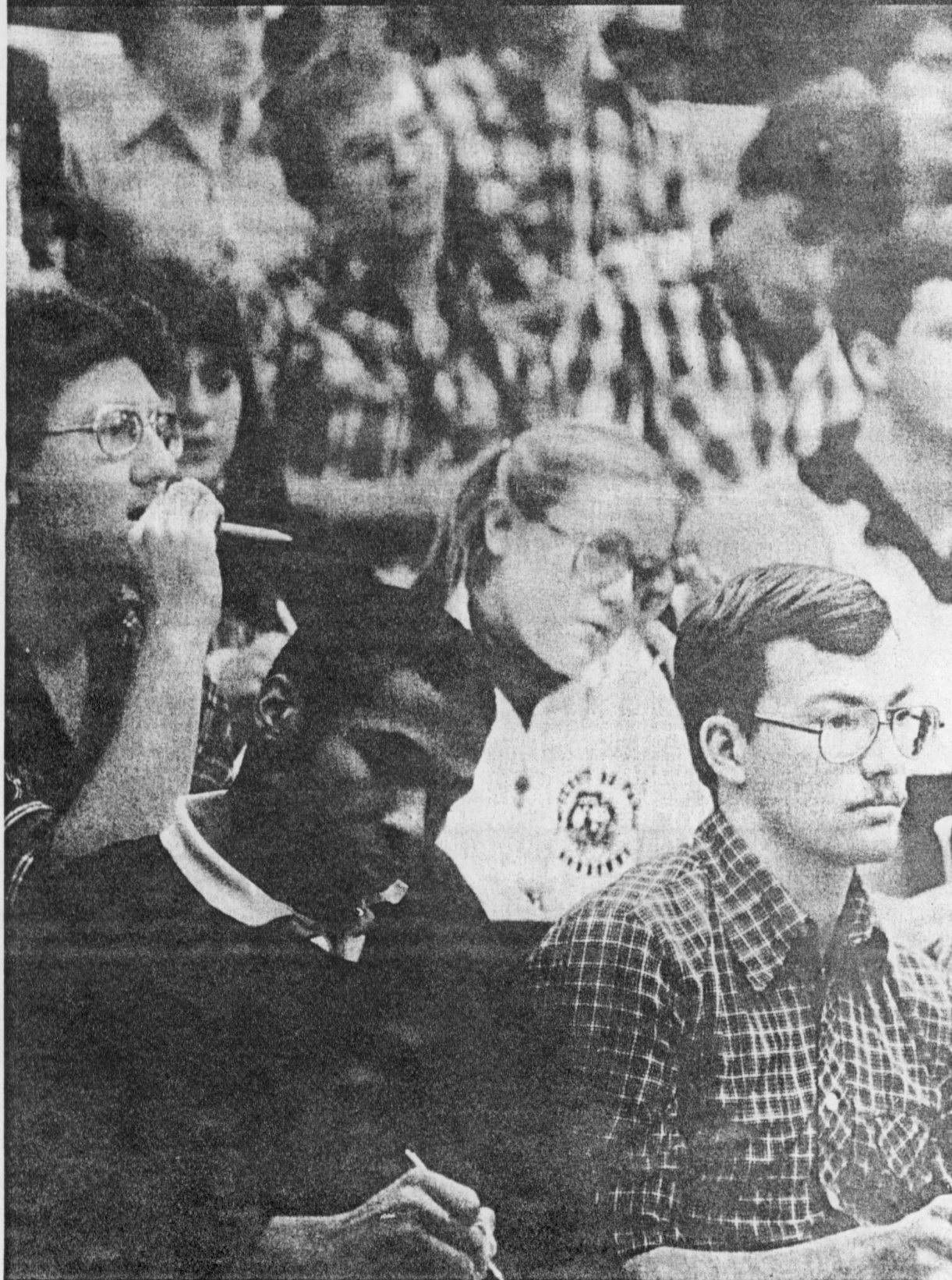


When minority means one



A study in black

The University of Illinois Afro-American Studies and Research Program (AAS) is like a weary traveler, asking itself where it is now and where it's going next.

