

5-2022

Finding Human Rights in Higher Education: A History of Federal Financial Aid and Discrimination in the United States

Andrew J. Toritto
College of the Holy Cross

Follow this and additional works at: <https://crossworks.holycross.edu/oflifeandhistory>



Part of the [African American Studies Commons](#), [Higher Education Commons](#), and the [History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Toritto, Andrew J. (2022) "Finding Human Rights in Higher Education: A History of Federal Financial Aid and Discrimination in the United States," *Of Life and History*. Vol. 3, Article 4.
Available at: <https://crossworks.holycross.edu/oflifeandhistory/vol3/iss1/4>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by CrossWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Of Life and History* by an authorized editor of CrossWorks.

Finding Human Rights in Higher Education: A History of Federal Financial Aid and Discrimination in the United States

Andrew Toritto '20

I. Introduction

On June 1, 1947, a group of two hundred delegates from the United Negro and Allied Veterans of America gathered in New York City to discuss the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, better known as the G.I. Bill of Rights. However, they were not there to praise the G.I. Bill, which is regarded as one of the most economically transformative legislation in United States history. They had gathered, instead, to condemn Veteran Administration's racist and discriminatory policy in the South that prevented African American veterans from securing their federal benefits. The convention included delegates from twenty States, all of whom had gathered to protest the South's discriminatory administration of G.I. Bill benefits. Veterans who had fought for freedom abroad during World War II expected low-interest mortgages and farm loans, unemployment benefits, and educational benefits for higher education from the Federal Government upon returning home. But they quickly realized that the same racism that existed before the war prevented many of them from receiving those benefits. The delegates elected to send a committee to Washington, D.C. that would ask the federal government to investigate the myriad of discriminations against African American veterans. Despite high hopes, little came out of the latter effort. A *New York Times* article that covered the convention aptly captured the sentiment of the delegated in its title, "Negro GI's in the South Seen Shorn of Rights."¹

The G.I. Bill was the first piece of federal financial aid legislation for higher education. Together with the National Defense Education Act of 1958 (NDEA) and the Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA), these three pieces of legislation laid the foundations to America's contemporary system of federal student aid for higher education. The 1944 G.I. Bill offered educational grants to honorably discharged veterans that could be used in any college or university.² The NDEA supported educational loans however was only available to citizens studying mathematics, engineering, science, or a critical foreign language. The program offered partial loan forgiveness for those teaching full time at a public elementary or secondary school.³ The HEA authorized grants, loans and work-study program was open to everyone based on financial need. Historians have written extensively on the exclusion of the African American veterans from educational benefits of the G.I. Bill. This essay asks how did the African-American fare vis-à-vis the other two legislations? I argue that throughout the history of federal financial aid in America, African Americans were given unequal access to financial aid until the Higher Education Act of 1965 was passed. Further, I argue that this constituted a de facto rights violation, given the increasing importance of higher education to socioeconomic status and mobility throughout the twentieth century.

The first section of this paper focuses on the G.I. Bill to examine how African Americans were often denied the benefits. It will follow the decisions made in Congress, which effectively upheld segregation laws in the South and allowed States to continue treating blacks as second-class citizens. I will discuss exclusionary quotas at Northern and Western colleges and universities, which inhibited many Black veterans from using the educational benefits. The second section will look at the NDEA and the debates on segregation in Congress. Ultimately, anti-segregation measures failed to be added to the bill, and federal aid continued to function within the framework of segregation and discrimination. The third section will discuss the broadening of federal student aid to all low-income students with the goals of equal opportunity and access driving the change. The conclusion will discuss why we should think of higher education within a framework of human rights.

While there has been ample attention paid to the G.I. Bill its discriminatory aspects, scholars have not examined the larger history of federal financial aid, namely the NDEA and HEA, as they effected African American students. Drawing on previous scholarship on the G.I. Bill as well as new sources from the 1950s and 1960s, I will integrate the role of the NDEA and HEA to the story. But in order to understand these two pieces of legislation and their wider impact on African Americans, it is important to first understand the G.I. Bill and its unequal benefits.

