THE BLACK POWER MOVEMENT AND THE BLACK STUDENT UNION (BSU)

IN WASHINGTON STATE, 1967-1970

BY

MARC ARSELL ROBINSON

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To the Faculty of Washington State University:

The members of the Committee appointed to examine the dissertation of MARC ARSELL ROBINSON find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

_________________________________
David J. Leonard, Ph.D., Chair

_________________________________
Lisa Guerrero, Ph.D.

_________________________________
Thabiti Lewis, Ph.D.
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THE BLACK POWER MOVEMENT AND THE BLACK STUDENT UNION (BSU) IN WASHINGTON STATE, 1967-1970

Abstract

by Marc Arsell Robinson, Ph.D.
Washington State University
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Chair: David J. Leonard

This dissertation centers on the Black Student Union (BSU) at the University of Washington and Washington State University, during the late-1960s. It traces how the first BSU organization was formed at San Francisco State University in 1966, and soon spread north to the state of Washington. Following the establishment of the BSU at the University of Washington in the fall of 1967, African American students there led a successful protest campaign to implement racial reforms at their institution. The BSU at the University of Washington also spearheaded organizing and protest campaigns throughout Seattle and the State of Washington, leading to the founding of a BSU at Washington State University. Located in a mostly Caucasian and rural area on the Washington-Idaho border, Washington State University is far removed from Seattle in terms of population and social climate, but there too BSU members led substantial protest efforts in the late-1960s. While giving a detailed narrative of BSU history in the Northwest, this dissertation also argues that the BSU was a constituent part of the Black
Power Movement and therefore challenges conventional narratives of Black Power as entirely violent and destructive.
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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the four people who have made the biggest impact on my life: my maternal grandmother Doretha Robinson, my mother Margaret Robinson, my sister Mekka Robinson, and my life-partner Sina Sam.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

My earliest recollections of learning about Civil Rights history occurred during elementary school. These encounters almost always happened during January or February when my class had a unit on Martin Luther King Day or Black History Month. During these lessons, my class would typically have some sort of play, reading, or sing-a-long to mark the occasion and I was often given a prominent position in the production. Often being one of the only Black males in my classes, I was commonly selected to star in the play or program. I relished these Civil Rights units, not because of the information they provided, but because they offered me a rare occasion to feel valued and affirmed as an African American male within a school setting.

By my teen years, I found the high school equivalent of these Civil Rights units totally alienating. In my mind, I had heard the “I Have a Dream Speech” more than enough times, and I found the Civil Rights Movement to be completely uninteresting. The cumulative effect of the narrative that school provided conditioned me to see the Civil Rights Movement as an endless series of marches and speeches that had no direct connection to me or the world around me. I had no concept of how the Movement might comment on why my “gifted” class was filled with mostly White students, while my school and the surrounding neighborhood was predominately African American. It would not have even occurred to me to connect Civil Rights history to my lived
experience in this manner, given how these lessons depicted school segregation as a thing of the past.

As an undergraduate and graduate student I began to completely rethink what I thought I knew about Civil Rights, as I learned many details and complications that my K-12 lessons neglected to mention. I learned that the “I Have a Dream” speech also included powerful statements about economic justice and “the fierce urgency of now.”¹ I learned that Rosa Parks was not a tired old lady, nor was she the first person to refuse to give up her seat. I also learned about the Black Power Movement, and how Civil Rights and Black Power impacted my hometown, Seattle, WA. Through these insights, I found a new and fascinating history that challenges simplistic heroes, narratives, and binaries.

Now, as I write a dissertation on Civil Rights and Black Power history, a major motivation for this work is to write something for the kid I once was. Whether or not I was happy at the prospects of feeling special for a day or annoyed by the same old Dr. King excerpts, I now see that the narrative of the movement that I got in grade school was reductive, de-contextualized, and disempowering. In contrast, my project endeavors to humanize, localize and complicate Civil Rights and Black Power, providing a narrative that may not always be comforting but that is intricate and dynamic.

My dissertation is about the Civil Rights and Black Power Movement in Washington State. It tells the story of Black student activists in the late 1960s, focusing on the Seattle Area, the University of Washington, and Washington State University. In

particular, it documents the actions of the Black Student Union, a national organization that became highly influential on college campuses all over the United States. This project examines the influences of both a Civil Rights and Black Power ethos within the context of Northwest student groups. Building on a small, but growing segment of the literature that focuses on late 60s Black student activism,\(^2\) this project goes where few have gone before: the Northwest. One exception is a doctorial dissertation published in 2008,\(^3\) but by comparing Black student campaigns at the University of Washington, the University of California Los Angeles, and the University of Texas at Austin, it does not provide the sustained discussion of the Northwest provided here. Therefore, this project moves into new scholarly ground, proffering a narrative that complicates notions of the 1960s, Black student protest, the Black Power Movement, and the Civil Rights Movement.

While dominant narratives of the 1960s construct Black Power and Civil Rights as completely distinct and antagonistic movements, this project argues that significant dialectical relationship connected these movements, such that they can more accurately


be conceived as two wings of the same movement, or “two branches of the same tree.”

By explicating Black Power’s larger significance and connections to Civil Rights efforts, this project aims to challenge conventional constructions of Black Power and show how its influence extended beyond Northern, riot prone ghettos. Moreover, this project will illuminate Black Power’s connection to grassroots networks, use of community organizing, and productivity as a protest movement.

What follows in this chapter is an expanded discussion of “conventional” Civil Rights and Black Power historiography, and the growing body of scholars who are challenging these still popular narratives. Then, the chapter will transition to give a brief history of the first Black Student Union in San Francisco State. Taken together, these two sections will provide an instructive foundation for the remainder of the dissertation.

The Dominant Narrative of Civil Rights and Black Power

In both the popular imagination and scholarly accounts of the 1960s, the Civil Rights Movement and Black Power Movement are cast in dualities. Starting with the chronology, the Civil Rights Movement (CRM) is said to have taken place during the early 1960s and the Black Power Movement (PBM) followed in the latter 60s. Furthermore, the CRM is remembered as nonviolent, Southern, community oriented, noble, and directed toward reasonable goals, while the BPM is violent, Northern, detached from local communities, irrational, and counterproductive. As historian Peniel

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Joseph describes it in “Introduction: Toward a New Historiography of the Black Power Movement,” (2006), “Cumulatively, this scholarship posits a good 1960s, filled with hope and optimism...personified by Martin Luther King Jr., with a bad 1960s, characterized by the omnipresent Black Panthers, urban rioting, and Black separatism.” Elaborating on this conventional version of Civil Right-Black Power history, Joseph described how Black Power is often framed in the center of larger declension narratives of the New Left.

The embrace, at times, of violent rhetoric, misogyny, and bravado by black power advocates have made them and their struggles easy targets for demonization and dismissal. For instance, black power stands at the center of declension narratives of the 1960s: the movement’s destructiveness poisoning the innocence of the New Left, corrupting a generation of black activists, and steering the drive for civil rights off course in a way that reinforced racial segregation by giving politicians a clear, frightening scapegoat. The backlash that followed seemingly destroyed the potential of the civil rights movement to establish new democratic frontiers. This narrative still too often provides the basis for popular understandings, as well as scholarly framings, of black power as an unabashed failure and a negative counterpart to more righteous struggles for racial integration, social justice, and economic equality.6

This idea that Black Power was largely responsible for the decline of mass
movement politics in the late 60s and early 70s continues to be influential. However, in
the last two decades, several scholars have published works that challenge this
construction, such as “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the
Past” (2005) by Jacquelyn Dowd Hall. There, Hall challenges the conventional
chronology of Civil Rights and places it in a larger period of continuing struggle from the
1930s to the 1970s and 80s. Also, she identifies and rejects the declension argument.

“In the dominant narrative, the decline of the [civil rights] movement follows hard
on the heels of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights acts, and the popular struggles
of the 1970s become nothing more than identity politics, divisive squabbles that
promoted tribalism, alienated white workers, and swelled the ranks of the New
Right. The view of the 1970s as a tragic denouement belittle second-wave
feminism and other movements that emerged from the black freedom struggle
and institutionalized themselves even as they served as the New Right’s
antagonist and foils. It also erases from popular memory the way the victories of
the early 1960s coalesced into a lasting social revolution, as thousands of
ordinary people pushed through the doors the movement had opened and
worked to create, integrated institutions where none had existed before.”

Scholars like Joseph and Hall provide guiding analytical frames for this
dissertation project. Their writings, along with others, provide an important foundation

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for this work. Joseph has called it “Black Power Studies,” a field that “highlights connections between the two historical periods, characterizing the civil rights and Black Power era as a complex mosaic rather than mutually exclusive and antagonistic movements.” Furthermore, this emerging field seeks to “reperiodize” 1960s Black politics “by examining the ways in which black radicals influenced black politics during the ‘heroic period’ of the Civil Rights movement.” My project aims to contribute to this larger scholarly undertaking.

To further explicate the dominant narrative of Civil Rights and Black Power history, we must examine the central role the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) plays in that version of history. The declension narrative is largely based on the organizational trajectory of SNCC, a youth oriented Civil Rights group that began in the aftermath of the 1960 Black students sit-ins throughout the South. SNCC would go on to gain wide recognition in the early 60s for its brave efforts to organize voter registration drives, Freedom Schools, and other community programs in rural Mississippi and other extremely dangerous places for Black activists to operate. However, in the latter 60s, SNCC experienced a gradual decline that coincided with the increasing prominence of Black Power ideals within SNCC, and in the wider Black freedom movement. While the history of SNCC and the growth of Black Power were related—for example, SNCC Chairman Stokely Carmichael made the term “Black Power” national news when he used it in a speech during the 1966 Meredith March—


Black Power has been erroneously cited as the cause of SNCC’s troubles. In addition SNCC’s fall has been taken as indicative of the fate of all Black youth activism during the time-period. Thus, Black Power is blamed for the “corruption of a generation of Black activists,” as quoted above.

In reality, the SNCC’s increasing dysfunction in the second half of the 1960s was due to a variety of reasons. A thorough reading of scholarship on SNCC like Clayborne Carson’s *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (1981) and Charles M. Payne’s *I’ve Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (1995) highlights the waning influence of SNCC due to activist burnout, disillusionment with American democracy, the influx up new and inexperienced members, and White repression. Much of this began to come to the fore in 1964, in and around an attempt by SNCC and COFO (the Council of Federated Organizations, a coalition organization of various civil rights groups working in Mississippi) to challenge the Mississippi delegation for its seats and voting power at the Democratic National Convention.

SNCC and COFO challenged the regular Mississippi delegates because the electoral process that put them in power systematically excluded Black voters, and because the delegation opposed the National Democratic Party’s attempts to support Civil Rights. In the months preceding the conventional challenge, the activists held a Freedom Vote “intended, first, to show that the masses of Negroes did in fact want to vote” and “second, it was intended to mock the legitimacy of the regular election by making the point that the candidates elected did not represent hundreds of thousands of
Negroes.”11 The activists formed the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) to challenge the regular delegates, arguing “that they, rather than the regular, all-White delegation, represented the expressed principles of the national Democratic party.” But, at the convention, the MFDP’s challenge of the Regulars was defeated, due to the efforts of President Lyndon Johnson among others, and they were offered a compromise of two, non-voting, at-large seats, which the MFDP rejected.12

This rejection of the MFDP’s campaign was a major blow to the underlying assumptions many SNCC members had about the Democratic Party’s support for civil rights and the Federal Governments’ commitment to democracy.13 As Manning Marable wrote in Race, Radicalism and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction and Beyond in Black America, 1945-2006 (2007), the younger generation of Civil Rights workers were generally motivated by a underlying faith that American society would ultimately live up to its professed commitment to liberty and justice. “Sit-ins were not rejection of the American Dream; they were the necessary although ambiguous steps take toward its culmination.”14 This foundational assumption in American Exceptionalism—that America really was committed to justice and just needed to be shown that its Black citizens were treated unfairly—was so thoroughly shaken by the Democratic National Convention episode that it set SNCC on a search for alternative philosophies from which it never recovered.

13 Carson 127.
To further appreciate the strains that fell on SNCC, this defeat at the Convention must also be considered in relation to the widespread violence SNCC workers suffered from local authorities, and the Justice Department’s unwillingness to halt such abuses. These compounding developments set in motion a series of outcomes that ultimately caused SNCC’s collapse. Many experienced SNCC veterans began drifting away from the organization due to philosophical uncertainty, disillusionment, and burnout. They, in turn, were replaced by newer members who did not have the ability to lead the organization into a new, clearly articulated direction. In the absence of a coherent program, the newer members were prone to infighting and internal squabbles, a problem exacerbated by government infiltration and sabotage. By 1968, the seeds of decline had grown to the extent that SNCC’s ability to conduct programs was severely limited.15

While this assessment is useful for understanding SNCC’s complete degeneration by the early 1970s, it has unfortunately been used to characterize all Black youth activism of the latter 60s and the Black Power Movement in general. This conclusion is unfortunately encouraged by certain sections of the aforementioned texts by Clayborne Carson and Charles Payne. Overall, both authors provide ample explanation of the various factors that undermined SNCC, but at certain points they too slip into the Black Power declension narrative. For instance, Payne wrote:

The radical-nationalist thrusts that came to dominate much Black activism after the mid-sixties represent not one but several distinguishable activist cultures,

15 Carson 287.
some of them diametrically opposed to the assumptions of the organizing tradition. Some—I stress the *some* here—of those operating under the new political banners had no problem with hierarchy so long as they could be at the top of it, no problems with cults of personality as long as they got to pick the personalities, little conception of individual growth as a political issue, more interest in the dramatic gesture than in building a base, and little concern with building interpersonal relationships that reflected their larger values. The basic metaphor of solidarity became “nation,” not “family.” The last may be especially important. The larger movement—not just SNCC and not just the civil rights movement—underwent a loss of community…¹⁶

Accurately, Payne acknowledged that his assessment only applies to “some” Black Power advocates. But, Payne’s qualification is later contradicted when he says that “the larger movement…underwent a loss of community.” This subtle jump from talking about one organization, SNCC, and talking about “some” Black Power advocates, to drawing conclusions about the entire era of late 60s Black politics contributes to the dominant narrative’s construction that Black Power ruined the promise of the 60s.

In an incredibly similar passage late in Carson’s book, he draws the same regrettable conclusion.

Some black power proponents derived their ideas from the stale residue of previous struggles rather than from their own shared experience. Fascinated by

¹⁶ Emphasis in original, Payne 365.

11
violent rhetoric, they failed to recognize the importance of nonviolent tactics in any sustained mass struggle. Machismo, apocalyptic imagery, and ideological competition not only failed to secure much power but also made the black freedom struggle more vulnerable to external repression.\footnote{Carson 306.}

Again, Carson begins by critiquing “some” Black Power advocates, but concludes this passage with the broad assessment that Black Power effectively wrecked the entire “black freedom struggle.” As I stated previously, a thorough reading of Payne and Carson reveals much evidence against this simplistic narrative; but proponents of the dominant narrative can find support for their position in certain passages of these works. There are in fact many adherents to this dominant narrative, in part because of its connection to a larger historical interpretation of the 1960s and the “New Left.” Beginning in the 1970s with Kirkpatrick Sale’s \textit{SDS} (1973), and continuing in the 1980s with \textit{Democracy in the Streets: From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago} by James Miller, \textit{If I Had a Hammer: The Death of the Old Left and the Birth of the New Left} by Maurice Isserman, and \textit{The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage} by Todd Gitlin (all 1987), highly esteemed scholarship on the 1960s established a consensus that the decade was a unique time of idealism and action, distinct from movements that came before or after it.\footnote{Van Gosse, “A Movement of Movements: The Definition and Periodization of the New Left,” \textit{A Companion to Post-1945 America}, eds. Jean-Christophe Agnew and Roy Rosenzweig (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2002) 278, 280-281.} These writers ignored or downplayed the continuities between the New Left of the 1960s and the social movements that came before or after it: the 1940s and 50s civil rights, labor, pacifist and anti-imperialist efforts, as well as the 1970s
campaigns for women’s rights, gay and lesbian rights, Chicano and American Indian power, and African American electoral politics.

Instead, what was put forth was a much simpler story that placed the mostly White, male, college-aged members of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) at the center of 60s youth activism and marginalizes all other radical efforts. “If one presumes a single, coherent New Left of white youth led by SDS, than other movements and struggles can be treated as influences, points of origin, schismatic developments, or after effects.” All else — before, during, or after the 60s— that does not fit into the White, male, college student frame is minimized “as either precursors (the civil rights movement) or legatees (women’s liberation) of the student New Left at the Sixties’ center.”

This notion of “the Sixties” became accepted truth for many, not because of its historical accuracy, but because many ex-SDS members and other White Americans found it to be a comforting way to make sense of a tumultuous period in US history.\(^\text{19}\) It was a way of claiming a larger significance for the struggles they had participated in and the time-period wherein they grew up. But, this romantic account posited a truncated historical account that was simplistically bound by the beginning and end of the decade. “This briefer, contained New Left begins fortuitously in 1960 with the wave of southern sit-ins and the renaming of the Student League for Industrial Democracy SDS, and concludes equally neatly in 1969-71 with that organization’s self-destruction and the


\(^{20}\) Gosse 281.
putative waning of the anti-war protest." Central to this narrative is the precipitous collapse of all constructive youth protest in the latter sixties as SDS itself disintegrated, which in turn is bound to the narrative of SNCC’s collapse caused by Black Power. The conclusion of this larger construction is that Black Power ruined both SNCC and the entire New Left, which is understood as SDS. To support this contention, the authors point to how certain White activists in SDS, and other White radical groups like the Weathermen, formed alliances with the Black Panthers and advocated political violence—a clear sign of Black Power’s corrupting influence.\(^\text{22}\)

Given the foregoing discussion, the declension narrative of the late 1960s is firmly established scholarship on the period. In both works by Black scholars on SNCC and White scholars on SDS, one commonly finds constructions of the late 60s and early 70s as a period of failed promise, disappointment, and disintegration. This dissertation joins the growing body of work that challenges this dominant narrative.

**Defining Black Power**

Now, that we have begun to outline how mainstream scholars have mischaracterized Black Power, let us consider the alternative conception of the movement that will be used throughout this dissertation. To begin, a basic definition of Black Power was given in *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity* (2005) by Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar. He writes that Black Power includes various ideas and

\(^{21}\) Gosse 278. 

goals, but its two most fundamental themes were “black pride and self-determination.”
In addition, the major ideological thrust of Black Power was Black Nationalism, which
advocated Black group consciousness and Black empowerment through independence
from White people and White dominated institutions. Expanding upon this foundation,
William L. Van Deburg’s *New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and
American Culture, 1965-1975* (1975) argued against popular notions of Black Power
that dismiss it as violent, angry and destructive, which largely originated with 1960s
news reporting.

Media misperception and manipulation of the Black Power message continued
throughout the decade and contributed to many long-term misunderstandings.

Two key assumptions which can be placed in this category are (1) that the best—
and perhaps only—way to conceptualize the movement is to treat it as part of a
violent era’s radicalized politics, and (2) that as an aberrant, directionless
expression of rage, Black Power was incapable of making lasting contributions to
black life.

In contrast to framings of Black Power as this sudden, inexplicable
phenomenon, the rhetoric and ideals of the movement have a long history in African
American life. Neither the term “Black Power” nor Black Nationalism was new in the
mid-1960s. Stokely Carmichael, who brought the term to national attention, “claimed
that he has heard the term in one way or another since he was a child. Indeed, less

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24 Ogbar 3.
than a month before Greenwood he and other SNCC militants had discussed Harlem congress
man Adam Clayton Powell’s utilization of the Black Power theme in a spring, 1966” speech at Howard University.\textsuperscript{26} Even earlier, in the 1940s and 50s, activists like Richard Wright, Paul Robeson, and Malcolm X used some iteration of the term in their writing and statements. And the history of African Americans supporting the creation and promotion of Black institutions extends back (at least) to the 19\textsuperscript{th} century when African Americans “formed fraternal, mutual aid, and cooperative organizations to promote Black solidarity and aid in racial survival.”\textsuperscript{27} This extensive pre-history of Black Power is an important part of understanding the movement, which 60s news reports and subsequent histories often neglect.

Also, conventional accounts also fail to appraise the heterogeneity within Black Power. The movement was held together by a commonly beliefs and tactics: (1) advocacy of self-defense or retaliatory violence, (2) support for positive color consciousness (or race pride) and Black solidarity, and (3) support for increasing the power of Black people to direct public policies that affected them.\textsuperscript{28} Yet, beyond these shared goals, Black Power advocates often differed with each other. In particular, three ideologies competed within the movement: assimilation, pluralism and nationalism. Of these three, pluralism and nationalism were most prominent within Black Power.\textsuperscript{29}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{26} Van Deburg 33-34
\item \textsuperscript{27} Van Deburg 34
\item \textsuperscript{28} Van Deburg 19, 21, 23.
\item \textsuperscript{29} Van Deburg 25.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Other scholars provide a thorough discussion of these ideas and their differences, but for our purposes the point is that Black Power was not monolithic.

Black Power also was not parochial, but had an expansive vision of social change that encompassed people of color around the world. As stated in *Waiting “Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (2006) by Peniel E. Joseph, one illustration of Black Power’s international and diasporic dimensions was the career of Malcolm X, who traveled to Europe and Africa several times and met with many world leaders. In his 1964 speech, “The Ballot or the Bullet,” Malcolm reiterated his long held advocacy of expanding the Black freedom struggle beyond the national boundaries maintained by the Civil Rights Movement. “We need to expand the civil rights struggle to a higher level, the level of human rights,’ Malcolm told his audiences. Malcolm’s search for racial justice outside ‘the jurisdiction of Uncle Sam’ was exemplified by the efforts of earlier Black Power radicals.”

This global perspective was part of a strategy to capitalize on international sympathies for Black Americans and a sincere expression of solidarity with other people of color globally. By the early 60s, the political careers of Malcolm X, Robert F. Williams, and others “helped create a new generation of black nationalists who studied local organizing, the politics of armed self-defense, and global upheavals with equal fervor.”

Domestically, Black Power groups also forged substantial relationships with other communities of color. Returning to Jeffery Ogbar’s *Black Power* – in his chapter,

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30 See Van Deburg’s chapter 4.
“Rainbow Radicalism: The Rise of Radical Ethnic Nationalism” he details how Black Power groups like the Black Panthers and the Black Student Union commonly worked with and/or inspired the Chicano Brown Berets, Chinese Red Guard, Puerto Rican Young Lords, and the American Indian Movement. Many of these organizations modeled themselves after the Panthers, created their own versions of the Panther’s Ten Point Program, Breakfast Program, etc. “Alex Hing, a Red Guard co-founder who assumed the title minister of information (one of several titles that mirrored those of the BPP [Black Panther Party]) explains that ‘we tried [to] model ourselves after the Panthers. When it didn’t work, we gave it our own characteristics.”33 The Black Panthers’ influence also included anti-racist, White Nationalist groups like the Young Patriots, thus the Black Power Movement deserves to be recognized for its impressive multiculturalism.34 The adoption of the Panther model by the Red Guard or Young Patriots reflects the shared vision and interconnections that often characterized the interactions of Black Power activists and their likeminded peers.

Likewise, recent work has shown that the Black Power Movement should not be thought of as a strictly northern phenomenon, but was a movement with substantial support in the South, especially its advocacy of self-defense. In Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power (1999), Timothy Tyson recounts the life of Robert F. Williams to show the long advocacy and acceptance of Black self-defense in the South during the late 50s and early 60s. A related work, Lance Hill’s The Deacon for Defense: Armed Resistance and the Civil Rights Movement (2004), showed

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33 Ogbar 160,163,170.
34 Ogbar 178-181.
that Civil Rights efforts were not as non-violent as commonly regarded given the existence of the Deacons for Defense, a southern based Black self-defense group. It formed in 1964 provided armed protection for Civil Rights organizers. Moreover, Simon Wendt’s “‘We Were Going to Fight Fire With Fire’: Black Power in the South” (2010) shows that armed tactics remained a part of Black southern politics into the 1970s, often resulting in conflicts with police—similar to what occurred in the North.

More confrontations between police and black radicals occurred in the early 1970s, when white authorities sought to disrupt the activities of black militant organizations in the South. In Houston, for instance, police repeatedly clashed with People’s Party 2 (PP2), a group that black activists had formed to combat police brutality. Modeled after the Oakland-based Black Panther party for Self-Defense, the PP2 intended to patrol Houston’s black neighborhood to prevent unlawful arrests and harassment…Southern chapters of the [Black Panther Party] engaged in similar confrontations with lawmen.35

Hence, it is clear that the Black Power Movement attracted wide support in the North and South, again countering truncated notions of the era.

More recent scholarship on the movement also reveal a complex relationship to Black women and Black feminism, contrasting to characterizations of Black Power as inextricably sexist and misogynistic. A thorough analysis of the Black Power Movement must acknowledge the movement’s investment in patriarchy, which often manifested in the emphases on Black manhood—a point that Michelle Wallace zealously argued in

Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman (1979). It is also useful to note that this privileging of Black male empowerment over that of Black women was also a major component in the Civil Rights Movement, illustrated by Ella Baker’s treatment in the South Christian Leadership Coalition and discussed in Steve Estes’s *I am a Man: Race, Manhood, and the Civil Rights Movement* (2005).


During the mid- and late 1960s, overt calls for black women to recede into the background in deference to male leadership were tied to the ostensibly revolutionary objective of reclaiming ‘black manhood.’ As a symbolic call to arms…the struggle to reclaim ‘black manhood’ galvanized black women as well as men within the emerging political communities of the early Black Power Movement. But this metaphor and the male centered political framework that it represent could be, and often was, used to silence and discipline the activism of black women.36

While acknowledging the sexist components of Black Power, Ward shows that the Black Power Movement was flexible and multifaceted, such that is also encompassed and fostered the Third World Women’s Alliance (TWWA), a Black feminist collective led by Frances Beal. In opposition to conventional framings of Black

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Power and Black feminism as “ideologically incompatible or locked in an inherently antagonistic relationship,” he argues that “black feminism is a component of the Black Power Movement’s ideological legacy.”

The members of the TWWA were simultaneously feminist activists and Black Power activists, and they crafted a multipositioned political space through which they fashioned feminist politics that also theorized and enacted central ideological commitments of the Black Power Movement as part of their feminist politics. That is, they built on and extended elements of Black Power Politics.

Further evidence countering the notion of Black Power and irredeemably sexist was put forth by Rhonda Y. Williams’ essay, “Black Women, Urban Politics, and Engendering Black Power” (2006), wherein she discussed little known Black women like Goldie Baker and Oblate Sister Judith (a Black Nun whose given name was Brenda Williams) who may not have joined national Black Power organizations but championed “black self-determination, political power, economic security, respect, and human dignity” on the local level. These insights from Ward and Williams complicate simplistic notions of Black Power and show that the movement extended beyond its patriarchal dimensions.

Further extending our understanding of the Black Power wide influence and social impact, recent work has also displayed the Movement relationship to areas like employment and health care.  

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37 Ward 120.
38 Ward 120.
Action, and the Construction Industry (2010), edited by David Goldberg and Trevor Griffey, is an anthology that details how community groups organized in Philadelphia, Detroit, Chicago, Brooklyn, Newark, San Francisco and Seattle challenge trade union discrimination using Black Power tactics and ideals. Beginning in 1963, these local struggles “not only drive the creation of affirmative action but also sought to connect the desegregation of the building trades with the broader Black Power movement goals of black community control and economic and political self-determination.”

Black Power at Work, adding to previous scholarship, reveals Black Powers productive influence on labor organizing throughout the North, which eventually impacted national Affirmative Action policy.

Alondra Nelson’s book, Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party and the Fight Against Medical Discrimination (2011) does similar work in relation to local and national efforts to address racial health disparities. Nelson focuses on the Black Panthers’ free medical clinics and other public health programs to illuminate how the organization was “a significant faction in the radical health movement of its era.”

Extending into the 1970s, Party members “worked with both lay and trusted-experts volunteers—including nurses, doctors, and students in the health profession—to administer basic preventative care, diagnostic testing for lead poisoning and hypertension and other conditions, and, in some instances, ambulance services, dentistry, and referrals” in communities all over.

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41 See: William Van Deburg’s New Day in Babylon, Ch 3.
Taken together, Nelson’s discussion of healthcare and Goldberg and Griffey’s work on labor activism add additional evidence against the declension narrative and displays Black Powers’ wide influence and consistent investment in local, community concerns.

These patterns in Black Power activism would also have impacts in higher education. On campuses across the country, Black students and their allies were inspired by the larger movement to articulate critiques and make demands at their respective institutions. Typically, they also formed political student organizations with overt connections to local communities and likeminded groups, on and off campus. The Black Student Union (BSU) was one of the most prominent of these student groups and it is to the BSU that our attention will now turn.

The First Black Student Union

Building off the previous description of the Black Power Movement, we will now begin our narrative of the Black Student Union, the Black Power organization that is the focal point of this dissertation. To start our discussion, we will examine the group’s original chapter at San Francisco State College. With histories of activist organizations and social movements, it can be difficult to establish precise beginnings and endings. Although most accounts hold that the Black students at San Francisco

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43 Emphasis in original, Nelson 6.
44 Although I will use the name “San Francisco State College” or “SFSC” for its accuracy during the era covered in this study, San Francisco State College is now known as San Francisco State University, having gained university status in 1972. Source: “SF State Facts 2009-2010, University Communication,” San Francisco State University n.d., 24 Feb. 2012 <http://www.sfsu.edu/~puboff/sfsufact/archive/0910/>.
State College (SFSC) formed the first BSU, the group was certainly influenced by developments at other schools.

For instance, in Dude, Where’s My Black Studies Department: The Disappearance of Black Americans from our Universities (2007), Cecil Brown wrote that the BSU at SFSC followed the Soul Students Advisory Council at Merritt College in nearby Oakland.45 Surely, in the dynamic and politicized youth culture of San Francisco, Oakland, and the entire Bay Area, there was much networking and crosspollination. Moreover, as will be discussed shortly, one could also argue that the BSU was an outgrowth of SNCC and/or the Black Panthers given the direct connections between the BSU and those groups. All this is to acknowledge the fallibility of claiming a precise origin, even as we take SFSC as our starting place.

The history of the Black Student Union started on September 19, 1963 when a group of African American students at SFSC “petitioned the student government to form a Negro Student Association (NSA).”46 The NSA’s main focus was to foster a sense of community among Black students through social activities;47 but from the start the NSA was deeply impacted by the era’s racial politics and the Southern Civil Rights Movement.

47 Dikran Karagueuzian, Blow It Up!: The Black Student Revolt at San Francisco State College and the Emergence of Dr. Hayakawa (Boston: Gambit, 1971) 40.
One of the few Black faculty members around at that time remembers most of the black students as primarily middle class, but “upset, going out of their minds” over the question of civil rights and racial discrimination. Many, along with many whites, had been part of the sit-ins or freedom marches in the South, or would head for Mississippi for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee’s 1964 Mississippi summer project. And in addition to the civil-rights turmoil on the nation scene, a lot of things were happening locally.48

On campus, the Black students were particularly disturbed by their shrinking population. Due to the 1961 incorporation of SFSC into the California State College system and California’s Master Plan for Higher Education, San Francisco State went from serving the top 70 percent of high school graduates to only the top 33 percent. Consequently “African American enrollment dropped from an estimated 11 percent in 1960 to 3.6 percent in 1968.”49 Black enrollment also declined due to “the military draft into the war in Vietnam, and in part as a result of a system of ‘tracking’ Black and poor students into schools for vocational education.”50 As the decade progressed, the NSA members recognized how school policies adversely affected African Americans.

During these early years, many of the organization’s members were politically conscious but the group remained a social club and rarely voiced political opinions on campus.51 This changed in 1966, following the arrival of young man named James

48 Orrick 79.
51 Karaguezian 40.
By the time of his arrival, James Garret was a veteran youth activist with ties to Civil Rights and Black Power groups. Garret’s activist resume included Freedom Rider, Black Panther, SNCC organizer (with experience in Mississippi), and former head of the Los Angeles SNCC office. He also arrived on campus with an explicitly Black Nationalist organizing philosophy that Garret had grown to believe in due to his experience in SNCC. Like numerous other ex-SNCC members, Garret was deeply troubled by the contradictions and drawbacks of White involvement in organizing efforts directed at Black communities. For instance, many felt White volunteers “prevented many Negro children from seeing that black people like themselves could be just as talented as whites.” Thus Garret concluded that intraracial organizing was the most fruitful approach.

Garret came to California because he had family living there and he came to San Francisco State to organize Black students. Once on campus, he pushed the Negro Student Association to embrace Black Nationalist politics through discussion meetings at his home. In a 1969 interview, Garret recalled:

“We began to set up, well, we call it internal education programs, where we would meet at my house or someone else’s house and we would talk about ourselves, seeking identity and stuff like that. A lot of folks didn’t even know they

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53 Orrick 81.
54 Orrick 81. Rojas 50-51.
were black. A lot of people just thought that they were Americans. Didn’t feel themselves that they were black people. We discussed that a great deal…”

Through these “internal educations programs”—including a trip to Black communities in Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia, organized by Garret “to let them see what was happening”—the group was transformed. “I started pushing people on the issues…[and] they began to settle down to work projects, different kinds of projects, like how [to] cut racism in different areas of campus.” Internally, the group changed their name to reflect their new political orientation. After weeks of debate the Negro Student Association was renamed the Black Student Union—originally suggested by Tricia Navara. The BSU consisted mostly of the same members as its preceding NSA, but under the leadership of Jimmy Garret and others the BSU would became “the most powerful pressure group on campus.” Thus began the first Black Student Union in 1966.

With its new name and guiding philosophy, the BSU continued its discussion meetings and these led a wide slate of organizing programs. One was a tutorial program that taught reading and writing to mostly Black, low income youth in San Francisco. In 1964, a group of mostly White students started the program in the poverty stricken Fillmore neighborhood with funds from the university. It was “born partly from the frustration of disillusioned liberal whites who had begun to see that there was as

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56 Orrick 81. Rojas 53.
57 Orrick 81.
58 Rojas 53.
59 Whiting 2. Karagueuzian 41.
60 Karagueuzian 41.
much wrong on the civil-rights front at home as there was in the South."\(^{61}\) However, by 1966, the BSU would take over the program.

Many of the White tutors were discouraged by racial and experiential barriers that hampered their teaching of the Black youth and their interactions with the larger community, and therefore felt the program might be better run by Black students.

The whites would come away “frustrated at the length of time it took them to relate to a black person,” recalled [BSU ally, Roger] Alvarado. Those who kept trying, though, gradually became aware of a whole cluster of problems…A child just would not seem to be able to concentrate, and it might take the tutor several weeks to establish enough confidence for the youngster to explain that he was hungry every morning, or that he had broken his glasses the month before.\(^{62}\)

In addition, the BSU felt it should run the program following the ideals of Black self-determination and community empowerment. Ben Stewart, another BSU leader, added: “We entered this project with the position that since 85 percent of the children tutored are black, then the tutors should be predominately black and in fact control the tutorial project.”\(^{63}\) Reiterating the concerns about Black self-esteem and positive color consciousness, Garret explained the impression “that white people working with black children makes it that much more difficult for black kids to get a positive image of themselves.”\(^{64}\) Therefore, in 1966 the tutorial program would move under the leadership of the Black Student Union, however many White students would continue to

\(^{61}\) Orrick 82.
\(^{62}\) Orrick 84, 100.
\(^{63}\) Orrick 86.
\(^{64}\) Orrick 85.
tutor in program. And over the following years the program would grow to twenty-two centers serving "nearly 500 black children;" the centers would also provide a meeting place for aspiring writers and a social space for other Black youth.\textsuperscript{65} This community service aspect of the BSU discredits the accusation that Black Power organizations did not serve local communities.

