

Wisconsin Students Demand Free Tuition for Blacks

[Via the Associated Press:](#)

“Black students should be offered free tuition and housing at the University of Wisconsin-Madison because blacks were legally barred from education during slavery and UW-Madison remains out of reach for black students today, the student government said Wednesday.

The Associated Students of Madison [ASM] said in a resolution that students from suburban high schools are overrepresented and that the consideration of ACT and SAT scores in applications restricts opportunities for the poor and thus upholds “white supremacy.” Race relations have been a contentious issue at the Wisconsin’s flagship campus for months and the university has proposed some measures aimed at improving diversity.

“The university’s rhetoric suggests that it is committed to diversity and inclusion, so this legislation compels the university to move towards action – which is imperative,” the resolution’s author, ASM Student Council Rep. Tyriek Mack, said in a statement. “If no one challenges the university’s empty promises, then the racial composition will remain stagnant.”

The resolution demands free access to the university for all black people, including former inmates. That means free tuition, free housing and no fees, Mack said.”

You can read the rest of the AP story for additional highlights, which includes descriptions of the cultural and racial tensions on the UW campus, as well as the university’s apparent attempt to appease the ASM by building a black

cultural center. The AP also points out that the black student population on campus has grown from 11 percent to 15 percent over the last decade.

What to make of this?

The idea of institutions that benefited from slavery offering reparations to the descendants of slaves is [a thorny topic](#), but not uncommon. What's interesting here is that this is a very different demand.

The student association is demanding free tuition for any students with black skin regardless of whether or not their ancestors were enslaved. Nor is the university accused of benefiting from the institution of slavery (as many other universities did); rather, UW is charged with not admitting black students during the slave period.

In light of these facts, such demands might seem irrational and logically indefensible, but that should not surprise us. The philosopher Alasdair Macintyre has argued that our age is one defined by protest and indignation, which [he calls](#) the "distinctive moral feature of the modern age."

If this is true, it stands to reason that we will witness similar demands by student bodies around the country, regardless of whether or not these institutions supported slavery or the students are the descendants of slaves.