

AT WAR WITH ITSELF:
RUTGERS UNIVERSITY'S MOVEMENTS FOR PROGRESSIVE REFORM
AND THE BOUNDARIES OF HEGEMONY, 1965-1972

by

Jason P. L. Boehm

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Dr. L. Troiano & Dr. W. Strub

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Abstract:

At War with Itself: Rutgers University's Student Led Movements for Progressive Reform and the Boundaries of Hegemony, 1965-1972 is a thesis which questions the limitations put on progressive movements by the hegemony of the society and the various elements of institutional and systemic power which historically support and maintain the structures of societal power. Utilizing the theory of hegemony first posed by the Italian Marxist Communist Antonio Gramsci and his works on the topic, along with an extensive use of Rutgers own archives, and a range of secondary sources dealing with everything from the periods economy, educational practices, and social formations in an effort to produce an accurate analysis of these various elements of United States (US) hegemony for this thesis. A micro analysis focusing on key events which took place on Rutgers three campuses during the 1965-1972 period, and the final years of President Mason W. Gross's tenure at the University. This thesis does not set out to prove anything, but instead to accurately illustrate the ways in which power and the system of capitalism remain entrenched as the dominant modes of societal and economic organization in spite of the contradictions produced by both capitalism and the current power structures of the US. This automatic and largely unconscious defense of entrenched power takes on an almost incalculable amount of forms some of which this thesis analyzes more closely, such as mass media, political leadership, and institutional authority. In total, this work remained dedicated to illustrating the effects of hegemony on US society through the lens of campus activity on Rutgers campuses during the 1965-1972 period.

Table of Contents:

Introduction: 1-5

Hegemony: 6-13

Student Led Movements: 13-31

Rutgers Faculty: 31-38

Administration & President Mason W. Gross: 39-46

The Boundaries of Hegemony: 47-89

Conclusion: 89-96

Bibliography: 97-100

Introduction:

On October 4, 1965, the American Council of Education, a body representing over 1,000 universities nationwide and another 145 constituent educational organizations, met in the nation's capital. The topic of that year's meeting, the college student.¹ As a *New York Times* article from that day reported, "this is not a result of a program chairman's whim. It is probably the greatest victory won to date by the so-called student rebellion."² That victory was simply the reality of the period. The postwar boom and entrance of so many in the United States (US) into the middle-class had produced a "sellers' market" for colleges and universities. For the first time ever a broad swath of students had the buying power to attend university, and the competition inherent among higher education to bring students, now consumers, to their campuses increased dramatically as it directly effected an educational institutions ability to grow, fund, and accommodate the needed progress to be considered a top rate institution. And so, the university altered and realigned to accommodate these institutional and systemic changes. Likewise, the underlying elements which initiated this restructuring of higher education, elements of the hegemony itself, would themselves inform, occupy, and reestablish this new paradigm in higher education. One that now compelled universities and colleges to "analyze the real causes of student dissatisfaction." And as the *New York Times* reported, to go so far as to "assign[ed] to a group of leading scholars the task of preparing searching background papers, which are to be made public..." to provide information for

¹ Hechinger, Fred M. 1965. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times. October 5. Accessed November 3, 2019.
search.proquest.com/docview/116996987?accountid=13626&rfr_id=info%2Fsid3Aprimo

² Ibid: November 3, 2019

these educational institutions in the mid 1960's all in an effort to understand the student and in-turn entice them to their respective institutions. This latest paradigm shift created a new-found space, one where the ideas, understanding, and demands of students would need to be considered if these institutions were to prosper in the US system. Thus, the historical bloc had shifted to a point where, historically speaking, the injustices and inequalities of the US could be combated from a position of relative safety and privilege. This "safety" was fundamentally linked to the buying power of this new rush of students who were quickly replacing the US government as the prime source of university and college funding. In this collective environment, where Cold War rhetoric remained strong, Civil Rights an active movement, and university faculty an organized labor force willing to speak truth to power, the student led movement for progressive reform was born.