Like the Black Panthers, the BSU concentrated their community organizing in tough inner-city neighborhoods and established connections there. As Jerry Varnado, a founding BSU member at SFSC, described: "Having the name Black Student Union, we were not afraid to go to Hunters Point...We tried to recruit students to come to college. We wanted them to join the BSU also, but the primary reason was for them to get an education."\textsuperscript{66} Outreach efforts like these were central to the BSU’s purpose and illuminate its retention of the organizing tradition. However, the tutoring program was not the full extent of the Black Student Union’s community service. The BSU developed “Negro history and culture groups at three high schools in the area.”\textsuperscript{67} The BSU was also a part of a community organization called Western Addition Community Organization (WACO), which “formed to help coordinate the fight against San Francisco’s hotly contested urban-renewal plan that pushed out low-income blacks to make room for middle-class housing.”\textsuperscript{68} Counter to the dominant narrative, we find ample evidence of the BSU actively investing time and resources into the San Francisco Black community.

\textsuperscript{65} Karagueuzian 111. Orrick 83.
\textsuperscript{66} Whiting 3.
\textsuperscript{67} Orrick 87.
\textsuperscript{68} Orrick 97.
On campus, the BSU’s main focus was establishing a Black Studies program. And, practically from its inception, the BSU worked toward this goal by creating courses in San Francisco State’s Experimental College. This was a program funded by the school that allowed students to create and offer classes of their own. Through the Experimental College, the BSU would eventually develop the first interdisciplinary Black Studies undergraduate major. This began with a course called “The Negro in America” taught by Robert Coleman, which covered American history and the Black Power Movement. Between 1966 and 1968, numerous other classes were added covering writing, social studies, literature, art, music and politics.

The BSU worked to establish this Black Studies program to address “the need for an educational program that was relevant to urban Black communities.” This argument for relevant education for Black students meant curriculum that would address “their specific history of racial oppression.” As reflected in the Black Studies program created, this would include courses intended to encourage an understanding and appreciation of Black history and culture, and courses on contemporary social developments like the Black Power Movement—all of which were generally not offered in the standard curriculum.

As they developed their Black Studies program, the BSU worked to have it implemented into the official college structure between 1966 and 1968, but was

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69 Rojas 58.
70 Rojas 61.
71 Rojas 62-63.
72 Rojas 53.
frustrated by the school unresponsive bureaucracy. Dean Joseph White, one of the Black administrators who worked closely with the BSU, described what happened.

The students had to run from committee to committee. They have this very innovative thing, or what they consider is an innovative proposal, and no one to carry the ball for them. There was no one on the faculty who could cut through the tape. So you have some students like Bennie Stewart who since they were sophomores have been going to committee after committee trying to articulate why black studies—only to wind up before the one they started with. It was frustrating, and gives you an idea of how the system runs you around.74

Due to these mounting frustrations, the Black Student Union issued President Robert Smith a list of ten demands On November 5, 1968, the first of which was the creation of a Department of Black Studies.75 Another one of the demands addressed the suspension of George Murray, a Black graduate student, BSU member and Black Panther who had earned the contempt of the administration. In particular, Murray was suspended for instigating a fight between the BSU and the staff of the student newspaper, the Gater.

“Some said it was related to the just-ended homecoming queen election in which the BSU-sponsored candidate lost by 10 votes amid charges, later proven, that 40 votes had disappeared…The Gater itself speculated later than an article written by Editor Jim Vaszko…the previous semester may have created much of

74 Orrick 109.
75 Rojas 1.
the hostility. It was a satirical spoof of the Heavyweight Champion Muhammad Ali.\textsuperscript{76}

Further complicating things, Jimmy Garret later said: “We didn’t expect to fight. Nobody went there to fight. The fight was spontaneous.”\textsuperscript{77} Regardless of the immediate cause, the fight resulted in the suspension of George Murray. Murray was very popular for his activism and teaching, therefore his dismissal was another catalyst for the confrontation.

President Smith refused to agree to all of the demands, therefore the BSU initiating a student strike on November 6. The student strike at San Francisco State College was the longest student protest of the 1960s.\textsuperscript{78} Shortly after the strike’s inception the BSU was joined by the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF), a coalition of other minority student groups that supported the BSU’s goals. Additionally, the TWLF added a few demands of its own, mostly centering on the creation of a College of Ethnic Studies with departments representing various racial-ethnic groups on campus.\textsuperscript{79} In a few weeks, the faculty also joined the students on the picket lines, unhappy over long simmering labor disputes about pay, benefits and workload.\textsuperscript{80} Many of the faculty also felt the suspension of Murray for his statements amounted to a violation of faculty free speech and shared governance. A resolution of the Executive Council of the American Federation of Teachers, the faculty union at SFSC, stated:

\textsuperscript{76} Orrick 113.
\textsuperscript{77} Orrick 113.
\textsuperscript{78} Karaguenzian 2. Whiting 3. Yamane 13.
\textsuperscript{79} Rojas 69.
\textsuperscript{80} Rojas 48-49. Rooks 33.
Recognizing the validity of many of the grievances of the Black Student Union, and recognizing the extreme violation of all due process and right governance of an academic community, as indicated by Chancellor [Glenn] Dumke’s dictatorial action with regard to George Murray, we therefore support the strike presently called for…and we call of the resignation of Chancellor Dumke, who has proven himself no longer a reputable member of the academic community.  

Thus, the strike would eventually get wide support from students and faculty. “Eighty percent of the 18,000 students” would come to support the strike, largely due to the violent repression and indiscriminate arrests of student activists and bystanders. 

From November 1968 to March 1969, SFSC was occupied by the police on a continual basis, with the daily police presence between two hundred and six hundred. “By the end of the strike, more than seven hundred people were arrested on campus. Over eighty students were injured by police in the process of their arrest, and hundreds more were beaten with police batons, dragged, punched, and slapped, but not arrested.” Some protesters also used violence, injuring thirty-two police men, setting fires, and exploding bombs on campus.

After five months of sit-ins, marches, rallies, and police beatings the strike ended in compromise on March 21, 1969. The strike was brought to an end by the maneuvering of President Robert Smith’s successor, President S. I. Hayakawa, who

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81 Karagueuzian 128.  
82 Rooks 34.  
83 Karagueuzian 8. Orrick 41.  
84 Rooks 34.  
85 Rooks 34.  
86 Rooks 34.  
87 Yamane 14.
undermined the strike with new policies that permitted mass arrests and the expulsion of contentious students. Hayakawa also gained leverage by hiring new administrators who would implement his harsh policies and suspending the student newspaper, the Gator, which had become staffed by allies of the BSU/TWLF.\(^88\) Furthermore, a major obstacle to negotiation was removed with the parole violation of George Murray, found to have two guns in his car during a traffic stop, which meant he was headed for jail and his reinstatement into San Francisco State was moot.\(^89\)

While the compromise meant administrators brought an end to the strike, what student activists got out of it was the creation of a College of Ethnic Studies—which is still the only such college in the nation.\(^90\) For Black students, the strike led to the creation of a Black Studies Department, increased enrollment of Black students, and additional financial aid assistance.\(^91\) The BSU/TWLF strike made a huge impact on SFSC; moreover it inspired students all over the country and led to a wave of new Black Studies programs across the country.\(^92\)

Not long after the Black Students at San Francisco State College formed the first Black Student Union, the organizing was adopted at other colleges and universities. The BSU strategy was particularly suited to create a base for Black student power at predominately White institutions because it created leverage by fostering links between Black college students and local Black communities. With these ties the Black Student Unions could bring pressure from Black students and local Black residents to push

\(^{88}\) Rojas 85-86.  
\(^{89}\) Rojas 85.  
\(^{90}\) Whiting 1.  
\(^{91}\) Rojas 81, 86.  
\(^{92}\) Karagueuzian 192.
university administrators to address their concerns. Leveraging multiple sources of influence and threatening the institution’s public image gave the BSU much greater bargaining power than they would have had otherwise. This effective approach was especially suited for predominately White institutions because it did not require a large population of Black students, and thus was widely applicable to colleges and universities throughout California and beyond.

**Dissertation Significance and Outline**

This introductory chapter covered two subjects that form the basis for this dissertation project. The first discussion engaged the historiography of the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements in order to identify and complicate dominant characteristics of historiography on the 1960s. Special attention was given to conventional notions of the Black Power Movement as counterproductive and destructive, as well as the emerging scholarship that is challenging this assessment. The second discussion provided a brief account of the first Black Student Union chapter at San Francisco State. Founded in 1966, this organization was a direct forbearer to the BSU chapters in Washington State, discussed in the following chapters. Both these discussions—dominant constructions of Black Power and Civil Rights, and the origins of the Black Student Union—provide constructive base for the coming discussion of the Black Student Union in the Northwest.

The following chapters will continue this narrative of the Black Student Union, describing the BSUs that would emerge at the University of Washington (UW) and
Washington State University (WSU) between 1967 and 1970. As we will see, the BSUs at the UW and WSU led major protest efforts that confronted institutional racism and resulted in substantial reforms. While uncovering little known history about student protest and Black history in the Northwest, this dissertation continues to advance larger assertions about the Black Power Movement. Building off the argument discussed above, this project supports a more nuanced understanding of the Black Power that recognizes its wide influence, productivity and complexity.

Given the coming focus on Black college students in the Northwest, some might wonder about this work’s larger significance. It is not hard to imagine how this project would appeal to individuals connected to the University of Washington and Washington State University—be it students, faculty, staff or alumni—because of its focus on those universities. This research would also likely draw interest from African Americans who live or have lived in the Northwest, be they connected to the universities or not, as well as anyone interested in Northwest Black history, because it provides insights into the Black freedom struggle in that region. But, what about a larger audience? Why might someone from a different region find this project useful?

One answer to this has already been outlined above, and that is how this project contributes to a multilayered understanding of 1960s Black political struggles. This project concurs with and extends scholarship on Black Power, Civil Rights, and broader historiography on the 60s by illuminating the interconnections between the Civil Rights and Black Power politics—and extending this research to the Northwest. In addition, this project is applicable to researchers of youth activism because it provides accounts
of college students organizing for social reform, and it comments on studies of higher education by examining how institutions can respond to challenges and enact reforms.

On another level, this work on Black students in Seattle and Pullman contributes to the field of African American Studies by charting the lives of African Americans in spaces commonly constructed as outside the norm for Black Americans. Without a doubt, locations like Oakland, Chicago, or Atlanta deserve extensive study because of their large Black populations and for the notable events that happened there. However, these locations do not encompass the full extent of the Black experience in the United States.

To take these cities, or any other location, as the extent of Black existence would fall into the analytically limited pattern of privileging certain notions of an authentic or essential Blackness. Many scholars have written about the shortcomings of essentialized notions of Blackness and how such parochial constructions marginalize African Americans who do not fit within assumed norms. For example, Michael Eric Dyson wrote:

> While historical memory permits the identification of characteristics of black culture that make it singular and unto itself, historical experience—which is generated and shaped by black cultural renewal and decay, and the ongoing encounter by black culture with new social and cultural forces that impact its future—provides a basis to resist essentialist modes of expression...While one may cherish black cultural norms, values and ideals—or even wish to protect them from rejection, irrelevance, or extinction—such desires must not be realized
through appeals to an unvarying racial or cultural essence that remains unaffected by vicissitude or change.\^93

As Dyson is saying, we can and should acknowledge common patterns for African Americans, but we should not do so in a way that privileges essentialist constructions of Blackness that are unvarying or static. Extending this argument, we should also resist similar racialized constructions of social space, such as the assumption that Black experiences in Montgomery or New York are more valuable than Black experiences in Seattle or Pullman. As we open our analysis to the potential for all Black lives to offer insights into African American Studies, we should also recognize the variety of geographies wherein Black people have lived and thrived. All locations that witnessed compelling events involving Black Americans deserve to be studied because doing so will ensure the most thorough and inclusive understandings of the African American past and present. With the details described in the coming chapters, we will see that Pullman and Seattle are among the many locations of noteworthy Black struggle.

The next chapter will center on Washington’s first Black Student Union, its early activities at the University of Washington (UW), and the larger Black political context that both impacted and was impacted by the BSU at the UW. From Seattle the BSU would emerge at Washington State University (WSU), which is the topic of chapters 3, 4, and 5. Chapter 3 describes the beginning of the BSU at WSU, as well as the Black student activism that preceded it. Chapter 4 describes the BSU’s successful 1968-1969

campaign for Black Studies, and chapter 5 recounts the legal and social turmoil the BSU faced following a fight between members and a White fraternity. Finally, chapter 6 concludes this project by analyzing past and present BSUs, and putting BSU history in dialogue with contemporary theory in American Studies and Cultural Studies.

Regarding historical and contemporary BSU’s, I argue that changes in the social-political climate has limited and shaped BSUs since the early 70s. Whereas many Black college students of the late-60s arrived on campus with organizing skills and a social consciousness, most African Americans students of today do not because there is no longer a discursive space that supports such overt political organizing. In relation to Cultural and American Studies theory, we will consider how Mark Anthony Neal’s concept of post-soul is reflected in BSU history, as members encountered the alienation of White dominated spaces that is endemic to the post-soul condition. By uncovering new historical research, complicating conventional narratives, and discussing the work of cultural theorists, this project embodies the interdisciplinary principles of American Studies.
CHAPTER 2

THE BLACK STUDENT UNION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

In November of 1967, thirty-five Black youth from Seattle boarded a charter bus and traveled to Los Angeles, California, where they attended the Western Regional Black Youth Conference, held during Thanksgiving weekend. At this historic conference, the Seattle delegation was introduced to the Black Panther Party, Ron Karenga’s US organization, and interacted with prominent Black Power advocates like Angela Davis, Stokely Carmichael, and James Forman. Perhaps most influential of all, the group attended a workshop led by the Black Student Union (BSU) at San Francisco State College, and were inspired to establish their own BSU back home. Once they returned to Seattle, the young activists began a campaign that would have major impacts throughout Seattle, the State of Washington, and the Northwest.

This chapter tells the history of the BSU at the University of Washington (UW). In addition to its local impact, the BSU’s establishment at the UW was noteworthy because it ushered into the region what Ibram Roger termed the “Black Student Movement.”

…This struggle among black student nationalists at historically white and black institutions to reconstitute higher education from 1965 to 1972 has been termed the Black Campus Movement. Even though [early 60s Black activism off-campus and late 60s activism on campus] both tend to be conceptually located in what is widely known as the Black Student Movement, this late 1960’s black power

95 Collisson, The Fight 25.
campus struggle represented a profound ideological, tactical, and spatial shift…”

The BSU at the UW was the pivotal point of connection between the Black college students in Washington State and the larger Black Campus Movement, responding to both local and national circumstances. Give its crucial role in connecting activists and inspiring action across the Northwest, it is the historical lynchpin for this narrative. To begin its story, the next section will examine the racial climate in Seattle and the context for the BSU’s emergence. Then, the narrative will discuss the BSU’s actions at the UW and larger influence.

The Black Freedom Struggle in Seattle during the 1960s

When the BSU reached the UW, Seattle had already witnessed a substantial period of Civil Rights agitation, particularly in the 1960s. However, beginning in the aftermath of World War II, Seattle featured civil rights agitation by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

Locally, the NAACP had attempted to change segregated housing patterns and discriminatory hiring practices, negotiating with Safeway [grocery store] in the late 1940s for a few jobs for Negroes and proposing a city open-housing

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ordinance in 1961 with no success. To support student lunch counter sit-ins in the South, the Seattle NAACP organized picketing at the downtown Woolworth.\textsuperscript{97} Despite the modest civil rights efforts of the 40s and 50s by the NAACP and others, the most outstanding phase of Civil Rights action in Seattle began with the formation of CORE (Congress of Racial Equality). After an unsuccessful attempt in 1957, CORE was established in Seattle in 1961, inspired by the Southern Civil Rights Movement, and especially the Freedom Rides.\textsuperscript{98} “Even in the northwest corner of America we heard the call for action and a plea to join the Freedom Riders, to fill the jails, to work to end the violence and to end segregation.”\textsuperscript{99} During the summer and fall of 1961, Seattle CORE began working toward these goals.

Their first action was to collect donations and send to the South volunteers who wanted to join the Freedom Rides. Between July and August, they sent three young men to Mississippi. The first was Ray Cooper, a twenty year old White resident of Seattle’s University District. Once he arrived in Jackson, Cooper was immediately arrested and served forty-seven days in Parchman Farm Penitentiary, returning to Seattle in the fall to become an active CORE member.\textsuperscript{100} The second Freedom Rider from Seattle was an Indonesian exchange student at the UW named Widjonarko Tjokroadismarto; he was also arrested on arrival but was spared prison time because he was the son of a diplomat and had diplomatic immunity. He also returned to Seattle,

\textsuperscript{98} Singler et al. 17.
\textsuperscript{99} Singler et al. 15-16.
\textsuperscript{100} Singler et al. 16, 18-19.
and would speak about his experience at many CORE events. The final person was Jon Schaefer who grew up in Seattle’s elite, all-white, gated community of Broadmoor. In the South, Schaefer received the same treatment as Ray Cooper, but decided to stay in the South to work in other CORE projects like Freedom Highways.

As they supported the national CORE campaign in the South, the group was being organizing in Seattle. In the summer of 1961, Seattle CORE launched a membership drive that reached out to likeminded individuals, church groups, University faculty and students, and organizations. Then in October, CORE led a Selective Buying Campaign directed at Safeway. After extensive investigations, CORE found that Safeway was one of the city’s most discriminatory businesses, despite the previous promises the chain had made to the NAACP. “Of the more than 1,700 Safeway employees in King County [in 1961], only 6 were Black,” yet the supermarket depended of Black consumers, especially in the predominately African American Central District.

After negotiations with Safeway officials proved unfruitful, CORE held a boycott of Safeway on October 27 and 28. Protesters held a picket line in front of two locations and urged shoppers to take their business elsewhere during the protest. In response to this unprecedented protest action, Safeway agreed “to open a branch employment office” in the Central District and hired five new Black workers. CORE would continue put pressure on Safeway, and in little over a year the number of Black employees would

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101 Singler et al. 20-23.
102 Singler et al. 37.
increase to twenty-eight.\textsuperscript{103} CORE’s activism ushered in new phase direct action protests in Seattle, and led the civil rights community in a new direction of mass action.

As CORE expanded its Selective Buying Campaign to other businesses, their activism led to the creation of the Central Area Civil Rights Committee (CACRC), a coalition organization that united the most active civil rights organizations in the city. It was led by Walter Hundley of CORE, Charles V. Johnson of the NAACP, Edwin Pratt of the Urban League, and Rev. John Adams of the First African Methodist Episcopal Church.\textsuperscript{104} From 1962 to 1969, the CACRC would be at the forefront of racial reform efforts in Seattle, with Rev. Adams as its spokesman, leading campaigns to address police brutality as well as discrimination in housing, education and employment.\textsuperscript{105} This dynamic network of civil rights activists and organizations provided a crucial foundation for the Black Student Union.

Many Black youth were politicized by these Civil Rights efforts, including at least one who would later take a leadership role in the BSU. Gary Owens, who participated in CORE organizing as a teenager and helped to protests employment discrimination in the early 60s, would eventually ascend into BSU leadership. Owens recalled:

“Before I got out of high school I had been attracted to some of the stuff people were doing in this area. They had a group called CORE... they basically were trying to take their lead from some of the things going on in the South and saying that those kind of things happen in the North, but not the same way. So I got

\textsuperscript{103} Singler et al. 42-45.


\textsuperscript{105} Richardson 81-82.
involved in some the demonstrations they had downtown actually demanding that the private sector hire more Black people.”

After high school, Owens was drafted into the military and did not return to Seattle until 1967. Soon after his return, he enrolled at the University of Washington and joined the Black Student Union. Owens would later adapt a Black Power perspective, but his early experience with CORE was the beginning of his political activism, illustrating how many Black Power advocates had strong ties with the Civil Rights Movement. Moreover, we see here how the Black Student Union grew out of earlier Black protests in Seattle.

In addition to this Civil Rights community, the Black Student Union would also be connected to a cadre of Black Power organizations that emerged in the latter 1960s. Interestingly, a Black Power/Black Nationalist presence in Seattle can be traced back to the post-WWI period when Marcus Garvey visited in 1919 and 1924 and local African Americans establishment of two branches of the United Negro Improvement Association. Later, in 1961, a Seattle branch of the Nation of Islam was established. But, as in many other Black communities around the country, Black Power and Black Nationalism took on much greater visibility in the second half of the 60s.

In 1967, reflecting nationalist shifts, the Seattle chapter of CORE adapted a Black Nationalist philosophy. At the national CORE conference that year, “the definition of CORE as a ‘multiracial’ organization was replaced by ‘CORE is a mass membership


organization to implement the concept of Black Power for Black People.”

This late-1960s shift in CORE, both nationally and in Seattle, reflected a larger shift happening in Black America as many activists, especially younger ones, grew to question the goals and tactics of the Civil Rights Movement. Individuals like Malcolm X, Robert F. Williams, and Gloria Richardson had publicly questioned the efficacy of non-violence and integration as far back as the 1950s, but it was not until the latter 60s when views like theirs began to dominate Black political thought—especially following the assassination of Martin Luther King.

At a Black Power forum held in Seattle’s Mount Zion Baptist Church in May of 1967, several speakers “indicated a growing mood for Negro self-determination in political, educational, economic and housing affairs in the central area.” Carl Miller, who would later become a principle leader in the Black Student Union, said: “Young people feel leaders don’t speak for them and they don’t have a voice. When you can’t get jobs or housing, it leaves a feeling of anger and frustration.” Miller’s statement about jobs and housing points to the limited reforms won by Civil Rights groups, both nationally and locally. For instance, in 1964, the CACRC was unable to get passed an ordinance against housing discrimination, even with an extensive organizing campaign.

Also, Seattle’s Civil Rights community was never able to force local trade unions to reform their policies and enable working-class Blacks to acquire well paid

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108 Singler et al. 200.
111 Singler et al. 8-9.
manufacturing jobs, despite several campaigns against employment discrimination. An Urban League report from June 30, 1968 found that “while unemployment was declining for blacks, those employed tended to be concentrated in the lowest paying and least secure jobs—‘still the last to be hired and the first to be fired.” Therefore, CORE, the NAACP and other Civil Rights groups only produced limited success notwithstanding their years of hard work. As the statement by Miller alludes, these limited reforms were a significant contributor to the growing popularity of Black Power in Seattle, making the city a conducive environment for the Black Student Union to take hold.

One event in particular contributed to the growth of Black Power in Seattle and that was a visit to the city by Stokely Carmichael on April 19, 1967. That day, Carmichael spoke to packed audiences at Garfield High School and the University of Washington. At that time, Carmichael was nationally known as the former chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating and one of the leading advocates of “Black Power.” During his inspiring speeches, he outlined the meaning of Black Power stating: “We must organize black community power to end abuses and to give the Negro community a chance to have its needs addressed.” After Carmichael’s visit young African-Americans began to see their struggle in new ways.

112 Richardson 255.
113 Taylor 214.
Many whites received Carmichael words with contempt and saw Black Power as synonymous with violent revolt, some even tried to prevent Carmichael from speaking at all.\textsuperscript{117} Two weeks before the eventual speech, the Seattle School Board refused a request to rent the Garfield Auditorium, claiming that “if Mr. Carmicheal is permitted to speak a danger will be created in this community” and his appearance would “have an adverse effect upon their program to achieve in Garfield High School a better proportion of white and black students.” American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) lawyers Raymond E. Brown and Michael H. Rosen filed suit against the School Board in King County Superior Court and won a court order to let Carmichael speak. In his decision, Judge Frank D. James stated that the Board’s concern for danger was understandable but said: “What, in my judgment, the School Board has overlooked is the fact that the greater danger to the public would be the judicial sanction to their exercise of prior restraint upon Mr. Carmichael’s constitutionally guaranteed right to speak, even though the things which he may say may be very offense to most of us.” Hence, the Judge only ruled against the School Board because of his commitment to civil liberties, not because he felt Carmichael has something valuable to say.

With hindsight, one can see that this effort at White censorship actually proffered further evidence of Carmichael’s Black Power argument: that White people were too accustomed to holding power of Blacks and that African Americans needed to control their own institutions if they were to improve their collective social status. For many

African Americans who heard him speak Carmichael’s visit was a transformative moment, inspiring them to reassess the Black political struggle and their own identities.

…It had a profound impact on the entire Black community of Seattle I was told because I was in Harlem at this time. My friends when I got back said they all went into Garfield on that morning that he spoke referencing each other as Negroes and after he spoke that night and they went back to Garfield and Franklin the next morning all of them referenced themselves as Black and were very proud to be such, and start talking about Black Power immediately. That’s the impact that he had on the two thousand mostly Black people assembled at Garfield in that evening.118

Concurring in a 1968 newspaper article, Eddie Demmings said: “[Carmichael] had something we could identify with. He told us that things could no longer stay the same.”119 Carmichael’s visit in the spring of 1967 ignited Seattle’s Black Power Movement.

By the end of 1968, the network of Black Power organizations established in the city included a CORE and the Black Panther Party, as well as the homegrown organizations like the Central Area Committee for Peace and Improvement (CAPI) and the Seattle Central Area Registration Program.120 Furthermore, these groups did not merely talk about making change, but actually made significant impacts on local racial politics. For example, in the summer of 1967 CAPI organized a tour of the Central Area

118 “Larry Gossett [Interview],” Seattle.
120 Taylor 219-221.
for Governor Dan Evans to show him the need for social services in the community. As a result, Gov. Evans agreed to create a multiservice center in the area that would provide health, employment, and public assistance offices.\(^{121}\) Hence, Black Power organizations were making a tangible impact.

**The Black Student Union Comes North**

As the 1967-68 school year got underway, Black students at the University of Washington recognized the need to challenge the school’s institutionally racist practices, which in their mind was reflected by their small numbers. “At the time, the University had only one African American professor, and of the 32,000 students enrolled, only 4 percent were students of color. Nonwhite staff were concentrated in the most unskilled jobs.”\(^{122}\) In addition to this institutional discrimination, the approximately two hundred African American students on campus also experienced individual hostility from some of their White counterparts. BSU member Emile Pitre, who enrolled at the University in the fall of 1967, recalled this experience. “I was walking across campus one day and a student in braces said, ‘ Everywhere I go you damned niggers are here.’”\(^{123}\)

The combination of this campus climate, Seattle’s Civil Rights Movement, and Stokely Carmichael’s visit fostered a political awareness amongst several Black

\(^{121}\) Taylor 220.


students on campus and motivated them to organize. There was one Black student organization on campus at that time called the Afro-American Student Society. It was established in 1966 by Dan Keith and Onye Akwari\textsuperscript{124} to encourage dialogue and understanding between Black Americans and Black Africans.\textsuperscript{125} Given that this group was not politically oriented, student-activists like Carl Miller began organizing off-campus. In the events surrounding Carmichael’s appearance, a Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee chapter emerged and Miller was the group’s Housing Committee Chairman. During the summer and fall this SNCC group did not undertake any major campaigns, but did organize a community forum co-sponsored by the Seattle Council of Churches, which included SNCC speakers and Rev. John Adams, head of the Central Area Civil Rights Committee.\textsuperscript{126}

Seattle SNCC would also play a key role in the founding of the Black Student Union at the University of Washington. Toward the fall, Seattle SNCC received information from the Los Angeles chapter about a Western Regional Black Youth Conference happening in LA over Thanksgiving weekend, and the Seattle group was urged to attend. Accepting the invitation, Seattle SNCC arranged for thirty-five Black youth—college and high school students—to attend the conference, held in LA’s

\textsuperscript{124} Dan Keith was African-American and Onye Akwari was Nigerian.
\textsuperscript{126} Smith, “Black-Power” p3.
Second Avenue Baptist Church. The Black Student Union at the University of Washington would begin at this conference.

Organized by Professor Harry Edwards, the conference featured two-hundred participants from across the West Coast representing various political philosophies within the Black Power Movement: Black Nationalists, Cultural Nationalists, and others.

It was at that conference that we first got exposed to and met brothers from and sisters from the newly formed Black Power organization in Oakland, California that was calling itself the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. We had not heard of it before we went to that conference. It was at that conference that we met really strong, articulate Black men and women from San Francisco State University and UCLA who had begun forming Black Student Unions on their campuses, at both the college and high school level. It was at that youth conference that we met, met up with Stokely Carmichael and James Forman...[Forman] ran workshops on building grassroots community organizations at this conference. It was at that conference that we met a group of very cultural nationalist oriented youth who called themselves US, u-s, US and they were headed by Maulana Ron Karenga who was the creator of the, of Kwanza.
Another historic feature of this conference was a discussion to boycott the 1968 Olympic Games, put forth by Dr. Harry Edwards. Prominent Black athletes like Kareem Abdul-Jabbar (then known as Lew Alcindor) attended the conference and their discussions eventually led to a slew of Olympic protests, the most notorious of which was when sprinters Tommie Smith and John Carlos gave the Black Power salute on an awards podium.131

This was an extraordinary conference for Black youth leaders from across the West Coast, offering a plethora of networking and educational opportunities. Yet, for the University of Washington students in attendance, the conference’s most noteworthy impact was their introduction to the Black Student Union program. As mentioned above, students from San Francisco State and UCLA presented the BSU concept and expressed the need for others to establish their own BSUs across the country. The Seattle students were deeply impressed by this message and decided to follow the example of their California mentors.132

By the end of that conference we had made a commitment to go back to Oregon and Washington and organize Black Student Unions… That was a very, very important conference and the thirty of us were very excited when we got back to Seattle and began to talk about what we were going to do to build a Black Power Movement in our home community.133

132 Robinson 2.
133 “Larry Gossett [Interview],” Seattle.
In a broad analysis, the Black Student Union can be thought of as a program or movement because of the central goals and tactics that unified the students. As the young Black Seattleites learned, “the primary mission of Black Student Unions was to serve black students’ needs on university campuses, to initiate community service projects, and organize BSUs in high schools and junior highs.”

Contrary to the notion that Black Power activists abandoned local community concerns, the imperative to work with Black youth and become interwoven into local communities was foundational to the BSU’s approach.

We were specifically asked on the weekend Thanksgiving 1967 at this conference if we would not just focus on college campuses, that we have to become rooted in the black community, so we had to organize Black students at the high school and junior high level. And we had a commitment to do that; [and we] began to do a blueprint on how to do it at this conference.

The commitment to local organizing within the foundation of the BSU movement is important to note because it counters dominant constructions of Black Power activists as outside and contrary to the community organizing tradition.

Once the group returned to Seattle, a Black Student Union immediately began to materialize at the University of Washington. The new BSU chapter in Seattle was also part of the Western Region Alliance of Black Student Unions, which was initially headed by Jimmy Garret at San Francisco State and included over sixty BSU’s by the end of 1968. This loose confederation offered no central command structure and each chapter

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134 Robinson 2.
135 “Larry Gossett [Interview],” Seattle.
was completely independent, but “BSUs wrote letters to support the struggles of the other Unions in the confederacy, shared local campus newsletters and newspapers, and occasionally traveled to other BSU chapters to provide additional leadership or participate as protesters.” Thus, the Western Regional Alliance of BSUs functioned like an informal communications and support network. Soon, the BSU at the UW held their first rally.

About a week after the conference, flyers appeared around campus announcing a new student group. “Black is beautiful!!!” proclaimed the placard next to an illustration of a black panther. The Black Student Union, “formerly: Afro-American Student Society,” would hold a rally “to inform people about the racist practices at San Francisco State.”

The campus rally was held on December 6. It was “timed to coincide with similar rallies on campuses up and down the West Coast.” As the flyer indicated, the purpose of the rally was to introduce the BSU and urge support for nine black San Francisco State students who were expelled following a fight with staff of their student newspaper, The Gater. “The [rally’s] speeches asked for support for the nine ‘soul brothers’ facing trial in San Francisco following expulsion from college for attacking the student editor for what they called ‘unfair, racist handling of black material.’” The BSU members at the rally included Carl Miller, Ernestine Rodgers, Eddie Walker, and Larry Gossett whose official title was Coordinator of Washington and Oregon Black Student Unions. The rally

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drew a crowd of about one-hundred mostly White students, who “contributed to a ‘defense fund’ of bail money for the San Francisco students.”

By the start of 1968, both the Afro-American Student Society and the Seattle chapter of SNCC merged into the Black Student Union, making the BSU one of the foremost Black youth organizations in the Northwest. As the UW’s Winter Quarter began in January the BSU would continue to assert itself on campus, beginning with a request for a blackboard in the student union building near an area the Black students typically congregated.

We went to the administration of the HUB [student union building] and we said we want a blackboard put up in the area where we sit together so we can communicate with the other Black students. And they did it, without any fuss or fight. And in a certain sense, as miniscule as that was, that was a very empowering act for us.

Although it may seem trivial, this symbolic and functional victory was an important step for the BSU, which they would continue to build on throughout the year. In February, the Black Student Union made its first appearance in the UW student newspaper, The Daily. The article, titled “New Black Image Emerging,” described the new organization and quoted several BSU members on the group’s philosophy and goals. Dan Keith, BSU president, explained that the group changed its name from Afro-American Student Society “because of a new-found awareness of the common goals

139 In Pursuit.
and problems of the non-white community.” Included in these goals were “to increase black student enrollment on campus” and push for a program of Black Studies.\(^{140}\)

“Today’s black students are defining for themselves what their cultural values will be,” said E. J. Brisker, vice president of the Black Student Union. “For this very reason we would like to see incorporated into the University a black curriculum of studies, a department planned, controlled, and influenced by the black community.”\(^{141}\)

The BSU also outlined their vision for Black Studies as an interdisciplinary departmental. “The BSU’s major proposal is the black curriculum on campus. Classes would be taught in black history, music, literature, and sociology. The BSU would like a department established like any other major area, with interdepartmental studies as well.” They also maintained that the classes would be open to White students. “The classes would be open to white students, stressed Brisker. ‘Right now the University tells us who we should admire, and what we should learn.’”\(^{142}\)

Overall, “The BSU hopes to form a power base from which to present certain demands to the university administration.”\(^{143}\) In addition, two other distinctive characteristics of the BSU were revealed in this article. The first was its multicultural nature. The piece confirmed that the BSU membership included “black students of American and African origin, as well as Indians and South Americans.”\(^{144}\) Although it was call the *Black* Student Union and always held central Black interests, the BSU also

\(^{140}\) Doctor 6.
\(^{141}\) Doctor 6.
\(^{142}\) Doctor 6.
\(^{143}\) Doctor 6.
\(^{144}\) Doctor 6.
welcomed members of other racial groups and, as we will see, advocated on their behalf. The second noteworthy characteristic mentioned in the article was the BSU’s potential for militancy. The BSU stated its intention to work in collaboration with University officials, but they warned of disruptive action if the administration was not cooperative. “[Larry] Gossett declared, ‘Our militancy is entirely dependent on the white reaction to the concrete proposals we make. It is the white communities’ responsibility.”

One aspect of BSU that the article did not reflect was the organization’s female membership. During the BSU’s first year there were about 20 core members and at least two of those members were black women: Verlaine Keith and Kathy Halley. Later, as the BSU gained notoriety their female membership would also increase. However, in a pattern that can be identified in many other political organizations of the 1960s, Keith, Halley and other BSU women did not make public statements or show up in news reports because they consciously took or were given supportive roles. Yet they were vital to the BSU’s activities: answering phones, writing official correspondences, setting up meetings, taking notes and managing other “nuts and bolts” work. Within a few years BSU women would take leadership roles, but throughout BSU history they were equal to their male counterparts in their passion and commitment to the movement.

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145 Doctor 7.
146 Larry Gossett, personal interview, 13 Apr 2004.
148 “Larry Gossett [Interview],” Seattle.
149 Mack 16.
Following the “New Black Image Emerging” article, the next day’s student paper included a statement written by the Black Student Union elaborating on the groups’ point of view.