Hillary Herbold argued that the intent of G.I. Bill was to disadvantage blacks, to uphold segregation thereby ensuring their second-class status. She highlighted the role of Southern Democrats in Congress, who played key role in constructing the bill's discriminatory provisions. Herbold also noted the role of the Veterans Administration (VA) in withholding benefits from Black veterans. Because the bill tolerated segregation laws in the South, Black veterans found themselves limited to historically black colleges and universities. The latter did not have equal access to resources compared to white universities. More broadly, she linked the G.I. Bill to the rise of the new middle class, from which the Blacks were largely excluded.⁴ David H. Onkst, building on Herbold's work, closely examined the distribution of G.I. Bill benefits in the South. He argued that the majority Black veterans returning to the South after World War II did not receive the same G.I. Bill benefits as whites. Based on these findings, Onkst concluded that the early post-war era did not represent a transformative moment for black veterans.⁵

Ira Katznelson, examining affirmative action in the twentieth century, delved into racial inequality through social policy. While the scope of his book is much larger, he spent a significant portion of his work focusing on G. I. Bill and its outcomes for African Americans. Similar to Herbold and Onkst, Katznelson argued that as the G.I. Bill was carried out on the state level, States and individual institutions were able to exclude the Blacks from accessing its benefits. Katznelson further contended that the framers of the legislation allowed for segregation and discrimination in the Bill.⁶

Edward Humes, differing slightly from Herbold and Katznelson on the G.I. Bill's original intentions, asserts that the bill was race-neutral. He particular examined the language of the bill, and

found that it did not explicitly advocate discrimination. Like Onkst, Herbold and Katznelson, however, he agreed that the actual implementation of the bill was discriminatory, especially in the Jim Crow South, but also at colleges in the North. He noted that the G.I. Bill transformed the lives of some Black veterans, who later became active in the Civil Rights movement. But the vast majority of Black veterans did not have the same experience.⁷

Not all scholars agree that the G.I. Bill was discriminatory and exclusionary toward Black veterans. Ronald Roach argued that the G.I. Bill was transformative for Black veterans, contributing to the emergence of Black middle class as well as the future leaders of the Civil Rights movement. He also underscored the increased enrollment in Black colleges as well as desegregated Northern and Western colleges.⁸ In a similar vein, Reginald Wilson called the G.I. Bill “triumphant” for the Black community, arguing that it gave African Americans more access to higher education than ever before. He also highlighted how it increased the total amount of Black enrolled in higher education. Wilson went so far as to claim that a “black bourgeoisie” emerged as a result of the G.I. Bill.⁸ While Roach and Wilson’s arguments of the G.I. Bill increasing Black enrollment in higher education and helping many Black veterans attain the middle class have some merit, the assertion that the Bill was transformative is questionable. It is a historical fact that Whites veterans disproportionately benefited from it compared to Blacks.

While the literature on the G.I. Bill’s exclusionary effects on African Americans is abundant, there is little to no scholarship addressing the role or effect of the NDEA on Black Americans. The latter primarily established loans for students in STEM fields and foreign languages. Barbara Barksdale Clowse’s work sheds interesting light on legislative history particularly on the role segregation played during the debates and deliberation on the NDEA in Congress. While her central argument focuses on the factors leading to the passage of the NDEA (which were informed by the Cold War anxiety following the successful launch of *Sputnik* by the Soviet Union), she does discuss liberal Democrats’ ongoing efforts to attach anti-segregation riders to the bill. In years prior to 1958, this had resulted in the death of education funding bills. In 1958, this posed a major threat to the passing of the NDEA due to a number of segregationists who opposed it in Congress.⁹

While there is not much scholarship on how the HEA affected the black community, specifically in regard to federal financial aid, Christopher Loss and Matthew Fuller have examined the larger history of finance in America. Loss, writing about the changing federal role in higher education, argued that the Federal Government turned to higher education as an “intermediary” in the twentieth century to quell a political culture afraid of big government. The result, he posited, was social and political change in the form of a new conception of democratic citizenship, an educated citizenry, and the importance of diversity.¹⁰ Fuller, taking a slightly different approach, argued that financial aid evolved from locally based, and mostly philanthropic efforts in the colonial era, to a complex national system of aid that responded to the needs of higher education, society, and political priorities.¹¹ While

these works help us gain a greater understanding of the history of financial aid, neither address African Americans and federal financial aid adequately. They did not pay enough attention to the impact, or lack thereof, of the G.I. Bill on Black veterans. Similarly, they did not sufficiently call attention to the role segregation played in financial aid legislation. And while Loss did note the transformative impact of the HEA for African Americans, Fuller neglected to do so.

Scholars have thus overlooked the history of federal financial aid as it relates to African Americans. While there is a significant scholarship on Black Americans and the G.I. Bill, similarly focused work on NDEA and the HEA are hard to come by. No single work has tied the issue of exclusionary federal higher education policies to rights violations. My aim in this paper is to help fill that void.

