Chapter 10: The 1980s:

"The Struggle Continues"

During the decade of the 1980s subtle shifts began to emerge on the Whitworth campus regarding race relations. More faculty than ever committed themselves to addressing issues of racism in American society. Affinity groups such as the Hawaiian Club, International Student Club, and Black Student Union remained popular. Several students of color were elected to student government positions and the college continued to invest in student life administrators who were committed to advancing Whitworth's approach to race relations.

Yet the decade proved frustrating to many students, faculty, and administrators who hoped for even more progress. Too many students of color continued to find Whitworth and Spokane difficult places in which to live. The few administrators of color at Whitworth expressed frustration with the lack of resources and, in their opinion, inadequate commitment to diversity at the upper level of the college's administration. All of that reflected the struggle to become the place that many had envisioned. While it is clear that the college had not forsaken its commitment to diversity, the definition of diversity for a campus like Whitworth remained ambiguous, and strategies were limited. Nevertheless, Whitworth positioned itself on the more

progressive side of the Christian college spectrum in a decade when conservative social and political forces were growing more strident across the country, particularly among evangelical Christians.

In 1980, and again in 1984, American voters elected Ronald Reagan to be president.

Most African American leaders viewed the Reagan years as a setback compared with civil rights gains during the previous two decades. The president's conservatism was reflected on a number of fronts domestically, but perhaps most dramatically in his commitment to reduce the size of the federal government wherever possible. This meant a reduction in federal aid programs that had been designed to address poverty, and a deemphasis on affirmative action strategies that had been developed to rectify decades of discrimination in the workplace. Conservative Christian political forces rallied to groups such as the Moral Majority, led by Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson.

Whitworth trustees also signaled a turn toward more conservative theological impulses with the hiring of Robert Mounce as president; his term roughly coinciding with Reagan's years in office. Mounce, a New Testament scholar, had been ordained as a Baptist clergyman. Whitworth's board of trustees' selection of Mounce reflected its general sense that the college had moved further to the left under Ed Lindaman than many desired. Mounce openly affirmed faculty who were more evangelical. In 1985 he hired theologian Dr. Darrell Guder as academic vice present. Guder, while having a long history in Young Life, was steeped in the Reformed tradition and more aligned than Mounce with the mainline Presbyterian Church.

In spite of the turn in a more conservative theological direction, Whitworth leaders continued to endorse goals of building a diverse student body and offering a multicultural education. Ongoing support for the Hawaiian Club, International Club, Black Student Union,

and the newly formed Native American Club reflected this commitment. Meanwhile, Dean Guder actively promoted overseas study with an eye toward helping Whitworth students and faculty experience cultures other than their own.

The Hawaiian Club provided the most consistent diverse cultural experience on campus with its annual Lu'au, begun in 1970. Always a popular event for students, staff, and faculty, the Luau provided an opportunity to sample Hawaiian food and witness students performing Hawaiian dances. The International Club also offered an intercultural experience through an annual banquet, where international students provided recipes for dining hall food and performed dances and other expressions of their native cultures. In addition, the Black Student Union sponsored soul food dinners through the decade, as well as dances and other campus events.

During the 1980s, the small number of Hispanic students did not generally host cultural events on campus. In 1985, Native American students formed a group called "Let's Stand Together," which was a translation of a Sioux word *Yuwita Nanjin*. The club's president, Sue Starr, helped organize a display in the library from the Museum of Native American Culture at Gonzaga. She also showed a film at the home of Julie Anderton, vice president for student life, entitled "Running Brave." In addition, Starr sponsored a panel entitled, "Whatever Happened to First Blood?" Her hope was "to educate people in what Native Americans are all about – we're not those Hollywood savages." However, despite Starr's efforts, Indigenous students remained largely invisible on the Whitworth campus. There were occasional speakers on Native American culture, but the club found it hard to sustain momentum.