Who needs “whitey?” Who really needs “whitey?”…”Whitey” is a “stuffed-shirt” administration. “Whitey” is that professor who at mid-quarter tells you your class behavior is antithetic to anything he calls interest, motivation, drive or intelligence, and this one really gets you, ‘cause he hardly knows your name. As a matter of fact, he never really know you at all!...You’re the only black student in the class, and you are simply fed up with this low-calorie bombardment so that your times away from the University become cherished, for then you can be alone. For many black students, even those who are afraid to admit it, this is a constant reality. Now is the time for the black student to become an integral part of the University scene.150

In contrast to the mitigated message contained in the previous day’s article, this message presumably came straight from the BSU and expressed the changing ethos of Black political rhetoric during the time. Following the example of Malcolm X and others, Black Power adherents embraced discourse that deliberately disregarded White notions of propriety. Doing so, insisting on expressing oneself freely without concern for currying the favor of Whites, reflected the shift toward Black self-esteem and empowerment. Moreover, it is also worth noting that these sentiments of the BSU, feeling isolated or overly scrutinized on campus, could have been written by Black

students at predominately White institutions today. Thus, the BSU’s activism was partly a response to the climate they found on campus.

Aside from their statements in the student newspaper, the BSU also sent a letter directly to UW President Charles Odegaard early in the year. In this letter, they called for more black professors, counselors, and teaching assistants; classes in Afro-American history, culture, and literature; African language courses; and a university program to encourage black students to graduate from college. In addition, they demanded positive steps be taken to eliminate racism in the athletic department, sorority and fraternity system, housing, and employment (both student and staff); and for the university to be a leader among Pacific Northwest colleges in initiating and sponsoring programs to improve conditions in the Black community. The BSU closed the letter by saying: “We feel the University of a thousand years does not need another thousand to determine action on these proposals. If you, Dr. Odegaard, do not act promptly, we shall use any means that we deem necessary to insure that freedom and justice prevail on this campus.”

During the first months of 1968, the BSU spearheaded other interrelated organizing efforts in addition to the public statements and letters previously described. One was an off-campus campaign to foster Black Student Unions at local high and junior high schools. The other was an on-campus effort to draw attention to the Eurocentric nature of the curriculum. Both of these projects would help the BSU build a base of support that they would later mobilize to strengthen their demands.

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151 Curtis 4.
Off-campus, the BSU at UW worked with youth in the middle and high school grades to create new BSU chapters. As discussed above, this type of outreach was a fundamental part of the BSU strategy. A paramount concern of the BSU movement was to maintain ties and build bridges between Black college students and Black communities. A central critique was that “historically black students in the United States have been separated from the black community, if not physically, mentally.”\textsuperscript{152} To avoid this, and to build a larger base of support, the BSU fostered relationships with younger Black students. This organizing effort was primarily orchestrated using the UWBSU members’ younger siblings who attend Seattle public schools. For example, BSU member Aaron Dixon’s brother, Elmer, when to Garfield High School, and Larry Gossett had a brother, Richard, at Franklin High School and a sister, Sharon, at Marshall Junior High.\textsuperscript{153}

Starting these high and junior high BSUs was no easily task however, as school officials initially refused permission for the groups. Elmer Dixon “later remembered that only after leading a strike where Garfield students refused to enter classrooms, did the school administration agree to recognize the BSU as an official student group.” Sharon Gossett remembered similar challenges as Marshall Junior High. There, “black students presented the administration with a petition calling for the creation of the BSU. The administration rejected the petition, telling student they did not need a BSU on campus.”\textsuperscript{154} Eventually public school BSUs were established at Marshall and all over

\textsuperscript{152} Colisson, The Fight 38.
\textsuperscript{153} Colisson, The Fight 31.
\textsuperscript{154} Colisson, The Fight 31.
Seattle, particularly in areas with a high proportion of African Americans due to Seattle’s segregated housing and schooling patterns.\footnote{Robinson 3}

In January, by the end of January we had organized BSU at Garfield, Franklin, Rainier Beach and Cleveland high schools. We had organized Black Student Unions at the junior high level at Washington, Meany, Asa Mercer, and Sharples. All, as you’ll note, inner-city. However, because High Point is out in West Seattle and a lot of Black students went to Chief Sealth; we had organized a Black Student Union at Chief Sealth high school too.\footnote{Larry Gossett [Interview], 
Seattle.}

Having established BSU all over Seattle, it was estimated that by March of 1968 the combined membership of BSUs throughout the city totaled around nine hundred youths.\footnote{Larry Gossett, personal interview, 23 Oct. 2003.} All of these BSU chapters were joined together in the Seattle Alliance of Black Student Unions (SABSU). “Alliance members…met as frequently as once a week to discuss how to confront the problems facing Seattle’s black students.”\footnote{Collisson, The Fight 30.} This substantial youth outreach by the UWBSU would provide an important link between them, local youth and the larger Black community. Getting children involved in a movement tends to impact their parents and extended family as well as the children themselves, so this youth mentoring was a savvy organizing tactic of the BSU.

Besides their outreach, the other significant campaign of the BSU during the winter and spring of 1968 was an effort to address what the members found to be an anti-Black bias within the UW curriculum. With their course subjects, reading materials,
and class discussions, BSU members were frustrated by the lack of inclusion or respect for Black writers, scientists, artists, etc. For example, Eddie Walker shared the following experience.

   My art professors told me there weren’t any Black artists of national merit. And I’m sitting up there saying one of you is missing because I got books listing African American artists of international repute and you’re going to sit up in this class and tell me that, and I’m paying to come here and get an education and you’re miseducating me. I’m upset.\textsuperscript{159}

   To challenge these curricular patterns the BSU first conducted a survey to demonstrate how the institution’s courses were biased against non-White people. The BSU found “that of the three thousand main course offerings in the Arts and Humanities, not only did no class deal with the Black experience but we couldn’t find one professor or instructor that used a book written by or about African Americans, Asians, Native Americans, or Latinos.”\textsuperscript{160} The study results reveal what Eddie Walker and the other members had already experienced, that the curriculum was dominated by information on Euro-Americans and neglected all others.

   Emboldened by their findings, the BSU chose to raise awareness of the Eurocentric curriculum and the need for Black Studies by interrupting University classes and holding teach-in protests. Members would prepare research beforehand and present Black history, literature, and other topics in UW classrooms. Larry Gossett and others would interrupt a class by saying: “This is an institutionally racist campus and the

\textsuperscript{159} \textit{In Pursuit.}
\textsuperscript{160} \textit{In Pursuit.}
curriculum is racist.” Then, if it was a Colonial American History class, members would say something like: “Ya’ll in here learning about old George Washington and Thomas Jefferson and calling them your forefathers. They might be your forefathers, but they were much more likely to be our Daddies, our slave owning Daddies.”\textsuperscript{161} This, of course, is drawing attention to the history of slave owners sexually abusing their female slaves and enslaving their part-African children.

Continuing their polemic, they would say, “They cannot be our forefathers and you need to ask these kinds of questions about whether or not they’re yours if their humanity did not include anything but white folks with property.” Then, they would offer their own heroes like Richard Allen, Peter Salem, Salem Poor, and Crispus Attucks who was “the first cat to die in the war to free the American Colonies from Britain.” Like Attucks, Salem and Poor were Black soldiers in the Revolutionary War, while Richard Allen was a religious and civil rights leader of the time.\textsuperscript{162} These types of interventions forged a curricular space for curriculum on African Americans were no such space previously existed. Although these teach-ins could reproduce other problematic social hierarchies like the male bias exhibited in this example, it was still a powerful challenge to the Eurocentric conventions that were foundational to America’s educational system.

These teach-ins facilitated four productive outcomes for the BSU. To begin, they created spectacles that would capture the attention of their target audience, White faculty and students. Two, they illustrated that the current curriculum omitted relevant information on Black people and needed to be augmented by Black Studies content.

\textsuperscript{161} “Larry Gossett [Interview],” Seattle.
\textsuperscript{162} “Larry Gossett [Interview],” Seattle.
Three, the teach-ins demonstrated that the BSU had a level of intelligence that matched their boldness, and that their criticisms were well thought-out and researched. As a result, a fourth productive result was these actions established a certain level of legitimacy for the BSU in the minds of Whites. Creating a reputation as both dramatic and insightful “helped the White students not be real hostile toward us when, by the time we had the sit-in…” These classroom demonstrations actually helped the BSU build larger a consensus for their demands, giving the group greater leverage when their campaign became more confrontational.

**BSU Further Radicalized, March through May 1968**

In the spring of 1968 a string of events motivated the BSU to take more aggressive measures. The first of these events was a student sit-in at Franklin High School on Friday, March 29, where an estimated one hundred students took over Principal Loren Ralph’s office and forced the school into early dismissal. At the head of the protest were Franklin BSU members Trolie Flavors and Charles Oliver, and University of Washington BSU members Aaron Dixon, Larry Gossett, and Carl Miller.

Sources differ on the direct cause of this demonstration. In numerous interviews, Larry Gossett maintains that the protest was ignited after school officials expelled two Black female students for wearing the “Natural” or Afro hairstyle.

“Gossett recalled Ralph told the young women that they can return to school when they

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163 “Larry Gossett [Interview],” Seattle.
learned to look more "ladylike". However, contemporary newspaper accounts hold that the protest followed the suspension of two Black male students after a hallway scuffle on March 28, a day before the protest. Reportedly, many Black students were angered that only Charles Oliver and Trolice Flavors were punished for the fight and the White student involved was not reprimanded. Undoubtedly, both events played a role in the conflict.

Given the documented prevalence of racial insensitivity at Franklin, it is likely that the suspension of the Black girls for their hair, the suspensions of the boys for the fight, the refusal to recognize the BSU, and other biased action on the part of school officials motivated the student sit-in. Certainly there is evidence that Franklin had significant race problems during this time, beyond these specific suspensions. In a *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* article that ran in June of that year, national racism critic, Edward P. Morgan identified Franklin as a "sick school." Yet, given Flavors and Oliver’s involvement in the Franklin BSU and their connection to Black UW students it is logical that their suspensions were a major catalyst for the sit-in.

After learning of his punishment, Trolice Flavors tried to speak with Principle Ralph about an additional penalty. Both Oliver and Flavors were suspended, but Flavors was also accused of "making a physical threat to Franklin Vice-Principal

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168 Gilbert 1.
169 “Larry Gossett [Interview],” *Seattle*.
Charles F. Shearer and was suspended immediately and indefinitely.\textsuperscript{171} As a senior, Flavors was concerned that this would leave him unable to graduate and tried to “negotiate his suspension and contest the alleged threat to Shearer.” When his efforts to speak with Ralph failed to remedy the situation, Flavors contacted Carl Miller of the UWBSU.\textsuperscript{172} Miller then contacted Dr. Eugene Elliot, Assistant to the UW President Odegaard, and asked him to try and arrange a meeting with Ralph the next day. Miller and the other BSU members hoped that with the help of the UW officials, Ralph could be persuaded to reinstate the suspended students.\textsuperscript{173}

By the following day, March 30, Principal Ralph had refused all offers for mediation, leaving the Franklin students few options to express their grievances. Knowing that the Franklin situation was growing tense Carl Miller, Larry Gossett and Aaron Dixon went to the school and found that the students wanted to “burn the school down.” “As reported in the \textit{Seattle Post-Intelligencer}, Dixon, Gossett and Miller instructed the students to gather at a local eatery called ‘The Beanery’ across the street from the school, to alleviate a potentially violent situation.”\textsuperscript{174} There, the UW and high school students formed a plan of action that would allow them to express their concerns without deliberately destroying school property.

\textsuperscript{171} Gilbert 1. 
\textsuperscript{172} Gilbert 1. 
\textsuperscript{173} Gilbert 2. 
\textsuperscript{174} Gilbert 2.
At 12:45 pm, one hundred students marched in to Ralph’s office chanting “Ungawa, Black Power!” Included within the group were approximately 40 non-Franklin students, who were mostly BSU members from other Seattle high schools.\textsuperscript{175}

They demanded, first and foremost, that Ralph immediately reinstate Trolice Flavors and Charles Oliver. Alongside this, the student’s made three other demands: 1) that a black administrator be hired at the high school level in the Seattle school system; 2) that an African American history class be taught at Franklin; and 3) that images of black heroes grace the school walls along with the other American historical figures already featured.\textsuperscript{176}

Ralph and his staff were caught off guard and did not know how to react; this was the first protest of its kind at any primary or secondary school in Seattle. At 1:45pm, after trying unsuccessfully to disperse the demonstration, Ralph cancelled all school activities for the rest of the day and evacuated the building. Next, Seattle Police officially closed the building and surrounded it with officers.\textsuperscript{177} The police also made preparations to storm the building.

Seattle responded by sending 65% of the police…to surround Franklin High School. They didn’t know how to deal with it. Can you imagine—a sit-in in Seattle? They said that stuff happens down south, not up here. So they said something must be wrong, some virus or something has infected our Negro youth. So, they sent most of the police. And at that time, Lowes [hardware

\textsuperscript{175} Gilbert 2. 
\textsuperscript{176} Gilbert 2. 
\textsuperscript{177} Gilbert 2-3.
store] …in Rainier Valley, that used to be Sicks Stadium, it was a baseball stadium in Seattle right below Franklin. So they mobilized the entire police force in the parking lot of Sicks Stadium. Can you imagine? It’s a baseball stadium so it had a big parking lot. So while we were sitting-in some of our people went down there and they got message back to us that it looked like the whole force was at Sicks Stadium ready to attack Franklin if you’ all don’t leave. And we said we’re not going to leave.178

Despite the ominous police presence, the protesters insisted on continuing their sit-in until their demands were addressed. Fortunately, some community leaders from the Central Area Motivating Program (CAMP) and staff of the Seattle Schools’ Intergroup Relations Office arrived and successfully deescalated the conflict. They persuaded the demonstrators to accept a proposal to meet the following Monday to discuss their demands and racial issues in Seattle schools. At 3:45pm, the students accept the offer and left the building.

That following Monday, April 1, the suspensions of Flavors and Oliver were reversed following a hearing at the Human Rights Commission because the Commission found “discrepancies in the testimony concerning the…suspensions.”179 However, School Superintendent Forbes Bottomly hinted at possible legal action against the protesters. “We want to be sure that the loitering ordinance is upheld and that the schools are protected from outsiders coming in and disrupting our schools.”180

178 “Larry Gossett [Interview],” Seattle.
179 Constantine Angelos, “Human-Relations Unit Urged Franklin High,” The Seattle Times 1 Apr. 1968: 3.
180 Larry Gossett [Interview],” Seattle. Gilbert 3.
Three days later Aaron Dixon, Larry and Richard Gossett, Carl Miller, and Trolice Flavors were arrested by Seattle Police and charged with unlawful assembly. Apparently in a coordinated effort, most of the arrests occurred between 8:30am and 9:30am on April 4.\(^{181}\)

The students’ arrest and detention in King County Jail also happened to take place on the day Martin Luther King was assassinated, a tragic event that set off Black outrage nationwide. Although many young Black activists questioned King’s philosophies of non-violence and moral suasion, his death was still seen as a major loss and caused great anguish. Moreover his killing, in spite of his own advocacy for non-violence, convinced many African Americans that White America would kill anyone who challenged US social structures, no matter how palatable that challenge might be.\(^{182}\) Moreover, King’s murder could be interpreted as signifying the great potential for social change embodied by King’s increasingly radical statements against “the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism.”\(^{183}\) Aaron Dixon recalled the impact of King’s murder on him and his peers. King’s death:

…began a series of riots and rebellions all across the country. And there were rebellions in Seattle that night as well. And the fact that Martin Luther King had been assassinated I think for me and for many, many other, not only Black people across the country but other young people across the country, it was a signal to us that it was, that no longer did we feel that peaceful demonstrations


\(^{182}\) Painter 328,330.

were going to work. That we were now going to look toward other methods of demonstrating and getting our point across.

King’s assassination marked a turning point for African Americans nationwide. However for the young men arrested following the Franklin sit-in, the event had an added significance because of their experience in jail. After the BSU members and other inmates learned of King’s death, there was initially a desire by some Blacks to attack their Whites fellow inmates. However, the BSU members prevented that from happening by leading all the inmates, Black and White, in a discussion of the day’s significance. “Dixon, Gossett, and Miller counseled against any violence, persuading the inmates that taking out their anger in a violent fashion would not honor Dr. King’s legacy. The BSU leaders decided to gather all the inmates and encourage them to talk about their personal problems and current world affairs.\textsuperscript{184}

Once the criminal justice authorities learned of these discussions happening in the jail, they expedited the arraignment hearing of the BSU leaders to prevent any such action from continuing.

…Later that night, the word go out [that] we were having discussions throughout the whole jail and by that morning the director of the King County Jail was demanding that the three of us get put out of jail. That had never happened, where the jail commander says: “Get this people out of this jail. They’re actually having prisoners talk and work with one another.” That was an outrageous thing

\textsuperscript{184} Gilbert 4.
to them, that prisoners would be talking about their own self-interests and what they could do collectively to exercise that.\textsuperscript{185}

This community building while in jail, the blatant suppression of social justice organizing, and bending of official rules to suit those in power, all demonstrated the immorality and hypocrisy of the White power-structure in America.

On April 5, all the BSU defendants—except for Richard Gossett, who was being processed separately given that he turned himself in and other mitigating circumstances—were brought into court with Judge James J. Dore presiding. Several hundred supporters came to the courtroom in support of the defendants and saw them brought in with handcuffs and chains around their wrists, waists, and ankles. Describing the scene, Gossett recalled: “They had the guards holding the chains, about four feet in back of us, as they brought the three [sic] of us in the court, you know, like we were the coldest murderers that ever hit Seattle, not some people that had been busted for a misdemeanor…”\textsuperscript{186}

The purpose of the hearing was to determine if the defendants should continue to be held in jail on $1,500 bail until their trial. After hearing testimony “from an array of friends, relatives, UW faculty, and the four individuals themselves, that the students were respectable in character and would indeed show up for the trail,” Judge Dore released the defendants on personal recognizance. In response, “the group of 400 people that sat in the courtroom cheered.”\textsuperscript{187} This controversial court case would

\textsuperscript{185} “Larry Gossett [Interview],” Seattle.\textsuperscript{186} “Larry Gossett [Interview],” Seattle, Gilbert 4.\textsuperscript{187} Gilbert 4.
continue in the summer, however this initial protest at Franklin and the resulting arrests and trial, coinciding with Dr. King’s death, was the first set of events that radicalized the BSU during the March to May period of 1968.

The next set of radicalizing experiences happened in California, as BSU members traveled to another Black empowerment conference. Within days of their release from jail, Dixon, Gossett, Miller, and others left Seattle for a Western Black Youth Conference at San Francisco State College, stepping into yet another tense situation. In nearby Oakland on April 6, local police assaulted the headquarters of the Black Panther Party. Hostility between the police and the Panthers stemmed from the latter’s outspoken advocacy of Black Power, criticism of police brutality, armed patrols of police actions, and other programs. In the ensuing shootout, eighteen-year-old Black Panther Bobby Hutton was killed and Eldridge Cleaver, another Panther, was wounded.

This controversy affected African Americans throughout the Oakland-San Francisco area and dominated the Black youth conference. The chairman of the Black Panther Party, Bobby Seale, delivered the conference’s keynote address and conference participants attended the funeral of Bobby Hutton. At the funeral, the visitors from Seattle:

188 Gilbert, 5,6.
189 Walt Crowley, Rites of Passage (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995) 114.
…were immensely impressed with the discipline and the solidarity in the youthfulness of the Black Panther Party on that visit. Because we went to Oakland, to his funeral, and we saw about a thousand Black men and women in leather coats and black berets and shades. And very disciplined as revolutionaries, talking about they would continue to work for Black Power, they would continue to work for revolutionary change.\textsuperscript{192}

Following the funeral, Seale’s keynote speech was a rousing call to action. Speaking decades later about it, Aaron Dixon described it as “one of the most inspiring speeches that I have ever heard, even up until this point. And you could tell that he was in a lot of pain, but even though he was in a lot of pain he was still very defiant in terms of what he was talking about.”\textsuperscript{193} That speech and the Panther funeral had a deep impact on the conference attendees from the Northwest and the Seattle chapter of the Black Panther Party would form shortly thereafter.

Many of the UWBSU members helped to found the Seattle Black Panthers, the first chapter outside of California.\textsuperscript{194} On April 14, 1968, Seale came to Seattle and met with a small group of local activists. As Dixon described: “Then a week later [after the conference], he came to Seattle and stayed at my parent’s house. We met with him with about twenty other people from the community and we sat down for a couple of days talking about the Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton [who co-founded the

\textsuperscript{192} “Larry Gossett [Interview],” Seattle.


\textsuperscript{194} Larry Gossett, personal interview, 05 Jul. 2006.
party with Seale].” After these meetings, Bobby Seale approved the Seattle Black Panther Party and appointed Aaron Dixon as Captain.\(^{195}\)

In addition to fostering the establishment of the Panthers in Seattle, the conference also pushed the Black Student Union members toward more direct and confrontational tactics. Seeing other youth who were willing to face death in support of their ideals inspired the UW students to take greater risks because doing so would demonstrate that violent repression would not deter their movement. Their experience in San Francisco and Oakland, combined with the events surrounding the Franklin protest, all coalesced between March and April of 1968 and had a radicalizing impact on the Black Student Union. By May, BSU members had a firm conviction not to let the school year end without taking strong action toward their goals.

**May Sit-in**

By late-April of 1968, the Black Student Union was having regular meetings with UW President Charles Odegaard to discuss their calls for minority recruitment, Black Studies and other reforms. Despite this ongoing dialogue, the BSU soon felt frustrated with the administration’s lack of action. Describing a April 30 meeting, E.J Brisker said “Dr. Odegaard didn’t respond in exactly the way we wanted him to respond…I thought he was being wishy-washy.” Carl Miller added that Odegaard “talked around the point” and that “everyone left the meeting with a headache.” Believing that the “dialogue

\(^{195}\) Crowley 114. “Aaron Dixon [Interview],” Seattle.
attempted through the University channels has not worked and an alternative is needed," the Black Student Union sent a list of demands to Dr. Odegaard on May 6. The demands were initially kept secret “because of a ‘gentlemen’s agreement’ between the BSU and Dr. Odegaard,” but the demands strongly reasserted the group’s goals and “threatened further action if [Odegaard] fails to ‘reply or take positive action.’”\(^{196}\) The following is an excerpt from the BSU’s May 6 letter of demands.

(1) All decisions, plans, and programs affecting the lives of black students, must be made in consultation with the Black Student Union. This demand reflects our feeling that whites for too long have controlled the lives of non-whites. We reject this control, instead we will define what our best interests are, and act accordingly.

(2) The Black Student Union should be given the financial resources and aids necessary to recruit and tutor non-white students. Specifically, the Black Student Union wants to recruit: 300 Afro-American, 200 American Indians, and 100 Mexican students in September.

Quality education is possible through an interaction of diverse groups, classes, and races. Out of a student population of 30,000; there are about 200 Afro-Americans, 20 or so American Indians, and 10 or so Mexican-Americans.

The present admissions policies are slanted toward white, middle-class, Western ideals, and the Black Student Union feel that the University should take these other ideals into consideration in their admissions procedures.

(3) We demand that a Black Studies Planning Committee be set up under the direction and control of the Black Student Union. The function of this Committee would be to develop a Black Studies Curriculum that objectively studies the culture and life-style of non-white Americans.

We make this demand because we feel that a white, middle-class education cannot and have not met the needs of non-white students.

At this point, an American Indian interested in studying the lives of great Indians like Sitting Bull or Crazy-Horse has to go outside the school structure to get an objective view. Afro-American members of the Black Student Union have had to go outside the school structure to learn about black heroes like Frederick Douglas, W.E.B. DuBois, and Malcolm X.

One effect of going outside the normal educational channels at the University has been to place an extra strain on black students interested in learning more about their culture. We feel that it is up to the University to re-examine its curriculum and provide courses that meet the needs of non-white students.

(4) We want to work closely with the administration and faculty to recruit black teachers and administrators. One positive effect from recruiting black
teachers and administrators is that we will have role models to imitate, and learn from.

(5) We want black representatives on the music faculty. Specifically, we would like to see Joe Brazil and Byron Polk hired. The black man has made significant contributions to music (i.e. jazz and spirituals), yet there are no black teachers on the music faculty.197

Analyzing this document, we see that these demands restate goals the BSU had expounded since its beginning: greater minority enrollment, a Black Studies program, and the recruitment of more Black faculty and administrators. Also, the multicultural nature of the BSU is also visible. The recruitment of Mexicans and American Indians are explicitly outlined in demand number two and references to Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse are cited in demand number three.198 Furthermore, demand number three seems to suggest that the Black Studies Program the BSU envisioned would not just teach about African-American history and culture, but would also include content about other minority groups.

Lastly, the BSU recommended the appointment of Joe Brazil and Byron Polk to the Music department. Both were strong candidates and accomplished musicians: Brazil a saxophone, flute player and combo leader and Polk a saxophonist and sextet leader. And Brazil was already employed at the UW as an assistant in the Applied Physics Laboratory.199

197 “Letter from the BSU to Odegaard, May 6, 1968” Black Student Union, Seattle: University of Washington Archives.
In this May 6 letter, the BSU put forth a well articulated, reasonable set of demands that reflected the groups' convictions and commitment to reform. On May 9, President Odegaard responded in a letter that expressed his support for the BSU ideas and insisted on the need for better communication between the administration and the BSU. To improve communication Odegaard requested the BSU identify “a designated, named group of individuals with whom some continuity of relationship can be established and who can readily be contacted when advice is needed.” Odegaard also address each of the BSU's demands, stating that programs were already underway to address many of those areas and that he would continue to support initiatives that continued in those directions. In closing, he wrote:

I repeat here, as I did in our meeting, my desire to see the University make a greater contribution to the lives of all men and especially to those of black men. For years I have been actively seeking to find positive and inventive ways of bringing this about. Your help in constructive solutions to our problems will be much appreciated.

The following Monday, May 13, representatives of the BSU, Odegaard and other administrators met for two and a half hours. Following this meeting, the BSU announced it was “somewhat encouraged” by Odegaard’s verbal commitments to their demands. Carl Miller explained, “Odegaard gave preliminary agreement to our suggestions for implementation of our demands. However, stress should be placed on

201 “Full Text” 1-2.
the word preliminary because there are many details to be ironed out."\textsuperscript{202} In particular, what needed to be ironed out was availability of University funds to support the BSU recruitment goals and other initiatives. The BSU wanted some of its members to be hired as University employees and to recruit new students of color. Odegaard claimed procuring funds for recruiting would take significant time.\textsuperscript{203}

One positive outcome of the meeting was that Dr. Eugene Elliot, special assistant to Odegaard, agreed to “set up a meeting next week to discuss the development of more effective recruiting of minority students with representatives of the BSU and other student groups interested in the program.” At this time, the UW already had programs to recruit African American students, including a recruitment committee within the Associated Students of the University of Washington (the ASUW or student government), but both the BSU and the administration agreed the these efforts needed to be coordinated and expanded.\textsuperscript{204} Also, the meeting let to further steps toward the creation of Black Studies.

Another positive action was the decision to set up a series of meetings to discuss curriculum changes in the College of Arts and Science. Black student representatives will meet soon with representatives of the departments of English, music, psychology, history, sociology, anthropology and art after Dean Phillip Cartwright works out the details. Black student representatives also are

\textsuperscript{202} Dennis Carlson, “BSU Meeting with Odegaard ‘Encouraging,’” The Daily (University of Washington) 14 May 1968: 1.
\textsuperscript{203} Carlson 1.
\textsuperscript{204} “Full Text” 1-2. Emery 13.
expected to meet with the dean and members of two college committees—Curriculum and General Studies.\textsuperscript{205}

Despite administrative and faculty support for Black Studies, funding issues also hampered this initiative. The BSU requested that Professor Nathan Ware and Jimmy Garrett, both from San Francisco State, come as paid consultants to help create Black Studies at the UW. Explaining this Miller said: “These two men have set up very effective programs in the Bay Area and we feel their expertise will heighten and aid our program.” While agreeing on principle, Odegaard once again resisted the allocation of funds to bring the men to the UW.\textsuperscript{206}

During the meeting, three hundred BSU sympathizers gathered outside the Administration building (now called Gerberding Hall) to show their support. After the meeting ended, a rally was held where many White students voiced their support for the BSU demands, especially the creation of a Black Studies program. Robbie Stern, a Law student, said:

It is terribly important that we be here. It is also important to understand that these demands are in our own best interest as white students because they involve the kind of education we are getting here…the education that we get here is white and middle-class. It is clear at this point that what is happening in the world requires us to have an understanding of non-white America and a non-white world.\textsuperscript{207}

\textsuperscript{205} Carlson 1.
\textsuperscript{206} Carlson 1.
\textsuperscript{207} Carlson 16.
Kathy Halluran of the Black and White Concern Organization declared: “There are 23 million black people in America today and we need to know about them. We are the ones being hurt by the lack of courses on black culture.”

In the following days the BSU was disappointed to find little if any concrete reforms, despite the meetings with officials and the rally of support. They felt pressure to take bolder measures because the school year was ending soon. As Larry Gossett recalled, they felt that dramatic action was a necessary next step “because time is running out, school will be out at the end of May. And man, we don’t want to go all summer and not have our demands met, that’s crazy. Plus we told these cats that we wanted this to be done by the end of this school year.”

Seeing the school year end without any tangible reforms was unacceptable to the BSU, so on Thursday May 16, they sent another set of demands to Odegaard—by letter and by phone. This time, the BSU demanded Odegaard allocate $50,000 for BSU initiatives and deposit the funds into the BSU account by June 1. Threatening future action, the letter stated:

If you fail to meet these just and final demands of the Black Student Union, its membership will be forced to take new action to implement the Black Studies Program and expose resolutely, the intransient racism which exists at the

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208 Carlson 16.  
209 “Larry Gossett [Interview],” Seattle.  
210 Robert Cour, “UW Negroes Air Demand for $50,000,” Seattle Post-Intelligencer 18 May 1968: A-B.
University of Washington. Remember, ‘There shall be political consequences for political mistakes.’” 211

E. J. Brisker, the de facto leader of the BSU by this point, telephoned Odegaard’s office to reiterate the demands and threats. He said: “Dr. Odegaard, we tired of yall’s half-stepping. And we want 50,000 dollars put into the BSU account.”212 Brisker gave the deadline of noon the next day (Friday) for the pledge of money. If there was no pledge of money, the BSU warned there would be “political consequences.”213

The next day, Odegaard allowed the deadline to pass without any statement. To further dramatize their grievances, the BSU then decided to take its demands to Washington Gov. Dan Evans, who was on campus that day reviewing ROTC troops in Husky Stadium. Through negotiations with UW Vice President Ernest Conrad, Assistant Attorney General Gary Little, and other officials, “Brisker and Dixon were allowed to hand over a ‘position paper’ to Evans. It contained a demand for money and a list of grievances against Odegaard and University administrators.” After doing this, Brisker and Dixon left the stadium; Evans “appeared unperturbed and said nothing.”214

That weekend, with their deadline ignored, the students of the BSU prepared to launch an unprecedented protest at the UW. Eddie Demmings recalled: “Our thinking was words are not enough, it’s just that simple. We gave them the words and now we’re going to give them the action. We’re going to shut this thing down to let them

212 “Larry Gossett [Interview],” Seattle.
213 Cour, “UW Negroes” 1.
214 Cour, “UW Negroes” 1.
know that we are serious and we expect our demands to be met." Their plan was to interrupt a meeting between Dr. Odegaard and Gov. Evans, and to keep them both in Odegaard's office until their demands were met. However, as members considered how expulsion, injury or jail could result from their demonstration some suggested canceling the protest. As members debated whether to carry out their plan, some much need encouragement came from a BSU member who pointed out a compelling irony. He was a blind member of the group named Gordon Dewitty and after hearing others talk about possibly extending their deadline, he spoke up.

...He stood up and said: "Man, I've been listening to yall. This is crazy. I'm blind and I can see better than any of you that we have no choice. We told the guy [our deadline], and if none of yall are going Imma take my behind over there to the president's office at the time we're talking about." Then he sat down. There was not more discussion about not doing it.

Pointing out the irony that he could "see" better than some others, and expressing his courage despite his handicap, Dewitty's short speech put an end to the debate about whether to carry out the protest or not.

The next Monday, the BSU took action. At approximately 5:20 pm on May 20, a large group of BSU members and supporters burst in Odegaard's office suite. They intended to find Odegaard and Gov. Evans there, but instead interrupted a UW

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215 In Pursuit.
216 "Larry Gossett [Interview],” Seattle.
Executive Committee meeting and Evans was not present.\textsuperscript{218} Several protesters entered the meeting room and sat on the floor while others secured the doors. The subject of the meeting immediately changed to the BSU demands and continued with hostile exchanges.\textsuperscript{219} By 6:40pm the discussion had stopped, Odegaard and most of the other administrators withdrew into the inner-office and were barricaded in by protesters. This left the protesters in the outer-office, along with a few faculty members from the meeting who decided to stay and help the protest. The most prominent of these faculty was Professor Arval Morris.\textsuperscript{220}

By 7pm, the sit-in had grown to approximately 150 demonstrators, mostly young African-Americans but including several non-Blacks members of the Black Student Union such as Marcie Hall-McMurtrie (Native) and Jesus Crowder (Latino).\textsuperscript{221} The sit-in also received support and participation from high school BSU members, Black Panthers, community activists, and White students like Robbie Stern. In addition, as the protest unfolded, a demonstration of support gathered in front of the building. Recalling the wide spectrum of support, Eddie Walker said: “We had a nice crowd, a multiethnic crowd of Latinos, and Indian students, and White students, and Asian students. So it was a multiethnic takeover and just led by the Black Student Union.”\textsuperscript{222} This multicultural and multilayered aspect of the sit-in is important to consider because it...

\textsuperscript{218} Gossett, 05 Jul. 2006.  
\textsuperscript{220} Norton 5. Walker 66.  
\textsuperscript{222} In Pursuit.
highlights the interracial characteristics of the Black Power Movement and illustrates the broad coalition the BSU had built.

Next, local law enforcement arrived on the scene. The University Police attempted to cordon-off the building and prevent protesters from entering or exiting. But, in spite of police efforts, groceries and a record player were lifted up to a third floor office window and at least one student, Eddie Walker, circumvented the barricade by rope climbing up the side of the building. By 7:30pm the Seattle Police arrived on the scene and assisted the UW police in finally sealing off the building. The actions of the police and the protesters make evident the high drama of the event.

At 8:15pm Vice-President Donald K. Anderson and the UW Police Chief Ed Kanz tried to deliver an ultimatum that either the protesters leave on their own by 8:30pm or they would be removed by force. Reportedly, this exchange was hampered by the difficulty for protesters and police to communicate through the heavy office doors, but BSU members were concerned about a possible police raid on their demonstration. Carl Miller recalled: “We were worried every other minute that the police or the National Guard was going to come in and you know arrest us all and take us away.” Eddie Walker echoed: “While we were inside we were worried that state troopers and all that stuff, who were I think in one of the other halls that had a connecting underground tunnel to [the Administration Building], were going to come up into the building and just whoop, beat us out of there.” Following their experience with the police during the

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223 In Pursuit.
224 In Pursuit.
Franklin protest and its aftermath, the BSU had rational cause to fear antagonism from law enforcement.

Fortunately, the sit-in would end in neither violence nor arrests. Before the building was sealed Michael Rosen arrived on the scene and helped establish negotiations. Before long, with the help of Rosen and the faculty members, Brisker, Dixon and the BSU drafted a proposal that, if signed by Odegaard, would allow the sit-in to end peacefully. The proposal was delivered to Odegaard, negotiations continued, and at 8.45pm Odegaard signed it. The document recommitted the University to the BSU program; and as they left, the BSU chanted: Beep-beep, bang-bang, ungawa, Black Power! Remembering their feelings of jubilation, Eddie Demmings said: “We left the university administration in triumph.”

