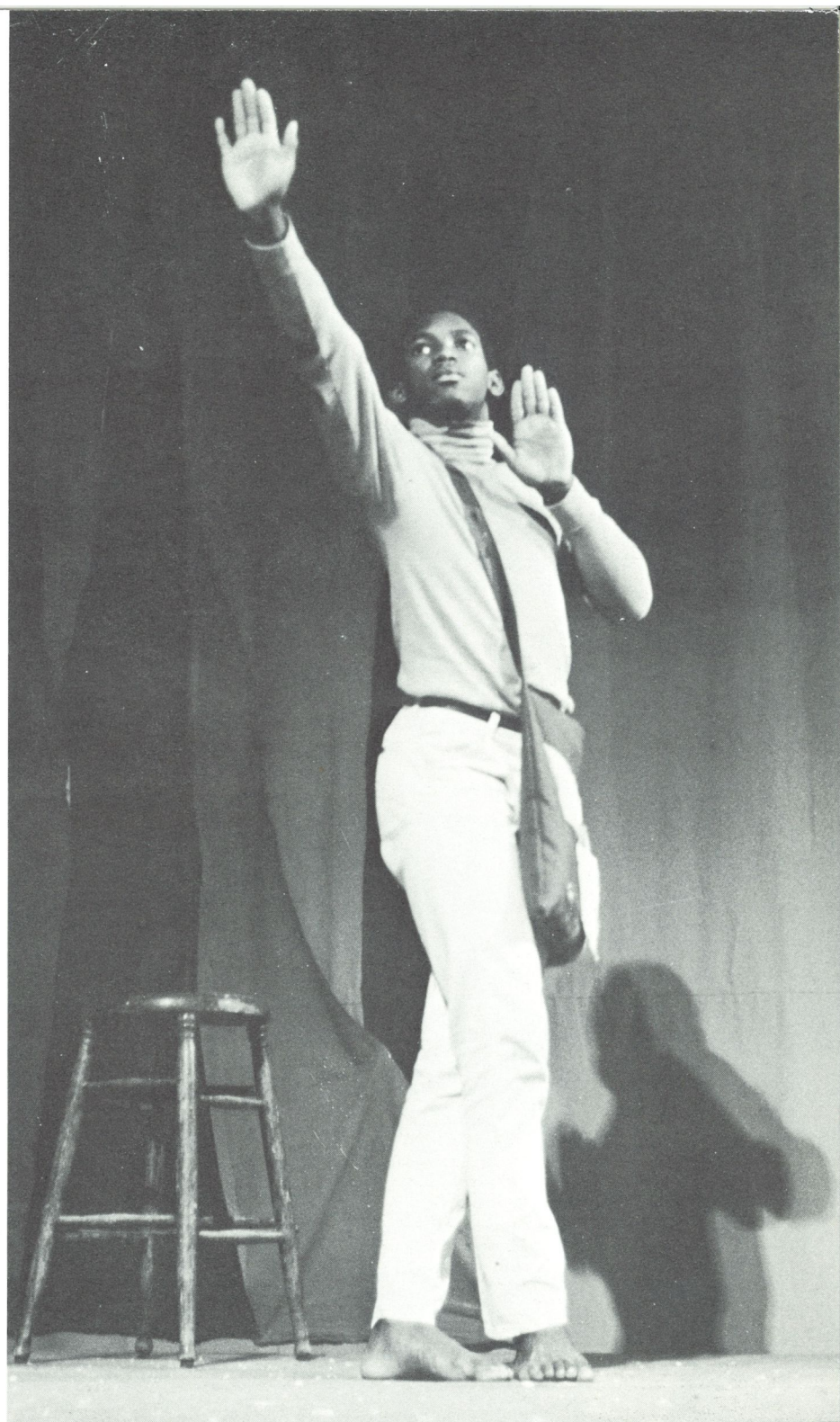
The first thing I noticed after arriving at Carleton is that I was the only black person on my floor and almost everyone wanted to be my friend. I'm sure that 90% of my floor had been in my room three times each by the end of freshman week. However, I found that this popularity began to wane the moment I started expecting my new white friends to respect me for and recognize my blackness. I seldom found understanding for most of my problems among my white friends. It is shocking and disturbing to realize how unaware white people are of their prejudice and to realize that even when their prejudice is pointed out to them, the vast majority do not care that they are prejudiced and do not wish to put forth the effort to change that prejudice. A black student must cope with this as best he can.

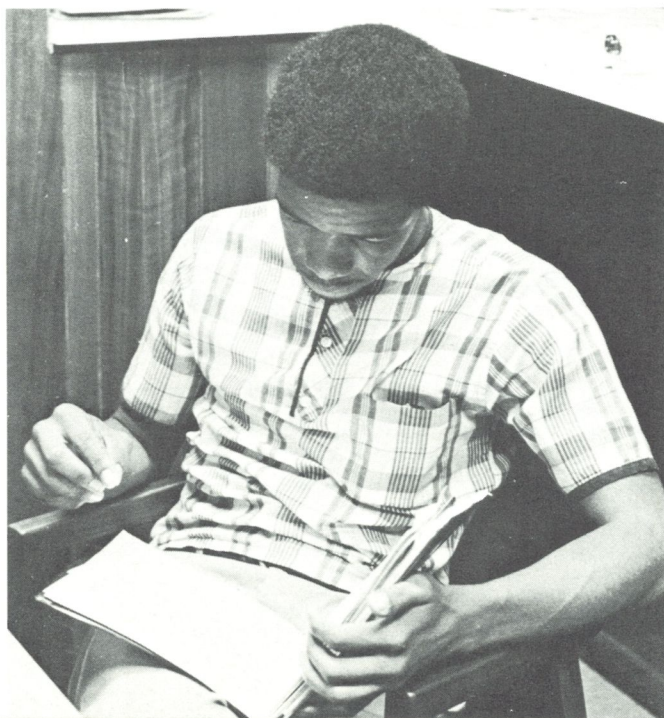


I was unhappy at Carleton for three basic reasons. The first is that I had only white friends whose backgrounds were quite different from mine. There was no one I could talk to without feeling inhibited. Secondly, I became disillusioned with myself because I no longer made straight A's. I began to think that maybe I wasn't so smart after I took my second exam here. The lack of social life was my third reason for being unhappy at Carleton. For a black student from a ghetto or similar all black situation, the social life on a white campus is nil if he has no black friends.

It is not so mellow when your "good" white friend thinks you're a rich, different Negro because you aren't talking like your brothers in the ghetto. He cannot and will not understand that you have to live by a double standard if you are to continue to communicate with him. Your "good" white friend will tell you that you're the first Negro friend he's had. He could not be bothered with the coarse Negroes who went to his high school. He would not mind your coming to visit him. Think of all the attention from the neighbors! Carl Whitey brings Carl Black home and Mom and Pop Whitey want you to visit every relative and friend in town to show off their liberality. How humanitarian! Frankly, it disgusts and nauseates me.