II. The G.I. Bill of Rights: Rights for Which Veterans?

The G.I. Bill emerged in a political climate of anxiety of veterans returning to civilian life. Government officials feared that eight to nine million unemployed veterans were a recipe for riots and political instability. To avoid that President Franklin Roosevelt and Congress passed the G.I. Bill.¹² The G.I. Bill sought to avoid future catastrophe, namely disgruntled veterans potentially leading to social unrest. Given these motivations, it is not difficult to understand why more liberal Democrats, like FDR, were willing to compromise with Dixiecrats on racial issues.

The language in the 1944 G.I. Bill did not condone racial discrimination. However, the bill empowered the state governments in administering the G.I. Bill benefits. It did not include a nondiscrimination clause to be eligible for federal funding. Therefore, while not explicitly subscribing to discriminatory practices, the G.I. Bill overlooked existing racial discrimination and segregation in the South.

From the early stages of crafting the G.I. Bill, the principles of decentralized control of the fund and segregation were of utmost significance to key decision makers. The American Legion was instrumental in lobbying for the G.I. Bill advocated that the state be granted full control in distributing the benefits.¹³ Likewise, some of the key outspoken segregationists of the time ensured that the states retained the primary power in disbursing the funds from the bill. Mississippi Representative John Rankin, the Chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee and the chief sponsor of the House G.I. Bill stated in a letter to General Frank Hines that "A definite line should be drawn in the schooling on the matter of race segregation."¹⁴ He worked tirelessly to ensure that the language of decentralization made it to the bill. He also sought for the bill to allow little to no federal oversight.¹⁵ Other segregationists worked closely with the American Legion to prevent the bill "from becoming a wedge for federalization...from social workers and planners in the Washington bureaus."¹⁶ Clearly, in the minds of the American Legion and segregationists, any federal oversight could disrupt the existing system of segregation. As such, they sought to vest as much power as possible in the States.

The final the G.I. Bill allowed for States to control distribution of the educational benefits. For example, in Mississippi the State Department of Education denied African American veterans their G.I. Bill educational benefits for vocational schools. W.A. Bender, an African American minister from Mississippi, outlined this blatant discrimination in a letter to Congress. Governors of Southern States appointed State committees to control the distribution of benefits with the goal of denying black veterans their benefits.¹⁷ Moreover, Rankin and his segregationist colleagues had succeeded. The bill granted the State enough power to deny African American veterans their benefits. As a result, a large number of black veterans returned from war only to be denied their educational benefits at the State level.

However, black veterans were not completely barred from receiving a higher education in the South. But their only choice was to attend all-black colleges, as Jim Crow laws prohibited Blacks from attending white colleges. So even in the rare cases when African American veterans received their G.I. Bill benefits in the South, they found themselves limited to attending Black only institutions. Under the guise of the “separate but equal” doctrine, Black veterans were denied access to what was usually considered better quality education at white Southern institutions.

The “separate but equal” doctrine has repeatedly been debunked by historians. This very much holds true for the state of black education in the Jim Crow South. As the prolific African American scholar Charles H. Thompson wrote in 1945, “The overwhelming majority of Negroes obtain their higher and professional education in segregated schools...Thus, whether we like it or not, the problem of higher and professional education for Negroes is a problem of the Negro separate school with all the disadvantages which that connotes.” He decried the poor quality of black colleges in the South: “Not a single one of these institutions offers work that is even substantially equal to that offered in the corresponding state institutions for whites...and there is nothing to indicate that they will or can ever do so.”¹⁸ To make matters worse, because of the additional demand put on the system by the influx of students from the G.I. Bill, Southern black schools found their educational resources spread increasingly thin.¹⁹ In 1947, student to faculty ratios exceeded 20 to 1 in black only colleges and under five percent of black colleges were accredited by the Association of American Universities.²⁰ Not only did segregation force African Americans to attend separate colleges from whites, but it also left black students with inferior quality of education.

This stark inequality in education caught the attention of the Federal Government and the executive branch. One of the earliest government reports called for an infusion of large federal funds into higher education. Sanctioned by President Harry Truman, the *Higher Education for Democracy Report* (also known as “Zook report,” named after its chief author) identified segregation as a key roadblock to quality education for the Blacks. The report noted that segregated black colleges and universities were usually “inferior” to white institutions. It also found that black schools usually suffered from underfunding, were housed in decrepit or inadequate facilities, employed underqualified teachers, and

lacked adequate library materials.²¹ This led Zook commission to conclude that “the separate and equal principle has nowhere been fully honored...the consequences of segregation are always the same, and always adverse to the Negro citizen.”²² But enacting change on this front, especially with the Southern Democratic bloc in Congress, was an entirely different feat.