A portion of the credit for the peaceful conclusion of the sit-in, and the meaningful reforms that followed it, must go to President Charles Odegaard. As Professor Charles Evans explained, Odegaard was a major reason why the police did not raid the sit-in. “There was one alarming factor [of the sit-in] and that was that we heard that law enforcement was planning to come to the campus. And as I recall it, we understood that Dr. Odegaard was stalling [the police]. He didn’t feel that this was necessary.” At other schools, police were called in to crush student protests and this often led to

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225 Michael Rosen was an American Civil Liberties Union lawyer who helped win the case to allow Stokely Carmichael to speak at Garfield High School. He was also helping Miller, Dixon, and Gossett in their criminal trial stemming from the Franklin sit-in. See: “Four in Franklin Protest Plead Not Guilty” The Seattle Times 5 Apr. 1968: 24.
226 Walker 66.
228 In Pursuit.
229 In Pursuit.
police brutality and even greater disruptions. Odegaard wanted to avoid such an episode at the UW, but he also was supportive of the BSU’s goals. Not only did he forestall police intervention, he also made sure that no disciplinary action would befall on the BSU members following the sit-in.

The administration of President Charles Odegaard could have reacted quite differently than the way that they did. There were then and there are now tools of repression. There could have been arrest warrants. There could have been expulsions. There could have been any, or student disciplinary hearings of some sort. There could have been a lot of things that we would have been confronted with and perhaps if those things had occurred, the struggle would have been different. But Charles Odegaard didn’t do those things and he wasn’t of that type.\textsuperscript{230}

Due in part to Odegaard’s leadership, what emerged from the sit-in was a renewed cooperation between the Black Student Union and the administration. Now with an imperative for action, this working relationship became highly effective during the summer and following school year. The aftermath of the sit-in saw dramatic results with virtually every BSU demand addressed, including an unprecedented increase in the enrollment of students of color. As they had wanted, BSU members were hired that summer by the University to recruit new Black students from Seattle neighborhoods, as well as Mexican-American students from the Yakima Valley and Native American

\textsuperscript{230} In Pursuit.
students from the Makah Reservation. Due to these efforts, Black enrollment when from 150 to 465, Chicano 25 to 100 and Native 10 to 90.

This effort to outreach beyond the Black population grew from the BSU’s advocacy of civil and human rights for all people color—or third world consciousness—that they had maintained since the group began. Throughout their inaugural campaign, they were sensitive to the discrimination experienced by other groups and willing to make strategic alliances to support shared interests. This was true of the BSU at UW, as well as the BSU at SFSC, and (as we will see in coming chapters) it was also true of the BSU at Washington State University. This Third World consciousness, or empathy for other people of color, was a feature of the Black Student Union and Black Power Movement that counters the perception of Black Power as “Black chauvinism.”

Once on campus, the new students of color soon found programs to help them succeed. One was called the Special Education Program (SEP) and Dr. Charles Evans, head of the Microbiology department and the Faculty Senate Chair at that time, was appointed by Odegaard to direct it. Its purpose was to correct the fact that White students were far more likely to graduate from college that their counterparts of color. The program included recruitment, tutoring, and advising services. The tutoring was especially important because many SEP students found that they had not received the

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231 Robinson 7-8
232 Taylor 223. Walker 73.
233 Bryant 14.
necessary preparation to be successful in college, so regular tutoring was established in a variety of subjects, as well as special preparatory English and math courses.\textsuperscript{234}

Responding to other BSU goals, the number of Black faculty and staff, and the creation process for Black Studies also got a large boost following the sit-in. There was a dramatic increase in the number of Black workers at the University of Washington: Black UW employees rose from 327 in January 1968 to 493 in October 1968. Black faculty rose from 7 to the all time high of 15 by 1969, with new professors in the Urban Planning, Medicine, Dentistry, and Engineering departments.\textsuperscript{235} The movement to institute a Black Studies program had support from UW faculty members even before the sit-in,\textsuperscript{236} thus it soon began to take shape. Reflecting the era’s emphasis on cultural nationalism and Black knowledge of self, the Black Studies program would begin the fall 1968 with courses in Swahili, an Anthropology class called “Social Biology of the American Negro” and a Social Science class “Afro-American History and Culture.”\textsuperscript{237} With its visions set in motion, the BSU made an indelible mark on the University of Washington.

In the years following the sit-in, the Black Student Union would remain an influential student group on and off campus. As a result of the sit-in, and the continued activism of the BSU and their allies on campus, the following years saw continued racial reform at the UW, much if which is still in evidence today. In 1970, Samuel E. Kelly

\begin{footnotes}
\item[235] Taylor 223. Walker 47.
\item[237] Curtis 4-5.
\end{footnotes}
was appointed as the first Vice President of Minority Affairs, and under his Office of Minority Affairs (OMA) these post-sit-in reforms were coordinated together. During this time SEP became the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) and continued to provide recruitment and retention support for underrepresented UW students (including poor whites). The tutoring services were also brought under the supervision of the OMA in 1970, and in 1976 the tutoring services were further consolidated into the Instructional Center (IC). All of these entities—OMA, EOP and IC—can be found at UW today, continuing to support students.

Activity Following the Sit-in

The specific period covered in this chapter ends with the 1968 sit-in and its aftermath. However, it is worthwhile to take account of the UW BSU’s activities between 1968 and 1970. After the success of the BSU’s sit-in, one might imagine the group would fade from the public stage—satisfied with their accomplishments and exhausted by the struggle. But, in fact, BSU members continued to lead social activism into the next decade.

238 Kelly 4.
240 In 2002, the name of the Office of Minority Affairs was changed to the Office of Minority Affairs and Diversity. See: “Office of Minority Affairs and Diversity,” UW 150th Story Bank n.d., 27 Oct. 2011<http://depts.washington.edu/timeline/storybank/the-changing-definition-of-diversity>. Other outcomes of the BSU’s campaigns are UW’s current American Ethnic Studies department and Ethnic Cultural Center/Theater. The successful creation of the Black Studies program led to Chicano and Asian-American Studies programs. Later, these programs were merged to create the department of American Ethnic Studies. The Ethnic Cultural Center and Theater was completed three years after the sit-in to promote the culture and social life of minority students, and for them to explore and preserve their cultural traditions. Both institutions are modern day monument to the efforts and impact of the BSU. Source: Pitre, 17 Oct 2003.
The first set of events developed in the summer of 1968 surrounding the trial of the BSU members arrested for leading the Franklin Sit-in. As mentioned above, UW BSU members Carl Miller, Aaron Dixon, and Larry Gossett were arrested and charged with unlawful assembly in early April, 1968. Larry's younger brother Richard Gossett and Trolce Flavors, members of the Franklin BSU, were also arrested and charged but their charges were later dropped due to their being minors and other mitigating circumstances. On June 10, the trial of Dixon, Gossett, and Miller began. American Civil Liberties Union lawyers Michael Rosen and Mrs. Kenneth Young represented Gossett and Dixon respectively; Miller was represented by Andrew Young.

Throughout the trial, the defendants received great community support. Each day, numerous supporters sat in the courtroom with signs that said: “‘Call off your Pigs,’ ‘Black Control for the Black Community,’ ‘Free Aaron Dixon,’ and ‘Support the Panthers, Not the Pigs.’” As reflected in many of the signs, much of the media and community attention was focused on Aaron Dixon, who was now widely known as the leader of the Seattle Black Panthers.

After four days of trial consisting of efforts by the defense to have the case dismissed, then testimonies of numerous witnesses including Dr. Odegaard and his assistant Dr. Eugene Elliot on behalf of the defense, and Principle Loren Ralph on
behalf of the prosecution, Dixon, Gossett and Miller were found guilty. On June 13, after ninety minutes of deliberation, the all White jury convicted the three young men. On July 1, they were given the maximum sentence, six months incarceration, all for a misdemeanor crime of unlawful assembly. This harsh sentence outraged many in Seattle’s Black community and sparked a riot in the city.

The riot took place in the Central District in the direct vicinity of Garfield High School. It began around 8:30pm on the day of the sentencing, reportedly right after a meeting between local youths, the Black Student Union and the Black Panthers. The disturbances lasted several hours, featured 175 to 200 participants, and led to twelve arrests. Mostly, the rioting consisted of rocks and bricks being thrown at cars and local businesses. “A number of persons, including police officers, suffered minor injuries. Police cars and other vehicles were pelted with rocks. Windows of businesses were broken and some firms were entered.”

The protesters threw objects at passing cars; for instance the “windows were broken in Assistant Police Chief M. E. Cook’s car as he drove past with Mayor [J. Dorm] Braman as a passenger.” Several police officers suffered injuries from broken glass, “Officer Richard Zuray…suffered minor cuts on his face and neck when a brick

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247 Gilbert 5.
249 Wyne and Barr 6.
250 Wyne and Barr 6.
shattered the window of a patrol car.\textsuperscript{251} Additional reports held that several pedestrians were attacked by the rioters and treated for “bumps, cuts and bruises”—one victim also had $8 stolen from his pocket.\textsuperscript{252} “A total of 125 police officers were involved in quelling the disturbances,” which also allegedly included efforts to use firebombs. Therefore, this riot was a noteworthy event that had the potential to be even more destructive.\textsuperscript{253}

Besides the riot, the conviction of the BSU members led to indignation and action by sympathetic individuals and organization throughout the city. There were immediate plans to appeal the conviction and money was raised by Black and White community groups to pay the appeal bail, five hundred dollars for each defendant. Donors included the Ecumenical Metropolitan Ministry, the Law Student Civil Rights Research Council at the University of Washington, the NAACP, and others. Therefore, Dixon, Gossett and Miller were released from jail around 3:00pm following their sentencing.\textsuperscript{254} What followed was years of litigation and appeals that finally came to a conclusion in January of 1971, when the Washington Supreme Court ordered a retrial and the prosecution declined to proceed.\textsuperscript{255} This was the first high profile episodes that involved the BSU after their UW sit-in.

The second controversy erupted about a year later, when the BSUs at the UW and at Seattle Central Community College led a challenge of the Seattle Community College system. As is true today, the Seattle Community College system had different

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{251} Wyne and Barr 6.
\item \textsuperscript{252} Wyne and Barr 6.
\item \textsuperscript{253} “Police Sealed Area, Brought In More Help” Seattle Times 2 Jul. 1968: 6.
\item \textsuperscript{254} “Blacks, Whites Post Bail” 6. Gilbert 5-6.
\item \textsuperscript{255} Gilbert 6.
\end{itemize}
campuses throughout the city: North, Central and South. Because of the segregated nature of Seattle, different racial-ethnic populations tended to go to one community college or another depending on which was closest to their homes. Seattle Central Community College was popular among Seattle’s non-whites because of its proximity to the Central District.

In May 1969, Seattle Community College BSU member Frank Williams and others learned of a plan by the Seattle Community College Board of Trustees to shift most of its academic programs to the mostly White North Seattle campus and leave the vocational programs for the Central Seattle campus. Seeing this plan as unfair and racially biased, the BSU demanded that at least one of the five all-white Trustees resign in favor of a BSU appointee.256

After fruitless negotiations, the BSU called for a student strike on May 8, 1969. The relative ineffectiveness of this initial protest spawned a much larger protest on May 22. On that day, a few hundred members of the BSU and the Students for a Democratic Society (or SDS, a White-radical group) stormed the Edison Technical School Building (a Seattle Community College facility) and occupied it until the Seattle Police Tactical Squad forced them to leave. The next day there were additional protests and confrontations with police, culminating with brick throwing and tear-gas. After reaching this high point, the violence subsided and the controversy came to an end.

256 Crowley 136.
when Trustee Carl Dakak resigned and was replaced by Marvin Glass on July 24, and the plan to move the academic programs was reviewed.257

In 1970, the Black Student Union became involved in a third highly publicized conflict, this time concerning the Husky athletic program at the University of Washington. This controversy centered on a campaign by the BSU to force the UW Huskies to cut all athletic and institutional ties with Brigham Young University (BYU), because their parent Church of Latter Day Saints (or Mormon Church) discriminated against African Americans.258 In addition, this confrontation with the athletic program grew out of past conflicts between Black students and the Football Coach Jim Owens, who suspended four Black players the previous October for complaining about team discipline and failing to adequately express their allegiance to him or the team.259 Thus, the BSU’s influence also extended in the realm of college athletics.

By the beginning of 1970, the BYU controversy was the BSU’s most prominent campaign. The BSU believed that the UW should cut ties with Brigham Young because it supported institutionalized racism and White supremacy. As evidence of this, they could point to the Mormon Church’s priesthood system. The Mormon priesthood was not a professional order, but was a necessary status for certain religious privileges like being married in the temple, holding important leadership positions, and entering the highest level of heaven. Generally, all males entered this priesthood at the age of

257 Crowley 137.
twelve, but Black males of any age were denied admittance. This policy, along with other anecdotal evidence of anti-Black tendencies in the Mormon culture, convinced the BSU that both the Mormon Church and its school, BYU, were racist. Hence, by engaging with them, the University of Washington was endorsing racist practices.\footnote{Collisson, \textit{The BSU} 1-2.}

The Black Student Union at the UW came to this conclusion in solidarity with other Black students around the country. By this time, there had been several protests against BYU, including a highly publicized case of protesting football players at the University of Wyoming, and an announcement by Stanford University that it would schedule no new athletic events with BYU.\footnote{Crowley 170.} Following these and other events, the UWBSU began their campaign in January of 1970, sabotaging a gymnastics meet between BYU and the Huskies. Just as the contest was set the begin, about 20 Black protesters entered Hec Edmundson Pavilion and threw garbage, raw eggs, catsup and oil on the gym mats and knocked over tables and chairs. When a UW coach yelled at them to leave, water was thrown in his face.\footnote{Collisson, \textit{The BSU} 1.}

In addition to the protest, a student petition also expressed opposition to BYU. A Black member of the UW gymnastics team, Lynn Hall, began circulating a petition requesting the school cancel all remaining athletic events with BYU.\footnote{Collisson, \textit{The BSU} 1.} In early February, the petition was delivered to Joe Kearney, UW Director of Sports, with over 1,500 signatures. In response to the protest and petition, Kearney began to investigate

\footnote{\textsuperscript{260} Collisson, \textit{The BSU} 1-2.} \footnote{\textsuperscript{261} Crowley 170.} \footnote{\textsuperscript{262} Collisson, \textit{The BSU} 1.} \footnote{\textsuperscript{263} Collisson, \textit{The BSU} 1.}
the matter, meeting with Black athletes, Mormon students, Alumni, community leaders, and others. Believing that this investigation was merely stalling tactic or “bullshit committee meetings,” the BSU demanded that the administration make a clear policy announcement by March 5 or “it would ‘act accordingly’ against the University’s silence.” On March 4, the day before the BSU deadline, Kearny finished his investigation and sent his report to Executive Vice-President John Hogness, who was the acting president as Odegaard traveled Europe. That same day Hogness announced that the administration needed more time to make a decision and would make a final announcement no later than April 1.264

Unsatisfied with this, the Black Student Union launched a new round of large-scale protests on Thursday March 5, in cooperation with the Seattle Liberation Front (or SLF, a White student group similar to SDS). That day, nearly 1000 people rallied on campus at noon, ten representatives of the BSU met with Hogness, and a group of protesters occupied Thompson Hall until 3:30pm. The next day, an even larger group gathered and marched around campus and employed “hit and run” tactics to disrupt the campus: this tactic was to enter a building, tell the students and faculty to leave, occupy the building for ten minutes, and then do the same in another building. In response, the administration called the police to campus and the protesters dispersed before the police arrived.

In response to the escalating civil disobedience, Hogness obtained a temporary restraining order on behalf of the University during the following weekend that barred

264 Collisson, The BSU 4-5.
“employing force or violence, or the threat of force or violence, against persons or property on the plaintiff’s premises.”265 This displays the degree of disruption caused by the demonstration and the extent to which governmental institutions coordinated to squelch this dissent. In spite of the court order, the demonstrations continued the following week, with up to 3,500 participants. On Wednesday March 11, the protests reached their most disruptive phase as 700 protesters occupied eight buildings on campus. In a few classrooms, students trying to attend class angrily challenged the protesters and refused to leave, which led to violence. In at least one case, protesters burst into a history class, threw garbage, shouted obscenities, and beat members of the class.266 Again, the police were called and the protesters dispersed. After Wednesday’s actions, Hogness changed his approach and called in Tactical Squad Police before the demonstrations began. On Thursday, police and King County Sheriffs patrolled campus all day and made sure there were no more disruptions.267 In response to the show of force Carl Miller and the BSU held a rally, but advised no new protests. Miller said:

Anybody here, who believes that those policemen that they got out there will not kill you, is in for a rude awakening. We do not intend to commit suicide. We do not intend to place our bodies in front of his guns and billy-clubs. The effect of that we’ve seen over and over again[,] people get hurt, and nothing changes.268

265 Collisson, The BSU 6.
267 Collisson, The BSU 9.
268 Collisson, The BSU 10.
Miller’s words marked the end of the campaign. Despite the widespread agreement with the BSU’s criticism of the Mormon’s racial policy, their campaign was ultimately unsuccessful. Despite the criticism of the Mormon Church, UW administration believed that they could not legally sever ties with Brigham Young University. As explained by Assistant Attorney General James B. Wilson, “…the University cannot declare a policy of refusal to engage in activities with BYU solely because of a creed of its religious sponsor, regardless of how strongly we may disagree with that religious creed.”\(^{269}\) To do so, the administration believed, would be in violation of constitutional protection for religious freedom. Plus, BYU had been investigated by the Office for Civil Rights and found to be in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.\(^{270}\)

Therefore, in the eyes of the administration, they were legally unable to agree to the BSU demands. The most they believed they could do was offer a compromise, which the BSU found unacceptable. During the weekend of March 7 and 8, in the midst of the protests, the administration formulated this compromise.

After consulting with the Board of Regents, Hogness developed an official University policy on BYU. The University would honor all current contracts with BYU, but make no plans to enter into any further contracts. Hogness also

\(^{269}\) Collisson, The BSU 5.
\(^{270}\) Collisson, The BSU 5.
emphasized that ‘no student is required to participate in any event with any institution if he objects to participation as a matter of conscience.’\textsuperscript{271}

Of course, this policy was far less than what the BSU was demanding, a complete severing of ties with Brigham Young University. Therefore, the conflict ended in a stalemate. As the rest of the year transpired, the student activists left the BYU issue and turned to other controversies, especially the national outcry following the Kent State killings which occurred about a month later. In late March and April, there were some moves among the administration and faculty senate to further address the BYU issue, but with student attention directed elsewhere those efforts soon faded away.\textsuperscript{272}

Two final notes came later: in 1971 the University renewed its contract with BYU, and in 1978 the Mormons opened up their priesthood to Black members.\textsuperscript{273}

What these events—the trial in 1968, Seattle Community College protests in 1969, and BYU protests in 1970—unmistakably prove is that following its 1968 Sit-in victory, the Black Student Union continued to an extremely active political group at the University of Washington and in the Seattle community at large. Although the campaigns did not all enjoy the same level of success, they reflect that the Black Student Union continued to launch substantial leadership and community service campaigns.

\textsuperscript{271}\textsuperscript{271} Collisson, The BSU 7.
\textsuperscript{272}\textsuperscript{272} McCune, 107. Collisson, The BSU 11.
\textsuperscript{273}\textsuperscript{273} Collisson, The BSU 11.
This story of the Black Student Union shows that the group deserves a special place in the history of the University of Washington, and as well as the story of Black Power and Black history in the Northwest. The record of its first year is nothing less than remarkable. It was the first organization on campus to advocate so successfully for people of color. Within one year, this student organization transformed the University into a place that concretely addressed racial inequality. And even beyond its initial success, it remained highly active into the 1970s. Like the Black Student Union at San Francisco State, we see that the UWBSU was a powerful pressure group that made meaningful contributions throughout their community.

As an extension of the larger Black Campus Movement, this BSU was a leader in its region and set the tone for successive Black student protests in the Northwest. Its role as a lynchpin and catalyst for youth organizing and activism cannot be overstated. Both, throughout the city of Seattle and beyond, the group was a direct influence on scores of Black youth. In addition, this BSU chapter also embodied dominant themes in the entire Black Power Movement. In addition to their youth oriented emphasis on empowerment and self-esteem, the BSU at the UW also featured an expansive compassion for all oppressed people and ties to earlier Civil Rights efforts. Narratives that construct Black Power as misguided or destructive often neglect these characteristics, describing Black Power as completely distinct from earlier protest movements and the interests of non-Blacks. But, in order to get a thorough appreciation for the complexity of this history and the potential tools it offers to address
current social ills, its intercommunalism and interconnections to Civil Rights efforts are two of its most important components.
CHAPTER 3
EARLY BLACK ORGANIZING AT WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY, SPRING 1968

Previous chapters have recounted the activism of African American college students in San Francisco, California and Seattle, Washington. Both locations featured a major university and a sizable, politically active Black community; and the Black Student Unions in both cities emerged from, and remained connected to, their respective Black communities. In contrast, our next site provides an opportunity to analyze a Black Student Union chapter in a different socio-geographic context, one that lacked a significant African American community. Now, we turn our attention to Black student activism at Washington State University.

Despite being a significant distance from a sizable Black community, Washington State University (WSU) had an active Black Student Union in the late 1960s, which maintained many of the same goals and strategies of their counterparts at other schools. By examining the BSU in this location we can identify how their location affected their activism, and how certain fundamental characteristics of the BSU approach remained intact. To begin, this chapter will describe the social and geographic nature of Washington State University. Then, it will detail the early phase of Black organizing at Washington State University, during the spring semester of 1968. It will recount the emergence of the first Black student organization at WSU, the Afro-American Alliance, and trace its later reorganization into a Black Student Union. By
examining in detail the actions of the Afro-American Alliance/Black Student Union in its early stages, we will gain key insights into the group’s character, especially how it was connected to the other BSUs and the larger Black Power Movement.

**Socio-Geographic Characteristics of Washington State University**

Washington State University is located in Pullman, a small college town in Whitman County. Directly adjacent to the Washington-Idaho border, the university is situated in a predominately rural area that specialized in producing wheat and other agriculture. The institution itself specialized in agricultural science and was once known as the Washington Agricultural College. According to the 1970 U.S. Census Whitman County had a total population of 37,900; Pullman was its largest city, and only 2.5 percent of the population was African American.²⁷⁴

In addition to being surrounded by wheat fields, the context of Pullman was also predominately White and politically conservative. Providing an accurate description of WSU throughout most of the 1960s, a writer in the student newspaper summarized the school as “quiet, conservative WSU.”²⁷⁵ Moreover, Whitman County was one of only three Washington counties to vote a majority for Republican candidate Barry Goldwater in the 1964 presidential election.²⁷⁶ Therefore, Black students who enrolled at WSU in the 60s found themselves in an unwelcoming environment. Given that context, it is not

²⁷⁶ Mathison 5.
surprising that the African American WSU students soon began to organize as their population increased.

Prior to the 1970s, Washington State did not keep official records of student enrollment based on race.\textsuperscript{277} So, personal narratives provide that best indication of the Black student population, as well as their experiences on campus. One such narrative comes from Felicia Gaskins, an African American who enrolled as a freshman at WSU in 1961 and lived in Pullman throughout most of the 60s.\textsuperscript{278} Gaskins recalled that the total number of Black students at WSU went from approximately 24 to 50 between 1961 and 1966, and gradually increased throughout the 60s.\textsuperscript{279} This account is confirmed by other sources, for instance it was widely reported that between the 1967-68 and 1968-69 school years Black enrollment increased from approximately 60 to 80 students.\textsuperscript{280} This particular spike in African American students happened as a result of a special recruitment efforts I will explain later on. However, to further describe the WSU climate of the time, it is useful to note that the 80 Black students enrolled in 1968 was the biggest Black enrollment the school had ever had and it was still less than one percent of the total student body.\textsuperscript{281}

On campus Black students felt an impetus to form their own community due to the hostility many encountered from White students and the Black students' shared socio-cultural backgrounds. Often, Black students encountered racism from fellow students and the general university climate. Jeff Guillory, a student at the nearby

\textsuperscript{277} Stephens 57.
\textsuperscript{278} Felicia Gaskins, personal interview, 14 Apr. 2011.
\textsuperscript{279} Gaskins.
\textsuperscript{281} Curry, “More” 2. Stephens 57.
University of Idaho in during this time, recalled that at both schools (University of Idaho and WSU) there were “very little social events with Blacks and Whites together.”\footnote{282} Black students were “often not invited to social events” on campus like dances or social affairs, therefore Black students at both schools frequently came together for “social life, parties, sporting events, and political events.”\footnote{283} African Americans relied on each other to provide their social life while in college, which laid the foundation for the Black political organization that would soon emerge.

Speaking in a 1969 interview, Eddie Leon (BSU chairman at the time) echoed how White standoffishness and the collective spirit of many Black students led to the founding of a Black student group. Leon said the White attitude on campus “has produced a together and close knit BSU organization. Deep-rooted emotion and love for one another is exchanged by the Black Students in return for the apathy and indifference shown by whites.”\footnote{284}

As mentioned previously, WSU was generally foreign and unwelcoming to Black students. On campus, they often encountered students and staff that were unfriendly and unwilling to include them into student life. On the other hand, African American students created a community for themselves, which encompassed students at Washington State and the University of Idaho. Also, their numbers at WSU steadily increased during the decade, adding to the potential strength of their collective voice. Just like BSU members at the University of Washington, Black activism at WSU was

\footnote{282}{Jeff Guillory, personal interview, 14 Apr. 2011.}  
\footnote{283}{Guillory.}  
largely motivated by the years of political and Civil Rights activism that was happening all around the country. Yet, in the local context of WSU, the relative isolation of Pullman and a strong collective spirit among Black students would be the foundation of social action.

**The Afro-American Alliance**

African American students began organizing at Washington State University in 1966. That year, they formed an organization called the Afro-American Alliance “to attain unity and an organized perception of the problems they faced, academically, socially, and politically.” As previously discussed, this formal Black organizing emerged in response several factors: the increasing numbers of Blacks during the 60s, the racially discriminatory climate on campus, and the strong social bonds Black students forged with each other.

In addition, like the BSU members at San Francisco State and the University of Washington, the social consciousness and activism of Black WSU students was a product of their life experiences before and after coming to college, and their past involvement in the Civil Right Movement. Several leaders of Black organizing at WSU were involved in Civil Rights protests such as Ernie Thomas who was active in his hometown of Austin, TX and David Covin who served as the co-chair of CORE while

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getting his Master’s degree at Colorado University.\textsuperscript{286} Elaborating on these connections, Covin described the collective mindset of the politicized Black students.

So everybody, wherever they came from, had that kind of background in which they were aware of all the stuff that had been going on, in both the Civil Rights and the Black Power Movements. And a lot of them wanted to be involved in doing what people were doing in those movements so those were big motivating factors.\textsuperscript{287}

Hence, Black activism at WSU also grew out of preexisting African American political struggle.

During the spring semester of 1968 the Afro-American Alliance (AAA) began to assert an increasingly visible presence at WSU, adding its voice to the small contingent of Leftist students on campus that included a chapter of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS).\textsuperscript{288} In February, the group began to garner attention from the rest of the campus by hosting cultural and education events. The first of which was a poetry reading on February 15, 1968. Performing at the event was Edward English, a traveling African American poet of the time who read his own work.\textsuperscript{289} The student newspaper, the \textit{Daily Evergreen}, described him as a “vagabond poet” and explained, “English, who appeared last week at the University of Washington, has travelled over the United States and Central America, presenting his poetry readings at major universities and

\begin{footnotes}
\item[287] Covin
\item[288] Mathison 5.
\end{footnotes}
schools.” Describing his work, English said: “I write about God because God spells life. There is God in every man. I don’t believe there are any bad people, just people with a bad understanding of life. This poetry reading was significant because it was the Afro-American Alliance’s first major campus event; however, as we will see, English’s work did not reflect the group’s disposition. It would be during their next event, held a week later, where their organizational personality would become clear.

On February 21, the Afro-American Alliance held a memorial for Malcolm X commemorating the three year anniversary of his death, which was titled “Malcolm X Made it Plain – A Presentation of Black Definition.” Rutledge Dennis, a member of the Afro-American Alliance and Black graduate student in Sociology, described the memorial symposium as part of a larger effort to implement a national holiday in honor of Malcolm X. The article that announced the event referred to the Afro-American Alliance as “a new group at WSU,” illustrating that the AAA was relatively unknown to the campus community until this time.

The group’s decision to organize an event to mark the passing of Malcolm X reflects their adherence to Black Power politics. Given Malcolm X’s connection to the Black Power Movement, the Afro-American Alliance’s memorial reveals key insights about the group. We see that the AAA admired Malcolm X, as did many Black youth of the time; and we can see that the AAA saw itself as connected to and apart of the Black Power Movement.

291 “Vagabond Poet” 1.
The link between the Afro-American Alliance and the Black Power Movement is apparent when we review the statements of the group at this memorial, as several speakers expressed their support for the goals and outlook of Malcolm X, namely Black unity and empowerment. As contemporary reports explained, “The Afro-American Alliance set aside this day because members believe that Malcolm X is a true Afro-American cultural hero, and that his life and ideals ‘epitomized the most fruitful direction for blacks in this country to follow.’”

Afro-American Alliance members identified with Malcolm X’s beliefs that Black people should “redefine [their] own values,” embrace their culture and history, and prepare for the inevitable Black revolt—which would certainly come due to America’s inability to reform its racial policies. Another AAA member, “Dave Covin stated that Malcolm X’s ideas concerning freedom were not the usual thoughts of free will and free speech, but, more definitely, with the freedom for ‘Black Americans to recognize themselves as Blacks in a society that is white.’”

There were three featured speakers and each one discussed a different component of Malcolm X’s legacy. David Covin, Black graduate student in Political Science, discussed Malcolm’s political influence, while Rutledge Dennis described his psychological impact on Black people. The third speaker was Anthropology Professor Johnnetta Cole who outlined Malcolm’s international impact. In her remarks, Cole gave some of the boldest statements of all. “Malcolm X felt that blacks will rise up and revolt, and that ‘no one rises up non-violently.’ He visioned [sic] that Black American revolt

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294 D. Jones 3.
emerging into a world-wide Black revolt. He felt that Blacks needed, wanted, and will strive to achieve power—and that they must conceive of getting it by any means necessary.” Considering that the Afro-American Alliance considered these views of Black self-definition and empowerment to be “the most fruitful direction for blacks in this country to follow,” it is clear that they had embraced a Black Power analysis.

Furthermore, to get a sense of Malcolm X’s larger significance, it is important to note that he was the most infamous advocate of Black nationalism and self-empowerment during his time; and he inspired a whole generation of young activists who would come to define the Black Power Movement all over the country. His speeches and ideals

...had an almost visceral appeal to a young, black, economically distressed constituency. Before his assassination [in 1965], Malcolm constantly urged this constituency to question the validity of their schoolbook-and media-inspired faith in an integrated American Dream. Many responded. Following his death, Malcolm’s influence expanded in dramatic, almost logarithmic, fashion. He came to be far more than a martyr for the militant, separatist faith. He became a Black Power paradigm—the archetype, reference point, and spiritual advisor in absentia for a generation of Afro-American activists.296

Malcolm was also a well-known icon and the Afro-American Alliance used him as a symbol to declare their political ideology to the rest of the campus. Following the Malcolm X Memorial, the Afro-American Alliance continued their advocacy for Black

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295 D. Jones 3.
296 Van Deburg 2.
Power ideals. On February 29, Professor Johnnetta Cole, advisor of Afro-American Alliance, participated in a panel discussion on race relations. There she criticized the Civil Rights Movement and its goal of integration. “Regardless of the social, economic or government programs set up, Mrs. Cole asserted that many Negroes have simply lost faith in the moderate Civil Rights Movement.” Cole defended the idea of Black separatism by stating it was a false assumption “that the Negro wanted to be integrated into American society” and explaining that many Negroes “argue that it is in the nature of the (American) system that no justice will be achieved in that system.”

A few weeks later, Cole was again quoted in the student paper defining Black Power and articulating its characteristics. She was quoted as saying that Black Power ranges from “racial pride to proposed separation.” Moreover, since the social and economic gap between Blacks and Whites had widened in the prior ten years “Black militants have taken this to mean that violence is the only alternative.”

Soon after, Rutledge Dennis participated in a panel about the Orangeburg Massacre, an episode where three Black students were shot and killed by National Guard troops on February 8, 1968 in Orangeburg, South Carolina. The shooting, which also injured several other students, was the climax of hostilities that followed several days of protests and repression in Orangeburg, stemming from an attempt to integrate the town’s only bowling alley.

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On March 21, 1968, Dennis (along with David Koulack, a White Assistant Professor of Psychology, and Russel Hansen, a White Teaching Assistant in Sociology) held a panel discussion at WSU about the Orangeburg Massacre. All three panelists argued that the events in Orangeburg reflected the ever-pressing need to confront racial bigotry in America. As a former resident of Orangeburg who received his Bachelor’s degree from the town’s South Carolina State University, Dennis added a detailed account of the tragedy, describing the town he knew well. As Dennis explained: “Orangeburg, SC, the homeland of the John Birch Society and the Ku Klux Klan, has a population of 35,000 people” and “there was a segregated bowling alley in a shopping center two blocks from South Carolina State,” an affront to the students at the predominately Blacks school.

As we can see from the string of events just described, the Afro-American Alliance remained an active and vocal group on campus during February and March of 1968, following their Malcolm X memorial. Two themes emerge from their statements: the use of Black Power rhetoric and a feeling of kinship with other Black activists near and far. Exemplifying the latter theme, their concern for the Orangeburg Massacre shows that Black students at WSU felt a significant connection to other Black youth far removed from their day-to-day lives. Jeff Guillory described the time as follows: “Back then we called each other ‘brother,’ we talked about national events and felt a brotherhood across the nation.”

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301 Eckstrom 1.
302 Guillory.
Washington/Northern Idaho, Black students at the University of Idaho and WSU felt connected to an “imagined community”\textsuperscript{303} that included like-minded Black youth who could be thousands of miles away.

The other theme that emerges here is the connection between the Afro-American Alliance and the Black Power Movement. Many different characteristics, ideas, and actions have been attributed to the Black Power Movement but, as stated by Jeffery Ogbar, two of its most fundamental themes were Black pride and black self-empowerment.\textsuperscript{304} In addition, the Black Power Movement was characterized by skepticism of the Civil Rights Movement’s integrationist approach and faith in American values and institutions. All of these themes and characteristics were reflected in the early statements by the Afro-American Alliance. They insisted on the need for Black people to redefine themselves and unify to become empowered. They also questioned the logic of integration as the solution to racial conflict.

Reflecting on what let him to embrace Black Nationalism, David Covin later recalled the 1965 Watts Riots of Los Angeles as a particular poignant moment. He happened to be driving to through LA that day on his way to Bakersfield, CA and learned of the riot from his car radio. Once he got near Bakersfield he heard the mayor announce over the radio: “We will fight on the streets, we will fight on the beaches, we will never surrender.”\textsuperscript{305} This announcement, which quoted a speech by Winston Churchill during World War II and amounted to a declaration of war, raised Covin’s

\textsuperscript{304} Ogbar 2.
\textsuperscript{305} Covin.
consciousness to the depths of hostility, fear, and mistrust separating White and Black Americans. By the time he left Bakersfield, after teaching there for two years, Covin decided that Black Nationalism was the political ideology that best suited him, and hearing the mayor declare war on Black rioters over one hundred miles away was part of what influenced his political persuasion.

By the spring semester of 1968 the Afro-American Alliance was already linked to the Black Power Movement. As Johnnetta Cole later told a Daily Evergreen reporter, the AAA “was never just a tea party to sit around and admire each other’s naturals.”

The AAA advanced a Black Power philosophy that reflected the principles and experiences of Black undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty at WSU.

