



# Stand and Prosper: Private Black Colleges and Their Students

*Henry N. Drewry, Humphrey Doermann*

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*Stand and Prosper* is the first authoritative history in decades of black colleges and universities in America. It tells the story of educational institutions that offered, and continue to offer, African Americans a unique opportunity to transcend the legacy of slavery while also bearing its burden. Henry Drewry and Humphrey Doermann present an up-to-date and comprehensive assessment of their past, present, and possible future.

Black colleges fully got off the ground only after the Civil War--more than two centuries after higher education formally began in British North America. Despite horrendous obstacles, they survived and even proliferated until well past the mid-twentieth century. As the authors show, however, the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* brought them to a crucial juncture. While validating the rights of blacks to pursue opportunities outside racial and class lines, it drew the future of these institutions into doubt. By the mid-1970s black colleges competed with other colleges for black students--a welcome expansion of choices for African-American youth but a huge recruitment challenge for black colleges.

The book gradually narrows its focus from a general history to a look at the development of forty-five private black colleges in recent decades. It describes their varied responses to the changes of the last half-century and documents their influence in the development of the black middle class. The authors underscore the vital importance of government in supporting these institutions, from the Freedman's Bureau during Reconstruction to federal aid in our own time.

*Stand and Prosper* offers a fascinating portrait of the distinctive place black colleges and universities have occupied in American history as crucibles of black culture, and of the formidable obstacles they must surmount if they are to continue fulfilling this important role.

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