The program is in its 14th year of existence. But existing does not mean prospering and growing for this program which struggled for survival for 10 years with little support from the University. But since the program's current director, Gerald McWorter, took over in 1979, the program has finally found direction and begun to receive support from the University.

But as the program here begins to prosper, many colleges and universities face declining enrollments and financial crises: the University just finished chopping \$7 million out of its own budget. These cuts intensify the questions of purpose and value of relatively new programs such as black studies.

At this point, black studies at this University is a program composed of about 25 courses, most of which are offered through different departments.

The University's program has neither a department nor a major. Only two or three students are taking cognates (minors) in AAS, but Glenn Jordan, associate director of the program, points out that AAS has not yet actively encouraged cognates.

Both whites and blacks take black studies courses, according to Jordan. Although the program does not have exact figures, Jordan estimates that most classes are composed of about half black and half white students.

The program's primary emphasis, according to McWorter, is curriculum development, although the program has "achieved success in initiating a research program."

In 1981, the University's AAS received a \$264,000 Curriculum Development Grant to develop a core curriculum of black studies courses, to develop materials for, among other things, four AAS courses. Five out of six re-

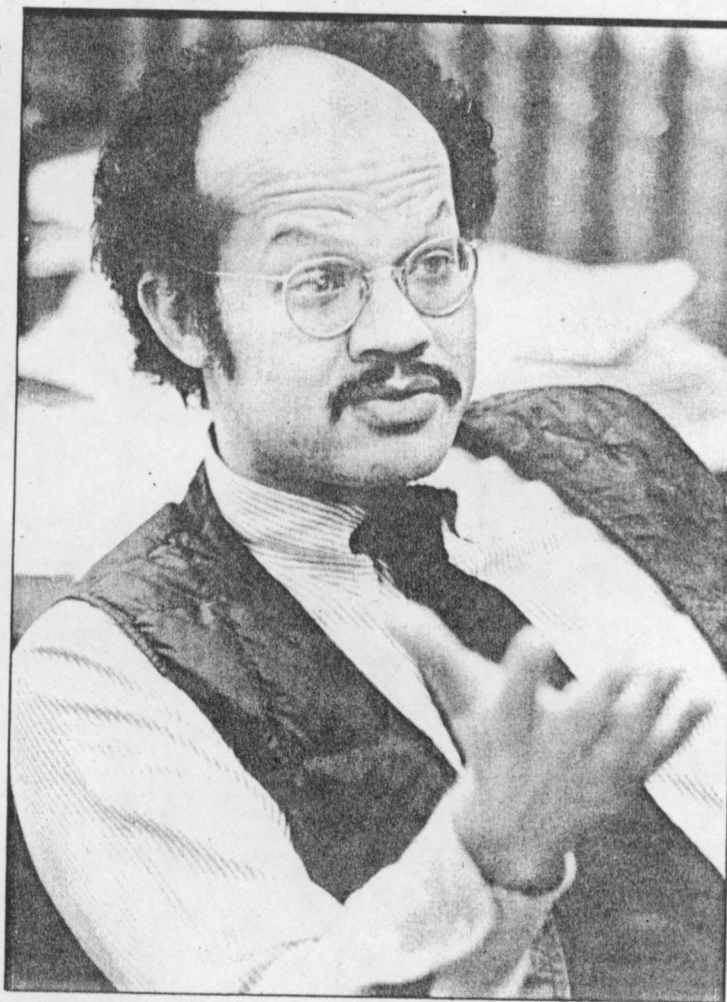
search grant proposals the program submitted between 1980 and 1982 were funded for a total of \$336,000.

As for classes, this Spring, students with an interest in black studies can take a section of Introduction to Sociology with a special emphasis on the black experience. They can also take two more courses, in the course catalogue under "Afro-American Studies"—Special Topics in Afro-American Studies: The Black Family, and Black/White Relations, which like the sociology course, are specifically classified as AAS courses. Beyond these, courses are offered by various departments which focus on the black experience in literature, music, and similar disciplines.

The program's current status was not easily reached. Robert Eubanks, who helped form the program, said McWorter had to "fight for what he got."