**Project 408 Incident**

Between March and May of 1968, the Afro-American Alliance underwent an internal transformation. By the next time the group spoke out on campus, it was calling itself the Black Student Union (BSU). In the spring of 1968 the Afro-American Alliance changed its name to the Black Student Union, and elected Barbara Williams as its first chairman. Over the same period, the organization saw a significant boost in membership following the assassination of Martin Luther King on April 4. King’s murder had a radicalizing impact on African American students at WSU, just as it did in

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308 Covin.
Seattle and elsewhere. Former WSU student and BSU member David Covin remembered:

One of the things that really, kind of jumpstarted the organization that already existed, but that gave it a huge momentum shift was when Dr. King was assassinated. So a lot of the students who hadn’t been active in the BSU before that, who hadn’t even been interested before that, when he was assassinated, really wanted to get involved so they joined the organization and were very enthusiastic and wanted to get things done. [King's death increased interested in the BSU because Black students were] so upset that they wanted to do something…they knew about Black Student Unions [from hearing about it at San Francisco State and elsewhere] and then when this happened, and since there was already one on campus, that gave them an opportunity to do something and they all felt compelled, that they had responsibility to do something to try to improve conditions for Black people.\[309\]

The period between March and May of 1968 was an important time of transformation and growth for the Black student group, during which it changed its name, welcomed new members, and found a new sense of purpose. The larger WSU community would learn of these changes when a racial controversy erupted in early May. The circumstances of the conflict began on May 9, when 54 Black high school students from Seattle’s Garfield and Franklin High Schools visited Washington State

\[309\] Covin.
University. The group traveled to Pullman as part of a statewide trip to visit numerous college and universities.

On Thursday May 9, fifty-four African American high school juniors and seniors arrived at Washington State University on a trip sponsored by the Project 408 program. Originating from a section of the 1965 National Higher Education Act, this program conducted the trip to foster the college enrollment of academically capable students from economically challenged backgrounds.310 Around 6:00pm, the students checked into various campus dormitories to which they had been assigned and this was where the problems began.

One sub-group of the students went to check-in to the Stephenson Hall dormitory and were treated by the dorm staff like potential thieves.311 The students were told that they had to provide their names and addresses because of recent thefts at the dorm. This practice of collecting the names and address of dormitory visitors was standard procedure, but the staff framed the sign-in process as a result of their suspicions and thereby communicated that the students were assumed to be criminals.312

After getting their rooms and having dinner the students were hosted to a social event at 8pm by the Black Student Union. At 11pm, the group left the BSU social and all returned to Stephenson to attend what they were told would be a dance in their honor. When they arrived they were told by Harold Mattraw, Program Coordinator of the Stephenson Residence Center, that there would be no dance. Moreover, Mattraw

312 “Committee Clarifies” 1.
told the students that they all had to leave Stephenson, except for those who had registered to sleep there.\footnote{Neil Felgenhauer, “Negro Visitors Claim Mistreatment, Insults,” \textit{Daily Evergreen} 14 May 1968: 1.}

When the students arrived, the Stephenson Residence Center did appear like a dance was in progress or happening shortly: the lights were dimmed, the furniture was pushed back, and a jukebox was playing. Therefore, it appeared that the students were being unfairly denied admittance and that this was yet another racial insult, so they refused to leave. The students gathered outside the Center and discussed what to do. After forty-five minutes or so, the students were persuaded by their chaperones to leave the scene and return to their rooms for the night. By this time, any dance that might have taken place at the Residence Center apparently been cancelled and the Center was returned to its normal appearance—the furniture was put back, the music turned off. Instead of staying there and causing a ruckus to express their indignation, the high schoolers showed admirable maturity by deciding to go back to their rooms and go to sleep. Yet, this was not the end of the racially offensive treatment.\footnote{Felgenhauer 1.}

The students separated as they went to their various dorms; as one group of males walked to Orton Hall they were subjected to additional insults. When they arrived at Orton, and nearby Rogers Hall, they reportedly were talking loudly and using “vulgar language”—possibly expressing discontent about the episode with the dance. \textit{Daily Evergreen} accounts hold that this loud talking drew the attention of White WSU students in the dorm,\footnote{Felgenhauer 1.} who then proceeded to yell insults at the high school students,
including word “nigger.” Additionally, if that was not enough, they threw pebbles, paper trash, and cigarette butts on the Black students’ heads, and threw a glass bottle that hit the ground near them.

Melvin Minnis, a Black WSU student who had attended Garfield High School, told the Daily Evergreen that he heard the commotion outside Orton Hall that night and went to the high schoolers to ask them what was happening. While doing so, he said debris was falling on all their heads from the dormitory windows above. Minnis was quoted as saying: “Basically I saw two guys from Orton…it was a small group of troublemakers.” Whether or not it was a small group of troublemakers yelling epithets and throwing trash, the Project 408 students were getting tired of being treated like their presence was not welcomed at WSU. The final insult came after this group got inside of Orton and had their requests for extra blankets denied by the dorm staff. This final slight prompted the entire group to leave abruptly at 2:30am. Taken as a whole, the experience of the Black high schoolers at WSU was marked by consistent discrimination and disrespect, and they had simply had enough of it.

The racial bigotry the high schoolers experienced and their sudden departure in protest led to a series of developments at WSU, which would involve the Black Student Union, WSU President Glenn Terrell, and much of the rest of the campus. This incident resulted in a campus-wide controversy, in part, because of its significant media coverage. Not only was it front page news in the student paper, but it also made the

317 Felgenhauer 1.
318 Felgenhauer 1.
319 “Negroes Ask” 2.
news in media outlets around the state in such newspapers as the *Seattle Times*, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, and *Spokesman Review*. The Project 408 incident raised questions within statewide public opinion about whether WSU was a racist institution; and this negative publicity prompted the institution to respond.

Predictably, the Project 408 incident had a major impact on African Americans at WSU. When they learned of the circumstances of the visitor’s departure, Black students were outraged by the inhospitable treatment received by the younger African Americans and the larger issues of racial prejudice involved. Thus, the Black Student Union was compelled to act by this event, as were African American members of the football team.

During the weekend following the Project 408 incident, a group of Black football players sat-out of spring football practices to express their discontentment with the treatment of the high school students. On Saturday May 11, Mark Williams and a group of other Black players approached their head coach, James Sweeney, and requested to be excused from their annual spring scrimmage and other team events. The players requested to Sweeney that WSU issue a public apology, telling him that they would not play until the matter was addressed. Sweeney was apparently sympathetic to the players’ sentiments and consented to the weekend protest. By the following Monday, much had been done to address the incident and the football players returned to practice. “Mark Williams, spokesman for the players, said Sunday the players would

return to Monday’s practice ‘to show that their actions were not directed at the coaches or at the WSU athletic program. Rather than hurt the team’s efforts, we decided to [return],’ Williams continued.”321

By boycotting the football activities, Williams and the other players expressed their solidarity with the Black Student Union. In some cases during the 1960s, Black athletes at various colleges and universities were at odds with their more activist oriented counterparts. One such episode occurred at the University of Washington in April of 1970, when members of the BSU at UW ridiculed two Oregon State University sprinters, Willie Turner and Willie Smith, for not joining several other Black athletes who had left OSU amid racial conflicts.322 Likewise, football players and other athletes have often been under pressure to refrain from political activism due to their requirements of loyalty to their teams and coaches, and their need to maintain their scholarships with appropriate conduct.323 But, this period at WSU was one case where the Black players and activists were united in their cause.

Along with the football protest, there was also several other developments the weekend following the Project 408 incident. One of the first things the Black Student Union did was start a letter writing campaign. They sent letters of protest to Washington Gov. Dan Evans calling for a formal statement denouncing racism in Pullman, and for him to put in place measures to find the culprits and prevent similar offenses in the future. Terrell was sent a copy of the letter to Evans, but the Black Student Union was

322 Oriard 97.
323 Oriard 104-105.
also in direct contact with Terrell throughout the weekend. The Black Student Union also sent letters to other BSUs on the West Coast asking them to send letters to Terrell in order to help pressure him to issue an official apology.\footnote{324}{“No Response Yet to Telegram Plea,” \textit{Daily Evergreen} 14 May 1968: 2.}

Lastly, the BSU wrote an open letter to the WSU community, published in the student newspaper, that recounted the ill-treatment of the high schoolers and admonished the university community for forcing the visitors to leave prematurely. “When a group of Black students from Garfield High School in Seattle come to visit our college campus, is it too much to ask or demand that our students act human? Are you still living in the day where you think blacks are low, uncouth people? Well, people, ‘IT IS A NEW DAY!’ BLACKS ARE NOT TAKING IT ANYMORE!” This letter, “signed by 22 Black students,” also said: “We are truly embarrassed of this performance of the White populace on this campus.” Thus, the BSU made their feelings known to the rest of the campus.\footnote{325}{Emphasis in original, “Negroes Ask” 2.}

The BSU also met with Terrell for forty-five minutes on the Friday after the incident. Despite an amicable meeting, rumors circulated that Black students had taken over the French Administration Building and worse that “two negroes” had kidnapped President Terrell.\footnote{326}{Mark Reese, “A Ridiculous Mountain is Born,” editorial, \textit{Daily Evergreen} 24 May 1968: 1.} That day Terrell issued a public statement expressing his concern about the treatment of the high schoolers and his sympathies to racial minorities. “I don’t know all the facts concerning what happened last night, and won’t for a little while...however, I do want to say that WSU is proud, and justifiable so, of the multiracial
character of its student body and faculty. Members of all races have always worked and lived together in harmony and with mutual respect."327 Given the small numbers of people of color at WSU, we can interpret this pronouncement of WSU's "multiracial character" with some cynicism.

Yet, these statements reflect Terrell's genuine concerned for racial matters at the school, which was further evidenced by the fact-finding committee he appointed to investigate the incident. Appointed to the committee were Professor Richard Ott (Veterinary Medicine), Professor Johnnetta Cole, Coach James Sweeney, ASWSU President Steve Kikuchi, BSU President Barbara J. Williams, and Professor Robert A. Johnson (Psychology) as committee chairperson.328 The creation of this committee and its membership—including professors, the football coach, and the student body president, as well as BSU members—revealed the various constituencies that were concerned about the Project 408 incident.

Following its creation, the committee immediately got to work. They met several times over the weekend, interviewing students and staff, reading staff reports, and finished their report by Sunday.329 In the report, the committee came to mixed conclusions. One on hand, they found that the Black student-visitors were subjected to derogatory name calling and insulting treatment from dorm staff. Yet, on the other hand, they found no evidence that WSU staff had violated laws against discrimination and that a lack of communication between Project 408 staff, WSU Admissions Office,

328 "Terrell Issues Apology" 2.
329 "Terrell Issues Apology" 2.
and WSU dormitory staff was partly to blame for the rude treatment. It was noted that the schedule for the visiting students was changed by Project 408 staff several times before the group arrived and while they were on WSU campus, and this contributed to their unpleasant experience.  

Hence, the committee absolved the university of official discrimination, but acknowledged that the 54 high schoolers did have cause to complain. Following the report, Terrell issued a public apology on Monday, May 13. In the apology, Terrell stated: “It appears that a few WSU students insulted our visitors on that evening and for that we are extremely sorry. I am certain that virtually all of us at this institution agree that there is no excuse for this behavior. Anyone, however, who knows the excellent character of WSU’s student body knows that this kind of offensive behavior was far from typical.”

The Project 408 Incident was a major event at WSU that catalyzed Glenn Terrell and the campus as a whole to address racial bias and discrimination at WSU. One aftereffect of the controversy came two days after the apology, when Terrell announced the creation of a committee on Social Responsibility. This vague and seemingly innocuous name, “Social Responsibility Committee,” may have more accurately been dubbed the bigotry and social injustice committee because those were the key areas Terrell intended the committee to address. This choice of name for the committee is worthy of analysis because it illuminates the desire to de-racialize racial politics through

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330 “Committee Clarifies” 1.
331 “Terrell Issues Apology” 2.
colorblind or race neutral rhetoric. Also, “Social Responsibility Committee” has the connotation that “we”—the university, elite, White institution—need to be responsible for “them,” thereby upholding social hierarchies. Rhetorically, the committee would have had a different, less palatable connotation, if it was called social justice committee or even the committee to end White racial privilege and prejudice.

Nevertheless, as Terrell articulated his vision of the committee, addressing White racial bigotry and discrimination was the mission of the group. “The committee has been requested to give priority in its deliberations to WSU’s responsibilities in contributing to the fund of knowledge regarding the underlying dynamics of racial inequality and the ways WSU can contribute to the educational, occupational, and social equality of all the races and ethnic groups in America.” Here we find a contrast between the committee’s colorblind name and its primary mission to address racial inequality, which also can be analyzed as an attempt to avoid a negative reaction for Terrell’s White constituency.

In addition to race, the committee was also directed to address other social issues. Terrell continued: “In summary, then, I am asking the committee to address itself to the general question of WSU’s responsibility to society as an institution of higher education, with specific reference to the problems of poverty, war, racial inequality, contamination and hunger…” Terrell charged the committee with an expansive mission that ranged from domestic social problems to international armed conflicts; even environmental pollution was included with his reference to “contamination.” Yet, given

333 “Social Responsibility” 3.
these other concerns, he said: “...I am requesting the committee give immediate attention to problems associated with unequal opportunity among the races.” So, race and racial inequality was to be a top priority.334

Appointed to the committee were Johnnetta Cole and Barbara J. Williams of the BSU, following their work on the fact finding committee. They were joined by Arnold M. Gallegos, Harlan E. Jones, Leonard B. Kirshner, Susan Rutherford, James F. Short, and Louis D. McNew as chair. The Social Responsibility Committee (SRC) was given three primary tasks: (1) investigate what programs and initiatives the university already had that were directed at meeting its public responsibility, (2) recommend new measures to better meet social needs, and (3) recommend priorities for these measures. Within the announcement, Terrell also stated his plan to meet with the committee during its first meeting to elaborate on its tasks, reflecting his personal interest in the group’s work.335

Evidently, Terrell was intent on addressing race relations at WSU and making reforms. In fact, in his announcement, he suggested the need for a Black Studies program and other emerging minority studies disciplines. He pondered: “What kinds of services are needed to insure maximum success for all students? What sorts of curricular changes are suggested to make the experience more relevant for students from all ethnic backgrounds?”336 Moreover, Terrell had advocated racial reform

334 “Social Responsibility” 3.
335 “Social Responsibility” 3.
336 “Social Responsibility” 3.
throughout his short time at WSU—less than a year at that point. When announcing the Social Responsibility Committee, he reminded the university of his inaugural address, which had been given the previous March. “In a number of public statements, including my inaugural address, I have taken the position that universities have the responsibility of devoting more of their resources to the search for solutions to the pressing problems of society.” Therefore, Terrell was sincerely interested in some notion of racial reform at WSU.

The formation of the Social Responsibility Committee came in the immediate aftermath of the Project 408 Incident as African American students and faculty, President Terrell, and other members of the WSU community responded to the controversial event. Some, like the BSU, seized on the moment to advocate reforms, others were undoubtedly motivated by an imperative to defend the public image of WSU. Either way, the visit of the 54 high school students was a pivotal moment that led to notable outcomes at WSU. As we will see, the Social Responsibility Committee and the BSU would quickly begin working to reform the campus, starting with a summer recruitment drive.

**Summer Recruiting, 1968**

During the summer of 1968, the Black Student Union and the Social Responsibility Community (SRC) worked to recruit minority students through an

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338 “Social Responsibility” 3.
Experimental Admissions Programs—which would later be called the Experimental Education Program or EEP. This program, first announced by Terrell when he formed the SRC, was intended to admit primarily Black students who could not meet the regular admissions criteria. Such a program was needed because of the widespread educational discrimination and lack of resources directed toward African Americans, for instance the “system of ‘tracking’ Black and poor students into schools for vocational education.”339 Therefore, students were to be admitted despite inadequate grades or other deficiencies, and provided with academic assistance. As described by Terrell, the program would be part social reform, part research experiment; he explained the students would be monitored closely and their experiences would be used to consider what reforms were needed in the program itself or in university admissions policies.340

The Social Responsibility Committee began meeting soon after it was announced and within about a week it began to plan out the logistics of the Experimental Education Program. In consultation with Academic Vice President Wallis Beasley and other staff, the committee began to implement several steps to enact the program. In a memorandum dated May 24, the SRC endorsed the recruitment drive: “We urge that, even though it is late in the year, we should, through the Admissions Office, augmented by interested faculty and students, attempt to get in touch with prospective students.”341

In addition, the committee worked to secure financial aid for the 20 disadvantaged students it hoped to recruit. It also developed a program focused on

339 Rooks 38.
340 “Social Responsibility” 3.
tutoring and other assistance once they matriculated. “We…are confident that we can develop…a program which would make it possible within one year for these students to acquire the ability to compete successfully in a university program. We are now discussing teaching, orientation programs, and housing as they relate to an experimental group.” By the end of May, the Experimental Education Program was focal point for the SRC. 

In cooperation with the Social Responsibility Committee, BSU members worked as college recruiters, identifying prospective students and persuading them to come to WSU. This was mentioned in another SRC memo sent to Terrell in July that suggested the BSU get office space, in light of their participation in the recruitment program.

Leaders of the local chapter of the Black Student Union have asked that they be given a place in the new union building for a headquarters…The Black Student Union has volunteered 100% support for the university’s educational experiment; they do request, however, they be able to maintain a headquarters and meeting place not directly tied to the offices of those responsible for that program.343

As the memo indicates, the BSU was highly involved in the summer recruitment efforts. Most of the recruitment was done in areas of Washington with large numbers of African Americans, particularly the Seattle-Tacoma area. Typically a WSU faculty or staff person and a BSU member would visit local high schools or community meetings

342 McNew “Interim Report and Recommendations”.
to explain the recruitment effort and promote enrollment.\textsuperscript{344} By the end of the summer, this campaign resulted in approximately 20 Black students being admitted through the Experimental Education Program for the fall.\textsuperscript{345}

As Rutledge Dennis explained, the BSU, SRC and other WSU programs set up tutoring and other services for the new students.

The experimental education program was designed to bring in students and to give them assistance by creating tutoring programs. Tutoring, there were tutoring programs in English. There were tutoring programs in math. And I think there was already was in existence a reading and writing center or program but I think that was even intensified as they were gearing up with the recruitment program, and with the Experimental Education Program, to bring in more students. So the reading and writing center, of course, was already there for the White students who were there who also had some handicaps to some extent but the programs where intensified.\textsuperscript{346}

As the new “experimental” students began their studies in the fall, the BSU members continued to work with them as mentors and guides. This, along with the entire EEP, was later described in the \textit{Daily Evergreen}: “The Black Student Union aided in the formation of the program and recruited the participating high school students this summer. It will also provide counselors for them [this year].” These changes had at least two impacts on the BSU. First, it gave the BSU a clear direction to channel the

\textsuperscript{344} Covin.
\textsuperscript{346} Dennis.
frustrations from Dr. King’s assassination. Following that tragedy, Blacks at WSU felt inspired to “do something to improve the conditions for Black people,” and the recruiting and tutoring underserved Black students allowed them to do that. Second, by the fall of 1968, there were more African American students than ever on campus and this increased Black presence augmented the potential power of the Black Student Union. During the following year, the BSU would use its expanding numbers to push for further reforms, especially a Black Studies Program.

This chapter has examined the beginning of Black student activism at WSU. It began by describing the actions and characteristics of the Afro-American Alliance, as well as factors that led to its formation. This chapter has also discussed how in the early months of 1968, the group held a memorial service for Malcolm X that was a reflection of their connection to the Black Power Movement. Then, as the spring went on, the Afro-American Alliance changed its name to the Black Student Union. Finally, the chapter covered the BSU’s activism during the spring and summer months, as it worked with university officials to recruit more Blacks to campus. At this point, we can already identify evidence of the importance and influence of this Black student group at Washington State University. During the course of the next school year, this influence would reach new heights.

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347 Covin.
CHAPTER 4
BSU CAMPAIGN FOR BLACK STUDIES AT WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY, 1968-1969

This chapter concentrates on the actions of the Black Student Union during the 1968-1969 school year related to curriculum reform. Here, we will trace the BSU’s campaign to create a Black Studies program at WSU, while also taking note of some other notable events for the BSU such as their confrontation with the Daily Evergreen. We will see that the BSU successfully forged a coalition of support for Black Studies that included administrators, professors, and White students, all of which helped make the campaign for Black Studies an eventual success.

Black Studies

At the beginning of the 1968-1969 school year, the Black Student Union quickly resumed their activism. During the very first week of school the BSU announced their purpose and goals for the new academic year. Speaking through the student news paper, Rutledge Dennis reasserted that the organization “was formed to promote Black unity” and described its service within the summer recruitment program. At this time, the BSU also circulated a memorandum, or “policy paper,” outlining its advocacy of Black Studies and its rational for the new program. The policy paper stated that WSU had failed “to properly prepare its White students to live in a pluralistic society” and “that

348 David Mathiason, “BSU Hits” 1.
areas of the social sciences and the humanities and music should include courses that emphasize Black contributions to studies in those areas."^{349}

The BSU memo mentioned specific omissions of African American content in the Music, History, and English departments, while also stating that WSU existing “Race Relations” course in the Sociology Department was “inadequate in explaining the institutionalization of prejudice and discrimination in American society.” Rutledge Dennis underscored the ideas of the memo when he said: “Black people are not White people with black faces, they have a distinct cultural background…we’re trying to awaken the black student to be himself and to awaken the white population to the plight of the Blackman.”

Dennis’ statement is also significant because it shows that by this time BSU members were advocating a vision of Black Studies that was open to Black and White students. In fact, the BSU went as far as to suggest “that one course in Black history or culture be required by the University for all students.”^{350} However, this model of Black Studies—that was to be open and welcoming to White students—was not promoted by all activists at the time. Many African Americans on and off campuses nationwide insisted that Black Studies should be primarily focused on serving Black students and Black communities, and some insisted it be Black-only.^{351} The BSU at WSU chose not to take the Black-centered approach, largely because the geography of WSU did not include a sizable Black community that could support such a program.

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^{349} David Mathiason, “BSU Hits” 1.
^{350} David Mathiason, “BSU Hits” 1.
^{351} Rooks 24, 25.
Although the campaign for Black Studies would fully emerge during the 68-69 year, the effort really began in the aftermath of Dr. King's assassination the previous April. As discussed in chapter 3, the BSU at WSU saw increased membership in the aftermath of the Dr. King’s killing as many Black students felt motivated to do something to address racism. Black Studies quickly became a focal point because many felt it would be fruitful in a number of ways. BSU members believed Black Studies would challenge anti-Black prejudice, affirm the value of African American people and culture, and enable more African Americans to be trained and hired as professors and administrators.\textsuperscript{352} Since Black Studies was a direction of reform that potentially would impact so many different areas, it quickly became the BSU’s number one goal.

Throughout the year, it would be the BSU who continually championed the cause, but by the fall of 68 the idea of creating Black Studies was endorsed by other segments of campus. For one, President Terrell expressed his openness to the idea when he announced the creation of the Social Responsibility Committee the previous May. In his letter to the campus he asked the Committee to consider, “What sorts of curricular changes are suggested to make the [college] experience more relevant for students from all ethnic backgrounds?”\textsuperscript{353} Given Terrell’s creation of the SRC, his directing them to address racial inequality, and his consistent statements in support of the university engaging with social ills, Terrell established a track record in support of reforms like Black Studies.

\textsuperscript{352} Covin.
\textsuperscript{353} “Social Responsibility” 3.
The Social Responsibility Committee also expressed its favor for Black Studies by the fall of 68. In a July memo sent to Terrell, the SRC put forth seven preliminary recommendations: (1) recruit Blacks into the Athletic Department, Admissions Office and Residential Instructional Staff [a body analogous to a faculty senate]; (2) establish a study center for disadvantaged, primarily Black students; (3) institute a faculty exchange program with a Historically Black College or University; (4) create a summer program were underprepared students could live on campus and get ready for college; (5) start a fundraising drive for scholarships for low income students; (6) grant the Black Student Union office space; and (7) create new academic programs.\footnote{354 McNew, “Interim Report of the Committee.”}

In the seventh suggestion, the SRC endorsed new curricular options and programs, such as creating “some inter-departmental courses which would bring together faculty members from various areas of learning and students from various major fields.” The memo’s description of this “inter-departmental course” did not address Black Studies or racial conflict however we can see that the committee was open to new approaches to undergraduate education. And given the SRC’s other recommendations and actions stated above, we can understand how their support for new programs eventually extended to support Black Studies.\footnote{355 Stephens 67.}

The student government at WSU also endorsed Black Studies during the Spring of 1968. Immediately following Terrell’s formation of the SRC, the executive officers of the Associated Students of Washington State University (ASWSU) recommended “…the initiation of integrated, problem-oriented courses (preferably of a seminar nature)
in areas of poverty, urbanization, Negro history, and others relating to the problems of racial inequality…” In this resolution, ASWSU also advocated Black Studies curriculum.

Staff members of the Daily Evergreen had also publicly expressed their support for Black Studies by the fall of 68. For instance, Tom Curry wrote the following in a September editorial: “Places of higher education have traditionally been charged with the responsibility of preparing the leaders that should solve some of society’s problems. Yet, the most pressing problem of them all, the nation’s race problem, isn’t really being confronted on this campus.” Later in the piece, he concluded that “one solution to ending this lack of involvement with black America would be the addition of a Black Studies curriculum.”

Thus, by the fall of 1968, a sort of consensus was emerging as prominent segments of the university—the BSU, President Terrell, the Social Responsibility Committee, the ASWSU, and the Daily Evergreen—expressed support for the idea of Black Studies. Yet, despite this tacit endorsement of Black Studies as a concept, the Black Student Union would still have to put sustained pressure of these other areas of the campus to turn words into concrete action.

Protest of the Daily Evergreen

357 Curry, “More” 2.
358 Curry, “More” 2.
As the BSU effort for Black Studies emerged, the larger campus adjusted uneasily to the increased presence of African Americans at Washington State University. Between the 67-68 and 68-69 school years Black enrollment increased approximately 33% from around 60 to 80 students. That increase was largely due to the summer recruitment efforts; and by all indications the group of 20 incoming Black students was the biggest influx of African Americans the campus and the town had ever seen. The visibility of the Black student population as heightened by the outspokenness of the Black Student Union, and considering that the Experimental Education Program and its recruitment had taken place over the summer, White students, faculty, and local townspeople were surprised to see many new Black faces on campus. African Americans were no longer a tiny minority that could easily be ignored.

The 80 Black students at WSU that semester still amounted to less than 1% of WSU’s student population. Yet, despite their small number, the increased Black population still produced anxiety among some Whites. For example, discomfort with the new Black students and particularly the activism of the Black Student Union was expressed in editorials of the Daily Evergreen. One editorial by Tom Curry, the Editor, claimed to share the goals of Black students, but charged the BSU with “extremism” and accused the group of hurting their cause by “labeling everyone who doesn’t support the group 100 per cent either a White racist or a poor example of devious White power.”

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359 Curry, “More” 2.
Curry objected to the rhetoric and approach of the Black Student Union, much like the
general White American reaction to the Black Power Movement.

Similarly, Mark Reese published a satirical piece that was clearly aimed at the
African American students and the Black Student Union. Titled “No Harmony in the
Barnyard,” the story was set on a farm inhabited by cows, sheep and other animals.
“The sheep were black and had only recently been admitted to the barnyard. One of
the sheep, named Smith John, began to stir up trouble by forming a black sheep union
( BSU) and making demands upon other members of the barnyard.”362 In contrast to the
sheep, the cows had enjoyed a privilege position and were the objects of the Black
Sheet Union’s scorn. After patient attempts by the cows to pacify Smith John and the
Black Sheep Union, giving them more and more of the barnyard, Smith John eventually
leaves to cause trouble elsewhere.363 As the Black students recognized, this fictional
story was a thinly veiled criticism of Black people, the Black Student Union, and the
Black Power Movement. The militant-leader Smith John was portrayed as an
unreasonable troublemaker, and whatever credible motivations the “sheep” had to
protest were overshadowed by his simplistic desire to cause mischief and agitation—
sentiments that mirrored mainstream accounts of Black Power.

There were several bases upon which this “Barnyard” story would be offensive. One
was the way it paints Black people, the Black Student Union, and Black Power as
irrational, irresponsible and uncivilized relative to White people (or cows). This
suggested that historically privileged groups are indeed superior and should have power

362 Stephens 61.
and status over others. Another basis for insult could be the allusion between Black students and “black sheep,” with black sheep being a colloquial term for something that is unwanted, rejected, or inferior. Speaking later to the Daily Evergreen, BSU member Pamela Smith said she objected to the “Barnyard” story because of the cow/sheep division. Believing that the differing sizes of cows and sheep (cows being much bigger) connoted differing amounts of power or importance, she said the story would have been better if it was told with Black cows and White cows. She said: “Reese should have used black and white cows as his fairy tale examples. But by using sheep he underlined and made one aware of the distinct difference.”

Hence, there were several different bases by which Black students could have been offended, and the BSU expressed their displeasure in a protest that quickly followed.

In response to the articles by Curry and Reese, which were published in the same issue, the BSU staged a protested of the newspaper by picketing on campus. The Black students demanded an apology. In response, Reese demanded that his free speech be respected. By the end of the week, the controversy would end after Glenn Terrell got involved. Terrell pressured the Daily Evergreen staff to meet with BSU members and for Reese to apologize, which he eventually did.

While complaining of racial “sensitiveness,” he stated the

BSU at Washington State professes to be a peaceful organization that wishes to bring about an understanding between blacks and whites. If this is indeed true,

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365 Stephens 61-62.
then perhaps it would be best to bury differences and work for that goal. And if that goal is genuine, an apology is certainly in order and I do so willingly.\footnote{Mark Reese “There’s No Other Way,” editorial, \textit{Daily Evergreen} 4 Oct. 1968, p5.}

While not the most contrite apology, it did retract the criticism of the Black Student Union. Yet, Reese remained critical of Black Power Movement, defending his barnyard story as “about a union of sheep that are pushing for pushings sake. This is a story of ‘Black Power’ better ascribed to other cities across the country that are from time to time burning. It apparently does not fit the Black students in Pullman.”\footnote{Reese, “There’s No” 5.} In this halfhearted apology, there is still a perceptible, lingering unease with Black people, especially those associated with Black Power.

This episode reflects the discomfort many White students felt towards the new Black student presence on campus. For instance, a study published later that year found evidence of substantial White racism at WSU. “The results of a survey, released by the university Human Relations Committee in January, found ‘ten to twenty prejudiced and discriminatory’ white students for every black student, and depending upon the criteria used to determine a prejudicial act, the number ‘could be as high as fifty [students] or more.’\footnote{Mark T. Fiege, “Rebellion in the Palouse: The Student Strike at Washington State University, May 1970,” \textit{Bunchgrass Historian: Whitman County Historical Society Quarterly} 11: 1 (1983): 18.} Similar attitudes were also found among the faculty.\footnote{Fiege 18.}

As remembered by Rutledge Dennis, Black students found a “standoffishness” from many of the White students. Elaborating, he pointed out that at this time integrated educational settings were something new to Blacks and Whites.
Many of these [White] students did not go to integrated schools. They went to segregated schools just as Black students went to segregated schools so that integration that was being experimented with at WSU was very new—new for Black students as well as for White students… So you can understand that under these circumstances and under these conditions there were areas of misunderstanding.\textsuperscript{370}

Dennis himself attended segregated schools in Charleston, South Carolina, as did Jeff Guillory and Ernie Thomas who were from different parts of Texas.\textsuperscript{371} And given the widespread school segregation in the North, Black youth from Seattle, Tacoma or Pasco were also likely to find much more White classmates at WSU compared to their previous schools. Given this, Washington State University was for many their first experience with integration and it unsurprisingly led to conflicts, fear, and tensions from both sides. Given this context, we can see how the enlarged presence of Black students would not escape notice.

Interestingly, this episode of the BSU protesting the student paper also led to another outcome on campus—a second “race relations” committee appointed by Terrell. The new group was called the Human Relations Committee and their responsibilities were: the “development of the university community’s awareness of the aspirations, problems, and contributions of minorities,” “consider specific issues and problems concerning human relations that may arise,” “and to make recommendations to Terrell

\textsuperscript{370} Dennis.
\textsuperscript{371} Guillory. Thomas. Dennis.
that would lead to resolution of the problems. Later that year, this group produced the study on White racism at WSU mentioned previously.

Although it was created in September, the Human Relations Committee first met in October in response to the BSU/Daily Evergreen controversy. Committee members were listed as Leonard B. Kirshner (Zoology professor) as chair, Bernard E. Bobb (History professor), David L. Covin (Political Science graduate student), Robert E. Ewalt (Assistant Dean of Men), Harlan Jones (undergraduate on Board of Control, ASWSU), Lloyd W. Peterson (Assistant Attorney General), Max Snyder (Pullman School Superintendent), and Barbara Williams (former chair of the BSU). Providing further evidence that there was potential racial conflict brewing at WSU as the year got underway, this group was a proactive attempt to prevent and respond to any racially charged incidents.

**Campaign for Black Studies Continues**

In October, following the protest of the student newspaper the BSU continued its efforts for Black Studies. What followed was a series of pro-Black Studies initiatives coming from various segments of the university, which were all connected to the Black Student Union in some way. On October 4, The YMCA (Young Men’s Christian Association) and YWCA (Young Women’s Christian Association) announced they would be jointly hosting a “Colloquium on Afro-American History and Culture” beginning the following week. This non-credit course would meet weekly throughout the fall semester.

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373 “Human Relations” 1.
and be open to all interested students, faculty, and community members. History professor Alfred Crosby would serve as the instructor, with Johnnetta Cole and Robert Cole, professor of Economics, functioning as official “discussion members.”

During this time, Alfred Crosby got approval from the History Department for a credit-bearing Black History course to be offered in the Spring semester. Crosby, who would teach the class, was developing the course in consultation with Johnnetta Cole and other members of the BSU. Addressing the curricular critiques of the BSU, the class would cover US history from slavery to the present and highlight the role and influence of African Americas in America. At this point, the class received approval from the History Department, but still needed full authorization.

Next, the Sociology department announced that it was sponsoring a series of forums to discuss the university’s “social responsibility” and “acquaint the campus with current pressing social issues.” It is not surprising that Sociology would take this initiative, given that it was one of the most racially progressive units on campus. In addition to offering the only class on race relations at this time, WSU’s Sociology department was also nationally recognized for its outstanding number of Black graduate students. Based on a nationwide study of Sociology programs between 1955 and 1964, WSU’s department awarded the highest percentage of its Ph.D.’s to African

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374 Robert Cole, a White man, was married to Johnnetta Cole.
378 “Afro-American Course” 1.
Americans—at 27.8%, 5 out of 18 Sociology Ph.D.’s went to Black students.\(^\text{380}\) Thus, the department of Sociology had been a leading unit on racial matters for some time.

The Sociology forums were directed by Professor Joel B. Montegue and would feature a series of prominent speakers, the first of which was E. J. Brisker of the Black Student Union at the University of Washington.\(^\text{381}\) Brisker was an activist with an extensive record, serving as the leader for the BSU at the UW, but also with connections to the Black Panthers, the Central Area Development Council, the Black United Front, and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee.\(^\text{382}\) Brisker spoke at WSU on October 17 about several topics, but particularly the importance of Black Studies. “‘Black Studies programs are vital to the survival of the Black race,’ stated E.J. Brisker…he advocated entire Black Studies departments which would include chemistry and physics as well as history and sociology.”\(^\text{383}\) Brisker continued that most White and Black professors were not qualified to teach Black Studies therefore hiring policies needed to be changed to bring in teachers with the ideal background. It is unclear who he envisioned as an ideal Black Studies instructor but given that his resume was found in Terrell's Black Studies file, Brisker may have meant hiring criteria should be changed to accommodate people like himself—individuals with exceptional organizing


\(^{381}\) “Social Problems” 4.


experience but no advanced degrees.\textsuperscript{384} Finally, he stated that Black Studies was needed by all students, including Blacks and Whites.\textsuperscript{385}

Next, the Black Student Union began pressuring the student government, especially its executive council called the Board of Control (BOC), to actively support Black Studies. On November 11, the Black Studies Committee of the BSU formally submitted a set of proposals for the BOC’s endorsement. These proposals consisted of actions that were not to be carried out by the BOC, but were directed at the university in general; therefore the BSU was asking the BOC to help put pressure on university executives to implement the BSU’s ideas.