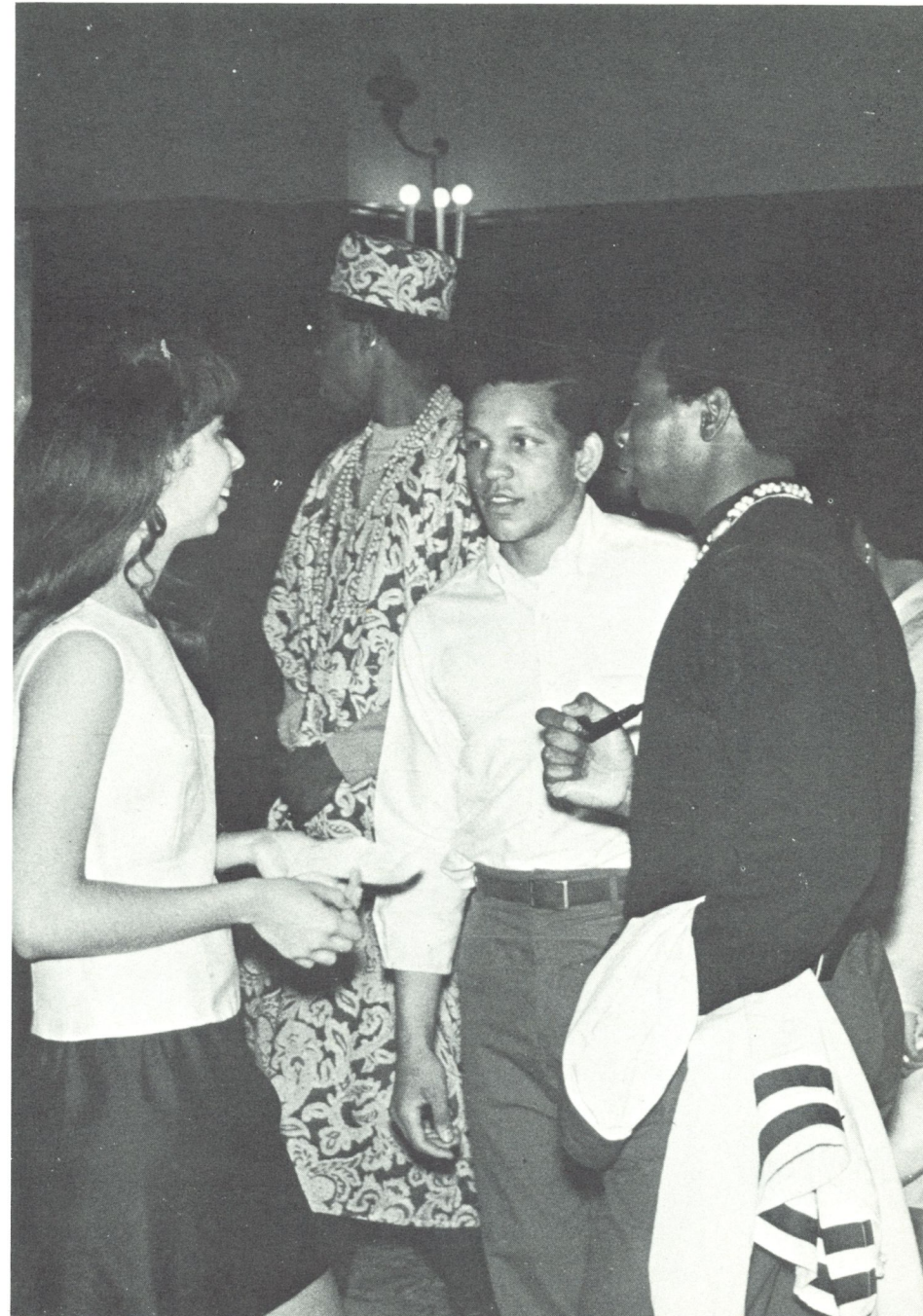
I was ready to leave.

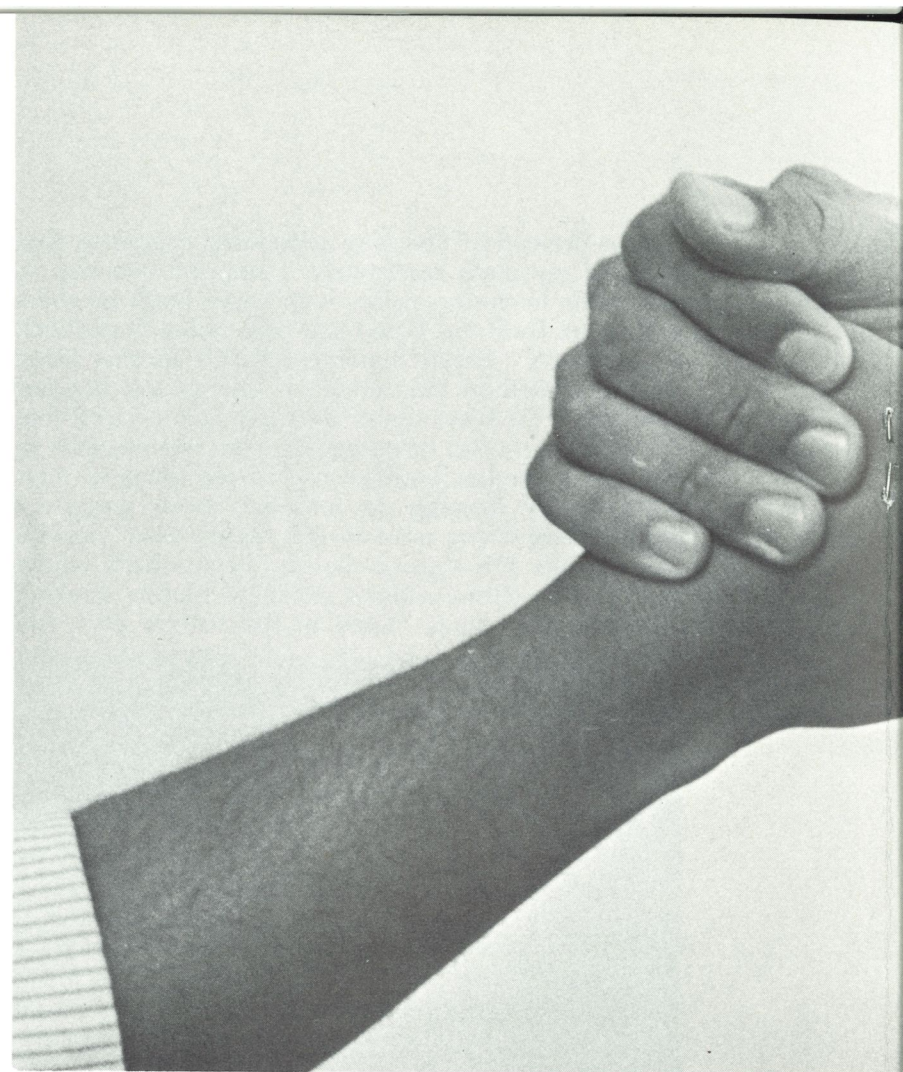
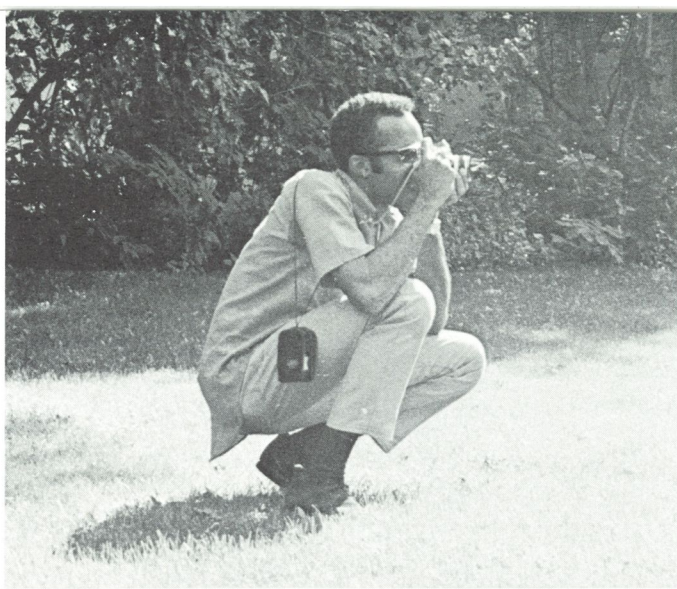