The program's achievements become more impressive because they have occurred in the span of four years that McWorter has been director. Indeed, many of the program's former directors including Richard Barksdale and Robert Eubanks, believe that the key to the present and future success of the program is McWorter.

McWorter said he reached an "agreement" with the University when he assumed directorship



Gerald McWorter

photos by John Zich

of the program in 1979. He would "build the program into a nationally recognized program," and the University would give him the necessary funding and support to accomplish this task.

McWorter's accomplishments include founding the Illi-

nois Council for Black Studies in the fall of 1979 (he was the first chairperson), and making the University a member of the National Council for Black Studies the same year.

When McWorter assumed direc-

torship in 1979, the program was lucky to be alive. In 1978, plagued by budgetary problems, the program was evaluated by the University and found not to be "moving in the right direction." The University had all but pulled the plug on the program when extreme pressure from

black administrators and students forced the University to reconsider its decision.

McWorter said he essentially had to rebuild most elements of the program from scratch. He said his efforts were hampered by "ignorance of the program's existence" and the program's bad reputation, which McWorter said was tied to racism.

So far, McWorter said, "The University has by and large stood by its agreement." Although the current budget crisis has caused the postponement of some of the program's funding, McWorter said he believes the problem is only temporary.

McWorter's agreement represents a considerable change in University policy towards the program.

"The University's dedication to Afro-American studies is caustic; it's showy; it's to put on a good front," said Richard Barksdale, English professor and former interim director of Afro-American studies.

Barksdale attributes the program's turnaround to McWorter's hard work and to the present Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, William Prokasy, who assumed his position in 1979 and who "believes in supporting the program."

Those involved with AAS here, however, believe Illinois is still behind most other universities.

McWorter admitted that the program is behind others "in some respects"—specifically in structure and "security of resources." And former interim AAS director, Richard Barksdale said, "The Ohio State program puts our program to shame." Ohio State's program is a department with state money spe-

by Karen Sundfors

cifically earmarked for black studies, Barksdale noted.

"Most campuses throughout the U.S. have an Afro-American Studies presence," said Ronald Bailey, executive director of Illinois Council for Black Studies. He estimated there are about 500 formal black studies departments at Universities and colleges nationwide. According to Bailey, there are 18 programs in the state of Illinois which grant either degrees or certificates.

Bailey said these universities include Ohio State, University of California-Los Angeles, and Howard University in Washington D.C., which Bailey said has "the strongest black studies program on a black campus."

In the state, Bailey estimates that the University's program is probably the strongest. However, there are differences even between University campuses.

McWorter said a major in AAS was approved by the Board of Trustees at the University's Chicago-Circle campus in April of 1971. He hopes to have a "recognized major" here—at least through the University's Individual Plans of Study program—in the next few years.

McWorter said the Chicago Circle campus has a major for its program because there are about 1.5 million blacks in Chicago, and there was "a great deal of student activism" at the campus in 1971.

While budget-cutting has made all programs at the University potential targets for reductions, McWorter hopes to have "hard money" to use to build up the program in the next few years.

Currently the program has two positions to teach AAS. McWorter, an associate professor in sociology, has a half-time appointment. A visiting professor is paid to teach AAS full-time, but McWorter said he wants to



Gerald McWorter

replace this position with a permanent half-time position.

Courses in AAS are rigorous, according to Paul Davis, junior in economics (LAS) with a cognate in AAS. "I find them very difficult," he said. "The professors really keep me on my toes."

Davis said the professors allow the freedom for creativity in class assignments by allowing him to integrate parts of his major into the class assignment.

Doug Burch, senior in LAS with a specification in AAS, comments that the black studies professors vary, but said, "I've had some really fantastic teachers."

Burch said that some black studies professors' styles are a bit impersonal. "I like a more personal relationship with my teachers," he said.

Burch also said, "Black professors feel they have to prove something." According to Burch, black professors don't want black students to think their classes are easy just because they are black. So some

professors are very difficult. "I haven't met an easy black professor yet," he said.

The death of Martin Luther King "broke the back of segregation in the South and opened up white institutions in the North"—Richard Barksdale.

The history of Afro-American studies at the University turns on the question of the establishment of what James Anderson, a graduate student in the history of American education at the University in the late 60's, calls an "appeasement" to black students.