Student led movements for progressive reform have a long history in the US, and that history has produced a narrative which includes radical change and progressive reforms. However, the world that these students were fighting for never seemed to have manifested. What happened? Where did it all fall short? How much has really changed since those days when college students raged against the Vietnam War and participated in the long Civil Rights Movement? What alterations have really been made to the institutions where these movements were born? And what happened to these spaces where this change was to take shape?

Universities were ostensibly the spaces where students were educated and informed in ways that facilitated the perpetuation of productive and obedient citizens. However, at many universities and colleges this space would, regardless the intent, act as

ground zero for many of the more popularly known campus-based protests and struggles in the 1965-1972 period. Yet, what were students really asking for in all of their campaigns for social, racial, gender, sexual, or economic justice? What were they really all about, what did they represent? As historian Roderick A. Ferguson points out in his book *We Demand: The University and Student Protests*, “when students challenged the university, they were calling for a new social and intellectual makeup of the university and for a new social order in the nation at large.”³ It is this very important fact that, more than any other, informs this thesis.

For what students were really demanding in these spaces was not just a change to the universities they attended or wished to attend, they were in fact demanding a change to the systems, structures, culture, norms, and institutions that combined with the economic system existed to serve and reinforce the current power structures ones dedicated to maintain capitalism, US civic religion, and the various social/cultural norms which reinforced and supported those structures. A model which had also historically terrorized, disenfranchised, and oppressed many of the populations now wishing to gain social, institutional, and systemic parity both within academia and the nation. Within this paradigm shift students were now attempting to alter the social and economic fabric of a nation, while also being courted by the country’s most prestigious institutions and intellectuals, all vying for financial and academic success by increasing their enrollment numbers. This allowed for the creation of what has become a perpetual and complex contradiction within higher education. In short, students wished to take the knowledge

³ Roderick A. Ferguson. 2017. *We Demand: The University and Student Protest*. Oakland, California: University of California Press. (pg. 9)

imparted to them through life experience and the incremental supplement of higher education and change the world for the better. A goal linked to the project of higher education, only by the means of the production of constructive, intelligent, and predominantly compliant citizens. Yet, to change the world the way students imagined it, one would need to change the systems, structures, norms, culture, narratives and institutions of the society itself, all must be corrected and restructured. For higher education as an institution such a goal would demand it submit itself to a total change, which itself would mean the end of their current societal/systemic role and positionality in society, the undoing of the long history that brought higher education to the systemically interlocked position it holds today.⁴ In essence a demand that could never really be met, regardless the concessions. The students wished for revolutionary change, while the university wanted only what would amount to symbolic change. This internal conflict created an institution at odds from within, at war with itself over the direction and shape of a better future. A potentially impossible project even in the most passive of times. Under the circumstances surrounding the 1965-1972 period these pressures, expectations, and contradictions would be greatly exacerbated.

Why the university, and why then? Who aided in the cause, and to what level was their involvement? And perhaps most importantly to the subject of this thesis, what was the response of authority and those institutions and systems that protect and aid authority's control and management of US society? Although the subject of hegemony is an almost insurmountable topic, as it encompasses every aspect of our society, in an

⁴ Richard P. McCormick. 1966. *Rutgers: A Bicentennial History*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. McCormick's book covers the whole of Rutgers history leading up to the period of study, 1770-1966.

effort to reveal its actual presence in society this project has distilled its analysis down to a micro level. This micro analysis of a societal wide influencing force takes place at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey (NJ) during the period of 1965-1972 generally, analyzing the events, actions, responses, and milieu of the period and the impact of hegemony on the many student led movements for progressive reform taking place during the period on Rutgers three campuses. A moment in US history best encapsulated by Ferguson.

“All these responses [of universities to student protests] were a way to regulate the intellectual and social transformation of the American university. Their sum attempt to thwart the main goal of the student movements: turning the interests of the minoritized and the disenfranchised into social forces that would allow those same folks to assume a role in history. The suppression of students’ vision of an inclusive university worked to snuff out the possibility that this vision would impact not only the university but the rest of the country as well.”⁵

In short, the impact and intent of these student led movements would be limited by the constraints of the hegemony of the society itself, both on Rutgers campuses and in the greater NJ area. As such, the insurgent movements of the 1960’s culminated in little more than the passage of superficial change, tokenism, and liberalized symbolism all while allowing and maintaining the structures of oppression and inequality to remain both within the institution and the society.