The question of what it would take for Whitworth to go beyond a basic commitment to increasing cultural awareness through social events, to a more serious examination of the college's curriculum, hiring practices, and racial dynamics on campus, remained largely

unaddressed during the 1980s. In retrospect, it is likely that answers to these more complex concerns required a greater critical mass of faculty and administrators of color. However, Whitworth did not seem overly committed to recruitment and retention of faculty of color at this point in time. The most visible African American faculty member during these years was Professor Ed Miller, who taught Spanish. Miller, who was very popular with both students and faculty colleagues across the campus, came in 1984, but left for Calvin College ten years later.

A second individual who illustrates Whitworth's inability to retain faculty of color was sociologist Terry Kershaw. Kershaw earned undergraduate degrees in Black Studies and sociology from the State University of New York at Cortland in 1976. He received an M. A. degree in Black Studies from The Ohio State University in 1978, and a Ph. D. in Sociology from Washington State University in 1985. While pursuing his Ph. D., he was hired to teach sociology at Whitworth in 1980.² Apparently it did not go particularly well; Kershaw did not make it past the pre-tenure evaluation. Perhaps in an effort to find a space for Kershaw, he was named director of the Office of Multicultural Affairs in 1983, where he remained until 1985.

Speculation as to whether Whitworth properly evaluated Kershaw or sufficiently supported him through his early years of teaching on a virtually all-white campus is heightened when one recognizes that Kershaw went on to a very distinguished career at the College of Wooster in Ohio. At Wooster, he directed the Black Studies Program and chaired the Department of Sociology. He served successfully as a member of the graduate faculty at the nation's first Ph.D. program in Black Studies at Temple University. He also held a host of leadership positions at Virginia Tech. Widely published, later in his career he was appointed department head and professor of Africana Studies at the University of Cincinnati, where he was charged with revitalization of the Africana Studies Department.³ Kershaw's professional

African American students had been demanding since the late 1960s, and could have provided leadership for a Black Studies program. Whatever the reason that Whitworth chose not to retain Terry Kershaw, the result was a continued absence of Black faculty after Ed Miller departed for Calvin in 1994.

For most of the decade, African American students were much less visible than they had been in the late '60s and through much of the '70s. However, in 1984, Black students Marquis Nuby and Travis Downs were elected respectively to be the student body president and executive vice-president. Nuby defeated a white student, Breean Beggs, following a tie-breaker. Downs, a history major from San Diego, won his race handily on the first ballot and went on to a successful career as an attorney, later serving on Whitworth's board of trustees.

Nuby played basketball at Whitworth and majored in chemistry. In 1985, he was selected as the "Outstanding Black Student" by the Pacific Northwest Region of the National Council of Black Studies. After being elected student body president, Nuby wrote about his concerns regarding the lack of ethnically diverse faculty on the Whitworth campus.

First, I am concerned with having a diversity of as many races as possible, and I did not imply that our only full-time minority faculty member was a black, even though that is almost a fact. According to the hiring procedures, a minority is any U.S. citizen who is non-white. Our total minority population is two, which makes up less than three percent of the faculty. Our international faculty population is less than four percent of the total faculty population. To me, this does not show any significant progress in reaching the educational goal to foster in students an understanding of other cultures within the nation

"multinational community" as stated in our catalog and various other publications.⁴

After graduating from Whitworth, Nuby earned a doctorate in medicine from Cornell University, served as a captain in the United States Air Force, and eventually established a practice in

and the world and an appreciation for the richness and interdependence of a

pediatrics in Denton, Texas.

During the same era that Marquis Nuby and Travis Downs attended Whitworth, another African American, Tommy Stewart from Southern California emerged as one of the greatest all-around athletes in Whitworth's history. Stewart excelled at both basketball and track. As a basketball player he averaged 22.6 points per game during his senior year and led Whitworth to conference championships in 1983 and 1984. He was named First Team NAIA All-District I and NAIA Honorable Mention All-American. He was a remarkable track athlete. He set one individual record and one relay record for Whitworth that still stand today. He won the NAIA national championship in the triple jump in 1983 with a jump of 50' 3 ½". In the following year he set Whitworth and NAIA District I records in the triple jump with a leap of 50' 7 ½" a school mark that has never been broken. After graduation, the NBA Seattle Supersonics signed him to a free agent tryout. While not making the Sonics, he played professionally in Europe for one year. He later went on to a successful career with Nortel Networks in Southern California. 5