Black studies first became an issue at this University when "Project 500," the University's first active recruitment of black students, occurred in 1968.

According to Anderson, now associate professor of educational policy studies, the University began this active recruitment "without a plan for the development of black student life."

Anderson said the University

conducted "two rounds" of admissions in the fall of 1968. About 200 black students were originally planned for, but the assassination of Martin Luther King caused the University to admit 500 more students under the "Project 500" plan.

However, Anderson said the University was not prepared to handle this influx of black students. It admitted more students than it had spaces and financial aid packages for.

Anderson and a large group of dissatisfied black students took part in a sit-in at the Illinois Union on Feb. 10, 1968 to protest their situation.

He said originally the students assembled to have their questions answered by leaders of the Black Student Association. When the leaders could not solve their problems, the students requested to talk to the chancellor, and he refused to come.

Meanwhile, Anderson said, "The University anticipated a violent outbreak" and called the police. Panicking students en-

gaged in a "mass scramble" when they realized that the Union had been surrounded by police. Only during this period of confusion did vandalism to the Union occur, Anderson said.

About 262 of the students present at the sit-in were arrested, and several thousand dollars of damage occurred.

The repercussions of this incident continued into the Spring of 1982. Black students continued to protest the arrests, and to demand that the University be more sensitive to their needs. Anderson characterized the demonstrations at the University during this time as "non-violent."

On February 13, 1969, five major college campuses were hit with demonstrations and sit-ins. Black students occupied the administration building of Duke University for 12 hours, and a similar occupation of the administration building by 100 students of the City College in New York City occurred.

In the midst of these nationwide demonstrations, the Black Student Association, on Feb. 15 directed a list of demands—including the establishment of a black studies program—to the University chancellor.

But according to Robert Eubanks, professor of engineering involved in AAS's formation, the University had already formed the Faculty-Student Commission on Afro-American Life and Culture, consisting of 3 faculty and 2 students, to study the possibility of a black studies program. One of the two students who was told of his appointment to the committee, got together a group of students to demand the establishment of the committee so the students would look good when it actually

happened, according to Eubanks.

The Afro-American studies program went through a couple of directors before Professor John Stewart was hired in 1974, and the offices were moved from the Chancellor's office to LAS.

Stewart said his term as director of the program from 1974 to 1978 was problematic because of "bad faith" between the dean's office and the program. Stewart said money for a quarter appointment in political science "disappeared" from Afro-American studies' budget.

In addition, while Stewart was on leave from the program in the fall of 1976, a psychology proposal on "institutional racism" was presented to the National Institute of Mental Health in Washington. The University's program, according to Stewart, was instrumental in the formation of this proposal. But Stewart said Vice Chancellor for Research George Russell, "didn't want Afro-American Studies representing the University," so the program was never given credit for the proposal.

Stewart said that during his leadership of AAS, department heads were "openly critical" of the program. "What they were afraid of was that Afro-American studies would introduce a bunch of easy courses into the curriculum," he said.

In describing his experiences, Stewart said, "(The University) is a very racist campus."

In the face of impending budget cuts, the program was evaluated in the spring of 1978. Stewart also was planning to resign because "the relationship between the program and the dean's office needed to be

◀ 5 study

to be dramatized."

According to Stewart, the program had already asked for and received a positive evaluation. But a second evaluation by the College of LAS Task Force recommended the withdrawal of funds from the program.

Tom Eackman, assistant to the vice president of academic affairs, who was a member of the task force committee, said the recommendation was made because Afro-American studies was "administratively topheavy" and below "a critical mass of faculty and staff to sustain an academic and research program."

Eackman said every program in LAS was evaluated and that he, as well as the committee, recommended AAS funds be put into teaching and research efforts rather than into administrative functions.

Eackman attributes the program's difficulties in gaining acceptance at the University to its origins in social disruption. Eackman said that Stewart's directorship might have been problematic because he had to split his time between Afro-American studies and anthropology, and Stewart could not devote enough time to "satisfying" his colleagues in anthropology.

Stewart called Eackman's reasoning "totally nonsense" and said, "That to me is a racist remark." Stewart questions whether Eackman would have said the same thing about the Latin or Asian studies programs, which also have part-time directors.