⁵ Ibid: (pg. 10)

Hegemony:

The use of the term hegemony in this thesis possesses historical and intellectual origins which must be addressed in order to understand the context in which this, at times multifunctional term, is being utilized for the purposes of this study. While not originally his term it was Antonio Gramsci, the Italian Marxist theorists and Communist leader, whose reconstructed definition of hegemony will be used in this thesis for the purpose of distinguishing the presence of what Gramsci described as the “cultural moral and ideological leadership over allied and subordinate groups... it must also be economic, must necessarily be based on the decisive function exercised by the leading group in the decisive nucleus of economic activity.”⁶ Gramsci’s definition, or meaning, of the term hegemony allows one to identify the symbiotic relationship modes of production share with the society they are developed and perpetuated within- even at the level of higher education. Gramsci’s definition of hegemony also stands as the most accurate and concise terminology to define and reveal the presence of such unwieldy and overarching forces and it will be utilized to expose the interlinking overlay of coercion highlighted throughout the various moments in Rutgers University history which include student led movements for progressive reform. First, a brief explanation of how the establishment of the word came to be, and what it actually means in terms of this thesis.

⁶ Antonio Gramsci. 2000. *The Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected writings 1916-1935*. Edited by David Forgacs. New York: New York University Press. (pg. 423).