While segregation barred African American veterans from taking full advantage of their G.I. Bill benefits in the South, in the North the Black veterans faced exclusionary quotas at predominantly white colleges and universities. According to Thompson, black enrollment in higher education in the North and West never exceeded five thousand students during the late 1940s.²³ Similarly, President Truman’s Committee on Civil Rights commenting on the unambiguous use of quotas at many institutions noted:

It is clear there is much discrimination, based on prejudice, in admission of students to private colleges, vocational schools, and graduate schools... Application blanks of many American colleges and universities include questions pertaining to the candidate’s racial origin, religious preference, parents’ birthplace etc. In many of our northern educational institutions enrollment of Jewish students seems never to exceed certain fixed points and there is never more than a token enrollment of Negroes.²⁴

According to the Zook report, “Many colleges and universities... maintain a selective quota system for admission... particularly to Negroes and Jews.”²⁵ The North found its own system to discriminate against the blacks. Whereas in the South black students were loudly denied rights through the legal system, in the North they were more quietly shunted into second-class status.

By 1946 it was clear that Black veterans did not receive the same educational benefits as white veterans. One *Pittsburgh Courier* article noted that “the veterans program had completely failed veterans of minority races,” as termed it “systematic denial of rights under the GI Bill.”²⁶ Another 1947 commentary remarked that it was “as though the GI Bill has been earmarked ‘For White Veterans Only.’”²⁷ While the G.I. Bill did not explicitly enumerate the denial of benefits to African American veterans, it certainly allowed for States and individual institutions to do as they please. In effect, the decentralized nature of the bill and the failure to include any nondiscriminatory measures allowed for this inequality to continue. In many ways, the G.I. Bill reflected the troubling sentiment of society-at-large in the 1940s: blacks were secondary citizens, and white supremacy was the law of the land.

III. The National Defense Education Act: Education for National Security, Not Equality

The G.I. Bill marked the first instance of federal student aid for higher education, albeit only for the veterans. The second instance of federal financial aid in the U.S. was the National Defense Education

Act of 1958 (NDEA). Spurred to action by the successful Soviet launch of *Sputnik*, lawmakers moved to ensure the United States did not fall behind the Soviet Union in science, technology, and defense. But whereas the G.I. Bill established grants for returning veterans, the NDEA only offered loans. And while the G.I. Bill funding could be used for any area of study, the NDEA limited to only “critical defense fields,” such as mathematics, science, engineering, and foreign languages. However, both bills had a common denominator and that both failed to allow equal access for African Americans.

One important difference between the two bills is there was a stronger effort to end segregation in 1958 compared to in 1944. Indeed, in the 14 years between these bills, the Supreme Court had ruled against racial segregation in public schools in the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* case. In addition, the nascent Civil Rights movement had begun to grow stronger. These new developments informed the Congressional debates on NDEA. At the heart of those debates was whether federal legislation should force schools to comply with the *Brown v. Board* decision. New York Representative Adam Clayton Powell, repeatedly attached, or threatened to attach, anti-segregation riders to education bills.

School construction bill died on the floor of the Congress two years ago when Powell added similar anti-segregation provisions. Powell and liberal Democrats in the House again proposed an anti-segregation rider amendment to the NDEA.²⁸ The *New York Times* called this a “possible snag in the plan,” and added “this would mean another fight over limiting grants to districts complying with the Supreme Court school integration decision of 1954.” The *Times* concluded that “such a fight could kill the entire bill.”²⁹

Many members of Congress wanted to avoid the question of integration in the NDEA legislation. Chief among these were Alabama Senator Lister Hill, Alabama Representative Carl Elliot (who both sponsored the bill in their respective chambers) and President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Hill and Elliot, both of whom were Southern Democrats, dreaded the issue of integration. As such, they hoped to avoid the question of integration by ensuring that “Federal funds would go mostly to individuals for scholarships.”³⁰ In a strikingly similar repeat to the G.I. Bill, sponsors of the NDEA intended the bill to function within the existing system of segregation.