However, due to pressure put on the University by Stewart and black student groups, the Executive Committee of the College of LAS, rejected the recommendation of the task force.

According to Stewart, the task force had been "surreptitiously" and "quietly" trying to disband the program, and if he had not resisted the evaluation and "recruited opinions from black students and faculty," the program would have ceased to exist.

Opinion on this turn of events differs. Eackman said Bob Rogers, Dean of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the time, did not bow to anyone's pressure and said Rogers had "sound academic reasons for keeping (the program)."

After Afro-American studies endured this crisis and Stewart left for a new position in California, Richard Barksdale became AAS' interim director in 1978-'79 for what he said was "one gruesome, painful year." During this time a nation-wide search for a permanent director was conducted.

Barksdale said the program was on the verge of collapse when he became its acting director. The program was continually overspending its budget, according to Barksdale. "I could never get any explanation of it," he said.

Barksdale attributes his problems to the "genuine budgetary crisis" LAS was undergoing. He said Stewart thought that AAS was singled out in a "discriminatory" manner through its budget prob-

lems. But Barksdale said, "I didn't feel that way."

In 1979 Gerald McWorter, who had then been teaching at the Chicago Circle campus with a doctorate degree in sociology, assumed the position he has held to the present as director of Afro-American Studies and associate professor of sociology.

According to McWorter, the program is currently under evaluation, and results will be available next fall.

Part of the question that the evaluation may try to answer is whether it's necessary to have a department and major in Afro-American studies.

Last year, Western Illinois University in Macomb, whose black studies program has been a department since 1973, lost its major in Afro-American Studies after a two year evaluation by the Illinois Board of Higher Education and the Board of Governors, according to director of the department, Essie Rutledge.

Rutledge said the department lost its major because it failed to meet the criteria set for the number and frequency of graduates with a major in AAS.

However, Rutledge said the Board of Governors set a precedent by approving a minor in AAS, which is not usually its responsibility.

"There were no students majoring in it (black studies), nor had there been for the last two to three years," said Ron Messina, assistant executive director for governmental relations on the Board of Governors.

A minor was maintained in the department because the Board thought that students would be interested in the classes. Messina pointed out, that if no students enroll in the courses, the courses will be eliminated also.

However Rutledge said the program still feels threatened because of the loss of its major, and for this reason Robert Eubanks feels AAS should not be a department. He said, "(AAS in a department form) is much too easy to attack in the case of financial problems."

But in whatever form, most students and administrators associated with black studies see value in taking black studies courses.

For Paul Davis it is part of his discovery of "what it means to be black."

Some administrators involved with black studies feel that black studies should be for white students—so they can learn about blacks. But Ronald Bailey feels every student should be required to take black studies courses.

That may be the next battle for the administrators of the Afro-American studies program who have traveled far, using black studies to its real value: educating white students about the black experience.

K.S.

Group starts events about black culture

by Beth McCurdy

The University Afro-American Studies and Research Program is sponsoring several local events this weekend designed to promote black culture, according to program spokespeople.

The Midwest Region of the National Council for Black Studies is conducting its first meeting of the year today at the University. The program, which started Friday, is meeting from 8:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. in rooms 263-279 Illini Union and involves representatives of 50 colleges and universities in the Midwest.

The purpose of the meeting is to establish a specific and uniform program in black studies for all schools in the country. At present, no specific curriculum exists for black studies majors. The council is developing guidelines for a definite and nationwide program.

Speakers at the conference include Douglas Davidson, former director of black studies at Amherst College, Boston, Mass., and nationally known leaders and scholars in black studies and several University faculty members.

The Afro-American Studies and Research Program is also presenting an art exhibit which started at 4 p.m. Friday and is on display through Dec. 1.

Prints by five internationally known black artists can be viewed from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday at the Afro-American Studies Building, 1204 W. Oregon St., Urbana. All exhibits are for sale.

The Women's Studies Program is co-sponsoring a workshop with the Afro-American Studies and Research Program on "Racism and Women's Studies: Materials for Black Women's Studies," from 9 a.m. to noon Monday in 269 Illini Union.

