

More Than Just Feeling Fiercely

A black studies program has become the fashion on many American campuses. Some universities have added black studies because they have suddenly been reminded they should have had such a program all along. But the black studies program on some campuses has amounted to a peace offering by the administration to agitating students.

It is probably not so odd that it took a minor revolution to bring about the formation of departments to study black-oriented subjects. There has been a tendency for education, not to gloss over, but to pass over lightly studies of the exploitation of the Negro in America or his role in the development of this land.

But the greatest area of neglect has been the related subject of Africa, historically and currently. Europe, Asia and Latin America, but especially Europe, have had more attention lavished upon them both by the academic world and the press. No area of the world (with the possible exception of Canada and Mexico) has been quite so thoroughly ignored by American universities.

So, if the role of the Negro in America and the story of Africa are

going to receive more attention on campus in the future, we will all be the richer.

Undoubtedly that will be the case with most of those universities that have voluntarily moved into this area. Some universities that have done so in the midst of campus turmoil have a more difficult situation on their hands. If they aren't careful, they are going to find a small black university carved out of the larger white one and a black university somewhat inclined to practice segregation at that.

The key in those cases seems to be the scholarly depth of the department head. The universities that have headed their new black studies departments with black scholars who are militant will probably fare better than those who have given the chairmanship of the department to a black militant who is a sometimes scholar.

Granted there is much fresh ground to be broken here so there is a shortage of prepared personnel, but the qualification for the post should be more than a simple matter of feeling fiercely that such a department is needed. — B. H.