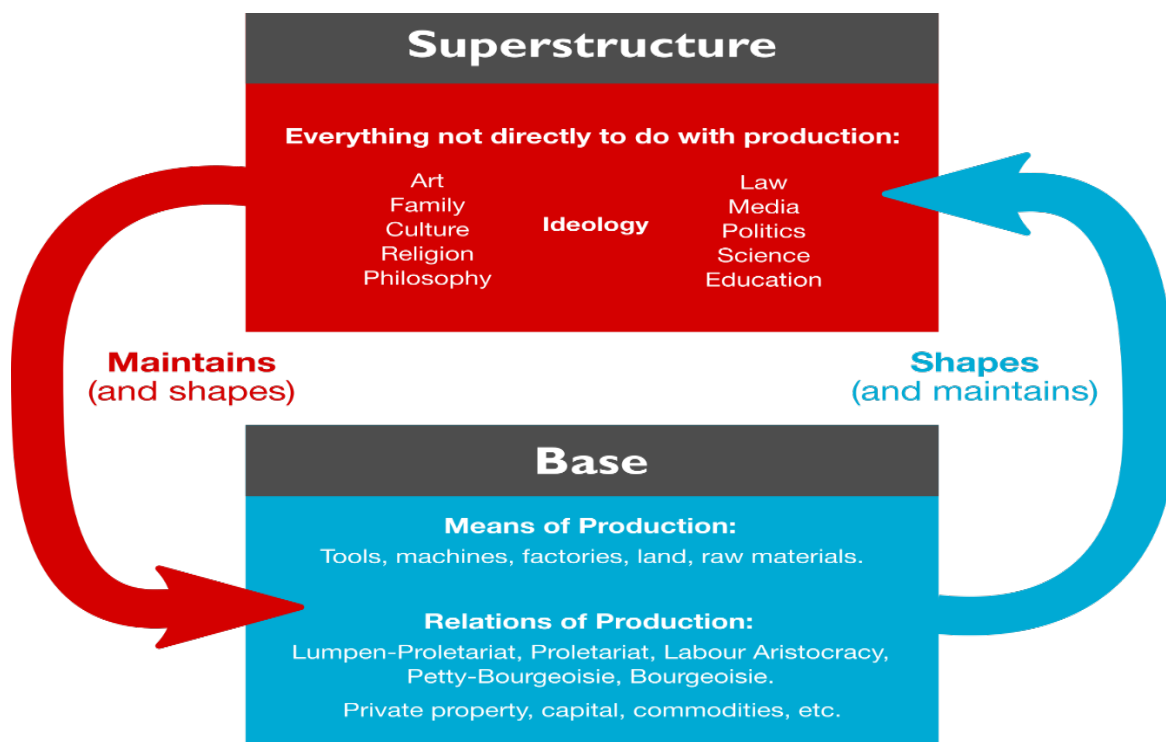


Figure 1⁷

Antonio Gramsci did not invent the term hegemony, it being used by the Russian revolutionary Vladimir Lenin only a few years before, and by Aristotle some two-thousand years before that.⁸ However, Gramsci's combination of Marxism (or dialectical historical materialism) with an inclusionary focus on, and deep analysis of, the superstructure added to and refined Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels original analytical theories concerning the system of capitalism and its effects on human beings. Marx's theory stated that the base (mode of production, class formations, raw materials, etc.) were central to not only a successful workers revolution, but to a coherent understanding

⁷ Image taken from online. https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/63/Base_superstructure_Dialectic.png. 2/22/2020.

⁸ Benedetto Fontana. "Logos and Kratos: Gramsci and the Ancients on Hegemony." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 61, no. 2 (2000): 305-26. Accessed February 28, 2020. doi:10.2307/3654030.

of the system of capitalism itself as this element of society made up the material base for the manifestation and perpetuation of the system of capitalism itself. Gramsci's addition to Marx and Engle's work stressed that the superstructure, (what Marx described as the collective ideologies which reinforce and support the conceptions of the base such as laws, popular culture, religion, identity, politics, philosophy, education, and even science) is equally important for workers to take ownership of in order to execute a successful proletarian revolution. To frame both of these aspects of the capitalist system, base and superstructure, in a term that would encompass the awareness of both as systemically supporting, and symbiotic in their material and social relationship Gramsci used the term hegemony.

For Gramsci hegemony is what ultimately allows capitalists and other elites of society to gain, keep, and manage power.⁹ By controlling both the economic and cultural spheres of a society a small group of elites can maintain a cyclical and self-perpetuating society focused on the expansion of markets, hyper-individualism, and the creation of wealth while humanity, animals, and the planets ecosystem remain externalities and irrelevant to the expansion of markets. An immense and biologically dangerous perspective, yet, it is precisely the job of hegemony to keep this illogical reality illusionary in society's dominant narratives. This cyclical relationship reproduces each from the other reinforcing the structural, systemic, and cultural narratives which formulate the modern capitalist system and allow for such glaring contradictions as the existential threat of climate change to be perceived as an ambiguous partisan issue to

⁹ Gramsci, Antonio. 2000. *The Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected writings 1916-1935*. Edited by David Forgacs. New York: New York University Press. (pg. 423-4).

much of the US's population. As such, a key aspect of hegemony is to define the political possible in modes that maintain and even reinforce the current power structures regardless the circumstances or outcomes.

According to Gramsci, hegemony is what allows the success of the Civil Rights Movement, or Women's Suffrage Movement to be coopted and assimilated into the oppressive power constructs of the original system itself. It is conversely what drives and informs these very movements as they fight to create their own hegemony, or counter hegemony to that which is dominant in society. Thus, while certain tangible and meaningfully impactful changes do take place, they are structured and executed in ways that allow for the overarching system of capitalism, or any other hegemonic force which may exist in a society, to coopt the demands of subaltern groups and through coercion of consent reestablish the system so that it does not fundamentally change, but instead, merely adapts. As Gramsci writes in his *Prison Notebooks*, "changing socioeconomic circumstances do not of themselves produce political changes. They only set the conditions in which such changes become possible."¹⁰ So the elements of a society which breed and perpetuate such oppression and exclusion at any given time will not change unless the superstructure, as well as the exploitation produced by the base, are abolished entirely and replaced/restructured, thereby creating a new hegemony. For as Gramsci illustrates in his examination of the theory, hegemony can never itself be abolished, however, those who control and perpetuate hegemony can, and often are, replaced. In short, hegemony is a constant, its character and essence is not. In the context of Gramsci's writings this proposed replacement would take place in the form of a worker's

¹⁰ Ibid: (pg.190)

revolution, with the proletariat taking control of both the base and superstructure of the society. The same holds true for radical university students during this period, and today.