Eleanor Smith, black studies scholar from the University of Cincinnati, will conduct the program, which is designed for those who teach or are involved in women's studies.

According to Beth Stafford, coordinator of the workshop, the purpose of the event is to raise people's consciousness of black history. "Women's studies is currently being taught as if all events take place in a white woman's world," Stafford said. "Actually, white women are a minority in the world."

Smith will present pieces of literature which are racist and analyze them. She will also present current literature which is acceptable for teaching an objective women's studies class, Stafford said.

The workshop is the first in a planned series on minorities by the racism sub-committee in women's studies.

Black columnist urges young to battle racist political myths

by J. Kathleen Curry

Young blacks should take the opportunity to dispel traditional—but erroneous—beliefs about the black community, says Vernon Jarrett, a black columnist for the Chicago Sun-Times.

Jarrett, who had been a columnist for The Chicago Tribune until recently, said Tuesday in a campus forum that people generally have believed that blacks are so emotional that they "can become mesmerized into causes, that we don't have to think... that we have to be overwhelmed."

That belief is not true, Jarrett told a group of predominantly black students in his speech about common myths of black leadership sponsored by the Afro-American Studies and Research Program.

Jarrett's columns generally focus on racial issues.

Jarrett said it is wrongly assumed that a black leader "must not only have charisma. He or she must be pretty. They must be dramatic and have a lot of other qualities in order to capture the masses. As if we had to be captured... as if someone had to come in from the outside and say, 'look you're unemployed.'"

"It's an insult to me the way we blacks have been defined and the way we permit other people to define us," Jarrett said.

Harold Washington's election as mayor of Chicago is proof that real black leadership works at the grass-

roots level and not merely by the efforts of one or two "charismatic" leaders, Jarrett said.

Washington was not such a charismatic leader, Jarrett said, and did not run for mayor on his own initiative. "Washington was pushed into running for mayor. I don't have to guess about it; I was one of the pushers," Jarrett said.

Washington refused to run until 50,000 new voters were registered in Chicago to ensure a large black voter turnout, Jarrett said. Several independent grass-roots level voter registration drives brought in 250,000 new voters, he said.

The presidential candidacy of the Rev. Jesse Jackson would only add to the myths about black leadership, Jarrett said.

Jarrett said Jackson probably could not win. His candidacy would only support white beliefs that blacks will not vote unless there is a black candidate, he said.

Jarrett aimed a rhetorical question to Jackson: "You mean to insult me to say you have to have a fictitious campaign to get people that are unemployed to register to vote?"

Jarrett's speech was the first in a series of six lectures on black Chicago leadership sponsored by the Afro-American Studies and Research Program. Last year, Washington was the first speaker in a similar lecture series.

Black History Month to include speeches, honorary receptions

by Kathie Henschler

Two University organizations are planning speeches and other programs to commemorate Black History Month.

The Afro-American Studies and Research Program is sponsoring a lecture series that starts Monday. U.S. Rep. Charles Hayes, D-Ill., the first labor leader elected to Congress, will speak on the growing political power of Chicago blacks at 7:30 p.m. in 407 Lewis Faculty Center.

Journalist Lu Palmer and Warren Bacon, vice president of Inland Steel and member of the Illinois Board of Higher Education, will speak later this month.

Rep. Hayes and Chicago artist/photographer Bill "Fundi" Abernathy will be honored at a reception at 4 p.m. Monday in the program's offices, 1204 W. Oregon St., Urbana. Abernathy documents everyday

black culture in his photographs, which will be displayed until March 30.

Another University group, the Afro-American Cultural Program, will sponsor a voter-registration drive from 1 to 5 p.m., Feb. 1-3 to commemorate the opening of Black History Month. It will be held at 708 S. Mathews, Urbana.

Carter Woodson founded Negro History Week in 1926, according to Gerald McWorter, director of the studies and research program. It was planned to coincide with the week that includes President Lincoln's birthday and was intended to pay special tribute to black achievers, he said.

Bruce Nesbitt, director of the cultural program, said that in the 1960s Negro History Week became Black History Month.

"After the 1960s, it seemed proper to expand this recognition to the whole month of February," he said.