

Eugenio Maria de
Hostos Community College
of The City University of New York

March 6, 1974

Honorable Alfred Giardino, Chairman
Board of Higher Education
535 East 80th Street
New York, New York 10021

Dear Mr. Giardino:

The lack of space at Hostos is so acute as to constitute a clear and present danger to the integrity of the instructional process. That there is no justification for this scandalous situation is apparent when one considers the record sums of money that the Board of Higher Education (BHE) recently allocated for campus development projects to various units of the City University. Why Hostos Community College must continue to operate under space limitations of less than 42 square feet per student when money is appropriated for such plush facilities as a new Center for the Performing Arts and a student union building at other units raises serious questions about the equitable distribution of available funds among units of the City University of New York (CUNY).

One cannot but conclude that the racial and ethnic composition of the student body at Hostos is ^a primary reason why this unit continues to suffer severe privation in its space requirements, while other units receive more favored treatment. Almost 90% of the student body at Hostos is black and Puerto Rican and it is this fact that accounts for the gross neglect of this second youngest unit in the CUNY system.

No doubt there will be strong disclaimers and expressions of injured innocence of any racial bias in the allocation of funds within CUNY. Nevertheless, the burden of proof is on those who assert that there is no racial motivation in the allocation of these funds. Racism is so pervasive in the institutions of white America that those who practice it are often unaware of its influence as a factor in their decision making. One does not have to propound the absurdities of a Shockley to be guilty of racism. This pernicious disease manifests itself in many subtle ways.

Perhaps the fact that the former BHE dragged its feet for three years in negotiations with the owners of the Security Mutual Insurance building across the street from what now constitutes the Hostos campus is not racism, but it is difficult to convince the student body that the BHE would allow a similar situation to develop at a campus with a preponderance of white students.

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Honorable Alfred Giardino, Chairman

Given the urgency of the space problem at Hostos, the failure of the former board of BHE to secure additional facilities was inexcusable. To allow the present situation to continue would border on the irresponsible. The college was compelled to deny admission to 500 students for this spring semester and the prospect of admitting any students in the fall is forbidding, to say the least. How can one expect disadvantaged students to function in a setting which would demoralize even the most academically talented student?

We appreciate the fact that Chancellor Kibbee has in the past been sympathetic to our problems at Hostos. But I think there is a need for extraordinary action. I urge you to bring the present negotiations to fruition or to obtain other facilities for Hostos in order that the college can fulfill its mission.

Sincerely yours,

Wilfred A. Callender
Associate Professor of
English

cc: Robert J. Kibbee, Chancellor
City University of New York,
Board of Higher Education

Mr. Franklin H. Williams, Vice
Chairman, Board of Higher Education

Editor, New York Times

Editor, New York Post

Editor, Amsterdam News

Editor, El Diario - La Prensa