The BSU put forth six proposals; the first was that the BSU be involved in all the planning stages of Black Studies. The second was that a Black Studies Planning Committee be organized that would bring together segments of the campus that had been working on Black Studies separately—the BSU, the Social Responsibility Committee, and the Education Polices Committee (the official body that recommends curricular changes). The other proposals called for bringing a consultant from an established Black Studies program, hiring Black faculty to teach Black Studies courses, bringing prominent speakers to WSU to discuss Black Studies, and that a course on Africa—taught by an African—be included in the program.\textsuperscript{386}

Representing the BSU and its Black Studies Committee at the meeting was Rutledge Dennis, Jack Craig, and Eddie Leon, whom justified their proposal in terms of


\textsuperscript{385} Hitchcock, “BSU Militant” 1.

students’ ignorance and the shortcomings of the existing curriculum. One of the three men said: “Whites are ignorant about Blacks. This ignorance results from the lack of exposure to information about Blacks in the educational system. This ignorance also plays a major part in the relationships developed between Blacks and whites when they confront each other at WSU.”

In addition, Dennis, Craig and Leon argued that Black Studies would also provide a needed service to Black students. “For Black students, the committee proposal states, that a major in Black Studies would help decrease their feeling of alienation within the American society, increase their awareness of their history and culture, thus aiding in their sense of identity.” So, here again, the BSU insisted on Black Studies potential to serve White and Blacks, even if in different ways. Finally, the proposal envisioned Black Studies as an interdisciplinary program involving “Economics, Sociology, Business, Music, Art, Anthropology, Political Science, English, Psychology, History, Education, Humanities, Philosophy, and Communications.”

At the initial meeting, the BOC stated their basic agreement with the BSU’s position but refused to endorse the proposal due to several objections. For one, ASWSU President Ray Crabbs and BOC member Harlan Jones objected to the proposal on the grounds that the Social Responsibility Committee was already addressing the issue of Black Studies. In response Leon stated: “…This committee has

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387 Prendergast, “Lack” 1,5.
388 Prendergast, “Lack” 1,5.
389 Prendergast, “Lack” 1,5.
not consulted the BSU on what they like or want. ‘I can’t see how this committee can draw up a curriculum without consulting with the BSU.’”

Another objection was put forth by Jim Rowland, the Graduate Representative on the BOC, who questioned the insistence on Black instructors for Black Studies classes, citing the scarcity of Black professors. Dennis countered that this problem stemmed not from a scarcity of available applicants, but rigid hiring standards that exclude people without advanced degrees from consideration. “We could bring Duke Ellington to teach music, or an author to teach literature because they are qualified to teach in their own fields,” Dennis insisted. Here, Dennis was echoing the point put forth by E.J. Brisker earlier in the semester, arguing that hiring standards would need to be more flexible. Through this point we also see the wider potential of the Black Studies campaign, as it raised questions about broader university practices beyond merely advocating for a new discipline.

Given these various disagreements, the meeting ended at an impasse.

“Although the Board agreed with the basic philosophy that a Black Studies curriculum is necessary on campus, they voted to postpone the proposal for one week to better communicate and work out specific details.” Initially, the BSU was resistant to the decision to postpone the proposals pending more discussion. Expressing this, Dennis retorted: “We don’t want the BOC to work with us on this…It is our proposal.” But after

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390 Prendergast, “Lack” 1,5.
391 Prendergast, “Lack” 1,5.
the BOC refused to endorse the measures as they currently stood, the BSU agreed to the postponement and follow-up meeting.\textsuperscript{392}

The follow-up meeting between the BSU and BOC took place within the next few days, at which the BOC members expressed additional concerns. ASWSU Vice-President Dave Cardwell expressed disinclination toward Black Studies, advocating instead the creation of Ethnic Studies. “It is my opinion (and of other members of this board) that we would be doing a better service to the university, state, and nation if we had a department of ethnic studies.”\textsuperscript{393} This contention that an Ethnic Studies program would be more economical and/or more comprehensive than Black Studies would be a key objection that would resurface again later in the year. But, at this point, that contention remained just a stated opinion and did not prevent the BOC from eventually endorsing the BSU proposals. At other institutions like UC Berkeley or San Francisco State, calls for Ethnic Studies coincided with calls for Black Studies as other students of color joined in solidarity with Black students protests. By contrast at WSU, the suggestion of Ethnic Studies at this stage and throughout the year would be used to check or limit BSU demands, not support or strengthen them.

On one tangentially related point, during the follow-up meeting the BSU was asked to explain their organization’s membership policy. Specifically, the BOC wanted to know if the Black Student Union was open to non-African Americans. Dennis explained: “All persons who wish to join the BSU must attend a certain percentage of

\textsuperscript{392} Prendergast, “Lack” 1.5.
meetings per month, pay dues and must show an interest in the ideals of the BSU.”

In other words, the BSU was open to non-Blacks provided they meet certain criteria. In another incidence of colorblind discourse, the BOC was apparently concerned that the BSU was practicing reverse-racism and unfairly excluding Whites from their group. But, Dennis and the others successfully addressed this concern. And at their next meeting the BOC voted to endorse the amended proposals.

On the November 20 BOC meeting, the council voted to recommend the development of a Black Studies curriculum by members of the Social Responsibility Committee along with four members of the BSU’s Black Studies Committee—Bill Ross, Eddie Leon, Rutledge Dennis, and Jack Craig—and two additional Black students. Fortunately for the BSU, their efforts to get the ASWSU endorsement would prove effective, as the BSU and SRC began working together soon after. By December 17, the BSU/SRC sent a joint proposal outlining their vision statement for the future program. BSU chairman Ernie Thomas restated the BSU’s idea of Black Studies, describing the joint proposal. “We need professors who really know what the problems are. This is why the joint Social Responsibility Committee—BSU proposal to Pres. Terrell, we ask for Black teachers to instruct classes in Black Studies. A white teacher can’t teach it when he hasn’t lived it.”

Thomas continued, “Eventually we hope there will be a Bachelors of Arts offered in Black Studies to prepare people to work with Blacks in social agencies and other

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394 Prendergast, “BOC” 1.
395 Prendergast, “BOC” 1.
areas. There is much to go through with the administration before we reach this point. I am pleasantly cautious about the progress.” Thomas’ “pleasantly cautious” assessment of the progress on Black Studies is quite significant, as it sets this Black Studies campaign apart from what occurred at many other schools. The common pattern—illustrated at the University of Washington, San Francisco State College, etc.—was for Black students-activists to find the bureaucratic process to be moving frustratingly slow and for students to suspect officials of deliberately stalling. In response, students used direct action protests to expedite the process: a sit-in at the UW and a student strike at SFSC. By contrast, at WSU the BSU was pleased with the administration’s response to their proposals.

Undoubtedly, this was in part a result of the broad support the BSU had garnered for Black Studies by this point, which included members of the faulty and the university president. However, this favorable climate was also encouraged by the disruptive protests that were happening at other schools around the country. At this point, in December of 1968, WSU officials knew that the student strike at San Francisco State was still underway and they saw the UW sit-in that had occurred earlier that year. Wanting to avoid similar protests on their campus, these actions at other schools were part of the local and national context that influenced WSU officials’ openness to Black Studies reforms.

Another notable development at this point was the formation of a White student organization that was committed to the development of Black Studies called White

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397 “Black Culture” 3.
Students Concerned with Black Studies (or simply White Students Concerned), which grew out of the YMCA/YWCA colloquy on Afro-American History that had been led meeting throughout the fall semester. With a letter to President Terrell and a petition, the group sought to pressure the campus administration to act. Pat Farwell, organizer of White Students Concerned, described the spirit and mission of the group. “We want to show that Whites are interested in the Black Studies program. Students aren’t getting a complete education while being ignorant about the Black culture in our society.” Noting that students are denied information on other people of color, Farwell stated her hope that Black Studies would lead to an Ethnic Studies program.\textsuperscript{398} As the 1968 Christmas break approached, the BSU and their allies had much to be optimistic about given the support for Black Studies coming from different segments of the campus.

Soon after the winter break, Black Studies got another boost from President Terrell. On January 8, Terrell announced his appointment of a university Black Studies Committee to “make more indepth studies and developments of a Black Studies program.”\textsuperscript{399} Reportedly, this move followed a recommendation by the Social Responsibility Committee, but it undoubtedly was a response to the BSU’s requests. Appointed to the committee were William F. Mullen (professor of Political Science), Alfred Crosby (professor of History), Richard S. Thornton (professor of Fine Arts), Rutledge Dennis (Sociology grad student & BSU), David Covin (Political Science grad student & BSU), Dan Barrom, and Johnnetta Cole (as committee chairman). In the

\textsuperscript{398} “Black Culture” 3.
announcement, Terrell expressed his “very strong personal support” for Black Studies, giving his personal endorsement of the effort. 400

Simultaneously, Black Studies garnered increased visibility from WSU’s Free University. This program enabled students to organize and teach their own courses on an informal, not for credit basis. 401 One of the earliest Free University courses was on African American literature. The class began on February 12 and was taught by BSU member Rudy Martin, a graduate student in American Studies. 402 Readings for the class included Dark Symphony: Negro Literature in America by James A Emanuel and Theodore L. Gross, Native Son by Richard Wright, Black Power by Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, and the Autobiography of Malcolm X. 403 The BSU utilized the curricular autonomy afforded by the Free University to offer Black Studies classes, as did other BSU chapters including San Francisco State’s where students used their Experimental College (a program analogous to the Free University) to create several Black Studies courses between 1966 and 1968. 404

Next, the BSU held another memorial for Malcolm X on February 21. Their newly elected BSU Chairman Eddie Leon reiterated the group’s admiration for Malcolm and Black Power politics. “He told us that freedom will never be won for Blacks until they let their enemies know that they are willing to do anything necessary to obtain their freedom.” 405 Leon, a Sociology major from Seattle, had recently succeeded Ernie

400 “President Terrell” 3.
402 Covin.
404 Rojas 62-63.
Thomas as chairman. He spoke publicly again a few days later, outlining three BSU goals for the remainder of the year: "provide an organized base for Black students participating in the educational process," "better relations between the Pullman community and Blacks students," and "further developing a Black consciousness and awareness among Black students." Leon also discussed Black Studies, which he connected to all the BSU’s goals: "In the Black Studies program, we want to give everyone, especially whites, a chance to learn of the black experience—of what it’s like to be Black. I feel the program will fill a vital spot pertaining to the Black history omitted in today’s text."  

In late February/early March, the Black Studies Committee established by Terrell and chaired by Johnnetta Cole completed their full proposal for the new academic offering. Once completed, the proposal would need to go through a series of administrative channels and garner full approval. First it would go to T.H. Kennedy, Dean of the College of Sciences and Arts, then to Herbert Wood, Acting Vice President-Academic, then to the Education Policies Committee, then to the Residential Instructional Staff, and finally to Terrell and the Board of Regents. With such a complicated process, committee members believed that it would take several months to get final approval. "According to Johnetta (sic) Cole, chairman of the Black Studies Committee, ‘The Committee hopes for a final decision sometime in May.’"  

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408 Hitchcock, “Administration” 1.
At each step the proposal had the potential to be stalled or rejected, yet the Black Studies Committee had good reasons to be optimistic. “According to Kennedy, [Dean of Arts and Sciences,] ‘If the committee submits a reasonable program, the chances of acceptance are practically 100 percent.’ However, he also emphasized that he did not want to speak for other faculty and administrators who will have a hand in the decision. ‘It is quite probable the program will be functioning in September,’ stated Kennedy.”

Given these comments from the Dean of the college that would house Black Studies, the program’s prospects looked promising.

The proposed Black Studies program included three options or levels of engagement: (1) broad service courses that would focus on African Americans, but cover all minority groups, and be open to all students; (2) a Black Studies minor to complement students’ majors; (3) a Black Studies major, structured similarly to the General Studies major where students would take courses from different departments. Moreover, Black Studies majors would have to meet general university requirements, complete 24 hours of courses in Black Studies, and complete 16 hours of courses in a traditional discipline—40 hours total with at least 21 coming from upper division courses.

The proposal addressed future employment and career opportunities for Black Studies graduates. This was a question brought up by critics, who claimed Black Studies segregated Blacks from White society and trained them in a field with no jobs.

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409 Hitchcock, “Administration” 1.
Believing that “professional and academic skills, along with exposure to white culture” was “most necessary for Black education,” critics like Kenneth Clark and Bayard Rustin questioned the value of Black Studies.\textsuperscript{412} In response to criticism like this, the proposal said that “students who earn degrees in Black Studies will be qualified for graduate school in the social sciences, teaching or business and social work. The demand for people educated in Black Studies will increase as government programs are initiated and expanded.”\textsuperscript{413} The wisdom of relying on government programs as a basis for long-term employment is questionable, but we can see that the committee was conscientious enough to address this concern as it advocated for the new program.

The new Black Studies program would include several existing courses like Sociology 322 and 522 on race relations, Education 403 and 404 on social foundations of curriculum, and History 370, the new Black History class. The committee also stated it was working with English, Philosophy, Sociology, Anthropology, History, Political Science, Psychology, Education, Economics and Business to contribute news courses to the program. Finally, the proposal noted that courses in Architecture, Communications and Fine Arts could also be eventually added.\textsuperscript{414} Therefore, in early March, the BSU/Black Studies Committee had put together a thorough plan for Black Studies and it began progressing through the proper channels. Shortly after, the plan received another endorsement from the student government who passed a resolution urging immediate action of the recommendations on the Black Studies Committee.\textsuperscript{415}

\textsuperscript{412} Rooks 23, 68-72.
\textsuperscript{413} Hitchcock, “Administration” 1.
\textsuperscript{414} Hitchcock, “Administration” 1.
Black Studies Challenged

In late March, WSU hosted an annual meeting of schools in the Pacific Eight (or Pac-8) Athletic Conference. This meeting was attended by eleven university deans representing all of the Pac-8 universities: University of California at Berkeley, Sanford, University of Oregon, Oregon State, the University of California at Los Angeles, University of Southern California, University of Washington and Washington State.\footnote{416} One of the main topics for the meeting was Black Studies. The deans discussed how to establish Black Studies, what sort of staff would be ideal, and finding employment for Black Studies degree-holders. All of the schools, except Washington State and Oregon State already had a Black Studies program at this point, and both schools said they expected to have one by the fall.

The general consensus of the meeting was that the “universities have neglected the area of Black Studies, which they should have considered earlier.”\footnote{417} They agreed that Black Studies programs should meet general university requirements, be chaired by Blacks who were experienced educators, and they discussed establishing an exchange program where a student or faculty could take or teach Black Studies courses at the various Pac-8 schools.\footnote{418} The concurrence in favor of Black Studies expressed at this meeting represents another contributing factor to the acceptance of Black Studies at WSU: institutional peer pressure.

\footnote{417}{"University Deans Discuss Black Studies Program," \textit{Daily Evergreen}, 25 Mar. 1969, p1.}
\footnote{418}{"University Deans" 1.}
According to the “social environment” approach of organizational sociology, organizations often change
...in response to social trends. Managers adopt new business strategies only because others do so. In the eyes of some organizational theorists, the environment is of the utmost importance because an organization’s ability to accomplish its goals depends on the legitimacy it derives from the state, accreditation agencies, other organizations, and influential elites.419

Hence, according to organizational sociologists, institutions like universities often adopt new practices as their peer-organizations do in order to maintain status and credibility.420 This meeting of West Coast universities revealed this component of peer influence that contributed to the acceptance of Black Studies.

Despite this favorable climate, Black Studies would soon face a major challenge. In early March, the Black Studies Committee submitted their proposal to Dean T. H. Kennedy. By April 4, it had made its way past the offices of Dean Kennedy and Vice President-Academic Herbert Wood, and it reached the Educational Policies Committee or EPC.421 After reviewing the Black Studies plan for a few days the EPC gave it conditional approval but revised the overall structure from a Black Studies Program to an Ethnic Studies program, with a Black Studies option within it. This revised proposal was completed on April 8 and was scheduled to be voted on by the Residential

419 Rojas 9.
420 Rojas 9.
Instructional Staff (or faculty senate) in early May.\(^{422}\) In the intervening time, a controversy erupted on campus as the two proposals competed for support.

The Educational Policies Committee’s Ethnic Studies proposal created a Bachelors of Arts degree in Ethnic Studies, with options in “American Indian Studies, Black Studies, and Mexican American Studies.”\(^{423}\) Leon Luck, chairman of the EPC, said they adopted “90 per cent” of the Black Studies Committee’s proposals, yet they felt an Ethnic Studies Program would “better meet the educational objectives of WSU and the needs of the society which it serves.”\(^{424}\) From the perspective of the EPC, their Ethnic Studies approach had the benefit of covering several minority groups. There was not any record of statements from Mexican-American or Native students calling for this Ethnic Studies model so it is not clear why the committee took this position besides institutional efficiency.

Given all the hard work the BSU and the Black Studies Committee put into their Black Studies proposal, they reacted to the Ethnic Studies plan with outrage. The primary criticism for the BSU was that each minority group deserved their own, fully funded departments with separate degrees. This reflected a Black Power philosophy, which insisted reforms like Black Studies be structured in a way to support the autonomy and self-esteem of African Americans.

The position of the BSU [at WSU] was parallel to that of many black student organizations on other college campuses across the country. While students

\(^{422}\) Farrar, “Black Studies” 6-7.
\(^{423}\) Cummins, “Ethnic Studies” 1.
\(^{424}\) Cummins, “Ethnic Studies” 1.
admitted the need for other minority programs, they particularly stressed the requirement for a distinct and separate program for black studies. Their argument was based on the ideas of cultural identity, and the need for an academic degree in black studies.⁴²⁵

Johnnetta Cole encapsulated the reaction when she said:

...each of the three main minority groups in this country, the American Indian, the Mexican American and the Black American is in search of its dignity as a people. This dignity indeed identity is best represented by a degree reading Bachelors of Arts in American Indian Studies, Mexican American Studies, or Black Studies.⁴²⁶

Another set of objections were put forth by other members of the Black Studies Committee, including Professor Alfred Crosby who said that since Black Studies was the only full program established at this point, the EPC’s Ethnic Studies would in fact be “a poor excuse for Black Studies.”⁴²⁷ Crosby said that, with this name, the program would “cheat students” out of the full benefits of a Black Studies education and degree. Finally, he said not having Black Studies would send a message that WSU did not value Black Studies, making it harder to recruit prospective faculty to teach in the program. Cole, Crosby and others also objected to the term Ethnic Studies, believing the term ethnic was too broad and could include White ethnics.⁴²⁸ While the Educational Policies Committee argued for inclusion and efficiency in their program, proponents of Black Studies objected to the prematurity of the Ethnic Studies program and the need for

⁴²⁵ Stephens 69.
minority programs to be fully independent as a symbol of racial sensitivity and cultural respect.

As April came to a close, the debate continued. On April 25, a committee of students in favor of the original Black Studies plan listed several criticisms of the EPC program.

(1) Ethnic studies purports to offer a degree in Ethnic Studies when in fact only the option in Black Studies has been proposed.
(2) Whereas, a committee has investigated the availability of staff and bodies of literature for a program in Black Studies, EPC does not appear to have made similar research on its proposed programs.
(3) Whereas, the Black Studies Program has the support of twelve departments, EPC has not secured similar support.
(4) Whereas, the Black Studies Proposal has a [plan for a] black administrator attuned to the specific needs and problems of the black student and later administrators who will be attuned to the needs and problems of the Mexican American and American Indian, the Ethnic Studies Proposal groups the needs and problems [sic] under one administrator who must be sensitive and knowledgeable in wide ethnic programs.429

A few days later Professor Harvey Low, a member of the EPC, responded to the criticisms in an editorial in the Daily Evergreen. Written with a sarcastic and hyperbolic tone, Low stated the critiques of the EPC’s plan led him to think the following: “My

inclination was to send smoke signals to the chiefs in our state. Smoke 1: you are being ignored again!” Low insisted that the “21,000” Indians and “20,000” Mexicans living in the state should be represented in WSU’s curriculum, but acknowledged the criticism of the degree’s name saying: “The naming of the Bachelor’s degree is a valid concern…This aspect needs reexamination.” As we can see in that last statement, Low’s editorial showed some willingness to compromise on the EPC’s plan and listen to those in favor of Black Studies, despite the biting sarcasm of the editorial.

Was Low’s enthusiastic advocacy on behalf of Native Americans and Mexican Americans motivated exclusively by his own judgment, or was it also responding to concerns expressed by members of those communities? The evidence on this question is inconclusive. As was mentioned before, there were no sentiments from Native or Hispanic community members in favor of the Ethnic Studies model recorded in the student newspaper, even though many other statements for and against were recorded. Therefore, one finds no evidence that Native or Hispanic students supported Low’s position as much as he did.

However, Harvey Low was the director of the WSU High School Equivalency Program (HEP), which enabled students to complete high school requirements and enter the university. The majority of HEP students were Hispanic children of migrant farm workers. In 1969, 59% of the students were Hispanic, 16% were Native American, 14% were African American, and 11% was White. Furthermore, many of the Chicano

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431 Low 2.
433 Wilson 6.
students who would later become active in MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano/a de Aztlan) and demand Chicano Studies in 1970 entered WSU through HEP. The fact that Low directed this program with its substantial contingent of Hispanic and Native students suggests that he may have had some insights into the opinion of those groups. On the other hand, it is plausible that Low was paternalistically speaking on behalf of those communities, embolden by his directorship. Unfortunately, there is no conclusive evidence to address this question.

On April 29, several students and faculty participated in a forum on behalf of Black Studies. Voicing their support for Black Studies, Judith Fortier and Penny Smith, both White students, reiterated the importance of the link between Black Studies and Black identity. "According to Miss Fortier, a degree-granting black studies program is a symbol of identity for the Black American," and "Miss Smith called the black studies program a symbol of the white recognizing the black man's plight." Arnold M. Gallegos, Acting Associate Dean of the Graduate School, added his voice to the argument for Black Studies. Arguing that Black Studies would serve as a useful trial run before instituting similar minority studies programs, "Gallegos stated he favors the black studies program as a model for other studies to come."

As various articles, speeches, and forums were being circulated on campus, the official vote by the faculty senate (or Residential Instructional Staff) on May 5 drew ever nearer. If the debate remained unresolved, the RIS could reject both proposals and

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then both sides would end the year with nothing. So, there was clearly an incentive to negotiate. Following a second forum—described as “conciliatory” by a reporter—held on April 30, the Education Policies Committee and the Black Studies Committee meet and discussed their differences.

By Friday May 2 they reached a compromise. In a new, joint proposal, the program was restructured to satisfy both sides. The new plan put forward a “Program for American Minority Studies” headed by a coordinator, who would report to the Dean of Sciences and Arts. Under that coordinator, there would be a program for American Indian Studies, Mexican American Studies, and Black Studies, each with their own director. Each program would also grant its own degree reading Bachelors in Black Studies, etc. Black Studies would be implemented in the fall, along with a “Committee on Minority Studies” that would manage the creation of Indian and Mexican Studies, and help expand Black Studies—identifying grants, potential hires, and relevant literature.

On Monday May 5, the RIS approved the American Minority Studies Proposal, officially titled: “A Substitute Recommendation for Approval of Programs in American Minority Studies Leading to a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Black Studies.” In what was reported to be one of the shortest RIS meetings in history (less than 30 minutes), Minority Studies was approved with practically unanimous support. News of the decision was greeted with elation by many on campus. “President Terrell called the

passage of the proposal ‘one of the finest moments in the history of WSU.’ Alfred Crosby said: “It’s beautiful. I’m in an emotional state where I don’t think I could say much more than that. I honestly do prefer the compromise worked out between the Black Studies Committee and the EPC.” Similarly, Professor Robert C. Day said: “The degree of consensus developed by the students who visited the different faculty meetings and the various faculty was very surprising. It appeared that about 20 or 30 out of the 447 people there were voting no…”

Members of the BSU reacted with similar surprise and jubilation. Rutledge Dennis said: “I was very shocked by the reaction and the quickness of the vote in favor of the program.” Ernie Thomas stated: “This is a beautiful thing in that only a small minority of faculty voted no. This vividly illustrates what needs to be happening on campuses where faculty and students participate together. It’s cool, it’s a beautiful thing.” Johnnetta Cole encapsulated the sentiment when she simply said, “I’m tremendously pleased.”

The final approval would come from President Terrell and the Board of regents on June 9, 1969, but since this was largely a formality, preparations for the new program began immediately. Several new Black Studies courses, also approved by the RIS, were implemented: Introduction to Black Studies (Black Studies 101), The Arts of Black America (Black Studies 102), Seminar on Black Studies (Black Studies 498), Studies in Black American Literature (English 320), Black Revolution (Philosophy 345), and Black

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441 Dave Mathiason, “RIS” 1.
442 Dave Mathiason, “RIS” 1.
443 Dave Mathiason, “RIS” 1.
444 Dave Mathiason, “RIS” 1.
445 Stephens 74.
Politics (Political Science 324).\textsuperscript{446} Also, Sociology 380 The Sociology of Black Americans was scheduled for the fall, taught by Rutledge Dennis.\textsuperscript{447}

Acting Vice President-Academic Herbert Wood approved Johnnetta Cole as the first director of Black Studies. Professor Jim Short, head of the selection committee explained: “We feel that Dr. Cole is outstandingly qualified for the position because of her background in Anthropology and her very active interest in student affairs on campus. We could not have found anyone more qualified had we searched the nation.”\textsuperscript{448} The members of the new Minority Studies committee were also named. The faculty and staff members were Roger Ray (chair), Johnnetta Cole, Harvey Low, Arthur Okazaki, and Gerald Young. They were joined by four students: Rutledge Dennis, Tony Estrada, Roberta Miller, and Sue Hinz.\textsuperscript{449}

Thus, the 68-69 campaign for Black Studies ultimately created a crucial breakthrough. Throughout the year, the BSU consistently pushed various segments of the university to take up the cause. As a result of their activities, Terrell created an official Black Studies Committee that included BSU members and supportive faculty. This committee completed a formal proposal for Black Studies in March of 69 and it progressed smoothly through the university bureaucracy until it got to the Education Policies Committee. The EPC put forth the biggest obstacle Black Studies faced, initially trying to alter the proposal to a program for Ethnic Studies. But after furious

\textsuperscript{447} “BSP’s Class Beings in Fall,” Daily Evergreen, 16 May 1969: 5.
\textsuperscript{448} “Johnnetta Cole is Chosen as New Program Director,” Daily Evergreen, 28 May 1969: 1.
\textsuperscript{449} “Johnnetta” 1.
objections from the BSU and their coalition, the EPC compromised and the American Minority Studies with its Black Studies program was born.

Undoubtedly, this campaign represented a remarkable instance of organizing, effort and impact by the BSU at Washington State University. Black Studies would begin in the fall of 1969, and although it would have to contend with financial strain and budgetary challenges,\textsuperscript{450} this was clearly a success. This is another illustration of the productivity of the Black Student Union during the late-1960s, and by extension the Black Power Movement. Here, BSU members forged strong alliances with faculty, administrators and other students in support of their goal, Black Studies. This challenges historical narratives that render the late-60s protest as fruitless and the Black Power Movement as ineffective.

This research shows that when one puts the Black Student Union into the narrative, one must question the notion that the constructive phase of 1960s Black activism ended by 1966. On the contrary, BSU chapters at WSU and elsewhere were making meaningful reforms all over the nation between 1968 and 1970, creating a new academic discipline and forcing institutions to be more responsive to students of color. The intervention of Black Studies—along with Ethnic Studies, Women’s Studies, and like disciplines—has been one of the most significant developments in American scholarship in the last half-century and it is part of the important legacy of late-60s Black Power student activism.

\textsuperscript{450} Stephens 74. Fiege 18.
If creating Black Studies was the only thing occupying the attention of the Black Student Union during the 68-69 school year, its successful campaign would obviously be impressive. However, what makes it even more impressive is that Black Studies was not the only controversial issue connected to the BSU that year. As we will see in the next chapter, there was another conflict surrounding the BSU that began in early 1969, and this matter—involving violence and racial hostility—would constitute a tense racial drama that played out as Black Studies moved ultimately toward approval.
CHAPTER 5
THE BSU AND ALPHA GAMMA RHO INCIDENT

This chapter recounts another development related to the Black Student Union in 1969, which unfolded simultaneously with the Black Studies campaign. Here, the issue was not curricular reform, but interpersonal conflicts between Black and White students. As the Black Studies program was being ushered through various committees, there was an even more controversial matter facing the BSU during the winter and spring months. This story begins with a fist-fight, and while the conflict did not initially involve the Black Student Union organization, the group would soon be pulled into the affair. By the year’s end, the reverberations of this fist-fight would be felt all over campus and beyond, constituting the most racially charged and potentially explosive issue WSU had ever seen.

The Conflict Begins

The original clash occurred on January 9, 1969 between Ron Henderson, a member of the Black Student Union, and members of Alpha Gamma Rho, an all White fraternity. It took place during an intramural basketball game, which pitted the Alpha Gamma Rho (AGR) team against a team from Goldsworthy Hall (a dormitory).  

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During the course of the game a member of the AGR team called Henderson a “Black bastard,” which led to a scuffle between Henderson and multiple AGRs.\footnote{David Mathiason, “BSU Issues Statement Supporting ‘Brothers,’” \textit{Daily Evergreen}, 22 Jan. 1969: 1.}

The next day several BSU members happened to see Henderson and he did not mention the fight at all. At this point Henderson thought the matter was over, and there was no tension between the BSU and the AGRs.\footnote{David Mathiason, “BSU Issues” 1.} The following week, the conflict was reignited when the BSU office received a phone call from an AGRs member. During that call, the BSU was given what amounted to an invitation and a challenge. The caller said the AGRs “were ready to talk to a group of Blacks and they were also prepared for any other kind of action.”\footnote{David Mathiason, “BSU Issues” 1.} Thus, this phone call was both an invitation to discuss differences and a provocation for further hostilities.

At the next BSU meeting, January 15, the phone call was brought up and discussed, and a group of members decided to go to the AGR house to accept the challenge to talk or engage in some “other kind of action.” At around 11pm, the group went to the Alpha Gamma Rho house and knocked on the door. When no one answered they went inside and asked for “the student who had ‘jumped on Ron’”—an large brawl erupted soon after.\footnote{“WSU, Police Investigating Night Battle,” \textit{Spokane Daily Chronicle}, 16 Jan. 1969: 7. David Mathiason, “Police Investigation” 1.} The AGR official statement described the situation as follows: “The house president came out from the kitchen, saw a negro standing on a table and asked him to get off. The house president was then physically assaulted along with other AGRs who were in the area.”\footnote{David Mathiason, “Police Investigation” 1.} Although the AGRs claimed they were
innocent victims, the BSU account stated that both groups participated in the brawl with equal fervor. Thomas said it “was like one of those saloon fights you see on TV or in the movies” with everyone hitting someone.\footnote{David Mathiason, “BSU Issues” 1.}

Shots were also fired during the mêlée. One witness reported that, immediately before the incident, they were asked by a carload of Black males for directions to the AGR house. He gave them directions and then noticed what looked like an automatic rifle with one of them. Shortly after he saw another car full of Blacks, then gunfire shortly after that.\footnote{David Mathiason, “Police Investigation” 1.} The AGRs insisted that “shots were fired by the Negroes both inside the house and from outside the house.”\footnote{David Mathiason, “Police Investigation” 1.} Thomas confirmed that shots were fired in the house, but that he couldn’t say who fired them.\footnote{David Mathiason, “BSU Issues” 1.} The AGR account also contended that several Blacks entered the house with other weapons like pipes. However the BSU disputed this, contending that any pipes used during the fight were picked-up off the floor—and the house was undergoing repairs at the time. The BSU account also claimed that bottles were thrown by the AGRs.\footnote{David Mathiason, “BSU Issues” 1.}

Following the brawl, as the BSU was leaving, at least one member of the group shot and hit the outer wall of the fraternity house. An eyewitness reported: “one of the retreating men turned and fired two shots at the house.” The police arrived soon after and found two shotgun bullet patterns near the front door. The officers made no arrests because the Black students had left the scene and the AGRs were taken to be victims in the conflict. Despite the fists, bottles, pipes and guns used in the incident, only five

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AGR members reported minor injuries: Harold Boyd, Bob Mattingly, Ernie Schwartz, Marty Warner, and Eric Thorn, AGR president.\textsuperscript{462} Not surprisingly, this event would become the biggest racial controversy at WSU since the incident with the Project 408 incident described in chapter three and it would have a major impact on the BSU, the WSU campus, and the larger Pullman area. News of the clash sent a shockwave of fear through much of the White community. One account stated, “Campus officials were deluged with phone call Wednesday night from parents of youngsters on the campus.”\textsuperscript{463} In addition, an editorial in the student paper admitted that racial “tensions are high” and “the extreme and unfounded rumors being passed around won’t help matters any.”\textsuperscript{464} Highlighting the broader implications, it concluded: “As rude of an awakening as the whole episode has been it doesn’t mean that campus animosity should be allowed to increase. The violence of Wednesday night doesn’t have to mean that the campus has reached an impass (sic) in its racial relations.”\textsuperscript{465} The BSU/AGR altercation became a crisis of race relations at WSU.

The behavior of the local police added to the emotion, acting as if they believed the community was under attack and facing a grave danger. “The Pullman police immediately secured the area with assistance from the campus police and other local agencies.”\textsuperscript{466} In specifics, “securing the area” meant stationing an officer to guard the AGR house and patrolling the area. Statements by the police give us an indication of their reaction to the incident. First of all, they were shocked, reportedly telling witnesses

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\textsuperscript{462} David Mathiason, “Police Investigation” 1. \\
\textsuperscript{463} “Fraternity Damaged in Ruckus,” The Spokesman Review, 16 Jan. 1969: 1. \\
\textsuperscript{465} Curry, “Wednesday Night,” 2. \\
\textsuperscript{466} David Mathiason, “Police Investigation” 1. 
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of their surprise. “One officer who stood guard in front of the fraternity with his shotgun confirmed this. He said he had never seen an outbreak of this kind before.” Of course, an outbreak of “this kind” meant the kind that involved Black people. Additionally, besides shock, the police were also gravely concerned, even fearful. That same cop continued: “He commented that in the rush at the Pullman Police Station after the report of the incident was turned in, he had forgotten his gloves and his hands were cold because he could not put them in his pockets and still hold his shotgun.”

Here, in the middle of winter, we have a cop who would rather endure frostbite than set his shotgun down. Apparently, he was convinced that the danger posed by this group of armed Black suspects was so serious that he needed to have his shotgun in hand at all times.

Newspaper accounts also detailed police officers’ particular concern for the safety of White women in the area. Although the facts of the altercation harbored no direct indication of a potential for violence against women or sexual assault, “Women in sororities were instructed [by police] to remain in their houses for the rest of the night.” Considering this action together with the garrisoning the AGR house, we see that the police arrived on the scene with the expectation that they would be dealing with an armed mob of dangerous killers and rapists, rather than a fight between two groups of college students.

467 David Mathiason, “Police Investigation” 1.
468 David Mathiason, “Police Investigation” 1.
469 David Mathiason, “Police Investigation” 1.
Why, we might ask, did the police react this way? Well, it was certainly related to the way Whites have long associated African Americans with a wild, uninhibited sexuality. For Black men, their perceived hypersexuality has often manifested in the form of the Black rapist who is especially inclined to attack White women.\textsuperscript{470} Particularly in the Jim Crow era following the end of slavery, “The myth of the Black rapist emerged…African American men were simultaneously accused of having a natural sexual desire for White women that grew in part from their now untamed buck status as sexual animals, and in part from ideas about White womanhood as beautiful, the most desirable, irresistible women…”\textsuperscript{471} This constructions of Black men as sexual predators and White women as their preferred victims were certainly powerful in the 1960s and help to explain why the Pullman police told the White female students to stay indoors.

The recollections of BSU member David Covin point to another factor that contributed to the police response, a fear of the Black Power Movement. In a 2011 interview, Covin recalled how he first learned of the AGR/BSU fight.