President Eisenhower who was a proponent of the decentralized educational model believed that the issue of segregation should be sidestepped on this particular bill. “When you come down to it,” Eisenhower stated, “it gets to this point: we believe fundamentally the educational process should be carried on in the locality. We don’t want any more Federal interference or control or participation than is necessary.”³¹ On the topic of segregation and the NDEA, Eisenhower stated: “One thing in this year’s proposal was that I had great hope that by taking a thing functionally the segregation idea would not come into it at all, we could go ahead with a job and not worry about peoples—the color of their skin or anything else.”³² While supporting the bill as an “emergency” measure only, Eisenhower made it clear that he believed education should be decentralized.

When the NDEA finally passed through Congress, lawmakers were able to avoid the question of segregation. However, the international political consideration, particularly the fear of being surpassed by the Soviet Union tipped the scale in favor of federal aid to education. On March 9, 1958, the *New York Times* reported that “many insist that the launching of the Russian satellites had made a difference and that many who opposed the construction bill last year will now vote for education aid stressing science.”³³ Indeed, Hill and Elliot had both framed the bill as an issue of “national survival” where “the ability of this country to survive in a world where freedom is imperiled may depend largely upon the strength of American education.”³⁴ This proved to be the right strategy as the public shared the fear of falling behind the Soviets. A *Life Magazine* poll published on March 3, 1958 found that 39 percent of Americans thought Russia offered better education in science and mathematics compared to only 28 percent who found the United States superior in those subjects. It also concluded that two-thirds of U.S. graduates believed the Soviets were ahead in science and math. In a way, “Sputnik has made millions aware of defects in U.S. institutions and U.S. concepts of life,” and now millions of Americans favor “state or federal aid for schools, federal scholarships, government direction and financing of scientific enterprise in general.”³⁵

These larger concerns for national security and global inter-state rivalry surrounding the passage of the NDEA overshadowed the question of segregation. In the end, Powell could not garner enough support in the House to attach an anti-segregation rider to the bill.³⁶ Hill and Elliot were able to muster enough support on both sides of the aisle. As a result, the conditions that afflicted the discriminatory practices within the G.I. Bill also remained in NDEA. Even after the landmark *Brown* case, Congress could not agree on legislation to enforce integration. In failing to do so, it widened the wealth gap between whites and blacks.³⁷

IV. The Higher Education Act: Civil Rights for Educational Opportunity

The Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA) was the first bill truly aimed at equalizing educational opportunity in higher education for all young people, but especially black Americans. In a relatively short period of time, Congress was able to shift their educational policy agenda much further to the left. Whereas in 1958 anti-segregation riders upheld an anti-communism bill, in 1965 fighting poverty and inequality were the driving forces behind the passage of HEA. After the landslide victory of Lyndon B. Johnson in the 1964 presidential election, along with the strong Democratic majority in Congress, liberal advocates of equity in education finally had the support to pass comprehensive legislation on higher education. In addition, the 1964 Civil Rights Act also helped pave the way for the HEA, as the Federal Government finally granted black people full citizenship. Unlike the previous two bills, the HEA proved transformative for the African American community in higher education.

When LBJ offered the idea of aiding students through federal funds to Congress, he “proposed that we declare a national goal of *Full Educational Opportunity*. Every child must be encouraged to get as

much education as he has the ability to take.” He remarked that “higher education is no longer a luxury, but a necessity.”³⁸ While not explicitly stating it, LBJ certainly sought to frame higher education within the language of rights. To LBJ, it was simply not acceptable anymore to allow poor students and students of color to fail to attain a higher education due to lack of funds or discrimination. This was quite remarkable coming from LBJ given his voting history on civil rights legislation. From the beginning of his tenure in the House in 1937 and up until 1957 when he was the Senate Majority Leader, LBJ had never voted for civil rights legislation. One biographer even called him an “active member” of the Southern civil rights bloc, a group which had successfully killed many civil rights legislations in the first half of the twentieth century.³⁹ It appears that the strength of the Civil Rights movement had a profound impact on LBJ. He did not only sign the HEA into law, but also the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Known as a savvy politician, LBJ likely saw the changing tide on civil rights and decided it was politically expedient to enact them. In the 1972 reauthorization of the HEA, Claiborne Pell (whom the Pell Grant is now named after) stated that he intended to make college “a matter of right...a G.I. Bill for everybody.”⁴⁰ Here, Pell explicitly expressed his goal of making higher education a right for those who seek it. Indeed, after years of suppressing the African American community, lawmakers, despite whether their motivations were genuine or not, began to think about higher education in terms of rights.