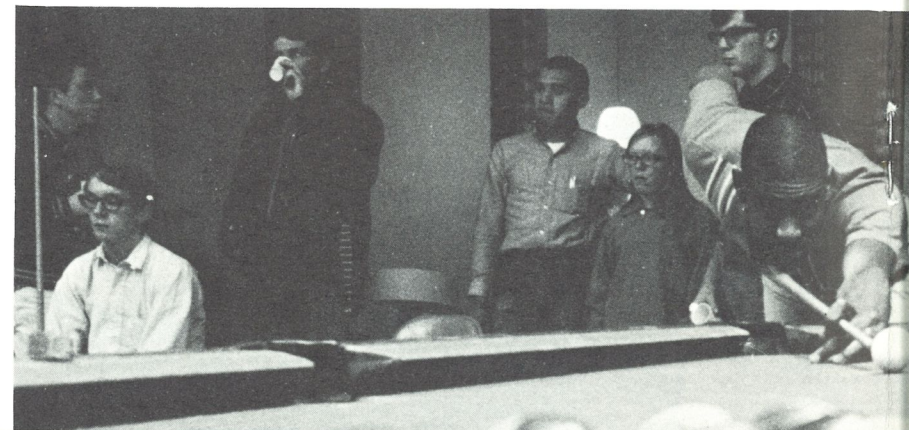
Near the end of first term something happened that changed my plans completely. I stopped one day to play cards in Burton parlor with some black brothers and sisters. Until that time I had been trying to get back to the books. I hardly remembered that another black student existed on the campus. I stopped and listened to many of the black upper classmen talk. I found that the problems I had faced earlier were not peculiar to me. My upperclass brothers had solved many of their problems by forming an informal social group—a group where if you want to yell “Good God” no one will look up. It is a group that can have a party where most people dance without someone silently thinking or softly whispering, “Look at the natives go.” The people in the group not only understood but had experienced many of the difficulties I faced and could offer practical help much better than my white “special” adviser. My identification with the black students made my “good” white friends less eager to approach me. In their opinion my metamorphosis had begun. Soon I was viewed as a regular Negro,—coarse; coarse in my little coarse clique of coarse black students.

When I came to Carleton I was gung-ho America, integration and equal rights. I believed that the Negro could and would easily fit into a white society and still feel and act the same as he would among other black brothers. This was not true. If I felt like becoming whitewashed I would have come right in and adjusted as well as any white student. But my face is black and I assert my blackness, so my first experiences at Carleton were little of what I was accustomed to.



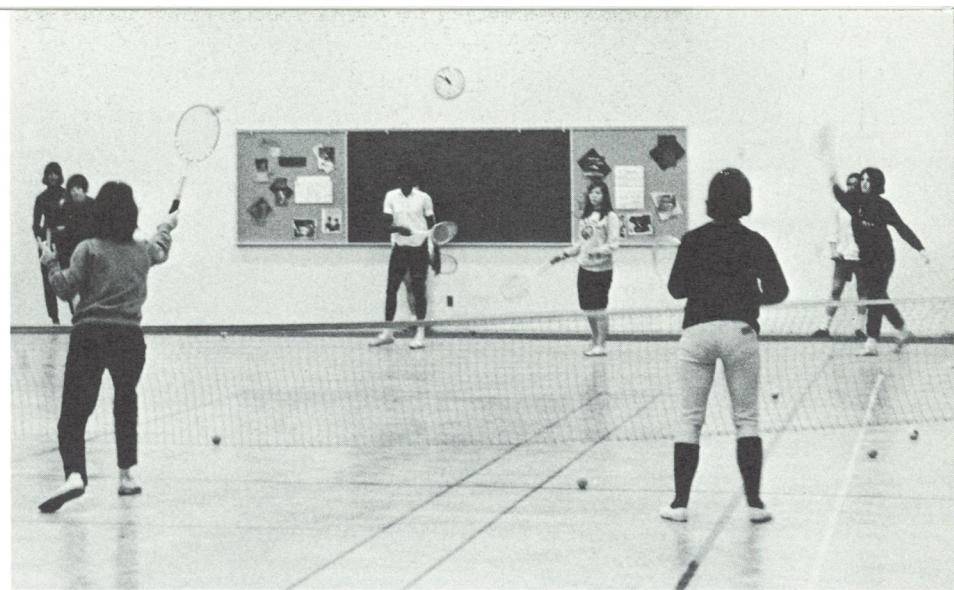
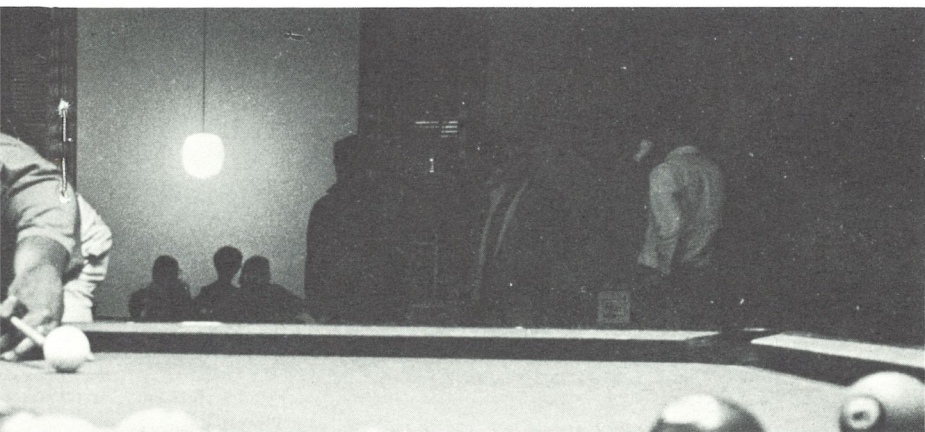