In the mid-'80s, two developments beyond Whitworth's borders helped shaped campus discussions regarding the nature of race relations. The first was increasing protest in South Africa against apartheid. In 1985, Whitworth had hired Rose Howell, an African American woman, to be the director of Minority Affairs. She remained in that position until 1988. Under her leadership, Whitworth students staged a simulated Apartheid Day on campus in February 1986.⁶ In that same spring and into the following fall, as was the case on many campuses,

students raised the issue of divestment of funds connected to the support of South Africa in Whitworth's endowment portfolio.⁷ It is difficult to detect whether these concerns about South Africa's racial policies had any impact on the ways race in America was perceived on campus, but it is reasonable to assume that the concerns reinforced for many students recognition that racism continued to exist around the world.

The other development that raised issues of racism in the United States, and specifically the Pacific Northwest, was the emergence of the Aryan Nations organization in northern Idaho. Headquartered in Hayden Lake, just ten miles north of Coeur d'Alene, the Aryan Nations, led by Richard Butler, openly proclaimed commitment to white supremacy and an allegiance to Nazi ideals.⁸

In the following year, discussion emerged in the student newspaper over the degree to which racism still existed in Spokane. Awareness of openly racist neighbors only 35 miles to the east of Whitworth helped raise the issue of racism both in Spokane and on Whitworth's campus. Concerns over racist groups in North Idaho led to a response in spring 1989, when over 1000 individuals from Spokane participated in a community march. Included among the marchers were an estimated twenty students from Whitworth who assembled in Ballard Lounge (residence hall) and carpooled to the event. Along the way, they tied orange ribbons onto trees and posted signs to convey support for minorities targeted by the neo-Nazi ideology and hate groups. On the students of the students of the students are students.

Concerns about racism on and off campus led Whitworth student Jill Uchishiba to write a two-part series in an October 1988 issue of the student newspaper. She highlighted numerous activities in the region, including Aryan-Nations gatherings and demonstrations. She quoted history professor Arlin Migliazzo, who had spoken not only of the conscious racism represented

by white supremacist groups, but unconscious racism borne out of ignorance or the lack of contact with minority groups. "In Spokane, if you put aside the reactionary groups (Aryan Nations) a lot of people don't even realize they have these views," said Migliazzo. "When we don't have much contact we try to demonstrate that we have no prejudices when in reality we all have prejudices." Uchishiba also interviewed the associate dean of students, Greg Hamann, who said, "The Christian faith calls us to not be racist, ethnocentric or egocentric, but the fact of the matter is that we are human before we are Christians." Gordon Watanabe, who was the director of Minority and International Affairs, said that "there is not much overt racism, but there is racism, as there is almost everywhere in this nation. It's suttle [sic] racism, stereotypes are taking over and we don't get beyond that." Sue Jackson, from South Africa, coordinator of Whitworth's Forum program, said, "The most obvious difference between the two cultures is that racism isn't written into law (here). Everyone has rights here and if they are infringed upon, they have recourse." All of this suggests that the discussion of racism on campus was becoming more robust. "I

In her second article, Uchishiba focused on Whitworth, interviewing several students. According to student Sharon Togashi, "The little things get to me, like people asking if I'm Korean when I'm Japanese. I encounter more ignorance than racism." Troy Nishikawa agreed, "There's a problem, but it's subtle. It's in the little comments I hear from people. It may be so subtle that they don't realize it's racism, but to minorities it comes across as racism. People here are pretty much ignorant of minorities and subcultures of America." Professor Ed Miller, Whitworth's only African American faculty member at the time, taught Spanish language and culture. He asserted that "There are stereotypes about other countries. Everyone thinks that if

you have a Hispanic name, you are therefore from Mexico. It's just not true, and people can't get around it."¹²

This focus on racial dynamics in Spokane and on Whitworth's campus generated a renewed sense of urgency around efforts to recruit more students of color, despite challenges presented by the difficult environment in the Inland Northwest. Gordon Watanabe, director of Minority and International Affairs, was quoted as saying that "People will miss out if this continues to be a one culture community, yet it's hard to get minority students to come here because there are so few minority faculty members to serve as role models. There is such a small minority of population many students don't feel welcome, and some people are discouraged by the nearness of the Aryan Nations in Northern Idaho." Director of Admissions John Reed asserted that SAT scores were regarded as having cultural bias. Reed told the Whitworthian, "There are so many things we can do to make this better. That is why I am encouraged, because I really think there is a chance to improve."

