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United Negro College Fund Scrapbook, 1955

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THE STANDARD-STAR, NEW ROCHELLE, N.Y., SATURDAY,
APRIL 19, 1969

EDUCATOR FAVORS GREATER VOICE FOR STUDENTS

[[[HEADLINE]]]BLACK COLLEGS TRY TO BE 'RELEVANT'

[[[the following text appeared as a 5 column article with a photo to the right of the article]]

By MARGE McCULLEN

Dr. Frederick D. Patterson of 124 Rockland Place, New Rochelle has been sitting in a classroom, in one way or another, all of his life.

As founder of the United Negro College Fund, past president of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama and current head of the Phelps-Stokes Fund of New York City, he has been involved in both the long-range struggle of predominantly Negro colleges to improve the quality of their educational offerings and the more recent attempts by students to win a voice in campus decision-making.

At the same time that colleges like Tuskegee are trying to better their facilities and their faculty, he explained, they are also "under the greatest pressure to become relevant to the needs of the black people. Certainly we want to do that, but the question is, how far do you go?"

Remembering his own experience with student revolts, such as the one last year when he and several other Tuskegee trustees were locked in an office on campus for 13 hours, Dr. Patterson believes that the current generation of undergraduates is "going to bring about substantial changes. But the wave of rebellion will pass. It's not the first time we've had student uprisings."

The New Rochelle resident, who holds ten honorary doctorates, graduated with a degree in veterinary medicine from Iowa State College in 1923, completed work for his master of science at the same school four years later, and received a PH.D. from Cornell University in 1932. The following year he became president of Tuskegee, and in 1944 he founded the United Negro College Fund, which has raised over \$100 million since then and which he now serves as honorary president.

Sitting in his office at the Phelps-Stokes Fund, a private foundation that supports educational projects and student assistance in the U.S. and Africa, Dr. Patterson noted that "quality is not a matter of race, but of resources."

He explained that Tuskegee originally was founded in 1881 as a technical school, offering courses in agriculture, mechanics and the hotel trades that were "lower in quality than those offered in the white high schools." Over the years, the college expanded vertically, opening up degree programs in engineering, for instance, and gradually broadened its liberal arts curriculum.

"Private schools, like Tuskegee," he said, "were poor to start with, and the alumni were far from wealthy. It takes money, you know, to raise money," he smiled a little.

"Some ten years ago, he continued, "We were able to get the double standard removed. Prior to this, predominantly Negro colleges were ranked separately from other colleges, and we fought to have this eliminated.

"As of now, most of the institutions are accredited, and a few years ago a study found that there was no black college that did not have its counterpart in the white-even the poorest of them. A few compared favorably with the better institutions in the country and the region.

"This was important," he noted, and his speech became more intense and even more precise, "because there was the unreal attitude that black colleges were inferior. The report just strengthened my belief that, as said, quality is not a matter of race, but of resources.



Parallel to the efforts of the predominately-black colleges to improve their resources by drawing and keeping quality faculty, and by constructing new facilities and adding on courses of study, is the student movement for increased participation in that growth.

"Much more responsibility should be placed on students," believes Dr. Patterson. "They should have a voice in practically every area. But I can't agree they should have the final say. They don't have the experience.

"Even among the faculty, genuine responsibility is usually exercised by the persons of longest tenure, and not by those who have been at a school only a few years. But, of course, that doesn't mean you should exclude either them or the students."

The separatist movement on campus and in the community is growing, he believes, but "it's a symptom, a reaction to the slowness of genuine integration. I don't think on percent of the black people really want separatism, but the effort does channel their bitterness into a positive program that builds their self-respect. Particularly young people. They're tired of always hanging around where people half-way accept you. Integration is a mutual thing, where strength is derived from both sides."

He remembered, too, that when he was an undergraduate, there were more restrictions on what a black man could hope to achieve in American society, but "the restrictions were not so unstable as they are today.

"We're going through a period of such rapid change in every area that young people, I think, do not see clear courses of action to them that won't be changed by circumstances over which they have no control. Vietnam, for example, enters into all their lives."

"Certainly we want to be relevant to their needs. But just how do you do it?" asked Dr. Patterson, "There are certain easy ways -- black history, courses on Africa -- but how far do you go, vocationally? We can get involved, for instance, in preparing people for initiating and administering small businesses, in social and civic responsibilities, in voter registration. But how much more?"

[[caption under the photo to the right of the article]]

Sculpture from Uganda carved from wood and depicting a boy playing a drum, is one of the art works Dr. Frederick Patterson picked up in a trip to East Africa. Dr. Patterson, shown here in his New Rochelle home, is the founder of the United Negro College Fund and former president of Tuskegee Institute of Alabama.

-- Staff Photo by Al Carlino.

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