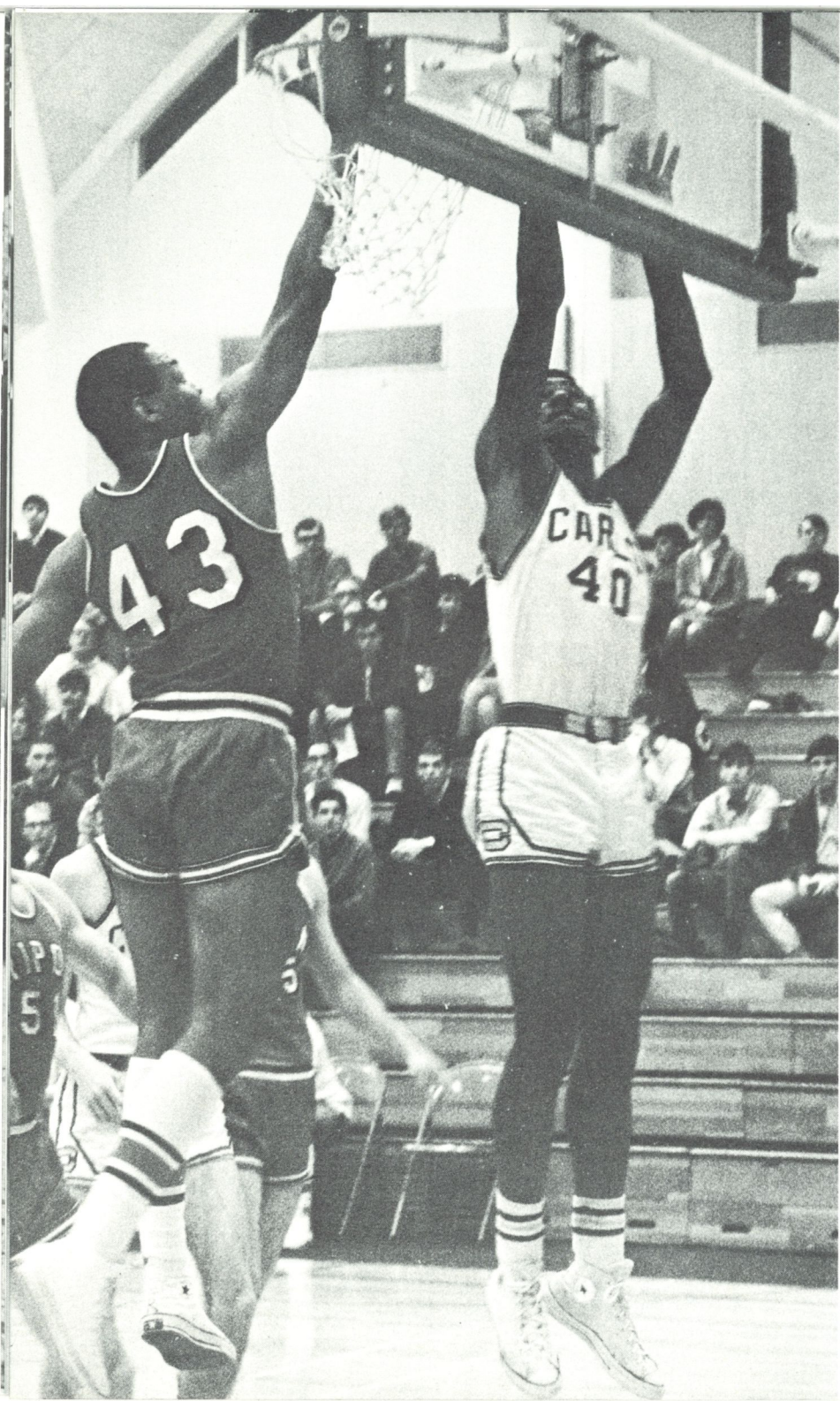
"We come from different backgrounds. We have our own interests."





But we are one . . . we are together . . . it's a great feeling."





A SOPHOMORE SPEAKS...

Bewilderment and excitement are the words to describe my first days at Carleton College. As a freshman, I was looking forward to what I thought would be the beginning of a new life, new friends and new experiences. As a Black freshman I was somewhat apprehensive. Would I be accepted? How should I act and speak?

Right away I was impressed with the beauty of the campus. I spent many hours just exploring, awed by its natural display of brilliant colors and smells. I believed I had picked the perfect college. Carleton had an excellent academic reputation. It was located in a beautiful area and had what I thought to be the nicest bunch of kids in the world.

I thought I had no problems, until winter term when I noticed my social life was definitely lacking. The root of the problem was not hard to find. Out of a freshman class of three hundred and ninety eight students, there were thirteen black students and ten were black females. This made the dating situation poor, as I soon discovered there were few white males willing to date a black female.

At first I told myself I could be happy without much social life, but I was fooling myself. Soon, walking back to the dorm alone after dinner on Friday and Saturday nights became painful. I knew within the dorm, girls were excitedly preparing for their dates while all I had to look forward to was spending the evening with my books or at best going to a coop flic with some girl friends. I did manage to get some dates, but they were few and far between. It was on some of those walks back to the dorm, while looking up at the star-filled sky, that I began to question whether I had made the right choice in colleges. Were books all college was about? I was sure they weren't, and I was definitely missing something.





Otherwise, I thought I was becoming adjusted to college life pretty well—becoming accustomed to Carleton's academic rigor, and making new friends, both black and white. However, in forming friendships with many of the white students I discovered something else. With many of them I found it very hard to communicate. We had come from entirely different backgrounds and had many different and sometimes conflicting ideas about life and the world. I was surprised by the accounts of their high school lives—their lack of social life, their lack of close friends, and how many of them spent all of their spare time reading or studying or doing something academic. I found, in many cases, that when I wanted to discuss the practicalities of life, I had to go to my black friends, for many of the white students seem to be unaware of the practical world outside of academic utopias like Carleton. They were always up in the clouds being intellectual about everything, wanting rational reasons for everything, even subjects such as friendship, love and marriage.

Many of these so-called white friends hurt me. I discovered in the dorm or in other closed groups, I was accepted and acknowledged as part of the group. However, on campus when I saw these white friends, many refused me the simple courtesy of a friendly greeting.



Seeing this overt hypocrisy in many whites on campus first made me realize that I was really different. Up until then I believed I could fit in, become a part of the crowd. I, like many other black students, had come to Carleton with arms open, willing to develop close friendships with whites — even willing to take the first step. I was willing when I first came here to try to blend in with the mainstream even to the point of not wanting to form too many close relationships with other black students. But I discovered that first year that my best and lasting friendships would be with some of the black students here.