The first thing I heard about it was, my wife and I were watching television and the broadcast was interrupted with an announcement that the Black Panthers were on their way to Pullman. And everybody should make sure, if they had a gun it was ready and that they could defend their houses. The Black Panthers had been identified descending on Pullman.\textsuperscript{472}

\textsuperscript{471} Collins 64.
\textsuperscript{472} Covin.
Knowing this report was completely ludicrous, Covin quickly called other Black students and learned about the fight. Expressing why this was such a ridiculous report, Covin recalled thinking: “Why would the Black Panthers be coming to Pullman, of all the places in the universe. Why would they be descending on Pullman? So I knew it couldn’t be true.” Yet, while the news was immediately suspect to Covin, the report or others like it likely motivated the police actions. Not only could the police imagine a dangerous Black mob, but this mob was also associated with a mythical “Black Panthers” constructed as an especially dangerous group of Blacks. This fear of the Black Power Movement of course, mirrors the “Barnyard Controversy” earlier that year, where similar fears of Black Power were expressed in the student paper. Given this erroneous association of the Panthers with wanton violence, it follows that Pullman law enforcement assumed the worst about the African Americans involved in the altercation. And like a community defending itself from a band of marauders, they had to protect their town from attack. Furthermore, given that the “Panthers attack” frame was broadcasted in a special news bulletin, much of the White community likely received the same message, causing wide anxiety across the Pullman area.

The Controversy Continues

On the WSU campus, the first official action was a statement by Terrell two days after the incident (on January 17) that stated he was working with university and city

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473 Covin.
officials to gather all the necessary information.\textsuperscript{474} On the same day, Whitman County Prosecuting Attorney Phillip H. Faris filed charges against three Black students in connection with the AGR incident. These three, initially charged with 2\textsuperscript{nd} degree assault, were Ron Henderson, Richard Lee Smith, and Ernie Thomas.\textsuperscript{475}

On January 21, the Black Student Union issued a statement, asserting that racial prejudice had impacted the framing of the AGR-BSU incident.

\textit{We fully and unconditionally support our brothers in the current struggle. We deplore the divided attention towards our black brothers and demand equal time be directed towards the AGR fraternity. Only the brothers are charged with felinous (sic) assault. Only the brothers are attacked by rumor and invidious slander. Only the brothers are assumed guilty. We will explore all avenues to assure that the brothers receive justice. Bila shaka ni lazima tushinde. We shall conquer without a doubt.}\textsuperscript{476}

The BSU statement also detailed its version of the altercation, stressing that their original intention was not to cause violence. “Everything’s so twisted and distorted [now]…we could have just talked then,” said Ernie Thomas.\textsuperscript{477}

In addition to the criminal charges, the three students were also facing disciplinary action by the university. It was reported that “Henderson, Smith and Thomas are scheduled to appear before the Disciplinary Committee where they face

\textsuperscript{475} David Mathiason, “BSU Issues” 1.
\textsuperscript{476} David Mathiason, “BSU Issues” 1.
\textsuperscript{477} David Mathiason, “BSU Issues” 1.
possible university disciplinary action.” Thus within a week of the fight, Henderson, Smith and Thomas were facing criminal charges and school discipline.

A few days later Terrell issued another statement, refuting charges of racial bias in an effort to calm racial tensions. Terrell stressed that “all leads relevant to the case have been carefully investigated by the university without regard to the parties of the incident. I believe the university has been fair to both sides...We will not prejudge the work of the university Discipline Committee nor the local courts.” One goal of the statement was to shield the university from any charges of mishandling the matter. Terrell also stated his “fervent wish” that the AGR incident not be seen as a confrontation between the Black Student Union and “non-Black students.” He expressed: “We have made too much progress in our program of expansion of educational opportunities for Black students to permit this sort of polarization of attitudes to threaten our program.” Although Terrell used ambiguous language, addressing the White population as “non-Blacks,” this statement was clearly directed at them because the only polarization that could have endangered Black recruitment would inevitably have come from hostile Whites. Finally, in that statement, Terrell said that the Human Relation Committee was studying what tensions there might be and comments or suggestions related to community relations should go to Leonard Kirshner, chairman of that committee.

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478 David Mathiason, “BSU Issues” 1.
480 “Terrell Comments” 1.
As Terrell’s insisted that the university’s investigation and disciplinary procedure was proceeding fairly Johnnetta Cole apparently thought otherwise, resigning from WSU’s Discipline Committee around the same time in protest of its handling of the AGR incident. She left in objection to “the general nature of Committee procedures” and especially its hearing for Ron Henderson, Richard Lee Smith and Ernie Thomas. Reportedly, Cole first joined the disciplining group the previous spring after several students involved in a one-day, small-scale student strike appeared before the committee. This protest occurred on April 26, 1968 as part of an international “strike for peace” effort, and was supported by Johnnetta Cole and other faculty. Cole joined the committee to see if student activists were being treated fairly. By January 23, Dr. Cole sent her resignation to Terrell at a time when the committee had finished their investigation but had yet to make its final recommendations. Cole differed with the Committee because of its presumption of guilt of the students in question. “She said there was an ‘unconscious assumption of guilt about Blacks by Committee members. ‘This attitude is prevalent on campus and in American society as a well,’ she commented.”

In addition, Cole objected to the proceedings because the Committee failed to consider the “bigger picture” of the experience of being Black at WSU and the racist attitudes of fraternity members. As we have already seen, this bigger picture included.

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484 David Mathiason, “Discipline Committee” 1.
White hostility and the exclusion of Black students from campus life. There was also documented evidence of systematic racial discrimination within the fraternity system. In 1967, the Sigma Chi Fraternity was found to have a membership “policy of review permitting the national organization to deny membership based on race, religion, or national origin.”\textsuperscript{485} This report was followed by a 1968 editorial in the \textit{Daily Evergreen} that declared that discrimination continued in the frats at WSU, even if not spelled out in official policies, and that the frats needed to integrate voluntarily to avoid litigation.\textsuperscript{486} However, the Discipline Committed failed to give adequate weight to this sort of information, according to Cole.

She also objected to how the accused were not allowed a lawyer and were not given a chance to face their accusers. Finally, she raised the point that a university hearing about a matter being simultaneously litigated in court constituted “double jeopardy,” a violation of the Fifth Amendment of the US Constitution. “No one should be forced to face the same charges twice,” she commented.\textsuperscript{487} Indeed, there was merit to this charge, given that in little over a week Henderson, Smith and Thomas were charged with assault, questioned in Discipline Committee hearing, and ordered appear in court. Upon leaving the committee, Ernie Thomas reacted by saying “that Mrs. Cole’s resignation was ‘a good sign because she can help more on the outside.’”\textsuperscript{488} This would prove to be a remarkably prophetic statement.

\textsuperscript{487} David Mathiason, “Discipline Committee” 1.
\textsuperscript{488} David Mathiason, “Discipline Committee” 1.
A preliminary hearing was scheduled for Henderson, Smith and Thomas, who were to appear in Pullman Justice Court on Monday January 27 at 9:00am, with Judge D.L. McMannis presiding. Prior to this hearing, Prosecuting Attorney Phillip H. Faris announced that “the case is still being investigated, and it is probable that there will be other charges.”\footnote{“Action Pending in AGR Case,” \textit{Daily Evergreen} 24 Jan. 1969: 1.} During Monday’s hearing, the case took a surprising twist as two other Black students came forward and admitted in court that they had fired the guns, not the defendants. The two students were Tyrone J. Daisy and Kenneth Walker, and they were aided by their lawyer Carl Maxey, a Black attorney from Spokane. “The statement read by Maxey said in part, ‘the guns were carried strictly on the volition of the two persons…and did involve none of the other Black students on the campus.’”\footnote{“Assault Charges Filed Against Two Students,” \textit{Daily Evergreen} 5 Feb. 1969: 1.}

Daisy was a freshman at WSU and Walker was finishing his high school credit in WSU’s High School Equivalency Program. As explained by the BSU, Daisy and Walker were compelled to turn themselves in to save Henderson, Smith and Thomas from more serious charges. Henderson, Smith and Thomas were told by Whitman county officials that if they did not bring in “the Blacks who had the weapons” they would face charges of second degree assault. So, the three explained the situation to other African Americans students, or as they put it “they went back to rap on the brothers,” and shortly after Daisy and Walker made their confession.\footnote{Dave Mathiason and Bruce Housinger, “Blacks Charge Unfair Treatment,” \textit{Daily Evergreen}, 4 Mar. 1969: 1,7.}

Following the confession, Daisy and Walker were charged with second degree assault and the charges against Henderson, Thomas, and Walker were reduced from
second degree to third degree assault. All were ordered to appear in Superior Court on February 11 to enter pleas of guilty or not-guilty.492 If they pleaded innocent a trial date would be set; if they pleaded guilty they could be sentenced at that time or the Judge could order a presentence investigation.493

The charges against the five defendants were a major topic on campus; both the criminal charges and WSU disciplinary action were closely followed and debated. As part of this debate, the WSU chapter of the Students for a Democratic Society submitted a letter to the public that described the campus climate.

SDS deplores the fact that during the two weeks following the incident no one on campus, none of the communications media, and no spokesman of the administration have stressed any questions about a. the role of one of the two parties, AGR, in the events precipitating and comprising the final conflict at the fraternity and b. the social context with which the event has occurred. If one judges on the basis of letters to the Evergreen and conversations going on all over the campus the inescapable conclusion is that the WSU community has focused exclusively on the actions of the black students on [Jan] 15 and that the campus is rather united it its resentment of the Black Student Union and its constituency. The crucial question here is: What will be the fate of the basic human rights of the blacks involved, in the courtroom, in the university

493 “Assault Charges” 1.

As mentioned by SDS, several letters to the \textit{Daily Evergreen} condemned the Blacks involved and expressed hostility for the BSU. One letter stated that, by defending the Blacks involved in the AGR incident, the BSU “have identified themselves as a reactionary group that is not out to better the race relations between the blacks, and the whites, but to continue the ever growing insurrection that is so prevalent in our American society.” In conclusion, the author stated: “The Black Student Union has no place upon the Washington State University campus if it is no better than a Black Panther Organization at an intellectual level.”\footnote{Steven Fuson, “Saving Face,” letter, \textit{Daily Evergreen}, 24 Jan. 1969: 2.} This was one of several letters claiming the Blacks involved in the fight deserved harsh punishments and the BSU had hurt their cause by supporting them.\footnote{See letters on 21 and 24 Jan. 1969.} Therefore, SDS accurately identified a palpable anti-Black/anti-BSU sentiment at WSU during this controversy. The SDS letter went on to connect this hostility to the subtle racism that characterized most Whites on the campus.

Concerning the social context in which this racial confrontation has occurred, SDS, [with] members who have close relations with all segments of the white community here, have over the last two years been impressed with the undercurrent of white racism (of the subtle, liberal, enraging Northern/Western variety as contrast to the explicit Southern variety) which sticks its head above
the surface only on special occasions (e.g. the treatment of Garfield students, Evergreen anti-BSU editorializing) or in relatively safe, private interactions involving individuals. The hostile sentiments against blacks, especially those who are struggling for political power, that have risen to the surface at WSU since the AGR incident, are extremely disturbing.\textsuperscript{497}

As we can see with these statements, the mostly White members of SDS were unequivocal in their recognition of racial bias on campus and their declarations of them as significant. These quotes provide an instructive look at the character of SDS, as well as the mainstream sentiments at WSU. We see that, on one hand, the average White student, faculty, and staff person at WSU were wary of or antagonistic toward the BSU, the Black Power Movement, and the Black defendants—which were inextricably linked in the minds of many. While, on the other hand, the SDS represented a minority of Whites who were sympathetic to the BSU.

We also see a high degree of organizational support between SDS and the BSU. Toward the end of the letter the SDS wrote that they had contributed to a legal defense fund for the Black students; and urged others to do the same by sending money to Barbara Williams, secretary of the BSU, or to Mrs. Pat Hansen of the Pullman American Civil Liberties Union—mailing addresses were listed for both. SDS also announced a campaign to chronicle all “substantial instances of open expressions of racist sentiments” and asked for relevant information be send to their campus address. Finally, SDS affirmed their support of the BSU and condemnation of “White racism.”

\textsuperscript{497} Students for a Democratic Society of WSU 2.
The fundamental position of SDS is one of continued political support of the program of BSU at Washington State University. We stand with all those who fight racism, knowing that the kind of racism which has the greatest ultimate negative effect on mankind is racism on the part of people who have the ability, the power and ‘privileges,’ to exploit economically and politically those against whom their racism is directed.\textsuperscript{498}

SDS was the most outspoken campus entity to support the Black defendants and the BSU, but they were not the only source of support on campus. An editorial by a Daily Evergreen staffer, published on February 11, also expressed support, although not as vigorously as SDS. Dave Mathiason, a reporter who had been covering the BSU throughout the AGR controversy and before, criticized the Discipline Committee. Mathiason raised many of the issues expressed by Johnnetta Cole when she resigned from the Committee, saying the committee should “only prosecute academic misconduct and leave criminal matters to the courts” or include a “student defender” to provide legal aid. Mathiason also reintroduced the issue that simultaneous proceedings in local courts and on campus resembled double jeopardy, and that “the discipline committee could influence a decision by the court if it became known.”\textsuperscript{499}

A week later, President Terrell responded to this double jeopardy charge by explaining how he had conferred with the university’s attorney, Lloyd Peterson, about the matter. Peterson, who was also the Assistant Attorney General of the state, reportedly advised Terrell “…that, legally, ‘double jeopardy’ concept is not applicable to

\textsuperscript{498} Students for a Democratic Society of WSU 2.  
With Peterson assessment, Terrell rejected the double jeopardy defense. Yet, it is interesting to note that Terrell felt a response was warranted. On one hand, this is an indication that the pressure of criticisms by Cole, Mathiason and others were effective; on the other hand, it is clear that Terrell was very committed to protecting the image and reputation of WSU.

On February 11, the defendants appeared in Whitman Country court for another preliminary hearing, and during this second hearing they were ordered to appear again on February 21 to enter their pleas. On February 12 Ron Taplin, a freshman from Seattle, was charged with second degree assault, bringing the total Blacks charged to six. After further delays, the arraignment finally took place on Thursday February 27. Ron Henderson, Richard Lee Smith and Ernie Thomas were represented by a White Pullman lawyer named Wallis Friel. Tyrone Daisy, Kenneth Walker, and Ron Taplin were represented by Carl Maxey. The involvement of both lawyers indicates how the BSU had relationships with some in the Pullman community, and others in other Eastern Washington towns like Spokane. Maxey was an active civil rights attorney in Spokane, for instance helping the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) of predominately Black and Japanese Lincoln Elementary school stop the Spokane School Board from

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closing the school in 1961. With actions like this, Maxey was well known throughout the Spokane area.⁵⁰³

All, except Taplin, pleaded guilty and were sentenced that same day by Judge John A. Denoo. Taplin did not enter a plea to his charge of second degree assault, pending further investigation, and was ordered to reappear in court on March 17—his charges were later dropped. Henderson, Smith and Thomas pleaded guilty to third degree assault and were sentenced to thirty days in Whitman County jail and one year of probation. Daisy and Walker pleaded to second degree assault and got ninety days in county jail and three years probation.⁵⁰⁴ In a show of leniency, Judge Denoo allowed the defendants to serve their jail time on weekends so they could continue their studies, assuming that they were allowed to remain students at the university.⁵⁰⁵

During the sentencing, Denoo’s statements expressed sympathy and condescension to the Black defendants. Expressing sympathy, he explained that he was giving them probation because it would allow the possibility of later removing the conviction from their records. He said: “….usually for a misdemeanor we do not use probation…[but] this can be so damaging to your future if I merely sentence you without probation because to do so would mean you have a criminal conviction of your record and it’s going to be hard to live it down.”⁵⁰⁶ Judge Denoo gave them probation because, with good behavior, their records could later be cleared.

⁵⁰⁵ Farrar, “Charged Plead” 1.
Yet, Judge Denoo used the sentencing to lecture the Black defendants, paternalistically instructing them how to deal with “inconsiderate” White people. Now, if there are some inconsiderate white people, and I am sure there are, and they abuse you in any manner you are just going to have to bow your head and let it drain off, consider the source as not all white people feel that way. Consider the source, let it drain off your back like water off a duck’s back and bear it because you now have this extra problem. We don’t expect you to be angels, we only expect that you will comport yourself according to law, that you will not unreasonably violate any law, that you will behave as other law abiding citizens, we expect nothing more than that.  

Speaking in this manner, Judge Denoo presumed to know how Black people should deal with racial prejudice and discrimination. He spoke to the young Black students as if he knew more about being Black in Pullman than they did, evoking a long history of a patronizing and paternalistic attitudes from Whites towards African Americans. This is the same type of sentiment that Martin Luther King responded to in his “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” writing to White religious leaders who were questioning the efficacy of the 1963 Birmingham Campaign. King wrote: 

First, I must confess that over the past few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro’s greatest stumbling block in his stride toward freedom

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507 Denoo 4.
is...the white moderate, who is more devoted to ‘order’ than justice...who
paternalistically believes he can set a time table for another man’s freedom, who
lives by a mythical concept of time and constantly advises the Negro to wait for a
more convenient season. 508

Like the clergy that King was addressing, Judge Denoo fell into the pattern of
assuming he could determine the proper course of action for African Americans,
exhibiting better insight than the Blacks themselves. This sentiment reflects an
assumption of White supremacy that can be traced to slavery, when White slave owners
viewed slaves of all ages as analogous to children.

Adding to the insulting nature of the speech, Judge Denoo also trivialized racial
slights by comparing them to water on a duck’s back. Unlike drops of water, racial
slights have the potential to inflict wounds and detrimentally effect one’s ability to
succeed—outcomes that do not easily “drain off.” In reaction to the sentencing and the
Judge’s statements, the Black defendants and many other BSU members were
infuriated and organized a daring demonstration that would put them at odds with the
government and university officials.

BSU Protest in Colfax, Whitman County Jail

On Thursday evening, following the sentencing, the BSU issued a letter to Terrell
with four “non-negotiable” demands. 509

508 Martin Luther King, “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” Justice Denied: The Black Man in White America,
I. We demand that the power and resources of your offices be used to guarantee the immediate suspension of the sentences of our brothers.

II. We demand immediate suspension of all university disciplinary action against our five brothers.

III. We demand that no disciplinary action be taken against any student or faculty members who supports, by word or action, our four demands.

IV. We demand that our five brothers, and all other black students supporting these demands be given a period of academic rest without any reprisals. The physical and mental strain of always carrying the burden is intolerable. We will return to our studies when the pressure subsides.  

The BSU set 4:00pm the next day, Friday, February 28 as a deadline for the demands. And if the deadline was missed, they warned “we will use any means necessary to rectify these grave injusticies (sic).”

Besides the demands the letter explained: “Today’s decision by the Whitman County judge against our five brothers proved that the main business of the court was not to dispense justice. The business of this court was to insult, intimidate, and imprison our five brothers.” And they justified the demands by stating: “We have witnessed a series of events, culminating in the present discussion, which leaves us no alternative but to guard our own interests. We do so by making a series of

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511 Black Student Union 1-2.

512 Emphasis in original; Black Student Union1-2.
demands…These demands are put forth by the Black Student Union and must be viewed apart from the plight of our five brothers.”

Several notable aspects of the crisis are reflected in these demands. The BSU demanded amnesty for all five Black students from both criminal and university punishment, which points out that the Discipline Committee’s judgment was still pending and the five defendants were liable for further punishment. In demand three, we see that amnesty was requested for students and faculty making the demands, reflecting that both were involved and supporting the protest effort—most notably Professor Johnnetta Cole was a key organizer. Lastly, demand four speaks of the mental and physical strain the BSU was under at this time, which is also important to note because it helps to explain the drastic measures the group would soon take. Taking note of this especially charged and tense atmosphere helps to explain why the BSU took steps—like writing this list of demands—that might otherwise seem extreme.

The high emotion of the BSU was also noteworthy because it was an aspect that Terrell did not understand, demonstrated by his response. On Friday, his reply included the following statements.

This letter is a response to the demands in your letter delivered to me last night.

I shall respond to them in the order you listed them in your letter. Before doing so, however, I should like to say that I think it very regrettable that BSU has chosen this way to present those issues. It is foreign to the ways of an academic community for its members to attempt to solve problems or effect change in such

513 Black Student Union1-2.
a manner that the possibility of discussion and other intellectual means of problem solving are ruled out.\textsuperscript{514}

For the BSU, who knew their “five brothers” would begin to serve their sentences that weekend, there was no time for intellectual problem-solving because the immediacy of the injustice. In contrast, Terrell viewed the situation as not a pressing one and believed it could be resolved through “discussion and other intellectual means.”\textsuperscript{515} Terrell did not understand the need for the demands. He and the BSU did not share a common understanding of the situation therefore he was not disposed to respond positively. To the demand that the university have the sentences be suspended, Terrell said it would be inappropriate for the school to intercede in a court’s decision. Regarding the Discipline Committee, he said they had already showed good faith by delaying their recommendation until the conclusion of the court case and now planned to resume their proceedings in the following week, as previously planned. In response to demand three and four, Terrell declared he could not promise amnesty if rules were broken and students under physical and emotion strain should request leniency from their instructors.\textsuperscript{516}

Terrell ended the letter by reiterating his disappointment with the nature of the demands, saying that he and the BSU had “effective means of discussion in the past” and that he hoped “we can continue this pattern.” Then, Terrell suggested his office and the BSU begin meeting regularly to discuss sensitive issues that arise beginning


\textsuperscript{515} “Terrell Rejects” 1,3.

\textsuperscript{516} “Terrell Rejects” 1,3. Terrell, “Letter, 28 Feb 1969.”
the following week. While rejecting the demands, Terrell retained his posture of trying to create and maintain a cooperative relationship with the BSU. However, in this situation, words would not be enough; the faculty and students of the BSU had decided it was time for action.

Anticipating that Terrell would not respond favorably to their demands, the BSU began preparing for an act of resistance. Following the conviction, they knew that Friday, February 28, was the day the five convicted Black students were to begin serving their weekend sentences and the other BSU members felt that they had to stop it. They contacted Black students at nearby colleges and universities and requested their support. One person that received the call to action was Jeff Guillory, a University of Idaho (UI) student, who came to WSU to attend a protest planning meeting. He later remembered that Dr. Cole proposed a plan to “block the entrance of the jail.”

Cole also explained to everyone in attendance that they needed to seriously consider the possible consequences for this action. She explained that athletes like Guillory, who played for the UI football team, needed to be especially wary because “they might get arrested, lose their [athletic] scholarships and get expelled.” After hearing that, Guillory and some other UI athletes decided they could not take such risk and began to leave. As they did so, others called them “uncle tom” and ridiculed their decision. This incident did not lead to any lasting hostility between Black athletes and

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518 Guillory.
519 Guillory.
other BSU members according to Guillory, but it did make him angry at the time. And it shows the various factors that could constrain or compel students to protest.

According to Dave Covin, the plan to block the entrance to the jail was actually a scaled down version of a more extreme act that was originally proposed. The first plan was for the BSU to prevent the Sherriff from seizing their “brothers” by any means. When the Sheriff and his Deputies came to Pullman to take the five students to jail, the BSU would stop them and “shoot it out” if needed. It is useful to note here that several BSU members had guns at this time. This fact was stated in interviews with Dave Covin and Jeff Guillery. Guillery said that many BSU members carried guns, as did many White radical students, in response to the revolutionary climate of the time and their feel of being in danger from those unreceptive to them and/or their ideas.\textsuperscript{520} Concurring, Covin said:

Yeah, the BSU had guns. They were mostly pistols. I had one and I don’t know exactly how many did…The president of the BSU received a permit to carry a weapon, that was Ernie Thomas, everybody called him Stone, because he had received so many threats on his life. So that even though the Colfax county (sic) Sheriff was not favorable disposed toward Black people the threats were serious enough that he recognized the need for Ernie or Stone to have protection on his person at all times. These threats were relentless.

When asked to elaborate about the nature of these death threats, Covin said they came by “phone, mail and the threats would go to [Thomas], but also to the university, to the

\textsuperscript{520} Guillery.
president and so on. To the university, that these people were going to do something about him.”

Due to these threats—which were coming well before the plan to protest the convictions—many BSU members had guns and were prepared to use them in a standoff with the Country Sheriff. However, Cole and Covin convinced the group to take a different approach that was less likely to get them all killed. Both of them were older than the Black undergraduates and had families to consider, so they were not eager to die a revolutionary death. Therefore, the final plan was that the BSU would let the Sheriffs take the convicted students into custody, but gather in front of the jail before they arrived. Once the Sheriff and the students got there, the protesters would hold a rally and block the entrance. The rally would part to allow the Sheriffs and prisoners to pass through. Then, when they were in the middle of the crowd, the crowd would close in so tightly that it would separate the “brothers” from the Sheriff. Then, they would move off with their comrades in the middle of the assemblage and go to a nearby church for sanctuary.

On the evening of February 28, with their demands rejected by Terrell, the BSU and their allies gathered in Colfax and put their plan into action. Colfax was the seat of Whitman County and the location of the County’s courthouse and jail. Following the plan, approximately 75 protesters surrounded Sheriff Mike Humphries and the five captives when they arrived and refused to allow them into the jail. As this initial

521 Covin.
522 Covin.
523 Covin.
confrontation unfolded, a group of local White citizenry gathered at the scene and began threatening the demonstrators and throwing rocks at them—which inadvertently broke three Courthouse windows. The protesters then asked Humphries for protection from the antagonistic and aggressive “onlookers.”

The crowd, mostly of Negroes but including about half a dozen whites, gathered in front of the Whitman County Courthouse about 4:30 pm. Later, claiming they needed protection from objects thrown by a group of white Colfax residents who had gathered near by (sic), the black students moved into the courthouse hallway leading to the second floor office of the Whitman Country Sheriff.

Reportedly the air was also let “out of the tires of several sheriffs’ vehicles,” but it was unclear whether this was done by the activists or the onlookers/farmers. Next, the protesters went to a nearby Methodist Church for sanctuary. Johnnetta Cole had arranged with Rev. Tracy Manley to use the church, and Humphries agreed to allow the group to go there to avoid the hostile crowd as long as the activists agreed that the five captives would be kept with the group. Cole agreed to the Sheriff’s condition and the group went to the Methodist Church with a police escort.

Once inside of the church, they heard on the radio that highway patrolmen and police officers from nearby towns as far away as Spokane were racing to Colfax. “State troopers and other law enforcement from near by [sic] were brought to Colfax in

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525 Denstedt 1,6.
526 Denstedt 1,6.
527 Farrar, “Weekend Demonstration” 1,3.
528 Covin.
case trouble developed, but Humphreys and other officials decided they should be kept out of sight to avoid a confrontation and possible violence." Anticipating an attack on their church sanctuary by law enforcement or local Whites, the protesters began making preparations, stockpiling wet cloths to put over their faces if tear gas was used. Then they got a call from the highway patrol, who explained the radio report. He said that farmers from around the area were forming "fleets" of cars, loaded with rifles, to come and kill the protesters. And, in an ironic twist, the Patrolman said he and the other officers were being sent to Colfax to protect the protesters from the farmers. Yet, the caller insisted that he wasn't sure if they could stop the farmers from attacking, so they recommended the protesters come out and be taken into custody. Following this revelation, the demonstrators discussed what to do and decided to stay in the church. However, they believed what the Patrolman had said because they could look through the church windows and see truck loads of armed Whites driving past the building.

Later in the evening, as armed locals and law enforcement amassed outside, the protesters prepared themselves for an assault, a shoot out, and even death. They configured themselves into a formation similar to concentric circles with the innermost group being the five captives, then a circle of male protesters, then a circle of female protesters. This arraignment, they believed, increase the chances that a confrontation could be resolved peacefully if anyone did storm the building given that the females would be the first group the assaulting force would see. Hopefully, they would see the women and halt, but if not the males vowed to ensure the females were protected. If

530 Covin.
any invading persons physically accosted the group, they would be resisted at all costs. After all the men agreed to this plan, Ernie Thomas put his fist in the air and said “I’m going down.” Then, all the other men said the same, followed by the women. They said this meaning they would die if needed. Then, they sang a Spiritual called “We’re Soldiers in the Army.”

Despite the high tension inside and outside the church that night, there were no attempts to tear gas the protesters or enter the church. The Daily Evergreen reported that around midnight county officials decided against any further attempts to interfere with the group because of fears about “armed townspeople.” Judge Denoo was quoted as saying: “To avoid any possibility of bloodshed, there will be no further action tonight.”

The next morning (Sat) at about 10:30am, Rev. Manley told the BSU that he had gotten threats to his family and church, and asked the group to leave. Complying with the request, the assemblage of protesters and the five prisoners returned to the courthouse to speak with Sheriff Humphries. Speaking for the group, BSU member Mark Williams told the Sheriff that the group was willing to be arrested. But, unsure what to do, Humphries hesitated in order to consult with other County officials. The protesters then went to another church building, this time a vacant building owned St. Patrick’s Catholic Church. James Bell, a BSU member from Eastern Washington University, arranged use of the building with the church’s Father Stefani. Around noon,

531 Covin.
532 Farrar, “Weekend Demonstration” 1,3.
533 Farrar, “Weekend Demonstration” 1,3.
Father Stefani allowed the protesters into the church, rather than the vacant church building, citing complaints from parishioners. Adding to the drama of the weekend, the countervailing sentiments for and against the BSU pushed the group out of one church sanctuary and then into another within a matter of hours.\textsuperscript{534}

By noon, the group was in the Catholic church and expected to be arrested soon. Knowing that it would probably be a short time before Humphries got clearance to arrest them, they waited in the church singing songs.\textsuperscript{535} At 1:30pm, the arrests came and the group was loaded onto a bus. During the arrests, most of the group continued to sing and some held up “clenched fists,”\textsuperscript{536} a popular symbol of the Black Power Movement. The protesters were taken back to the courthouse and brought before Judge Evans C. Bunker.

Some 35 Washington State Troopers, Pullman Police, and Washington State University campus police remained inside the county courthouse while Humphreys made the arrests unassisted. One of the deputies drove a bus used to haul the students to the courthouse for booking.\textsuperscript{537}

In groups of three, the 42 demonstrators were booked and charged, and their bail set at $1000. They were also given the option of being released on personal recognizance if they promised to appear in court on the appointed day and stay out of Colfax until that time, but all refused the offer reminiscent of the “jail no bail” strategy

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{534} Farrar, “Weekend Demonstration” 1,3.  
\textsuperscript{535} Farrar, “Weekend Demonstration” 1,3.  
\textsuperscript{536} Farrar, “Weekend Demonstration” 1,3.  
\textsuperscript{537} “42 Students” 1.}
used in the Southern Civil Rights Movement.\textsuperscript{538} Therefore, the entire group would spend Saturday night in jail. Within the 42 arrested, there were six students from Whitworth University and nine from Eastern Washington University, along with the 27 people from WSU—26 students and one faculty member, Johnnetta Cole.\textsuperscript{539}

Due to limited space in the Whitman County Jail, the arrestees were separated by sex and the sixteen female protesters were bused to the Spokane City Jail. The remaining 26 males were held for the night in the Colfax jail, along with the five original convicts. Around this time, an ally of the BSU called Carl Maxey to have him intervene on behalf of the protesters. By Sunday, Maxey arranged for the group to appear before Judge Bunker again, and had them agree to the previous release terms. By Sunday evening the protesters were out of jail, and Maxey praised Bunker for breaking “the sanctity of his Sunday” to discharge the group.\textsuperscript{540}

Now, with the episode in Colfax quelled for the time being, the focus of energy and activism returned to campus. On the Monday following their protest (March 3), the BSU held a forum in the Todd Auditorium in front of an “overflow crowd” where they denounced university and court officials for the treatment they had received throughout the AGR controversy and especially the previous weekend.\textsuperscript{541} The “emotionally charged” session lasted two hours and featured several speakers; most of all Eddie

\textsuperscript{538} The “jail no bail” strategy, used by the Southern Civil Rights Movement, was for protesters stay in jail instead of paying bail for their release. This would conserve scarce funds for movement groups and cause the jails to become full with protesters, leading to significant costs for the local government and preventing them from jailing others. Bruce J. Dierenfield, \textit{The Civil Rights Movement}, revised edition (Harlow, England: Pearson, 2008) 57.

\textsuperscript{539} Farrar, “Weekend Demonstration” 1,3.

\textsuperscript{540} Farrar, “Weekend Demonstration” 1,3.

Leon and Mark Williams and two men from University of Washington BSU, Carl Miller and Larry Gossett. The event also featured a special seating arrangement, as the first four rows in the center were reserved for BSU members and the White participants in the Colfax protest. Ernie Thomas, Richard Lee Smith and Ron Henderson were also seated in this special section. Kenny Walker came later and Tyrone Daisy did not attend.\textsuperscript{542}

Walker, Thomas and Smith all made short statements to the crowd. However, Walker explained that he needed to keep his comments to a minimum because his probation did not allow him to participate in student activities—likely speaking for the others as well. Eddie Leon gave a recap of the AGR controversy from its beginning in mid-January. He retold the account that the BSU received a phone call from the AGRs that invited them to the house and escalated the conflict. Consequently, since the BSU was invited over, no crime was committed according to Leon. He also explained that some BSU members brought guns because “the invitation included a warning that the fraternity was ready with guns if the Blacks wanted trouble.”\textsuperscript{543} This alleged phone call was the subject of a heated argument later in the forum. A white female in the audience denied that any such threatening call was ever made, and two Black women insisted that she was lying. An AGR member at the forum, stated that he had no clear knowledge if it the phone call was made or not.\textsuperscript{544}

\textsuperscript{542} Mathiason and Housinger 1,7. 
\textsuperscript{543} Mathiason and Housinger 1,7. 
\textsuperscript{544} Mathiason and Housinger 1,7.
Leon also described the trial as a “kangaroo court,” expressing outrage that Judge Denoo told the defendants to let racial insults “run off your backs like water on a duck.” Adding to this point, Carl Miller pointed out that Denoo treated the violation of the AGR’s property rights as more serious than the harm done by racism. Indeed there was merit to this charge, for while at one moment the Judge advised the Black students to shrug off prejudice and bigotry, he also gave a lengthy statement about the sanctity of private property in the form of one’s home. “…This fraternity house in which these white boys lived was their home…and under ancient English law as it is in our own law today the home is to be absolutely inviolate…this I think is the thing more than anything else here that impressed me in the fact that this total inviolacy of the home of another was violated.” Miller accurately critiqued the fact that the Judge expressed more concern for the violation of property rights by the BSU than the violation of civil rights by the AGRs, or any other Whites the Black students might encounter.

Sheriff Mike Humphries also did not escape disparagement at the forum, as Mark Williams criticized the Sheriff for being indecisive during the protest and for continually looking to Prosecutor Phillip Farris for instructions. Williams also objected to the conditions in the jail, which he described as a “white ghetto.” Lastly, Glenn Terrell was criticized in the statements of Larry Gossett and Mark Williams. Gossett faulted Terrell for failing to address the situation as it arose and Williams added: “Talk is cheap. He appoints committees and the committees go out and get the white point of view.”

545 Mathiason and Housinger 1,7.
546 Denoo 3.
547 Mathiason and Housinger 1,7.
548 Mathiason and Housinger 1,7.
Williams also denounced Terrell for failing to respond to the BSU demands. Playing on the common meaning of being “blacklisted,” Gossett encapsulated the Black students’ sentiments by stating that Terrell, Faris, and Humphries had been put on the BSU’s “whitelist.”

Following the forum both Terrell and Louis McNew, the original chairman of Social Responsibility Committee (SRC) publicly refuted these charges. On the accusation that his committees were ineffective, Terrell said the following.

The Human Relations Committee has not been as effective as I would have liked. Many of the problems that could be brought to it for mediation are not. Whereas, the Social Responsibility Committee has been very effective, establishing a number of things including the Experiment Education Program which brought 22 Blacks to campus who otherwise wouldn’t have been able to attend.