Discussion of minority recruiting continued in late April 1989 with a story in the Whitworthian that asked whether Whitworth promised more than it could deliver to minority students. First-year students, Terry Carter, an African-American, and Elke Foster, a Black Hispanic student, both criticized Whitworth on several counts. Carter said that the Whitworth community, including administrators, failed to live up to diversity claims. "I came to visit the school and everyone was nice. But once I enrolled and started attending classes, I noticed things had changed," Carter said. "The brochure I received before I came here described how minorities get together and have a power day. Yet when I came here I found out that happened in the 70's and yet it was put into an 80's catalog to make it appear that they are wrestling with the issue, when in fact they are not." Carter also said that diversity was defined broadly on

campus including both American ethnic groups and international diversity. "The only diversity they have at this college is people from different cities," Carter said. "People smile and act nice to you but you really don't know if they are talking about you behind your back." ¹⁵

Carter further stated that he did not want to stay and be a token minority. He felt his role at the school was as a student and not as a recruiter. "I don't want to stay here and be a martyr, and everything I do is noticed. I want to blend in, not stand out. Because there are only a few blacks on campus, people try to stereotype you. There is not any overt racism here, but people make little comments. One guy said he went to an all-black school and that is why his stuff got stolen because people took it, I did not say because it was an all-white school." Foster, meanwhile, said that she felt welcomed by many of the students, though, "There is not a big enough support group here, and I don't feel comfortable talking to everyone. People are phony, they say they want to talk with you and help you, but in reality they really don't." 16

Gordon Watanabe reiterated that the lack of cultural diversity prevented everyone from receiving a well-rounded liberal arts education. "Personally I know it is a good school," said Watanabe. "For the most part there is a concern for who you are and how you develop. There is a basic level of care here, and a lot of students need that. But the issue of diversity or the lack of it is a concern. It takes someone very special to be able to live in a different cultural environment, be it majority or minority." Watanabe said that it takes someone with a pioneer spirit to stay at Whitworth. "I can't fault students who don't feel comfortable and need to go. But I applaud the student who says this is not the best place sometimes, but decides to stay and try to make the best out of it." "We as a minority will not always be living in a multicultural setting," said Watanabe. "When you don't, everything you do will be looked at . . . and you will always be counted. But it is up to you whether you want to go through that." 17

Greg Hamann, associate dean of students stated, "If I were a black student, I'm not sure I would stay here with it being a predominately white college. If I did stay, I would see it as a mission. For the most part, people here are not intentionally bigots; we're dumb and we can learn. But it takes a lot of energy on the part of the black student to teach so everyone can learn." 18

First-year student Paige Williams, who was African-American, did decide to return to Whitworth for her sophomore year. She said she was coming back because she wanted to see if Whitworth would have more diversity that fall. "Some of the people here are warm, and hopefully next year there will be more black students. I also believe you have to give a college at least two years before you decide to leave. However, I do believe the college needs more diversity and more faculty role models." ¹⁹

By the fall 1989, discussions of racism on campus gained more momentum. Whitworth hired an African American, Andre Branch, to be director of Ethnic/Minority Student Affairs; Evan Schneider was selected to be director of International Student Affairs. Branch, in his initial interview with the *Whitworthian*, stressed the connection between Whitworth's Christian mission and the need to break down barriers between various groups. "I think Christians have the only real motivation, the only honest motivation for breaking down cultural barriers and coming together to love and appreciate each other. Major corporations in our country are making strides in cultural diversity, but their motivation is profit. Ours should be to please Jesus." Branch hoped to assist in increasing minority enrollment; he also planned to offer a Black Studies course, and spearhead a Martin Luther King celebration.²⁰

In October, Branch helped organize "Racial Awareness Week," which prompted responses in the student newspaper. One student, Kelley Strawn, argued that Whitworth needed

to be more proactive addressing racism both on and off campus. In contrast, a second student, Mark McVay, asserted that much progress had been made and that Affirmative Action Programs "incite resentment."²¹ Several administrators were quoted in the October 10th issue, including President Art De Jong and Vice President for Student Life, Julie Anderton. Both affirmed the need to recognize and address racism in the culture, as well as on campus.