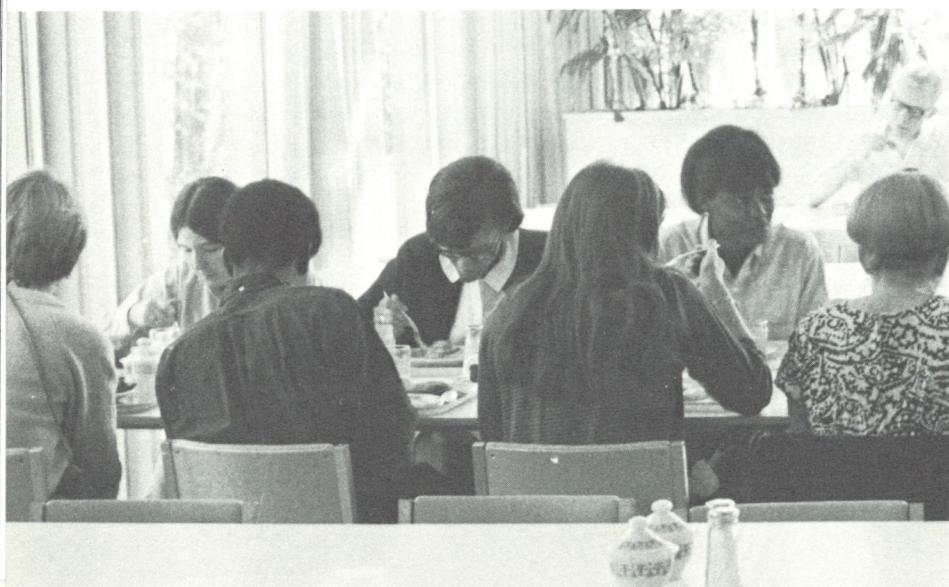
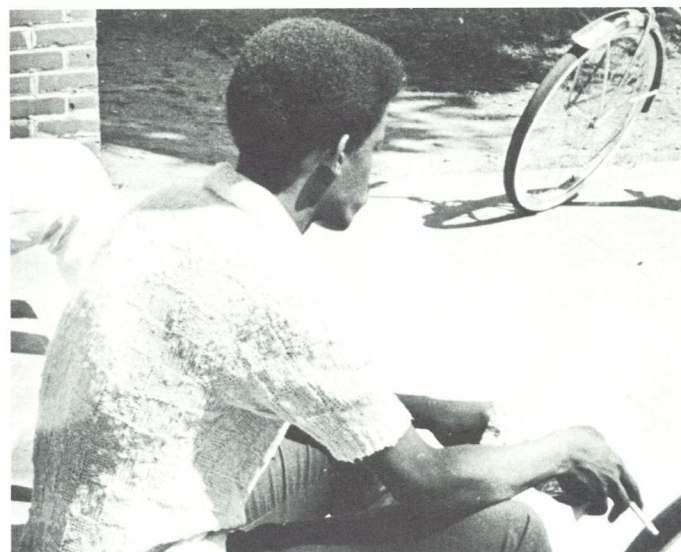
I decided then that I was not going to try to make an overt effort to blend in. If I was to be accepted by whites as a friend, they would have to accept me as I was — as a black student who happens to be on a white campus. With this attitude I found some whites I still consider friends. Those who fell by the wayside were not my friends in the first place.

This began my self re-evaluation. I began to realize that I couldn't blend in with this white society; and if I even attempted I would have to change my personality and the way I viewed the world. If I did this, I would be turning my back on the black masses who didn't have the opportunity I did.

This re-evaluation continued into my second year at Carleton. During the summer I realized what there was at home in the black ghetto that I missed at Carleton — the black subculture which contained much more warmth, love and friendliness than what I had encountered in the white middle class society.

How do I feel now as a black student living at Carleton? Truthfully, I am not completely happy. There are still those lonely hours when all I can think about is being at home. The times still exist when I feel hollow — empty with no purpose, questioning myself about being at Carleton. I feel this way frequently. I realize that although I'm in the midst of beauty and intellect, receiving one of the best liberal arts educations in the country, there is still something lacking. And it is not always something I can describe or put my finger on. I just know there is something missing.

Yet I feel Carleton has given me more than any other school in the country could have given. Living in this white middle class society has made me appreciate my blackness and my background. Carleton is giving me an education which will be accepted as excellent anywhere and no one can ever take it away. With this I will be able to pass on some of my knowledge to those I come in contact with in the black ghettos.

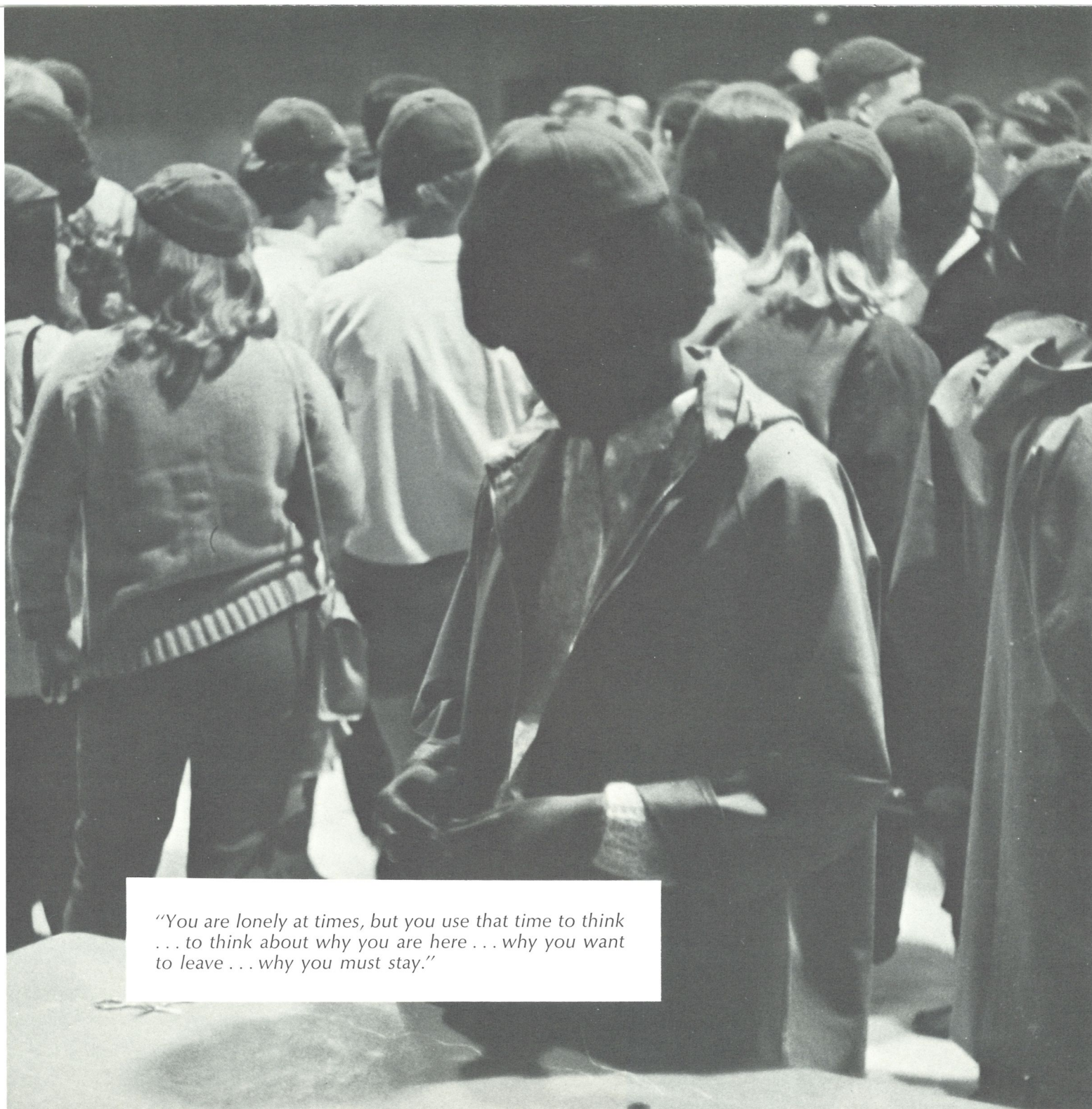






"You begin to see the difference between overt prejudice like that usually seen on television in the form of individual acts of violence and hatred, and institutionalized subtle prejudice like that which creates and maintains the black ghettos. You reach the heights of frustration when your roommate, who seemed more sensitive and more informed than the majority of white people, says to you that she doesn't 'blame' Negroes for what they are."





*"You are lonely at times, but you use that time to think
... to think about why you are here ... why you want
to leave ... why you must stay."*

A JUNIOR SPEAKS...