Gramsci explains, that the threats to a systems hegemony, what he termed an “organic crisis” or a “crisis of hegemony,” are dealt with in one of two ways, either by appeasement to gain consent, or through state sponsored coercion.¹¹ Gramsci points out that in countries where capitalism had fully taken root and flourished consent was far more powerful and widely utilized than coercion.¹² As the illusion of change, or the miniscule, or superficial presence of change, allows for a more peaceful and harmonious reinforcement of a society’s hegemony. Thus, the use of overt violence or other more brutally oppressive means have been eschewed in liberal states like the US. Although, a long history of overt and extreme violence of many kinds does exist in the US, it is not nearly as prevalent as the more covert process of appeasement and concession in order to gain consent.

Consent through orthodox liberal coercion/appeasement which results in the destruction or assimilation of progressive reforms has long been how the hegemony of US capitalism has assimilated or recovered from the demands of progressive movements. As an economically integral and systemically linked public institution Rutgers University is thus no different. Although, support for such constrictions and the blunting of progressive reforms are more than often backed by the bulk of the domestic population, that population remains firmly embedded within the hegemony of society as the institutions, social constructs, and foundational systems they engage with daily reinforce

¹¹ Ibid: (pg. 427-8)

¹² Ibid: (pg. 189-90)

dominant conceptions. Such popularly supported realignments of the hegemony are referred to as a “passive revolution” by Gramsci who notes that the “passive revolution... is not an instrument of government or of dominant groups in order to gain consent of and exercise hegemony over subaltern classes; it is the expression of these subaltern classes who want to educate themselves in the art of government.”¹³ According to Gramsci then many of the more progressive reforms that have been achieved only met that mark by incorporating the bulk of the movements demanded reforms into the existing hegemony of the system. To not set such boundaries on change would of course both materially and socially restructure the hegemony itself, and while many social gains have been made throughout US history, both the base and superstructure of the society have remained inherently intact.

Uncoerced aid from a population firmly rooted within an institution like Rutgers, operationally, structurally, and ideologically rooted in a hierarchical service to state power and US capital may seem unlikely. Afterall, it is a state institution with strong ties to state and federal government. Yet, Rutgers has at the same time provided the foundation for progressive change both at the University and beyond. This dialectic produces a state of almost perpetual contradiction and extreme complication. In many ways, the university itself embodies the contradictions of a liberal capitalist society.

While it should be noted that hegemony is not some insidious plot, but the function of the narratives and norms the society itself produces. These were the conditions in which the student led movements taking place on Rutgers campuses during

¹³ Ibid: (pg424)

the period of 1965-1972 were operating within and under. It is what any student led movement that began today would be operating within as well. However, unlike so many other institutions of higher education during the period, Rutgers authority chose to act without the use of brute force (which often creates the opposite effects power wishes to produce) during such crises of hegemony, instead acting with consent. Making Rutgers an ideal space for analyzing the ways in which US hegemony regularly (or more often) influences, directs, and thwarts progressive change. Rutgers, at war with itself during this period, utilized the method of appeasement to gain consent, to curtail, and eventually coopt its student led movements for progressive reform mitigating them to no more than incremental shifts rather than changes in the culture or community itself.

During the 1965-1972 period Rutgers like most other institutions of higher education was simultaneously producing informed, compliant, productive members of the nation's professional middle and upper class while at the exact same time providing the information and contextualization which inspired and animated the student led movements which developed during the period. Thus, as the university itself reproduces the class system it contradictorily disseminates information counter to the perpetuation of such a hierarchal system. While performing these institutional contradictions the university nevertheless remains an integral part of the post-World War II US economy, culture, civic religion, and international standing to name a few examples. As such, the university also serves as a unique space to analyze the presence and pressures of hegemony, as the barometer of the political possible, for as an institution the university remains necessary to the perpetuation of capitalism itself.

Thus, the university remains both essential to the status quo while simultaneously fostering and producing the origins of rebellion. A contradictory state that is not without institutional and personal consequences, yet, fundamentally Rutgers has maintained this contradictory existence up to today.