The efforts of several faculty in the mid to later '80s provided opportunities for students to learn about Black history. Bob Clark and Don Liebert regularly addressed issues of race in their classes in sociology. Liebert taught a course based on St. Paul's letter to the Corinthians, where readers are exhorted to love others. Liebert was also notable for his regular trips with his students to the predominantly African American Calvary Baptist Church in downtown Spokane. In the English Department, Laura Bloxham made a point of assigning Black authors and brought that priority as a faculty member on the Core 150 team. Her introduction of Alice Walker's *Color Purple* to the core curriculum apparently raised the ire of some, but in the end all students were required to read Walker's powerful novel. Arlin Migliazzo in the history department began teaching a course entitled "American Minority Heritage" in the mid-'80s; it later evolved into a course called "Identity, Race and Power."

However, conversations around race accelerated with the efforts of two new professors. Dr. Doug Sugano, assistant professor of English, began what would be a decades-long campaign to make the curriculum more inclusive of materials reflecting minority experiences in American culture. Sugano held a session entitled, "Gaps in The Textbook: Rediscovering Our Lost American History." In addition to Sugano, Assistant Professor of Psychology, Jim Waller, who had grown up in the South, took a deep interest in race and racism in America. Waller told the *Whitworthian*, "Today's racism is less show and more thought. It can be seen in more subtle

ways." For the next two decades, Waller would play a major role on the Whitworth campus in educating students to the ongoing reality of racism in America.²²

Another article under the general title of "The War on Racism" was published the following week in the *Whitworthian*. Entitled "Whitworth not immune to racism," the article included interviews with two African American students, Paige Williams and Terry Carter.

Terry Carter spoke about the presence of stereotypes among students. He suggested that because he did not fit the stereotypical Black male, people confused him with being an international student. "One girl thought I was from Arabia because I spoke French, but I learned it in a school just like everyone else," Carter explained. When asked whether racism was present at Whitworth, Paige Williams, president of the Black Student Union, answered, "Oh, definitely." She said, "It's hard coming to an all-white campus. You deal with a whole bunch of stuff that you hadn't had to deal with before. Maybe you had to deal with it subtly in the past, but here, you deal with it. It exists."

Paige Williams further asserted that racism might not be evident to non-minority students on campus. "It's not anything outwardly obvious. It's only obvious to minorities. When I first came to Whitworth I felt isolated and alone. I felt left out because I wasn't white, because I was black and I felt like I stood out. I got looks, I got stares for the way I dressed and the way I was. I doubted myself. People try to compete with you. You're being watched. They're waiting for you to slip." ²³

The following week, the *Whitworthian* continued its series, "The War on Racism," including interviews with several faculty and staff. Doug Sugano continued to establish himself as a presence and diversity advocate on campus. When asked "what is your response to racism?" Sugano said:

I have two basic responses to that. The first response is strictly a personal response.

One thing that I'm determined to do is whenever I'm faced with racism personally, I will calmly and compassionately confront it. And I will, in some way, ask the person who has done something to me to either explain it or to justify what he or she had done. I'm not doing it to provoke an argument. I don't want an argument. I don't want a fight. That's not the point. The point is to make the other person realize that it is wrong and that it is hurtful.