I have watched black students come and go. Why didn't I leave freshman year when homesickness was overwhelming? Or sophomore year when so many like me left? At home during vacations my friends and my family kept telling me to go back and not to give up. Black faces in the street kept saying to me, "Return and change the conditions. Change your school and change this ghetto." One of my excuses was, "I don't want to go back because I can't stand their music." That excuse and all my other excuses were not acceptable, nor should they have been acceptable. I knew from my first day here that it would not be easy. I am black in a white school. It can't be easy.

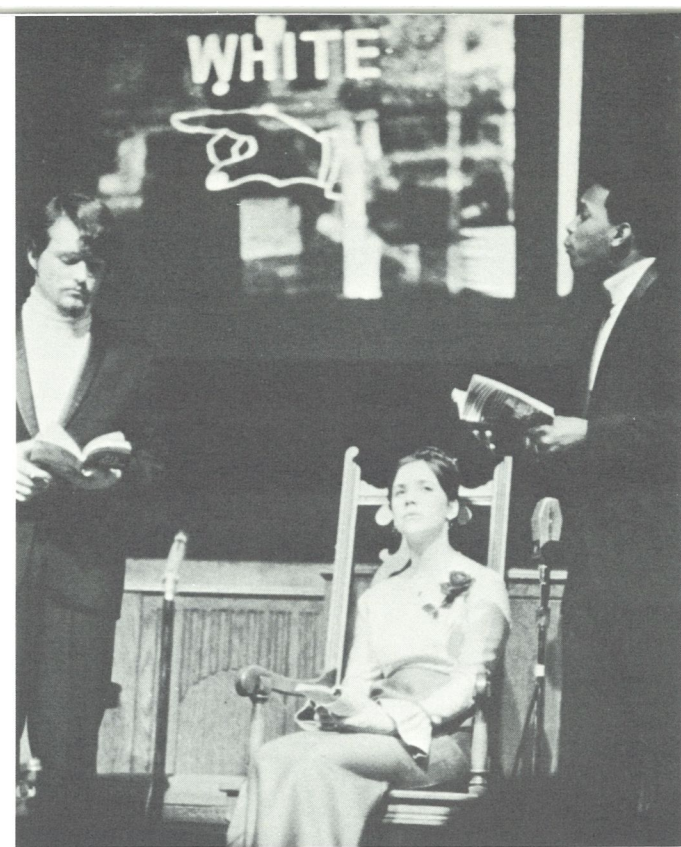
Getting through four years at Carleton became a challenge. The only way I would leave would be to fail, and I was not going to fail. In my sophomore year many of my black classmates left, mainly because they could not stand the cultural pressures. Black students were expected to assimilate 100% to the music, to the structure of the institution, to the intense pressure of striving for academic superiority before they would be considered successful Carleton students. So they left and I stayed. The rest of the year I kept asking myself, why?



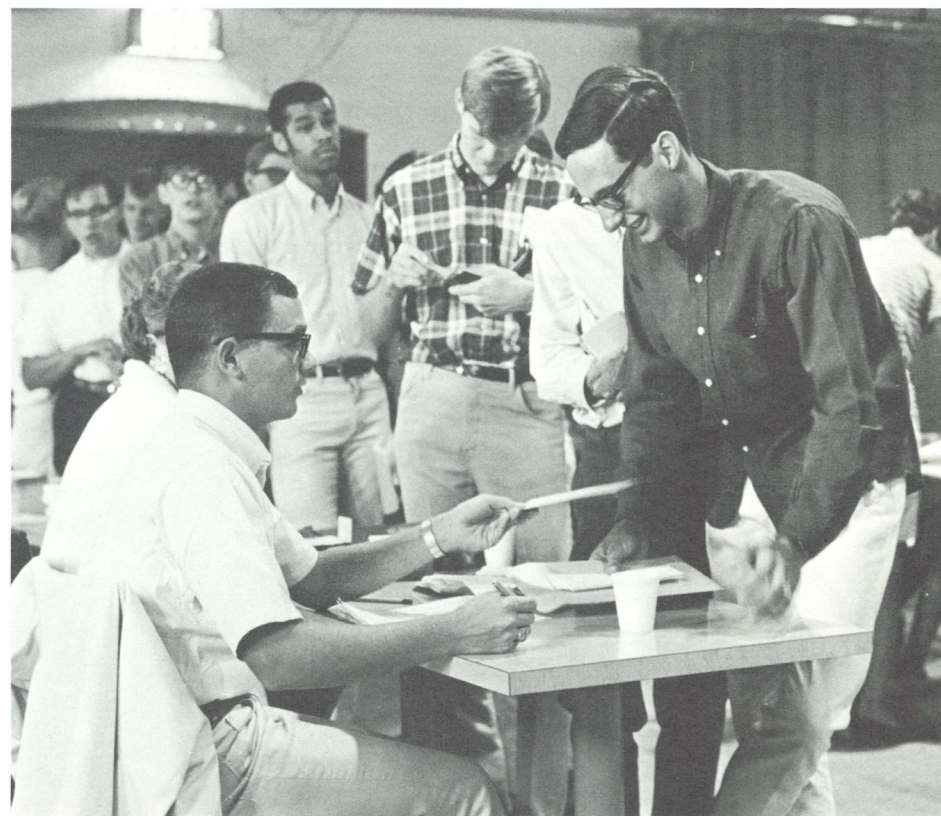
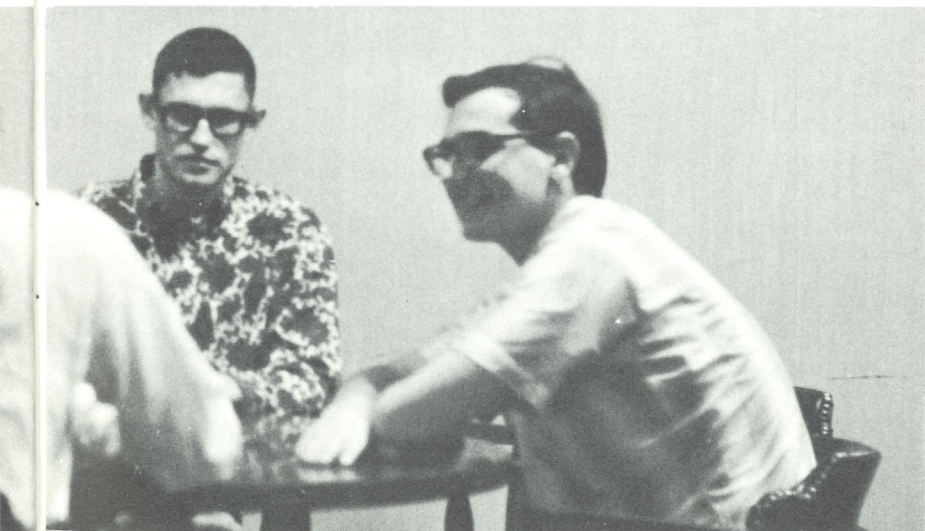


In my junior year I found the answer. I developed a purpose to my education. I was going to succeed without assimilating or losing my black identity. My biggest decision was whether or not I wanted to graduate Phi Beta Kappa and summa cum laude. That would look good on the program at graduation. That would mean keeping my nose to the grindstone. But I wanted to do something else besides study for two straight years. I chose to risk not making the best grades in favor of making my class work relevant to my needs as a black student at Carleton. It was taking a chance, but what does an education mean if it has no relevance to you?