The HEA was in many ways transformative for African Americans. In 1964, the Federal Government estimated that out of the 2.7 million high school graduates, only 1.4 million entered college. Of the 1.3 million who did not enroll in higher education, half were either black or low-income students and did not enroll because of a lack of adequate funds and/or academic preparation.⁴¹ The HEA doubled the Federal Government’s budget for higher education and by 1975, 1.5 million college students (out of 11 million total), received either a direct loan, an Educational Opportunity Grant, or work-study funding, while another million received federally guaranteed student loans from a bank or credit union. Between 1968 and 1978, Black student enrollment in higher education tripled.⁴²

Not only did the HEA provide financial aid for needy students, it also led to new and more inclusive recruitment practices, such as summer programs aimed at low income and minority students and established aid for traditionally black colleges. Title IV of the HEA established funds for compensatory, counseling, and student recruitment programs, all of which were aimed at helping bright but poor students prepare for and adjust in college.⁴³ It also established funding for Upward Bound, a college preparatory program intended to help black and/or poor students attend college.⁴⁴ Even Ivy League schools began to adjust their admission practices away from geographic diversity to “student diversity,” meaning diversity in the socioeconomic backgrounds of students.⁴⁵ Historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) also benefited from the HEA, as Title V was intended to benefit the nation’s 123 HBCUs, which enrolled about 60 percent of the black college students in the U.S.⁴⁶ After years of discrimination and segregation, the HEA sought to equalize higher educational access and opportunity

for black Americans. Unlike the G.I. Bill and the NDEA, the HEA was specifically charged with addressing racial and economic disparities.⁴⁷

V. Conclusion: Why Should We View Higher Education as a Human Right?

The Higher Education Act was certainly a triumph for the African American community. However, the HEA did not solidify higher education as a human right in America. But what would higher education even look like as a human right? This would mean that undergraduate and graduate school would be affordable for all those who are qualified and meet the criteria of college or university admission. There would be no discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, gender orientation, religion, or class in admission. To help remedy historical injustices, such as the long history of segregation and discrimination in higher education, affirmative action policies would be in place to ensure that bright students of color are placed on a level playing field with white students as well. For those students unable to gain admission to traditional four-year colleges, a robust system of community colleges would exist where the main admission criterion is a high school diploma. But if higher education is truly going to be a human right, primary and secondary schools must also provide more equitable, higher-quality education for their students to ensure they are prepared for the rigors of higher education. On both the higher education and primary/secondary education fronts, this would require a larger investment by the federal government. For primary and secondary education, this would mean an allocation of funds to poorer districts to help them catch up with wealthier districts. For higher education, this would mean an enhanced system of financial aid —through a combination of federal grants, loans, and work-study—for individual students to cover the entire cost of school.

When discussing higher education as a human right, it is important to clarify how higher education differs from other human rights. Unlike the rights to life, liberty, and freedom from slavery and torture, for example, higher education should only be a right for those who seek it. In other words, individuals should not be forced to receive a higher education, as other viable professional paths do exist, but they should receive an opportunity for higher education if they choose to pursue it.

But why should higher education qualify as a human right in the first place? The United Nations already recognized basic education as a human right in Article 26 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. However, *higher* education is not recognized as a right.⁴⁸ But in a changing world where technology, globalization, and globalized markets are fundamentally altering how people and society function, it appears as though the basic skills that come with only a primary education do not always suffice in providing individuals a life of dignity. Studies have shown that individuals with undergraduate degrees on average earn \$1 million more throughout their lifetime compared to those with only high school diplomas in the United States.⁴⁹ Evidently, an undergraduate degree is an economically transformative degree. But, as we have seen, access to higher education and this transformative degree has not been equally available throughout the history of the United States, never mind the entire world.

It seems obvious that if there are more individuals with higher education, more people will live with dignity. Therefore, while it is a lofty goal, higher education should be viewed as a human right, and we should strive to make it one.

Footnotes:

¹“Negro G.I.’s in South Seen Shorn of Rights,” *The New York Times*, June 2, 1947, 16., <https://search-proquest-com.holycross.idm.oclc.org/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/107939527/CCBB4BD153174CE9PQ/14?accountid=11456> (Accessed November 26, 2019).

²“The G.I. Bill of Rights” (Army Times, Daily News Building, Washington 5, D.C., June 22, 1944), https://www.nationalww2museum.org/sites/default/files/2017-07/gi-bill-of-rights_0.pdf (Accessed November 20, 2019).