My second response is more academic and scholarly I'd like future opportunities to be able to teach things like minority literature, simply because it's something a lot of campuses neglect."²⁴

Raja Tanas, an assistant professor of sociology and a Christian Palestinian, asserted that there has been a shift from civil rights to human rights and that the "issues have become class divisions. The minorities and blacks are still at the bottom of the social equality system." Greg Hamann, associate dean of students, said that "Racism is detrimental to everyone, whether you are the object or the perpetrator of the oppression. . . My personal response to racism is to try and convince them. We will not do anything to effectively diminish racism until we understand that we need to do it for ourselves: it is in all of our best interest."²⁵

The decade ended with a story in the *Whitworthian*, under the headline, "Racism a factor in staff member's departure." Cheryl Mitchell-Samuel resigned from her position as coordinator of student employment. In an interview she said that "it can be a very lonely existence here" referring to the fact that she was one of only four African Americans employed at the college. "Every day can be a struggle to find your place and be accepted. The feelings I was having were probably similar to those of minority students." In reference to her job, she

said, "In some cases I felt I didn't get a fair shake or afforded the benefit of a doubt. . . . Racism was certainly a factor, be that blatant or subtle. Most of my struggle was at the administrative level." ²⁶

The '80s proved to be an ambiguous and complex decade for race relations on campus. On the one hand, student affinity groups persisted and even flourished at moments; the Hawaiian Club, International Student Club, and Black Student Union all provided opportunities for minority students to gather, organize social events, and find a forum for making requests or demands to the administration. The election of Black student body leaders Marquis Nuby and Travis Downs reflected at least some openness among Whitworth students to being led by students of color. On the other hand, it was difficult to recruit and retain faculty and staff of color. By the end of the decade, Ed Miller was the only Black faculty member, and Andre Branch the only Black staff member. And, as revealed in the several interviews of students in the student newspaper, many students of color continued to struggle with not only the absence of a critical mass of individuals from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds, but struggled with the sense of being isolated and alone. They struggled to feel a sense of belonging.

It is also apparent that there was growing momentum for serious discussion around issues of race in America, in Spokane, and at Whitworth. Professors Doug Sugano and Jim Waller began to exert influence on campus conversations and to offer courses for students that specifically focused on race. Their efforts reinforced the ongoing work of professors such as Liebert, Clark, Hunt, Migliazzo, and Bloxham. Apartheid simulation days and Racial Awareness weeks went beyond traditional programming associated with Black History Month or the annual Luau and International Banquets. The *Whitworthian* continued to raise issues of concern about the lack of diversity on campus, and to focus on the reality of racism.

As the college prepared to celebrate its centennial in 1990, it appeared ready to address directly the nature of race on campus in ways that had not happened since the 1960s. Branch certainly challenged the institution to take seriously its commitment to campus diversity and to consider seriously challenges facing students of color. As indicated, more faculty than ever before were confronting issues of race in the classroom. However, like the 1980s, the 1990s would continue to prove challenging on all fronts when it came to race relations at Whitworth.

¹ Whitworthian, September. 16, 1985 p. 1.

² Whitworthian, September 22, 1980.

³ https://ncbsonline.org/in-memoriam/terry-kershaw/

⁴ Whitworthian, March 1, 1985, p. 2, 8.

⁵ Author interview with Steve Flegel, February 26, 2024.

⁶ Whitworthian, February 1, 1986.

⁷Whitworthian, March 31, 1986; April 21, 1986; November 24, 1986.

⁸ Whitworthian, February 17, 1987.

⁹ Whitworthian, October 25, 1988.

¹⁰ Whitworthian, April 25, 1989, p. 5.

¹¹ Whitworthian, October 25, 1988, p. 3, 8.

¹² Whitworthian, November 8, 1988.

¹³ Whitworthian, April 11, 1989, p. 1.

¹⁴ Whitworthian, April 11, 1989, p. 5.

¹⁵ Whitworthian, April 25, 1989, p. 1.

- ¹⁶ Whitworthian, April 25, p. 8.
- ¹⁷ Whitworthian, April 25, 1989, p. 8.
- ¹⁸ Whitworthian, April 25, 1989, p. 8.
- ¹⁹ Whitworthian, April 25, 1989, p. 8.
- ²⁰ Whitworthian, September 19, 1989, p. 4.
- ²¹ Whitworthian, October 10, 1989, p. 4.
- ²² Whitworthian, October 10, 1989, p. 7.
- ²³ Whitworthian, October 17, 1989, p. 5.
- ²⁴ Whitworthian, October 24, 1989, p. 5.
- ²⁵ Whitworthian, October 24, 1989 p. 5.
- ²⁶ Whitworthian, October 31, 1989 p. 1.