During my junior year conditions for black students changed at Carleton. Most important, conditions changed for me. Those black faces at home that said, "Change these conditions" were being answered. I made up my mind to use every Carleton course to my best advantage, to use every Carleton experience as a lesson learned. It is not important that I graduate Phi Beta Kappa. What IS important is that I graduate and use what I have learned. I have decided that I want to use my education in some practical and fruitful endeavors. There are reasons for my decision. Personal dreams will be realized. My family and friends who consistently encouraged me to keep trying are partly responsible for my decision. Many of these reasons are also to be found in the nameless black faces in the streets and tenements of the ghetto.



"Happiness for me at Carleton depends on the kind of sacrifices I am prepared to make . . . It is up to me to determine whether my stay is worthless or rewarding."







A SENIOR SPEAKS...

When I found out I would be going to Carleton I knew very little about the school and did not think seriously about the kinds of adjustments I would have to make. At that time college seemed to be merely an extension of high school with a little more emphasis on academics. My goals and expectations with regard to college life were derived directly from the satisfying experiences I had in high school. I expected to be the star on the varsity teams and to be easily in the top 5% of my class. I expected to be involved in as many extracurricular activities as I was in high school. Because of necessity, my attitudes soon matured and I found a new equilibrium point between these and academics.

However, my attitudes did not mature quite as fast in other areas. Namely in my daily social and personal life. Being one of very few Negroes (about ten at the time) on a white campus did not bother me too much because I attended a predominantly white high school. I was quite apprehensive about meeting my white roommate but felt I could probably cope with the situation. This was true to a certain extent. Soon, however, I realized that not only was I in class with him and not only did I meet him on the football field or on campus, but I also lived with him. Our acquaintance was not a mere "Hello" or "Pass the ball" or "Socrates said..." like it was in high school. Once we got back to the dorm and began interacting on a personal level, our cultural and social differences became apparent. Our tastes in music were radically different; he could not dance "The Jerk"; he did not know who "The Impressions" were. This was not limited to my roommate. I was completely surrounded by whites and their world. I had virtually no black friends. I became aware of our differences, but at that time my naivety could not cope with the problem. I decided that since I was in the minority (an understatement) I would have to fit in; I believed it was only natural that I assimilated into this new culture.

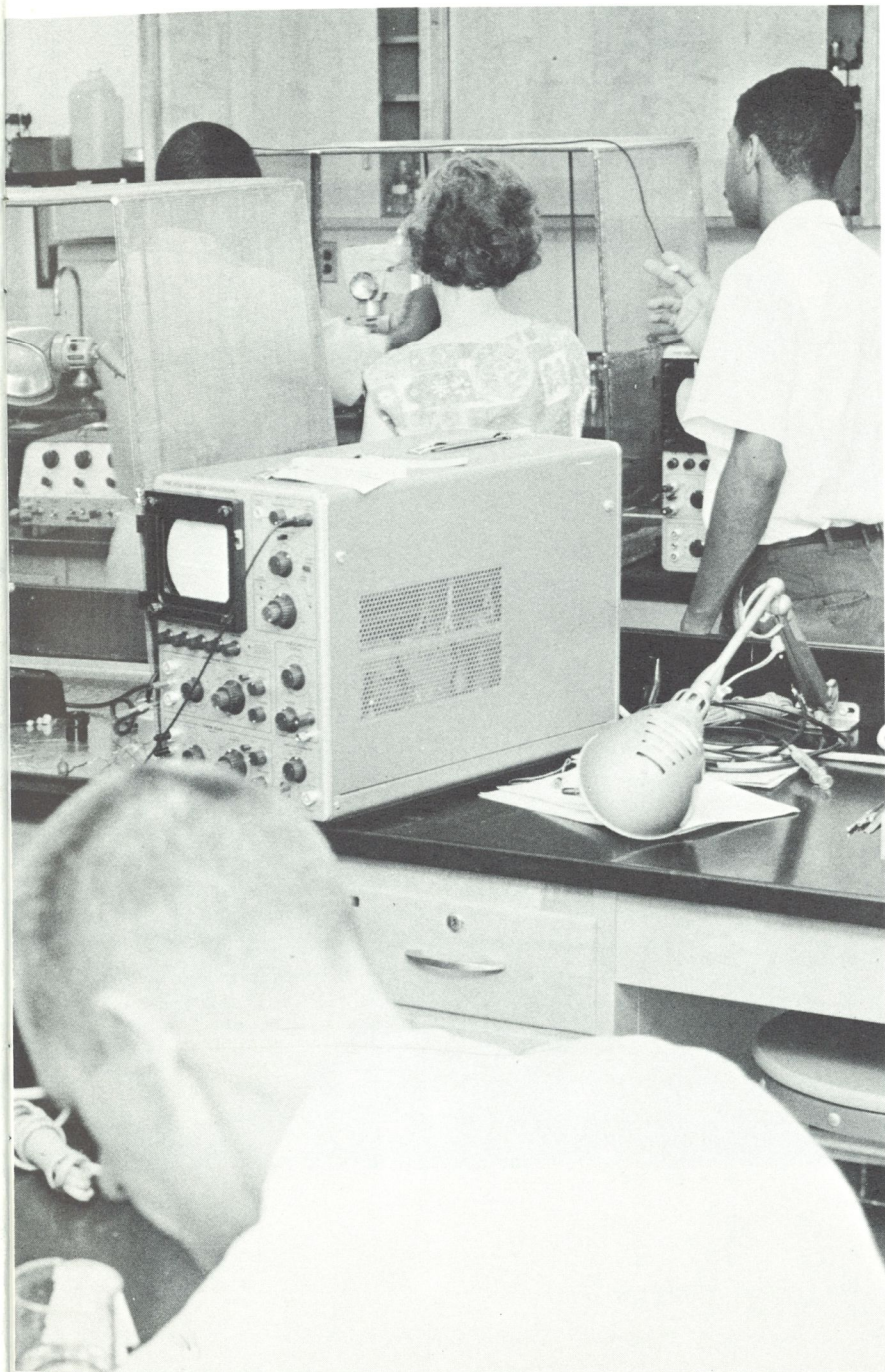
Soon came, of course, interracial dating. "Should I ask Susie Smith to the dance Saturday night? Would she go with me even if I am a Negro?" After calling four Susie Smiths, the fifth one would accept. Of course she wasn't exactly a fox, but then the foxes could get white dates. At the dance, I would sense a lack of communication between us. Questions were always on my mind: "What is she thinking about me? Is she worrying about all those people staring at us?" I knew that I was. And it was the same if we went to the movie in downtown white smalltown, U.S.A.

In class I was afraid to raise my hand and contribute my views. I knew I had a stigma on me... I was a Negro. Questions came to my mind. What if they don't agree with me? What if they simply disregard my view? What if I prove myself incompetent and stupid?

I was now becoming conscious of my blackness. It was hard to imagine how I had tried to suppress the fact that I am black and different from the white society I was living in. Gradually my attitudes began to mature. Assimilation was quite easy to fake on the outside, but inside me there was a battle going on. It was a persistent battle; I could not fool myself; I was unhappy. I began questioning myself. "Why should I give up my culture? Why shouldn't I listen to Sam and Dave? Why should I worry about her refusing me a date? Am I something I should be ashamed of?" I could not find convincing answers to these questions.