³National Defense Education Act of 1958 (NDEA), Pub. L. No. 85-864, 72 Stat. 1580, http://www.edu.uoulu.fi/tohtorikoulutus/jarjestettava_opetus/Troehler/NDEA_1958.pdf (Accessed November 20, 2019). Loan recipients could receive loan forgiveness not exceeding 50% of their existing loan balance in increments of 10% per year upon the start of their employment at a public elementary or secondary school.

⁴Hillary Herbold, “Never a Level Playing Field: Blacks and the GI Bill,” *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 104, no. 6 (1994-1995), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/2962479.pdf> (Accessed October 18, 2019).

⁵David H. Onkst, “‘First a Negro...Incidentally a Veteran’: Black World War Two Veterans and the G.I. Bill of Rights in the Deep South, 1944-1948,” *Journal of Social History*, 518-519, no. 31 (1998) <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/holycross.idm.oclc.org/eds/detail/detail?vid=2&sid=029cfad6-c2b7-4468-9924-5bdb8eaa319f%40pdc-v-sessmgr02&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmUmc2NvcGU9c2l0ZQ%3d%3d#db=edsgov&AN=edsgcl.20574138> (Accessed October 20, 2019).

⁶Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth Century America*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005), 122-123.

⁷Edward Humes, “How the GI Bill Shunted Blacks Into Vocational Training,” *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 93-94, no. 53 (2006) <https://search.proquest.com/docview/195551781/fulltext/2F475CECFF8449D9PQ/1?accountid=11456> (Accessed October 20, 2019).

⁸Ronald Roach, “From Combat to Campus: GI Bill Gave a Generation of African Americans an Opportunity to Pursue the American Dream,” *Black Issues in Higher Education*, 26, no. 14 (1997) <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=2&sid=b2c8df90-7868-4c3b-a251-89780e5d201f%40pdc-v-sessmgr05&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmUmc2NvcGU9c2l0ZQ%3d%3d#AN=edsgcl.20031731&db=edsgao>, (Accessed October 20, 2019).

⁹Reginald Wilson, “GI Bill Expands Access for African Americans,” *Educational Record*, 32, no. 75 (1994) <https://search.proquest.com/docview/225304823?accountid=11456> (Accessed October 20, 2019).

¹⁰Barbara Barksdale Clowse, *Brainpower for the Cold War: The Sputnik Crisis and the National Defense Education Act of 1958*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981), 2-3, 116-121.

¹¹Christopher P. Loss, *Between, Citizens and the States: The Politics of American Higher Education in the 20th Century*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 21-23, 26. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/holycrosscollege-ebooks/detail.action?docID=802235> (Accessed November 3, 2019.)

¹²Matthew B Fuller, “A History of Financial Aid to Students,” *Journal of Student Financial Aid* 44, no. 1 (2014): 42, 49-53, <https://ir.library.louisville.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1078&context=jsfa> (Accessed November 3, 2019).

¹³ Keith W. Olson, "The G. I. Bill and Higher Education: Success and Surprise," *American Quarterly* 25, no. 5 (1973): 597-600, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2711698?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents (Accessed December 16, 2019).

¹⁴ Katznelson, 124.

¹⁵ Katznelson, 127.

¹⁶ Katznelson, 127.

¹⁷ Katznelson, 126.

¹⁸ Katznelson, 129.

¹⁹ Charles H. Thompson, "Editorial Comments: Some Critical Aspects of the Problem of the Higher and Professional Education for Negroes," *Journal of Negro Education*, 509, no. 14 (Autumn 1945), https://www.jstor.org/stable/2966023?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents (Accessed December 17, 2019).

²⁰ Charles. H. Thompson, "Editorial Comment: The Critical Situation in Negro Higher and Professional Education" *Journal of Negro Education*, 580, no. 4 (Fall 1946) https://www.jstor.org/stable/2965881?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents (Accessed November 26, 2019).

²¹ Martin D. Jenkins, "The Availability of Higher Education Negroes in the Southern States," *Journal of Negro Education*, 16 (Summer 1947) 462, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2966355?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents (Accessed November 26, 2019).

²² George Zook, *Higher Education for Democracy: A Report of the President's Commission on Higher Education*, (New York: Harper Brothers Publishers, 1947), 1: 33, https://archive.org/stream/in.ernet.dli.2015.89917/2015.89917.Higher-Education-For-American-Democracy-A-Report-Of-The-Presidents-Commission-On-Higher-Education-Vol-I---Vi_djvu.txt (Accessed April 23, 2019).

