

# Racism at Macomb

Carol Schmidt

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Trustees of Macomb County Community College are considering a policy change which would effectively eliminate most of its black enrollment by phasing out non-residents of Macomb County.

Students for a Democratic Society are protesting the proposed change, and have issued a demand "that all students be granted equal opportunity to register and that no limit be placed on the amount of non-residents enrolled at Macomb," threatening possible student action if the demand is not met.

SDS sponsored a forum Feb. 26 in the college student center attended by nearly 200, to air views of students, faculty and the administration. William Hoerauf, administrative assistant to the college president explained the administration's views, while students, faculty members and a priest who is director of the Warren Interfaith Action Center protested the policy.

"Institutionalized racism at work," charged the Rev. Francis O'Donnell. "Regardless of the motive behind the decision, the effect will be to limit opportunities for black people, at a time when most intelligent people are leaning over backwards to eliminate racism and extend opportunities."

"Whites who are fighting this policy cannot feel that we are heroes for taking a stand because it is simply a matter of self-preservation for us too," the priest said. "A racist community is a dehumanized community that lives in fear, armed to the teeth, passing stop and frisk laws to warn black people to stay in their place."

Cordell Lovelady spoke for the black students on campus, who caucused after the forum. He charged that the few black students who would be left on campus after the "phase-out" would be "funneled into the industrial programs, which do not develop black leadership."

The contention of the administration, that there would still be plenty of black students coming to the college from areas in Macomb County (there are ghettos in Roseville and Mount Clemens), was denied by the caucus, most members of which were from Wayne County.

Hoerauf had boasted that the black enrollment at the college was up from 4.1 percent in 1967-68 to 4.2 percent this year. He had also been aware that most of the SDS members in the audience were from Wayne County—and would be eliminated by the policy change.

One-third of the current enrollment is from outside of Macomb County now, Hoerauf said, "mostly Grosse Pointe and Denby graduates." He said that Macomb is also participating in a seven-college program offering college courses at Denby and Southeastern High Schools until, if ever, Wayne County begins its own community college system.

Wayne voters have defeated every ballot issue that would finance a local community college system, and other community college districts have also begun to turn away the growing number of Wayne County applicants.

Hoerauf said that according to the state law establishing community college districts, these districts must first provide for their own area students. Out-county students are subsidized \$42 each by Macomb County taxpayers, in spite of tuition costs of \$20 per credit hour for out-county students versus \$9 for Macomb residents.

However, SDS challenged these figures. An SDS leaflet quoted administration records, obtained secretly, that only 20 percent of the operating budget comes from Macomb taxpayers, while federal and state funds account for

44 percent, and 32.9 percent comes from tuition. Even the 20 percent from taxes largely is supplied by area factories which draw their working force from Detroit.

Jim Jacobs, a Social Sciences teacher, noted that the college's real base was Wayne County, since in 1963 when it began it drew 75 percent of its students from Wayne County "because there wasn't enough interest in Macomb County to support a college."

Another Social Sciences teacher, Sue Calkins, noted that the administration had stressed that it must serve its own community first. "But how much do you serve your community by perpetuating a narrow, racist viewpoint, especially at a time which cries out for much broader thinking? Does a college serve its community when it fails to take a role in facilitating social change?"

"In supporting a community where racism abounds, especially in housing discrimination, this college is participating in institutional racism. As for students, to choose to do nothing, to choose to ignore a policy's effects on blacks, is to support racism."

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