Student Led Movements:

The student led movements for progressive reform which took place on Rutgers three campuses during the period of 1965-1972 varied in motivations, yet each relied on the already existing structures of the institution itself as it regarded the formulation, organization, and initial actions of their respective groups.¹⁴ While the population of the students leading these movements, their socioeconomic status, their lived experience, their ethnicity, or their sexual identity were all quite different and unique, they nevertheless contained various elements which were analogous with the society's hegemony. Therefore, as progressive movements determined to alter or restructure existing constructs, these movements still transcended elements of hegemony into their contributions for progressive reform. For instance, the maintenance of patriarchal social

¹⁴ 2002. *In the Free Speech Movement: Reflections on Berkeley in the 1960's*, by Robert & Reginald E. Zelnik Cohen. Berkeley-Los Angeles-London: University of California Press. In this collected work of essays written by those students who took part in the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley the legacy and development of student led movements for progressive reform are detailed and recounted from the perspective of students combating the injustices they saw on their campuses. This reading serves as a broad link to all student led movements as it was both among the first to explode on the national stage but also served as a model for other student led movements to this day. While the contents of the book do not intersect with the actions taking place on Rutgers University three campuses directly, the links that does exist, student solidarity, activist organization, combative discourse, and campaigns to fulfill particular demands with the existing power structures of any given institution or system are universal elements of student led movements for progressive reform and as such intersect and transcends race, class, or gender as any given movement can, and has, represented any number of historically oppressed or economically disadvantaged student bodies. It was also the source for the aforementioned meeting of the American Council of Education in 1965.

norms. Still, the varying degree of planning, execution, and implementation of these movements were widely impactful, and should be all the more perceived as logical and correct as they were developed and led by students during what many historians consider to be both a chaotic and transformational period in US history.¹⁵ Impactful as these movements were, each influencing the community on a national scale, they collectively served to perceptually alter certain views and conceptions popular during the period. Although, all would eventually find barriers to social and systemic progress outside the constructed environments they had developed on campus. For outside the university many of the “agents” of hegemony prevalent during this period were aware of these movements, and in most cases actively opposed them.¹⁶ The following will recount the organizational development of these movements and their response to the challenges and issues impacting their lives during this period. While the array of student led movements for progressive reform were broad and often included antithetical student led groups which opposed their goals, this study has focused on two main student led movements with an abbreviated but important overview of a third. Each represent movements which fundamentally challenged the hegemony of the period. Whether that challenge be rooted in culture, social norms, power structures, racial perceptions, gender perceptions, or any other challenge to the dominant power relations of the period each exemplify the

¹⁵ Kim Phillips-Fein. 2009. *Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement for the New Deal to Reagan*. New York & London, W. W. Norton & Company Inc. (pg. 150-65)

¹⁶ “agent(s)” here, and throughout the thesis, does not intend to infer to an actual agent of some kind of organization or institution, but instead an unconscious protector, aggressor, or administrator of the existing hegemony of any given period. These “agents” may be at times allies, or opponents, to movements for change depending on the incalculable number of variables in any given situation. Essentially, every member of any society may at times behave, think, or covertly or overtly defend hegemony as it saturates and pervades every aspect of mainstream society.

production, implementation, and actions of a university educated student led group which used that education and the institution to modify, and at times reform, aspects of the greater hegemony.

Anti-War Movement:

By 1965 the US's active colonial involvement in Vietnam was already over ten years old. The escalated military involvement had sparked outrage and indignation at both the War and the draft on campuses across the country. After all this was a war fought for unjust reasons which included a draft that disproportionately recruited young working-class men who were in turn disproportionately represented by people of color.¹⁷ Conversely, the Vietnam War also solidified and emboldened many people's sense of patriotism and other nationalistic perceptions born of certain aspects of US civic religion, such as American exceptionalism, both on and off campus. On Rutgers three campuses students who opposed and supported the War effort began to find voice, and with that voice, develop and coordinate organizations which facilitated their ability to disseminate and promote their antithetical aims. Although, in both instances the structures of the institution itself were maintained, and while some temporary changes developed and a few sit-ins/teach-ins interrupted classes as we will see later, the vast majority of responses generated from the rest of NJ's overwhelmingly suburban population was disproportionate to the actions it had reacted to.¹⁸