²³ Zook, 2: 30.

²⁴ Thompson, "Editorial Comment: The Critical Situation in Negro Higher and Professional Education."

²⁵ President's Committee on Civil Rights, *To Secure These Rights: The Report of the President's Committee on Civil Rights*, Harry S. Truman Library and Museum 66, <https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/to-secure-these-rights> (Accessed November 26, 2019).

²⁶ Zook, 1: 34.

²⁷ Truman K. Gibson, Jr., "Government Fails Negro Vets: Systematic Denial of Rights Under the GI Bill Scored at Conference, New Technique Needed to Get Results Under Government Program," *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 13, 1946, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/40125219/?terms=Government%2BFails%2BNegro%2BVets> (Accessed November 26, 2019).

²⁸ Charles G. Bolte and Louis Harris, *Our Negro Veterans* (New York: Public Affairs Committee, Pamphlet #128, 1947), 28, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/001671844> (Accessed November 26, 2019).

²⁹ Bess Furman, "Democrats Press for Public Works to Spur Economy," *New York Times*, February 8, 1958, 1, <https://search-proquest-com.holycross.idm.oclc.org/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/114443990/2D626D08CD3E45F3PQ/1?accountid=11456> (Accessed November 27, 2019).

³⁰ Bess Furman, "Scholarship Bill Expected to Pass," *New York Times*, March 9, 1958, 1, <https://search.proquest.com/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/114443990/2D626D08CD3E45F3PQ/1?accountid=11456> (Accessed November 26, 2019).

³¹ Furman, "Scholarship Bill Expected to Pass," 1.

³² Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Dwight D. Eisenhower: 1958: Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the*

President, January 1 to December 31, 1958, (University of Michigan Digital Library, 2005), 519, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/p/ppotpus/4728417.1957.001/305?page=root;rgn=full+text;size=100;view=image> (Accessed April 22, 2019).

³³ Eisenhower, 149-150.

³⁴ Furman, "Scholarship Bill Expected to Pass," 1.

³⁵ U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, *Science and Education for the National Defense, Hearings Before the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare*. 85th Cong., 2d sess., 1958, p. 1303, In Clowse, *Brainpower for the Cold War*, 87.

³⁶ "U.S. Change of Mind," *Life*, March 3, 1958, 96-100, Life Magazine Archive, EBSCOhost, <http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=4&sid=57a89357-41d6-4b30-a439-b674c5e16601%40sdcv-sessmgr06> (Accessed April 23, 2019).

³⁷ Furman, "Scholarship Bill Expected to Pass," 1.

³⁸ For data on the widened disparity caused by the G.I. Bill, see Sarah Turner and John Bound, "Closing the Gap or Widening the Divide: The Effects of the G.I. Bill and World War II on the Educational Outcomes of Black Americans." (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2002), <https://www.nber.org/papers/w9044.pdf> (Accessed October 18, 2019).

³⁹ *Public Papers of the Presidents: Lyndon B. Johnson (1965)*, (University of Michigan Digital Library, 2005), <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/p/ppotpus/4730960.1965.001/101?rgn=full+text;view=image> (Accessed November 26, 2019), 25-33.

⁴⁰ Robert Caro, *Master of the Senate: The Years of Lyndon Johnson*, (New York: Random House, 2002), xv.

⁴¹ Loss, 193.

⁴² "President's Talk in Texas on Higher Education Act," *New York Times*, November 9, 1965, 28, <https://search.proquest.com/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/116759371/D048476BB9324D6BPQ/1?accountid=11456> (Accessed November 26, 2019).

⁴³ Loss, 161-163.

⁴⁴ Howard A. Glickstein, "Federal Education Programs and Minority Groups," *Journal of Negro Education* 38 (Summer 1969): 312-14, in Loss, *Between Citizens and the State*, 161.

⁴⁵ Loss, 162.

⁴⁶ William Borders, "Ivy League Shift Admission Goals," *New York Times*, April 17, 1967, 1, <https://search.proquest.com/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/117594999/47D04C2DAF024239PQ/2?accountid=11456> (Accessed November 26, 2019).

⁴⁷ Loss, 158-160.

⁴⁸ As Christopher Loss mentions, the HEA was not a panacea and black students still faced many struggles. See Loss, *Between Citizens and the States* pages 168-176 for information on "Black Power and Black Protest" at colleges and universities.

⁴⁹ United Nations General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, December 10, 1948, <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/> (Accessed December 17, 2019).