

## James Farmer Leads Seminar On the Civil Rights Movement

One of the undisputed highlights of Antioch Philadelphia's fall semester was a special seminar on the Civil Rights Movement led by James Farmer, the renowned civil rights leader and founder of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), who was appointed Distinguished University Professor at Antioch Philadelphia by President William M. Birenbaum.

Those attending the eight-week series of classes included students enrolled in the course as well as faculty, administrators, and other visitors anxious to hear Farmer's firsthand accounts of the frequently dramatic events that made "The Movement" a watershed in recent American history.

Dr. Milton Lesnik, AU-P Professor Emeritus and moderator of the seminar, called it "an historic occasion for Antioch University." Dr. David Allen Frisby, III, Dean, cited the Farmer seminar as a "special opportunity to renew our appreciation of those turbulent and decisive years."

Farmer's lectures and discussions were not only highly informative narratives that offered decisive insights into recent events, they were frequently stirring recollections as well from a person who had put his life on the line more than once for the civil rights cause.

### Finest Hour

Farmer described the civil rights movement as "one of this nation's finest hours" and said he knew of no other period in American history when people rose to such heights of moral courage.

"People found something to believe in that was bigger than they," he observed.

Though the civil rights movement had long been a constant in American life—and began in earnest in the early 1940's—Farmer cited three reasons why the 1960s were a time of widespread demonstrations. The first reason was the Supreme Court ruling of 1954 that made segregation in public schools unconstitutional, leading to the desegregation of Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, and other schools throughout the nation.

The second reason was World War II, which brought black and white American soldiers together on the side of "freedom and democracy" against the forces of "totalitarianism, tyranny and racism," said Farmer. Yet returning black veterans saw that the struggle for freedom and democracy needed to be carried on at home.

(continued on page 8)



## Act 101 Program Expands Student Services

AU-P's expanded counseling and tutorial program, funded by a \$49,000 Act 101 grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Education, held an orientation for students on October 29. The AU-P Act 101 Advisory Board held its first meeting on the same day.

The new program, administered by Dr. Elizabeth Palazzi, AU-P's Director of Student and Alumni Affairs, provides intensive one-to-one tutoring or small group instruction in both the regular Skills Lab areas of reading, writing, mathematics, and oral communication and in additional areas such as time management, study skills, and identifying and using learning resources.

Students in the program may receive individual counseling to cope with school or family life or with job and career concerns. The counselors will also run small group workshops on subjects of general interest.

In addition, the Act 101 grant will fund special assistance to students in preparing applications for financial aid and identifying sources of supplemental financial aid, such

as foundation grants or employee reimbursements for which students may be eligible.

A total of 75 students will be participating in the program by Spring semester.

In addition to Palazzi, who holds a B.A. in psychology from Seton Hall College and an M.Ed. and Ph.D. in Counselor Education from the University of Pittsburgh, the program staff includes two counselors: Phyllis Flynn, a graduate of both the B.A. and M.Ed. programs at AU-P, who currently teaches and does counseling in the Human Services Program at Bucks County Community College; and Alice Swann, also an AU-P M.Ed. graduate, who is Parent Coordinator for the Chapter I Pre-School Program in the Bensalem School District.

The program tutors are Eleanor Childs and Eugene Howard. Childs, a reading specialist, holds a B.A. in Linguistics from Pitzer College and an M.S. in Educational Linguistics from the University of Pennsylvania, and is currently teaching at Montessori Genesis II. Howard, a published

post and writing specialist, is an experienced adjunct faculty member of the AU-P Skills Lab. A candidate for a Masters Degree in Creative Writing (see Faculty Notes), he currently teaches creative writing in the Pan-African Studies Community Education Program at Temple University.

Barbara J. Trawick, program secretary, is a B.A. student in counseling who expects to pursue graduate studies in that field.

