

# The Modern American

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Volume 2

Issue 2 Summer 2006 Commemorative Sylvania  
Woods Issue

Article 13

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2006

## White Money/Black Power

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### Recommended Citation

Chambliss, Cecily. "White Money/Black Power." *The Modern American*, Summer 2006, 46.

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# White Money/Black Power

**Keywords**

Noliwe M. Rooks, White Money/Black Power, African-American studies

# BOOK REVIEW

## WHITE MONEY/BLACK POWER

BY NOLIWE M. ROOKS. BEACON PRESS (2006). ISBN 0807032700.

*Reviewed by Cecily Chambliss\**

Sociate Director of Princeton University's African-American Studies program, Noliwe M. Rooks, details the history of African-American Studies programs in the United States and questions their future in *White Money/Black Power*. Rooks divided her analysis into two sections. The first section chronicles the programs' turbulent beginnings on the campus of San Francisco State University and its initial support from the Ford Foundation. In the remaining section, Rooks questions the survival of such programs amidst a variety of factors, including negative stereotypes and declining African-American student enrollment. The programs, which transitioned from the name "Black Studies" to "African-American Studies" in the 1990s, have become an integral part of African-American history within the academic community.

The emphasis Rooks' historical account places on the multicultural group of students who sparked this movement is distinct. The images associated with the San Francisco State University protests in the late 1960s typically depict militant African-American students pitted against armed police officers. However, Rooks stresses that these efforts began as a multicultural endeavor among African Americans, Whites, American Indians, Asian Americans, and Latinos. Together these students demanded the creation of a Black Studies Department and a separate Ethnic Studies Department to meet the needs of "third-world" students. According to Rooks, between 1968 and 1971, these diverse groups of students committed themselves to create nearly 300 Black Studies Departments on college campuses throughout the country.

As the title suggests, Rooks highlights the influence of the philanthropic efforts of the predominantly White institution, the Ford Foundation. The fruits of the students' endeavors were generally attributed to college administrators succumbing to the pressure of their demands. In 1966, however, the Ford Foundation's new president McGeorge Bundy made it the foundation's priority to address the country's race problem by realizing his goal of racial inclusion in the United States. The initial direction of Black Studies programs is credited to college administrators and African-American intellectuals. However, the leading intellectuals of the day could not agree on the curriculum or overall direction. Many felt Black Studies programs should serve as a means of integrating African-American students into the university settings, a recruitment tool, or even a form of segregating the students from their White peers. Rooks recounts the 1968 Yale University conference where Mr. Bundy enthusiastically an-

nounced his curriculum plans for a degree in Black Studies programs, which became a guideline for programs across the country. To Rooks, Mr. Bundy's conference appearance signified the Ford Foundation's dedication to the program, which would eventually donate nearly \$20 million throughout the programs' existence.

Despite the strong emphasis placed on the Ford Foundation, Rooks does not give the highly revered organization a proper introduction. She discusses the Ford Foundation without even a brief history of the charitable organization. It is as if Rooks continues an earlier conversation with an acquaintance already familiar with the subject matter. This noticeable oversight stands out when compared to the extensive background information Rooks provides about the events surrounding the programs' inception.

In *White Money/Black Power's* second section, Rooks evaluates the current state of African American Studies programs on today's college campuses. She makes much of her analysis through her own personal experience as the creator and director of the African-American Studies program at University of Missouri-Kansas City in 1995. Along with accounts from other program directors and scholars, Rooks suggests that today's programs are shrouded by stereotypes and misunderstandings. For instance, a variety of students question the viability of a degree in such a field, while college administrators only see the program as a recruitment tool for African-American students and faculty. Rooks states that such stereotypes led to the declining enrollment of African Americans in these programs in recent years. These and several other factors lead Rooks to believe that these programs will struggle to re-define themselves for future college students.

Although Rooks does an excellent job recounting the history of African-American Studies, her efforts become more convoluted when discussing the book's second section regarding the programs' future. Rooks does not devote enough energy in exploring the future of African-American Studies, devoting only one fourth of her analysis to this element which makes the book culturally relevant today. Despite the book's brief analysis of the program's future, Rooks recounts the programs' history exceptionally. By demonstrating the programs' multicultural roots, Rooks contradicts the customary images of this era. Her excellent historical account provides readers with a solid foundation to help ensure the survival of African-American Studies programs of tomorrow.

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