

I don't care whether this doctor had spent 40 years in prison, or just walked off the street, or was the most energetic guy you could find. There's no way the job could be done with that staff.

EIR: Are there any cases of disease-resistant tuberculosis there?

Smith: I don't know. It's possible. Part of the problem is that they don't do cultures and sensitivities in the District. So, if you get somebody who has infectious tuberculosis, they just start you on whatever their regime of drugs is, without doing sensitivities. So you don't know, even, really what the incidence of multiply-resistant TB is that we have in the District. Because our public health system has completely collapsed.

EIR: The strain on the families undergoing this "distance incarceration" is severe.

Smith: I know that families are having a tough time. The cheapest public conveyance out there is \$50. That's a bus service that sprang up to take people to the prison door. It's kind of a gruesome thing, because they leave at midnight on a Friday night; they get you out there in time for visiting, which starts at ten in the morning. Then at five o'clock, you climb back on the bus and you drive overnight to get back to the District early Sunday morning. So, these families are completely wrecked by the time they do that trip. Fifty dollars is a lot for a lot of people, and it's hard to go very often, or to bring kids along—it's \$50 a head. It's a grueling experience. On top of that, they put in a new telephone system in the last couple of weeks; this service costs \$2 to connect, and then it's \$2.50 for every minute, and it cuts you off after ten minutes. You have to start over again with the \$2 connect fee.

Interview: Dr. Andres Taylor

Funds for higher education cut in half

Dr. Taylor teaches English at the University of the District of Columbia (UDC). He was interviewed by Dennis Speed.

EIR: There have been traumatic changes proposed and implemented at the university in the 1990s. Could you tell us something about this?

Taylor: In the last five years, the university has lost over 50% of its funding.

EIR: And it's already reduced several of its programs?

Taylor: Practically all of our graduate programs have been scuttled. We may have, at most, a half-dozen left.

All our graduate programs in business were eliminated. Our programs in mathematics, chemistry, physics. And those were our *best* programs. We had first-rate programs in the sciences. We still have the law school, but the law school came as the result of a merger. We didn't develop it. It was merged with the university by an act of the City Council. So, the law school is still hanging on. The graduate program in history is gone. We have a graduate program in psychology and counseling, hanging by a thread.

EIR: You lost a lot of your undergraduate degree programs also, right?

Taylor: Yes, among them history; but more than that, the programs that are left have been so drastically reduced, and we've lost a lot of our associate degree programs. We inherited a lot of those from Washington Technical Institute, which was a junior college. UDC was formed as a result of merging a junior college, a teachers college, the District of Columbia Teachers College, and Federal City College. Those mergers took place in 1976.

EIR: How many students regularly attend the school?

Taylor: We now have 5,200 students. In 1981, we had 15,800.

EIR: So, the student body has been reduced by two-thirds.

Taylor: Correct. The most drastic cut has come in the last year. In 1996, at the end of the spring semester, we had 10,800 students.

EIR: So, the student body has been cut by 50% in one year!

Taylor: In one year. The cuts in funding started in 1992, when the university's budget was—people argue whether it was \$71 million, or \$77 million. I don't remember the exact number. It is now less than \$37 million.

EIR: So, in five years, the budget was cut in half.

What's the significance of UDC as a college? I understand it has graduated prominent people in several fields.

Taylor: UDC regularly graduates 1,000-1,500 students per year, and many of them have been outstanding. Sharon Horton graduated from UDC in 1987, and she finished her Ph.D. program at Stanford University in neurobiology. She was the first black woman to receive a Ph.D. in that field. She is now a research fellow at Southwestern Hospital in Houston, Texas. One of our graduates is the superintendent of the Dayton public school system. We have graduated 20,000 students since the merger [in 1976].

UDC is the land-grant university for the District of Columbia, and most of the students that attend UDC are adult working people.

EIR: Can you describe what you mean by a land-grant university?