AU-P alumna Kelly Miller was elected Advisory Board Chairperson; Catherine Johnson, Coordinator of Prior Learning, is Recorder. Other Board members are: Carolyn Batts, B.A. student; Hazel Boyd, M.A. student; Karen Chappelle, Assistant Registrar; Molly Daniels, B.A. faculty sponsor; Grady Lights, Director of Recruitment; Patti Pironi, M.Ed. student; Larry Robbs, owner, Robbs Book Store; Kim Saunders, M.A. alumna; Alice Schell, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs; and Edna Stralls, B.A. faculty, Human Services Core. □

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(continued from page 1)

Finally, the election in 1960 of John F. Kennedy, along with the appointment of Robert F. Kennedy as Attorney General, signaled a new mood, an aura of youthful spirit and the will to "get the nation moving again." Farmer pointed to a belief shared by black and white Americans alike that the nation should be moving especially in the area of civil rights.

Farmer, who became national director of CORE in 1961, founded the organization twenty years earlier, with a philosophy and tactics inspired by the non-violent direct action of Mahatma Gandhi. CORE's following increased during the 1956 Montgomery bus boycott led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who employed the same non-violent approach to change.

The success of the bus boycott was a major factor in CORE's sponsorship of the Freedom Rides a few years later, said Farmer. These direct but non-violent actions challenged segregation in interstate bus travel throughout the South.

CORE's plan called for black passengers to ride in the front of the bus, while whites rode in the back. In addition, when the group encountered segregated facilities along the route, blacks would use those designated for "whites only" while whites would use those marked "colored."

Though the Freedom Riders were non-violent, local residents were not. A mob surrounded a CORE bus in Anniston, Alabama, severely beat several passengers, then set fire to the bus. A photograph of the burning bus, superimposed over the torch of the Statue of Liberty, appeared on the front pages of newspapers all over the world.

### High Point

In Farmer's opinion, the Freedom Rides were a high point of the civil rights movement. They constituted a constructive confrontation, a "creative crisis," that made it more dangerous for reluctant federal officials

to continue to maintain segregation than to oppose it.

Although Attorney General Kennedy urged Farmer to call off the Freedom Rides for the purpose of creating a "cooling off" period, Farmer replied in a telegram: "Regret cannot comply with your urgent request. Been cooling off for 350 years. If we cool off any more we'll be in a deep freeze. The Freedom Rides will continue."

And the Freedom Rides did continue, with the protection of national guardsmen who were finally ordered into service.

CORE continued to fight to end seg-

## Media Coverage

James Farmer's seminar received extensive media coverage, thanks to the efforts of Bobi Stein, Administrative Assistant in the Office of Academic Affairs, who coordinated the publicity. In addition to articles in the Philadelphia *Inquirer* and *Daily News*, there will be forthcoming pieces in the Philadelphia *Tribune*, the *Inquirer Magazine*, and the *Christian Science Monitor*. Farmer was interviewed on WHY-FM's "Fresh Air" program and participated in a panel on "Politics in the 1960s" on WPVI-TV. He will also appear on WPVI's "Perspective" on January 13, 14, and 15, 1984.

regation, but by August 1963, the time of the March on Washington, Farmer felt that the civil rights movement had virtually ended. Passage of the Voting Rights Act and other civil rights legislation during the Johnson administration answered many of the movement's goals. Thus the stupendous march of 1963 reflected in many ways the need for a new agenda. Ironically, Farmer himself was unable to attend the March on Washington, having been jailed in Plaquemine, Louisiana, along with other blacks involved in a non-violent voter registration campaign.



### Looking Ahead

James Farmer—the only survivor of the "Big Four" that included Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Roy Wilkins, Whitney M. Young, Jr. and Farmer himself—sees a new agenda for the '80s, including a bold attack on inequities in income, education, health, and housing in America. "The goal of any new movement," says Farmer, "should be to translate the new freedom won by blood, sweat, and tears into real equality for both blacks and whites."

Farmer is scheduled to teach the seminar on The Civil Rights Movement again in the Spring '84 semester. □