

# COLUMBIA SPECTATOR ARCHIVE

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## Griffin speaks to 400 about black education

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and Elizabeth Reza

Although the event divided the campus and revealed rifts between student groups for the past week and a half, the appearance of Richard Griffin, "Professor Griff" of the rap group Public Enemy, occurred last night in a packed Altschul Auditorium without major incident.

Increased security personnel and four checkpoints within the School of International Affairs Building limited contact between opposing sides to shouting and an exchange of chants outside the building.

Griffin, closely surrounded by members of group known as the Last Asiatic Disciples, spoke to the racially mixed audience that included about 35 administrators.

Griffin called on blacks to re-educate themselves with a separate Afro-centric curriculum to correctly define their future.

"We need to be re-educated with the knowledge of self. What are you going to do with a B.A. or a Ph.D. without knowledge of self?" Griffin asked.

Griffin's appearance on campus as a Black History Month lecturer sparked campus controversy, due to anti-Semitic statements attributed to

him in an interview published on May 22, 1989 in the Washington Times. The Board of Managers (BOM), an umbrella funding group, withdrew \$1,000 which it had allocated to the Black Students Organization (BSO) for a lecture by Maya Angelou to be held on Feb. 27, to protest the BSO's invitation of Griff.

In addition, the Council of Jewish Organizations (CJO) published a petition with about 1,200 signatures to express "outrage" at Griff's appearance on campus. The CJO also helped organize a rally last night to protest hatred and racism.

At the opening of his speech, Griffin announced he would not address charges of anti-Semitism, but instead speak as planned about education for blacks in the year 2000. He added, however, that if a question about the issue arose during the question and answer period, he would answer it. But none did.

"What I said of truth, I'll stand by that. I'm not apologizing to anyone for the truth," Griff said. "I'm not one of those scared handkerchief-

head Negroes.

However, Mary Pattilo, CC '91, a BSO member who co-moderated the lecture, said any questions not pertaining to the actual content of the speech would be deemed irrelevant and have to be rephrased.

Griffin questioned the ability of Columbia's curriculum to provide blacks with an adequate education for the next century.

"Who makes the curriculum for Columbia University? You don't, do you? Who are the designers of the curriculum that you follow, that you have to pay money for?" Griffin asked.

The American educational system is designed to support a supremacist white elite government and therefore "suppresses the nature of the black man," Griffin said.

Another example of how the American government lies to blacks is the AIDS epidemic, according to Griffin, who said, that it is the result of a medical experiment in which the virus was injected into Africans. The physicians then blamed monkeys for spreading the disease when it was really a planned experiment, Griffin claimed.

"AIDS is a man-made disease," he said, adding that "condoms don't work" in preventing the spread of the virus.

When a student questioned Griffin about the problems of integration and cooperation between blacks and whites, Griffin advocated a separate educational, economic, and social

system for blacks.

“As far as this integrating stuff, nah, it won’t work. We have to be separate,” Griffin said. “As long as you’re connected with your slavemaster, it won’t do you no good. The integration thing will not work at all because we tried that.”

Griffin’s speech was preceded by a lecture by Lisa Williamson, a community activist, who addressed charges of Griffin’s anti-Semitism. She compared anti-Semitism to accusations of communism during the McCarthy Era.

“This issue of anti-Semitism represents the new McCarthyism for the ’90s and the year 2000,” Williamson said. “This witch-hunt against the black man. . . has got to stop because the tactic is old.”

The decision of BOM to withdraw funds from Black History Month demonstrates whites’ use of economic power to control blacks, Williamson said.

“If you take away your pittance for a celebration that should occur year ’round because we are your historical mothers and fathers, you can keep it. You can keep it, and you can choke on it,” Williamson said.

Williamson also responded to questions from the audience, telling blacks they would have to work twice as hard as whites to educate themselves in the American educational system.

BSO Parliamentarian Rebecca Grant,

CC '91, issued a disclaimer at the end of the lecture, saying that the opinions expressed by Griffin were not necessarily those held by the BSO.

Although the auditorium seats 400, only 90 tickets were made available to CUID holders at the Ferris Booth Hall ticket office, according to Director of Student Activities Chuck Price.

BSO members had first priority to purchase the tickets, according to BSO Political Chair Hector Carter, CC '91, and the remaining tickets were made available to any CUID holder for \$3.

The way a club distributes tickets to an event that it sponsors is entirely up to the organization and its funding group, according to Price.

The School of International Affairs Building, where Altschul Auditorium is located, was heavily guarded by Columbia Security, police officers from the 26th precinct, BSO members, and employees of an airline security company, according to Director of Security Dominick Moro.

People attending the lecture had to pass through four check-points. At each point, either security personnel or BSO members checked for valid CUIDs and tickets.

Because anonymous threats were made against members of BSO, everyone who entered the lecture had to undergo a metal detector search by personnel from the airline security company, Moro said.

No recording devices or cameras were allowed into the lecture at Griffin's request, Carter said.

"We didn't want to make a big media scene out of it. It was for BSO and the Columbia community," Carter said.

Inside the auditorium, audience members, who had been issued a copy of the University statutes that prohibit shouting in University lectures, stayed quiet. No attempts were made to heckle Griffin or to question him about the anti-Semitic remarks he allegedly made.

Outside the building on 118th Street, however, opposing groups engaged in shouting matches and chanting.

The Jewish Defense Organization (JDO), a self-defined "militant" group led by Mordechai Levy, yelled "Black rights, yes; bigotry, no" and "Jews united will never be defeated."

CJO member Judith Krinitz, GS/JTS '90, said, "This man [Levy] does not reflect the Jews on this campus. Levy is part of the JDO. It is an organization that, in my opinion, perpetuates hatred and racism even though he says he's not. [Levy] is not part of the CJO. I want to make it clear that he's not part of this campus at all."

Members of the New Alliance Party were also present, chanting "No more Zionists, no more lies. Black leadership is on the rise."

**Additional reporting by Jean Lee.**