Taylor: A land-grant university is the primary university in every jurisdiction in the United States, and in its territories and possessions. That is, every state has a land-grant university. It provides education, community service, and research. It's tax supported, and it provides education for any student in the community. For example, the University of Maryland is the land-grant university for Maryland, and the University of Maryland, in all of its different branches, provides access for higher education for every student in Maryland, as long as they have a high school diploma.

EIR: So, in principle, regardless of your financial situation, you are allowed to go there, so long as your grades qualify you.

Taylor: That's correct. The University of Maryland is a system that covers the whole state. The land-grant system of universities in the United States is the greatest system of higher education in the world. It's imitated and emulated the world over, and the only jurisdiction in which people have talked about closing a land-grant university is in the District of Columbia. No land-grant university in the history of higher education, has ever been closed.

EIR: This is the university system set up under Lincoln?

Taylor: That's right, under the Morrill Act, in 1862. Congressman Justin Morrill said that the purpose of his Act was, and this is a direct quote, "I would have learning more widely dispersed." And that's what the land-grant system of higher education has done.

EIR: What was the immediate catalyst for the drastic cuts of the past year?

Taylor: Different people have different stories. The administration maintains that it had voluntarily made cuts in the university budget early on; then, when the city government was forced to make *mandatory* cuts, it applied the mandatory cuts to the university, as if the university had made no cuts at all.

EIR: The cuts were mandated by the Financial Control Board?

Taylor: Right. The university cut its own budget between 1992 and 1995, thinking that it would be immune when the mandatory cuts came. Between '92 and '94, the university budget was cut over \$20 million—some 25-30%. We were down to about \$51 million. That was done voluntarily. We thought we had come in under the wire. Then, these mandatory cuts came along and we lost *another* \$18 million.

EIR: Were you able to nominally preserve most of the programs at the \$51 million level?

Taylor: Yes. It was in February of this year that these cuts occurred.

EIR: Was it not the case that the mayor was opposed to these further cuts, but then, they went through anyway?

Taylor: To the best of my knowledge, or this is what is said on the record, the mayor recommended to the Control Board, that the University of the District of Columbia appropriation be maintained at something like \$43-44 million, as a rock-bottom budget. And he attempted to transfer some money from one city agency to the university, because he said the university had already taken enormous cuts, and he wanted to maintain the academic integrity of the program. It was calculated that we could do this with about anywhere from \$43 million to \$44 million, and that would give us a bare-bones comprehensive state university-style program, despite the cuts. But the Control Board vetoed this.

Now, there are charges that the mayor was insincere. Well, I'm not a psychotherapist. I'm not able to interpret, but I do know, that we were cut to the bone, and beyond. That, we know.

EIR: How many faculty did you lose?

Taylor: We lost 125 faculty out of a total of 365. This was our faculty in the sciences, etc.: We lost them across the board. We don't have our public administration program any more, we don't have our MBA program any more, we don't have our master's degree programs in chemistry, math, physics any more. We just don't have them. And a state university is supposed to offer comprehensive public higher education.

EIR: Is it your view that the process of cutting is over, or will it continue?

Taylor: I don't know that it can continue. This wild man from North Carolina [Rep. Charles Taylor (R)] was talking about cutting the budget some more, which would have meant that we would get nothing. So, I gather that it has not been stopped; at least, it's under some negotiation.

EIR: What do you think has happened to education as a result, in the District?

Taylor: If you look at the figures, since 1993, we've had more people at Lorton Correctional Facility than we have had at the University of the District of Columbia. And 50% of the young black men in the District, between the ages of 17 and 34, are involved in the criminal justice system, either as incarcerated individuals, or as individuals awaiting trial, or as individuals on parole. There are over 10,000 people at Lorton, and there are 5,200 at UDC.

So, since 1993, the population at Lorton has zoomed, as the population at the University of the District of Columbia has declined. The facility at Lorton has a budget of \$215 million.

EIR: Whereas your budget is \$37 million.

Taylor: That's correct. And the populations of the two institutions reflect the budgets.