Adding to Terrell comments, McNew insisted that the SRC was continuing to work on behalf of African Americans. He identified four additional initiatives of the committee. For one, he said the SRC had established a Pullman Social Action Group, which had helped to implement a fair housing ordinance in Pullman. Two, they had recommended the formation of the Human Relations Committee. Three, they worked with Pullman churches and civil groups to foster understanding between Whites and Blacks. Four, the SRC was presently working to improve the recruitment of Black...

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549 Mathiason and Housinger 1,7.
550 Mathiason and Housinger 1,7.
These defensive explanations illustrate that Terrell and McNew considered the BSU’s chargers to be important and reflect the BSU’s influential position on campus. On a related point, Washington Governor Dan Evans also made a statement about the Colfax protest around this time, printed in the *Daily Evergreen*.

Gov. Dan Evans praised Whitman County authorities and WSU administrators for their handling of the demonstrations in Colfax this weekend. “It clearly was a case of obstructing justice when they attempted to prevent the youths from entering the Whitman County Courthouse to start serving their time,” Evans said. He commended the trial judge John Denoo for allowing the five blacks to serve their jail sentence on weekends.\(^{552}\)

The Governor’s comments, praising Whitman County officials and the University administrators, reflect that the actions and statements of the BSU had statewide impact, further demonstrating the group’s influence at the time.\(^{553}\)

Following Monday’s forum, tensions for the BSU and their allies remained high because the five convicted for the AGR incident still faced disciplinary action from the university. Wasting no time, the Discipline Committee hearing was scheduled for the Wednesday of that week, March 5, generating much activity on campus. One student wrote of possible disruptions on campus similar to the Colfax protest if the Discipline Committee acted against the five and urged the suspension of disciplinary action to avoid protests harmful to the “educational process” at WSU.\(^{554}\)

\(^{551}\) Mathiason and Housinger 1,7.

\(^{552}\) Mathiason and Housinger 1,7.

\(^{553}\) Mathiason and Housinger 1,7.

Also responding to the high tension and anxiety on campus, the executive board of the student government, or Board of Control, met with Terrell and Dean of Students J.C. Clevenger and proposed six measures to deescalate ill feelings on campus. Two of the recommendations directly related to the Discipline Committee: the Black students be given an open hearing if they request one and that going forward the overall principles of the Discipline Committee be reexamined. The other four recommendations were directed at reforming the university as a whole, the BOC suggested setting up a program of Black Studies or Ethnic Studies immediately, starting a hiring drive for qualified Black faculty, creating a program to make White students aware of White racism, and investigating a rumored poll that 90% of Whites at WSU were hostile to Blacks.

Among this activity, SDS members planned a small protest in front of the French Administration building. “Purpose of the demonstration, said Penny Ziegler SDS President, is to put pressure on the Disciplinary Board not to take action against the five Black students who were involved in the AGR incident.” This was to take place on Wednesday during the same time as the hearing.

As Wednesday came the Discipline Committee hearing drew near, the campus anxiously awaited the outcome. Then around mid-day an unexpected announcement came from Terrell that preempted the committee’s judgment. At about a half an hour before the hearing was scheduled to begin, Terrell announced that he was indefinitely

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556 “BOC Gives” 1.
suspending disciplinary action against the five students, reversing his position and bringing the affair to a swift conclusion. Both the hearing and the protest were quickly cancelled; the *Daily Evergreen* included a photo of Ernie Thomas sending home the approximately 20 people who had gathered to demonstrate.\(^{558}\) In his announcement, Terrell gave two stipulations: that there be no further protests in Colfax challenging county officials and that Blacks and Whites on campus agree to work with the Human Relations Committee to address the racial climate on campus.

Terrell did not explain why he made this decision, but other statements in the announcement hint that possible student unrest was in his mind. Within Terrell’s announcement suspending disciplinary action, he outlined a new “Policy on Freedom” addressed the acceptable parameters of protests on campus. While purporting to protect the right of faculty and students to express grievances, the policy stated that “the use of physical means to disrupt the educational process and functions of the university” would constitute a violation. Given the creation of this policy, it is clear that Terrell and his staff were concerned about disruptive protests at WSU and this surely influenced his decision to suspend the discipline.

When the next weekend came, the 5 defendants (Ernie Thomas, Richard Lee Smith, Ron Henderson, Tyrone Daisy, and Kenny Walker) began serving their sentences with no further resistance. And with this, the controversy stemming from the AGR incident came to a close. One aftereffect was that Terrell held two “off the record” meetings on Monday March 10, one with leaders from the Pullman community and the

other with Department Chairs at WSU. Terrell said that these meetings were called for him “to explain in a broader context the course we are taking to improve the racial climate at the University”\textsuperscript{559} The protest in Colfax and suspension of disciplinary action against the Black students undoubtedly raised questions about Terrell’s leadership in the minds of many on campus and in the surrounding community. Thus, Terrell called these informal meetings to reassure them of the prudency of his policies. Terrell, who had been president of WSU for less than two years at this time,\textsuperscript{560} was also facing a fair amount of scrutiny as these events unfolded.\textsuperscript{561} Given that Terrell took a public and proactive role in championing the Experimental Education Program, the Social Responsibility Committee, Black Studies and other reforms, he was clearly at odds with those who questioned such measures and these meetings were called for Terrell to buttress his credibility.

Another aftereffect was that the faculty member and students arrested during the protest in Colfax were tried and found guilty of “the obstruction of judicial processes.”\textsuperscript{562} The trial took place in mid-April, with all 42 protesters represented by Carl Maxey. Maxey entered “technical plea” which meant, “We violated the law but with a just motivation.” Despite this defense, Judge Evans C. Bunker found the entire group guilty, fined them $25 each, and placed them on probation until January 1, 1970—about eight months.\textsuperscript{563}

\textsuperscript{561} James Short, personal interview, 9 May 2011.
\textsuperscript{562} “Students, Faculty Member Guilty After Colfax Incident,” \textit{Daily Evergreen}, 18 Apr. 1969: 1.
\textsuperscript{563} “Students, Faculty” 1.
Finally, in May, some of the Black defendants had their weekend sentences reviewed for failing to report to jail during or around the weekend of Spring Break. The sentences of Richard Lee Smith, Tyrone Daisy and Kenny Walker also reviewed in this manner. And at least one, Kenny Walker, saw his sentence be changed from 90 days on weekends to 90 days to be served consecutively, beginning this consecutive sentence on May 7. It is unclear whether any of the other men’s sentences were altered in this way.

With all the events of spring semester of 1969—the AGR incident, trial, protest in Colfax and aftermath—it was an extraordinary time for the BSU at WSU. This was all the much more so when we consider that the effort to create Black Studies continued throughout the AGR controversy. Even though much of the BSU’s attention was directed towards their “five brothers” on trial in the courts and in public opinion, they did not abandon their campaign to institute a Black Studies program at Washington State University.

In this chapter, we have recounted the fight that took place on January 15, 1969 between members of the the Alpha Gamma Rho fraternity and the Black Student Union. In addition, we have covered the wide set of outcomes and impacts of this event, effecting the campus climate, university administrators, the local populace and criminal courts. This controversy represented the most racially charged incident that the Whitman County area had ever seen, and it would leave a lasting imprint on race relations for years to come. It also further illuminated the significant influence of the
Black Student Union on and off campus, as this controversy captured the attention of students, the WSU President, and even the Governor of Washington.

**Brief Account of BSU Actions, 1969-1970**

Building off the turmoil of the AGR controversy, the following year would see a new round of protests as Black students and their allies continued to feel alienated from much of the campus and the Whitman County community. The immediate origin of these events started in April 1970, after Black activist Ralph Atkins was arrested in connection with two notorious events. The first was political vandalism perpetrated by demonstrators who entered a local Safeway and stomped on non-union grapes for sale.\(^{564}\) The second was an arson fire that destroyed the south stands of WSU’s football field—then called Rogers Field and now called Martin Stadium. Atkins was arrested on April 15 in connection with both events, prompting complaints of discrimination, given that his was the only arrest despite many people being known to be involved in the Safeway incident.\(^{565}\)

On April 30, the tension increased following President Nixon’s announcement that he was escalating the Vietnam War into Cambodia, and the killing of four students protesting the war at Kent State by Ohio National Guard troops. At WSU, the Kent State shooting led to a nine hour occupation of the French Administration Building on May 5 by 500 to 800 protesters. Expressing their outrage at the shooting of students and the escalation of the war, the demonstrators forced Glenn Terrell to cancel classes

\(^{564}\) Fiege 16.  
\(^{565}\) Fiege 16.
the following Monday for a teach-in about the war, and compelled him to send President Nixon a telegram expressing the campus’ “outrage and dismay” regarding the Kent State incident.566

A new catalyst for student action came on May 14 following another shooting of protesting students. This time that shooting was at Jackson State College in Mississippi where local police shot twelve and killed two youths, all of whom were African American. This shooting and its Black victims garnered much less media coverage or public outrage than the White Kent State victims and this apparent double standard infuriated students of color across America. At WSU, this prompted S.K. Tripathi to call a meeting between BSU, MECHA (a Mexican student group), Radical Union (formerly the WSU chapter of SDS), and allied faculty and staff like Dr. Johnnetta Cole to find a more direct way to address racism on Washington State’s campus.567 The group created a coalition called the Third World Students and issued eleven demands to the administration as a minimal commitment against racism.568

Briefly, the demands called for a reduction in law enforcement on campus, the extension of the university’s legal resources to ‘Third World’ students, the establishment of programs dealing with racism, increased enrollment of minorities, additional support for minority studies programs, and the immediate removal of all non-union grapes from the campus.569

566 Fiege 16-17.
567 Fiege 16 (see footnote 2), 17.
568 Fiege 18.
569 Fiege 18.
The following Monday, May 18, representatives of the Third World Organizations (chiefly BSU and MECHA) announced their demands at a noon rally. On Friday, Terrell responded in a long letter that effectively rejected the demands citing previous university efforts, the university’s limited power and the baseless nature of some demands. In turn, the BSU announced a plan to gradually withdraw all Black students, faculty and staff from WSU and discourage further Black enrollment. This measure was taken partly as a strategy to force the University into compliance because BSU members guessed low minority enrollment would likely result in the loss of federal funds. Black students’ decision to leave WSU was also influenced by continued threats of violence against BSU leaders. Persisting from the previous year, and undoubtedly increased following the Colfax protest, a bounty was known to be put on the lives of Ernie Thomas and others. Hostile local militias including a group called the La Crosse Nightriders.

The BSU announced their withdrawal plan on May 22 and this sparked a flurry of action with them and on their behalf. First, a group of students converged at the French Administration Building to discuss the BSU withdrawal and 25 White students filled out withdrawal forms in solidarity. Also, Professors Robert Cole and Paul Brians met with Terrell for an hour to discuss the developments. At 4:30pm approximately 400 demonstrators held a sit-in on Stadium Way (a major thoroughfare through campus).

570 Fiege 19.
571 Fiege 20.
572 Fiege 20.
Protesters talked with stuck motorists to explain the action, but at least one driver tried to run into the activists but was stopped.\textsuperscript{574}

At 7:30pm, after several planning meetings throughout the afternoon and early evening, approximately 800 people met in the student union building and agreed to strike, elected a steering committee called the Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism, and selected Nola Cross as committee chair.\textsuperscript{575} They approved plans to picket campus buildings, distribute leaflets and boycott Pullman and Colfax businesses; additionally they agreed to withhold all academic and financial responsibilities from the university until the Third World Students were satisfied with the administration’s response to their 11 demands.\textsuperscript{576}

The strike began on Friday, May 22 and lasted for eight days. On Sunday, a meeting was held between Terrell and the Third World Students but the discussions broke down into a hostile exchange and nothing was resolved. That same day, Terrell spoke on the radio calling the strike unconstructive and offered himself as a special minority relations advisor. By Monday, May 25, support for the strike had grown with 3000 people crowding into the Bohler gym and voting to continue the strike. The assemblage also voted to campaign in offices and classrooms and to canvass Pullman residents to urge support for the strike.\textsuperscript{577}
The 3000 students at this Monday meeting represented roughly 20% of the WSU student population; most of the remaining 12,000 students never attended strike rallies and likely did not join the strike. Consequently, the strike occurred in a climate with significant opposition; rumors of potential repression from National Guard troops, vigilantes groups, and other locals also contributed to this climate. Yet, on the other hand, many individual faculty and teaching assistants supported the strike, especially in the Social Sciences.⁵⁷⁸

On Tuesday, May 26, Terrell softened his position by admitting that racism was a problem on campus, stating his personal opposition to it, and pledging that the administration was “dedicated to the struggle to eliminate it.” He also announced the appointment of an Assistant to the President for Minority Affairs, who would work with a Minority Advisory Council in fighting racism at the school. The Third World Students approved the president’s efforts but were ultimately unsatisfied, stating these policies put the burden of anti-racism on people of color.⁵⁷⁹

On Wednesday, May 27, 3500-4000 students and strike supporters attended the biggest strike meeting of the week and the steering committee announced plans to march through classroom corridors. During the meeting Marguerita Sugiyama, a MECHA leader, also persuaded the group to hold a rally the following day outside the building where Chicano Studies was being considered for approval. After the meeting

⁵⁷⁸ Fiege 22.
⁵⁷⁹ Fiege 22.
2000 to 2500 rallied in front of president’s house, where Terrell spoke to the crowd and reiterated his commitment to minority issues.\textsuperscript{580}

On Thursday, as MECHA requested, approximately 1000 demonstrators gathered outside the building where Residential Instructional Staff (or faculty senate) overwhelmingly approved the Chicano Studies Program. Also, on Thursday, the strike steering committee began to seek an end to the strike because the school year was coming to an end. They reasoned that they would be unable to sustain the strike over the summer, so on Friday, May 29, the strike ended with a compromise agreement. The compromise did not address all the original demands but it did produce enough results for the BSU to call off their plan to leave WSU.\textsuperscript{581}

The agreement included Terrell’s earlier proposal to appoint a special assistant for minority affairs to work on anti-racist programs. It also included a racism workshop the following year for students, faculty, staff, and local residents; the hiring of minority students to recruit more students of color and other reforms. During the following 1970-71 school year, WSU also changed its conduct code to prohibit racial discrimination, created a University council, and created a University Ombudsman position to mediate between students and administrators. The agreed upon Racism Workshop was held on Oct 7 and 8, 1970, during which of 20,000 participants attended group sessions and listened to speakers like Dr. Charles Hurst of Chicago’s Malcolm X Community College, Dr. Nathan Ware of San Francisco State’s Black Studies Department, Dr. Ralph

\textsuperscript{580} Fiege 22-23.  
\textsuperscript{581} Fiege 23.
Guzman of the UC Santa Cruz, and Luis Valdez who had worked in the farm worker’s movement with Cesar Chavez.\textsuperscript{582}

Undoubtedly, the Black Student Union was a powerful student group that played a pivotal role in the racial reforms Washington State University during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Into the next decade, the BSU would continue to be active, helping to expand Black Studies from a program into a department in the early 70s.

CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

In the fall of 2003, I started my senior year as an undergraduate at the University of Washington. During that time, I also served as an officer in the Black Student Union and began researching BSU history. In many ways, the genesis of this dissertation can be traced back that semester. Both my student involvement and BSU research grew from my previous years of learning about social inequality, and I was interested to transfer my theoretical and analytical lessons into practice. I joined the BSU because it was the main Black student organization on campus and, as a Black student, I figured it was a good place to start.

However once I became involved and agreed to fill a vacant officer position, I found myself out of step with the rest of the organization. Along with one or two others in the group, I was interested to discuss current events, organize protests, and form alliances with likeminded student groups. In contrast, the general inclination of the group was towards holding social events, discussing the latest trends in popular culture, and fraternizing with each other. If there was some apparent racial slight or instance of blatant discrimination my fellow BSU members would surely discuss their displeasure and perhaps even be motivated to demonstrate. But, in general, the members were uninterested in political issues and fell into a type of student Mark Anthony Neal called “strivers.”
Strivers probably make up the majority of black students on any given campus. These folks…simply aspire to middle-class futures as lawyers, dentists, financial planners, and software designers…but strivers are incredibly diversified and hardly conform to some Frazier type stereotype of self-hating, white-imitating Negroes. Though many of them are pressured to re-create middle-class lifestyles, some come from solid working-class and working poor environments. For the latter students, who are very often first-generation college students, the attainment of a college degree is a conduit into mainstream middle-class success. Race may matter to them, but not enough to jeopardize their academic and professional goals.  

As Neal outlined, many of the strivers I knew should not be faulted too harshly for their apolitical socializing and focus on career advancement because many had to carry the pressure of “vast parental investments, both emotional and financial, associated with their schooling” and future earnings. Yet, their choices of student involvement still evidenced an allegiance to concepts of capitalism, materialism, and upward mobility that I found disconcerting.

One instance in particular encapsulated the distance between me and the majority of the group, which was when we filled out our forms to renew our registration with the University. On these forms, the group had to update certain information like the names and contact information of the new officers, and state how it wanted to be

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584 Neal 181.
classified. Several choices were offered: religious, academic, athletic, political, social, etc. My first thought was that we should classify ourselves as political, but the group chose to be categorized as a social organization. And as I would come to find, they were right. The BSU had mostly functioned as a social organization for some time and that would continue to be the pattern throughout the school year.

Given these contrasting ambitions between myself and the group, my interest soon drifted away from the Black Student Union that I was a part of. While attempting to maintain my officer’s duties, I began channeling most of my energy and ideas into another student organization called Minority Think Tank (MTT), which offered the political consciousness, social action, and multicultural solidarity that I was looking for. I also became involved in other ethnic student organizations, attending meetings and supporting their efforts, especially MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano/a de Aztlán) whose UW chapter was admirable for its political orientation and gender politics (there was a deliberate policy to staff every leadership position with male and female co-chairs).

Yet, as my interest in the contemporary BSU waned, I grew increasingly fascinated by the Black Student Union of the late 1960s. For years, I had heard tidbits of information about the BSU’s impact at the University of Washington (UW) and I had heard something about a sit-in, but nothing was clear or concrete. A combination of personal interest in social activism and curiosity about local Black history induced me to begin researching the subject. Eventually, I uncovered a basic outline of the BSU’s 1968 sit-in at the UW and its political influence on campus. Indeed, I found that the
BSU of the 60s seemed very different than the BSU of 2003. This apparent gulf between the BSUs past and present was fascinating to behold, and left me with more questions than answers. Some of the most obvious questions were: what happened? And why was there this difference? Years later as I began this dissertation project I was still pondered those questions, and resolved to explore them by expanding my research on the BSU.

After years of research, I argue that the differences between late 60s and early 2000s BSUs result from the contrasting social-political contexts of the two groups. While critically conscious individuals can be found in any area, the late 1960s offered a unique socio-cultural space for Black protest to capture the nation’s attention due to the phenomena of the preceding years: the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power Movement, the Vietnam War, the Cold War, and Third World decolonization. These developments created a discursive space for Black Americans to advance their grievances and Black college students used that space to win concessions from their institutions. However, as that discursive space was being created and utilized, there were consistent efforts to undermine and destroy it.

As the 60s came to an end and the 70s began, Black student activists faced increasing criticism, especially following the brandishing of rifles at Cornell University in 1969. In addition, local law enforcement agencies, criminal courts, and the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) increased their efforts to sabotage and suppress campus militants.\textsuperscript{585}

\textsuperscript{585} Rogers 129-130.
As part of the now well-studied Counter-Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO), FBI director J. Edgar Hoover dispatched a message in 1970 to his staff. “Increased campus disorders involving black students pose a definite threat to the nation’s stability and security and indicate need for increase in both quality and quantity of intelligence information.” Active BSUs were investigated by the FBI, and the FBI kept a running list of prominent activists. Organizational, personal, and ideological conflicts within BSUs were exacerbated by the FBI. It sent forged letters to endanger BSU affairs and manipulate the press. The Bureau (as well as local and state police) recruited, employed, and deployed an army of spies (students and college employees) that collected data on student groups or thwarted their activities.  

The impact of this state repression can hardly be overemphasized, given its harassment, arrest, or injury of student activists all over the country. Eventually, these efforts by the FBI and others undermined the discursive space of Black protest and effectively neutralized the Black Campus Movement by the early 70s.  

With the events of the 70s, 80s and 90s, the rise of Reagan conservatism and colorblind racism, it is no wonder that most Black college students of the 2000s are strivers. They do not have access to a social climate that can comprehend Black grievances as anything more than ignorance, selfishness, or worse. Moreover, the repression and conservatism of the past forty-five years has all but eliminated that activist networks and training grounds that prepared Black college students to organize.

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586 Rogers 133-134.
587 Rogers 143.
African American undergraduates do not arrive on campus with the social analysis and organizing skills that late-60s BSU members possessed because there no longer are thriving NAACP Youth Chapters, or groups like CORE and SNCC to teach such preparation. By the time precocious young radicals like myself have their consciousness raised and learned a few organizing skills, it is time for them to graduate and leave the university. Of course, there were significant college student activism in the 1980s and 90s as students pressured their institutions to divest from apartheid South Africa and include a multicultural courses in their graduation requirements. But, contemporary college students are likely to know little or nothing about this recent past, just as they only know a limited narrative of the 1960s.

Therefore, to explain the differences between the BSUs of the late 60s and our current era, the changes we see in the students is largely a reflection of the circumstances that surround them. With this, I am not dismissing the personal agency or responsibility of Black individuals, students groups, or communities to investigate the challenges they face and organize to address them. Indeed, such efforts are crucial even if isolated or short lived because they can help us understand our own complex social locations. They also can uncover what methods of activism correspond to our unique situations and lay the groundwork for future endeavors. But, individual agency has to operate in a social context and the circumstances of our current era leads most Black students toward a halting engagement with overtly political projects. This explains the difference between past and present BSU’s.

In the following two sections of this chapter, the first part will summarize the narrative presented in this dissertation and outline promising avenues for future research. The second part will utilize the foregoing BSU history to engage Cultural and American Studies theory.

**Dissertation Synopsis and Concluding Arguments**

This dissertation has recounted the early history of the Black Student Union, starting with the group’s beginning at San Francisco State College in 1966 and subsequent actions there. Next it covered the BSU’s formation at the University of Washington and spring 1968 campaign, and ended with the BSU’s actions at Washington State University between 1968 and 1970. This history is significant in several different ways. For residents of the Northwest or researchers of Washington State history, this story shows the impact African Americans have had in this region of the country. And particularly for Black Washingtonians, the story of the Black Student Union brings to the surface a narrative that can be reclaimed for inspiration, pride and empowerment.

For those interested in social justice efforts, this dissertation is significant because it provides an example of how institutional reforms were fought for and achieved. The BSU strategy of fostering activist networks between students and local communities was essential to the BSU’s success, meaning that their accomplishments were not merely due to political posturing or sympathetic administrators. Rather, the BSUs at each of the schools discussed previously formed a power base by employing a
community oriented methodology and their experience offers a blueprint for future reform efforts.

For researchers of 1960s US history, this dissertation illustrates important insights into the Black Power Movement and the Civil Rights Movement. As was described in the introductory chapter, the mainstream account of the Black Power Movement characterizes it as the end-point and antithesis of Civil Rights. The Civil Rights Movement is cast as the productive, rational, and noble phase of Black protest, while the Black Power Movement is vilified as destructive, violent, and frightening. However, this popular Civil Rights and Black Power historiography is strongly disputed by the history of the BSU.

This project shows that the BSU retained the strategies of conducting community service projects and fostering links with local Black populations, methods commonly associated with the Civil Rights Movement. This contradicts the perception of Black Power as disconnected from local concerns and local people; it also disputes the view that the two movements were categorically different. While acclaimed historians have written that the ascendancy of Black Power meant a rejection of a community centered approach to activism, the practices of the BSU show that Black Power advocates could and often did continue to put an emphasis on local organizing—revealing a hereto underappreciated continuity between Civil Rights and Black Power.

590 Payne 365.
This study of the BSU contributes to an emerging group of scholarship that endeavors to challenge conventional notions of Black Power as mutually exclusive to the Civil Rights Movement. Rather, these works argue that the two movements were interconnected; and they support a more nuanced notion of Black Power. The research presented here makes a contribution to this scholarship, showing that the Black Student Union was part of the Black Power Movement and not merely interested in riotous destruction. Instead, they pushed a coherent program with a set of sensible goals addressing demonstrated community needs—not unlike the free breakfast programs or medical services of the Black Panthers. To achieve its goals, the BSUs in San Francisco, Seattle and Pullman established activist networks with likeminded students and local community members. Even at Washington State University, situated in an area without a large Black community, the BSU established links with Black students at nearby institutions, wrote letters to other BSUs, and outreached to Black communities hundreds of miles away. Therefore, this consistent pattern of networking and service reveals that Black Power adherents did not necessarily reject community organizing.

Furthermore, the existence of this Black Power organization (the BSU) in such different locations speaks to the broad appeal and flexibility of the Black Power Movement. Within the previous chapters, the BSU was identified in three very different locations: San Francisco/Bay Area, a major metropolitan area with a large Black community; Seattle, a medium size city with a smaller Black population; and Pullman, a rural college-town with a miniscule Black population. The establishment of Black Power in each location shows that the movement had nationwide appeal and was not confined
to riot-prone cities like Detroit, Chicago or New York—another common mischaracterization of the Black Power Movement.

Finally, this history shows that Black Power organizations could lead effective and productive campaigns, thereby countering the view of it as unable to win meaningful reforms for African Americans or society at large. At each of the institutions discussed here, the BSUs led remarkable protest efforts that created substantial improvements for African Americans and other people of color. These gains included an increase in Black students, faculty and staff, and new tutoring and retention programs. Moreover, the BSUs pushed their respective institutions to create Black Studies, which legitimized the study of Black people, history, and culture within academia. This development revolutionized higher education by creating new course offerings and forcing existing disciplines to reassess their curriculums. Moreover, Black Studies established the foundational critique that successive reformers could use to fight for Chicano Studies, Ethnic Studies, Women’s Studies, and similar programs. Given these insights, it is clear that narratives which construct Black Power as fruitless needed to be reconsidered.

This story of the Black Student Union is important and significant because of its dynamism, its existence in numerous geographies, and its substantial impacts on institutions across the West Coast. The BSU was one of the most important Black Power organizations and a study of the Black Power Movement without discussing the BSU is incomplete. The history of the BSU both challenges popular beliefs about Black
Power and deepens our understanding of the movement’s numerous dimensions and substantial influence.

Future Research

This dissertation project features both the need and opportunity for future research. One such follow-up project would continue to explore the differences and similarities between past and present BSUs, considering the intervening history between late-60s and the first decades of the 2000s. How did the BSU chapters discussed here, or that existed elsewhere, respond and adjust to the changing social environments of the late 20th century? How have Black Student Unions been incorporated or cooped into their respective institutions?

Another follow-up project would compare 1960s Black student protest in the Northwest to similar developments in the South and elsewhere. For instance, the administration of Washington State University and government officials in Whitman County directed much effort toward defusing the tension caused by BSU actions and preventing potential bloodshed. The most obvious example occurred during the Colfax protest, when officials allowed the BSU protesters to take refuge in a church to avoid a potential clash with hostile residents. This move to avoid scandal and the likely media attention that would result resemble similar policies carried out in some Southern towns during the Civil Rights Movement—the policies of Sheriff Laurie Pritchett in Albany, GA.
is one prominent example. Thus, it would be intriguing to explore the similarities and differences between these incidents, possibly identifying provocative connections that disrupt perceptions of a North-South dichotomy.

There is also an important story to tell that centers on Dr. Johnnetta Cole, professor at WSU during the late 60s and leader of the Black Student Union. Not only did she oversee the creation and early phase of the BSU at WSU but she was also involved in a variety of other issues on campus, from opposing the Vietnam War to monitoring the University’s discipline of students. After leaving WSU in 1970, Dr. Cole went on to have a distinguished career in academia, eventually serving as the President of Spelman College. She also became a respected source for Black feminist theory and analysis.

Given her distinguished career, it is worthy to consider the impact her time at WSU had on her development as a scholar and an activist. One particularly intriguing direction of research would ask: how did her time as a leader of a Black Power organization, the BSU, influence her feminist consciousness? This would be especially interesting because it might comment on the relationship between Black feminism and Black Power, a connection most scholars find to be contentious at best. Likewise, Cole’s impact on WSU also deserves to be unearthed and documented. These are all exciting avenues of future research, building of the foundation of this dissertation.

The Black Student Union and Post-Soul

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591 Dierenfield 79.
In this final section, we will consider how the history of the Black Student Union comments on contemporary theories of race and Cultural Studies. In specific, we will consider how the BSU of the 1960s reflects Mark Anthony Neal’s notion of “post-soul.” The concept of post-soul is a recent theoretical approach to grapple with the contemporary complexities of Black American lives. Yet, in contrast to the relative newness of this theory, one can identify illustrations of it in the history of the Black Student Union.

The climate on college campuses in the late 1960s reflected a set of tensions that would come to characterize US racial dynamics into the 21st century due to the time-period’s pivotal location between Jim Crow racism and a post-Civil Rights racial dynamic. Consequently, certain features of Black student history, such as that presented in this work, foreshadow the racial norms that would characterize the next several decades. Examining this moment as a harbinger of post-Civil Rights racial formations helps to enrich accounts of contemporary racial phenomena.

In Soul Babies: Black Popular Culture and the Post-Soul Aesthetic (2002), Mark Anthony Neal put forth the concept of post-soul, an idea that refers to a post-Civil Rights generational experience and a genre of artistic expression that reflects that experience. Both the aesthetic and the larger subjectivity respond to socio-racial phenomena that are particular to the post-Civil Rights era. These phenomena include “issues like deindustrialization, desegregation, the corporate annexation of black popular culture,
cybernization in the workforce, the globalization of finance and communication, the
general commoditization of black life and culture,” and other developments. 592

According to Neal, these socio-political shifts of the latter 20th century rendered
many preceding African American understandings and practices unworkable to the
post-soul generation, those born between 1963 and 1978, and successive cohorts. 593
Neal wrote: “I am also suggesting that this aesthetic ultimately renders many ‘traditional’
tropes of blackness dated and even meaningless.” Continuing, he explained that
although more recent Black generations continue to borrow from pre-Civil Rights or
“modern” Black cultural practices, the post-soul generation is “so consumed with its
contemporary existential concerns that such traditions are not just called into question
but obliterated.” 594 Black Americans’ social context and the challenges they faced had
so profoundly shifted between the pre and post-Civil Rights eras that younger African
Americans could no longer rely upon the cultural understandings or conventions of
preceding generations.

Among the various changes that characterize this post-soul or post-Civil Rights
era, one in particular connects to BSU history and that was the desegregation of
historically White institutions, particularly in higher education. The post-soul generation
was the first group of African Americans to navigate the challenges (and opportunities)
of integration throughout their lives. In many cases, claiming a space in White
dominated institutions meant being subjected to various iterations of “white scrutiny”

592 Neal 2-3.
593 Neal 3.
594 Neal 3.
and hostility stemming from “the negative imagery of blacks in popular culture and white people’s minds.” No longer confined or protected in historically Black colleges, universities and other institutions, integrated Black youth could no longer expect ready access to communal Black spaces. This created understandable anxieties by removing a potential source of support and encouragement. It also stimulated existential concerns about one’s Black racial identity. What did it mean to be Black in an integrated or traditionally White space? This imperative to recreate Black communal spaces and address questions of identity are central to Neal’s post-soul experience and is also found in the origins of the Black Student Union.

As they adjusted to these changing racial logics, many in the post-soul generation devised methods to affirm their Blackness and create Black social spaces. Some, like Neal, tried to signify their Black identity through performance.

In the privacy of my own bedroom, I could live out my Top 40 crossover fantasies with Harry Harrison, Dan Ingram, Chuck Leonard, and the rest of the jocks on WABC while sitting on the floor playing Strat-O-Matic and enjoying the music of Seals and Croft, Elton John, and Neal Sedaka…But in my neighborhood such desires had to be controlled in public, lest your ‘ghetto pass’ get revoked.

Continuing, Neal writes that throughout his adolescence, “I was haunted by the concern of whether I would continue to be perceived as authentically ‘black’ to my crew of boyhood friends,” and he draws a parallel between post-soul experiences like his

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595 Neal 178.
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597 Neal 176.
and college students of the 1990s and early 2000s. Identifying this latter group as the Hip Hop generation, Neal points out that they often affirm their blackness with similar personal, academic, and performance choices. “They range from those who seek to provide culturally specific activities to augment those provided by the campus to those attracted to more Afrocentric sensibilities or various forms of Islam...It is not unusual for students to Africanize their names” and “choose hairstyles—locks, twists, mini-Don King naturals, short natural crops—and styles of dress that reflect more African-centered sensibilities.” 598 Other Black students who do not feel a connection to Afrocentrism or Black Nationalist currents may join a historically Black sorority or fraternity. 599 Conveying their ideological differences, Neal categorizes the Afrocentric Nationalists as “activists” and described the Fraternity and Sorority members as middle-class oriented “strivers,” but despite their differences both groups evidence a proclivity for Black social spaces endemic to post-soul.

The history of the BSU features similar circumstances and strategies that Neal identified among the post-soul and Hip Hop generations. Although the post-soul cohort was the first African Americans to be born into integration, Black college students of the 60s experienced the implementation of these policies firsthand. And as Black students today might join identity based organizations, many of the BSU members joined as a way to address similar anxieties. As their student populations at the UW or WSU increased, Black students created social networks to provide respite and support in the

598 Neal 179.
599 Neal 181.
face of White hostility. The Black Student Union was an extension of these social networks and continued to function as a Black communal space.

This aspect of the BSU was underscored when Eddie Leon was asked what if any changes led to the group’s activism.

“It’s not so much a change or any change in attitude but more or less the continuity of the same old attitude which has produced a together and close-knit BSU organization. Deep-rooted emotion and love for one another is exchanged by the black students in return for the apathy and indifference shown by whites.”

In addition to the “emotion and love” that Leon described, joining the BSU might also provide practical resources and advice such as professors to avoid or which landlords had defacto “White’s only” policies. Thus, in addition to the group’s other functions, the Black Student Union provided a social and emotional support system not unlike what a Black Greek letter organization or similar identity-based group might do today. This forging of Black communal space in integrated environments is one similarity between BSU members of the past and Black students today.

The BSU also was a way to affirm one’s Blackness. Joining the BSU meant associating oneself with the archetypical Black militant, an image that many at the time took as authentically Black. This image included choices of clothing (sunglasses, dashikis, etc.), hairstyles (facial hair and afros), language, and demeanor that mirrored the revolutionary chic of the Black Panther Party and other Black Power groups.

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Related cultural practices also included certain choices in entertainment and popular culture—like listening to James Brown or Curtis Mayfield. Therefore, being a member of the Black Student Union typically included a set of cultural practices that was taken to communicate one’s Black identity. This of course, is also similar to contemporary Black youth who might signify their Black identity with certain hairstyles, peer groups, or consumption of Hip Hop fashion and music—“keeping it real” in a predominately White settings.

Likewise, the BSU’s record of community service was also related to these post-soul anxieties. Being at a college or university often meant being socially and/or physically removed for their home communities throughout the school year, hence BSU members attempted to sustain (or forge) social ties with Black communities by connecting their campus organizing to those populations. Whether it was starting BSUs in high and junior high schools, or recruiting new students, we see that the BSU took deliberate steps to invest in Black communities. This can be identified as a strategy by the BSU members to affirm their own Black identities, in addition to furthering their political projects.

Thus, the Black Student Union embodied and navigated at least some of the post-soul experience that Neal theorized. This is a noteworthy continuity between Black college students over the second half of the 20th century because it contributes to a thorough analysis of integration, showing it was not without its challenges, sacrifices, and survival strategies for Black youth. Furthermore, it points to another potential avenue of future research in conversation with scholarship in education, public policy,
African American studies, race studies, and cultural studies. Though this dissertation is primarily historical, it lays a foundation that can be extended into these other disciplines. And specifically, this discussion of post-soul comments and expands on Neal’s theory by describing the phenomenon's earliest days, suggesting the potential for future work that uses Black Student Union history to address contemporary issues of Black identity, expression, and resistance.
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