In class I began defending my views and found that I was not as stupid as I thought I might have been. I was becoming more confident and my thoughts were maturing. I began to accept and appreciate my blackness. The white society would have to accept and respect my color. Soon Carleton had made an effort to admit more blacks and I had brothers and sisters I could talk to. This made me even more confident as we began sharing our thoughts and making them known to the rest of the campus. This brought us the respect I had not seen in my freshman, sophomore and even part of my junior year. I now look back at the times when I worried about being accepted into the white middle class society and I am forced to smile in regret. I don't want to be accepted into white America. After living in it for so long, I am happy to be black. My white *friends* recognize this and receive me as I am on an equal level and I return them that respect. The others I couldn't care less about.



In all fairness to Carleton, I must say that when I compare its present state with that of my freshman year, it seems like paradise. It has a long way to go but it has come a long way. The road was not and is still not an easy one. But at times I find myself wishing I was starting right here now instead of four years ago. Carleton has shown me that it is possible to be black in a white world and retain my pride and self respect. It has given me black friends to last for life, black friends for moral support, and (few but some) white friends to keep me from hating white skin. It has given me the weapon I need to fight and survive racial prejudice — a realization of myself and of the overt and covert racists.

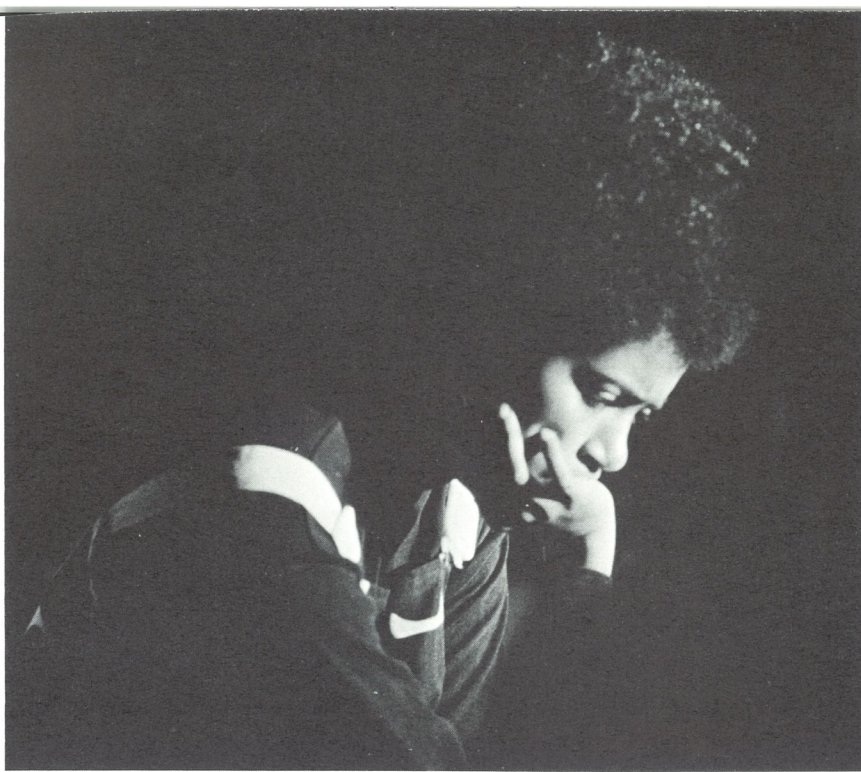


"Why go to a white college at all? At first glance the most obvious reason is an academic one. Yet, although the educational benefits obtained at Carleton are indeed great, you soon find that the greatest educational benefits are found outside the classroom or lecture hall. They are found through contact with people."

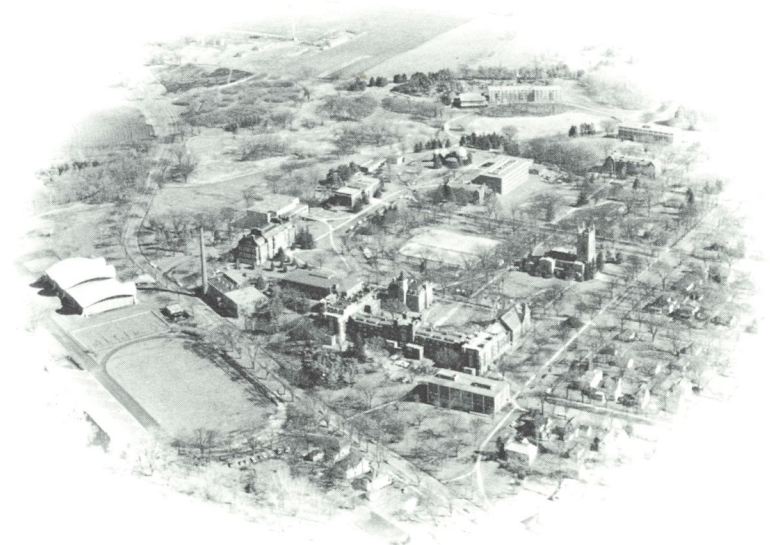
"You can see the pitiful lack of understanding and knowledge of black people when your 'friend,' to whom you've explained your life and the lives of other black people, continues to tell you that you ought to be grateful for your scholarship and ought to show your gratefulness by not criticizing the prejudiced attitudes of students and professors."







"... the slow crystallization of a mass of feelings and ideas. The world presents itself to me as it is, not as I would like to see it. And so I present myself to the world as I am with no explanations or excuses... Carleton, you shall never rob me of my identity. I stay here and get an education not learned from books — a full knowledge of myself..."



EPILOGUE

In resume, there are four ways we have benefited from our experiences at Carleton. Having presented us with a truly great academic challenge, it has given us an excellent education which will demand respect anywhere. Merely by being here we have already begun to destroy the stigmas which have been placed on us. Secondly, it has given us a realization and knowledge of ourselves. We came here resolved to be assimilated into this white society, ready to give up our own, because all our lives we have been made to think that this is the supreme society. Ironically, we find that it is our very understanding of this culture and society that makes us appreciate our own. We can now reject the white middle class society knowing exactly what we are rejecting and why. Thirdly, we have gained a full realization and knowledge of what we have been up against all our lives. We can now face and challenge this force confidently and consciously. With this knowledge we can present and support a new way of thought to our own people who might still be brainwashed, and to the white society. This new way of thought destroys all the preconceived stigmas and stereotypes that have been placed on the black man merely by questioning their unsupported validity. Finally, we have learned to communicate with our fellow men. We have learned to respect, and to demand, expect and receive respect. Through this mutual respect we have thus far achieved communication at Carleton.

Attitudes need to be changed. We are here because this is where they are, in white America. We are here to find out what they are, why they are, and to change them and this society. It is a long, hard, tiring journey. But then again, it has always been and will always be, unless we change it. We believe it is worth it and we hope we have shown you not only the good and the bad experiences we have been through, but also what we have accomplished by coming here and remaining.

"Now that it's almost over I tend to forget the bad experiences and remember the good and pleasant ones. I haven't graduated yet and nostalgia has already begun."

"To come to a white college is both a frustrating and a rewarding experience. As a black person, I have finally begun to free myself from the psychological bind in which white society has placed me. But it is only the first step. I have had to entirely re-orient my life and I know it may take me a lifetime to fully succeed."