¹⁷ Christian G. Appy. *Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers & Vietnam*. Chapel Hill & London, University of North Carolina Press. (pg. 29, 47, 168, 321)

¹⁸ Kevin M. Kruse. 2005. *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism*. Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press. Most of Kruse's book details the instance of a social phenomenon in which largely white suburban neighborhoods were planned, developed, and constructed by tax payer money while notoriously leaving out people of color who would largely

In the spring of 1965 students opposing and supporting the War effort had influenced the faculty sufficiently so that organized “Teach-Ins” and debates began to sporadically take the place of Rutgers students normal class schedule.¹⁹ Various events and teach-ins were regularly taking place on campus and the movement was a buzz, generating popular support for anti-war efforts among some of the student body and faculty. A broader and more institutionally coordinated event would be hosted by students which, on September 17th of 1965 in a hand written flyer advertised that, at “Records Hall Two GI’s from Fort Dix” would “rap about the army and the GI Movement,” with a special guest, Skip James, who would “speak of the army as the fist of American imperialism, fascism, and racism,” common concepts for those opposing the War during the period, yet radical to popular conceptions.²⁰ Clearly student activists were utilizing language to challenge otherwise commonly accepted conceptions and perceptions concerning the US Armed Forces at this event. In short, students were challenging dominant narratives rooted in both current perceptions and nostalgic belief patterns.

Just a few days short of a month later the Rutgers Chapter of SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) which had been formally active on campus since 1964, would hold a

occupy urban spaces while the suburbs became a space for mostly white Euro-Americans. Popularly referred to as “white flight.”

¹⁹ Michael J. Birkner. 1997. "The Turbulent Sixties at Rutgers: An Interview with Richard P. McCormick." *Journal of the Rutgers University Libraries*, Vol. L VIII 42-61.

²⁰ Rutgers University. Office of Public Information. 1965-1966. *Inventory to the Records on the Vietnam War Teach-Ins at Rutgers University*. RG 07/A2/01: Rutgers University Libraries: Special Collections & University Archives. Flyer titled “Free the Fort Dix 38” dated September 17, 1965. Box: 3 Folder: 13

similar event this time including speakers from Rutgers faculty, surrounding universities, and from the national leader of SDS Carl Oglesby concerning the War in Vietnam and the Cold War's collective impact at home and abroad.²¹ It is important to note here that the organization and structures of these meetings, and their official participants, in many ways mirrored the structures they were in direct contention with. Although creating a space for radical discourse at Rutgers these progressive groups still maintained the use of gender specific monikers like "Chairman" and involved the participation of groups like the SDS which had a complicated history with misogyny.²² Other modes of conformity are revealed by activists who repeatedly referred to the US as "America," implying through a supposed subconscious devotion to the civic religion of the US, that the US *is* the entire continent on which it sits, instead of the nation in fact sharing this imagined space with various other nation states.²³ Unassuming and often mundane examples such as these are not picked out to chastise these movements, but to clarify a certain unconscious commitment to dominant norms and narratives. Nevertheless, the subject

²¹ Ibid: James N. Rosenau Prof. of Political Science, Douglass College, Topic: The Role of Force in Foreign Policy; Charles Forcey, Assoc. Prof. of History both from Douglas College, Topic: The American Response to the Cold War; Lyn Turgeon Assoc. Prof. of Economics, Hofstra University, Topic: Problems of Growth in Underdeveloped Areas; Phillip Donohue, Asst. Prof. of History, Monmouth College, Topic: The Problems of Revolution in the 20th Century; John McDermott, Instructor in Philosophy, Long Island University, Topic: The Cold War and Southeast Asia; Sy Landy, Contributing Editor New Politics and Chairman of the New York Independent Socialist League, Topic: Alternative Perspectives in Vietnam; Roger Lockard, Chairman of the Student Peace Union, New York City, Topic: A New Foreign Policy for America; Carl Oglesby, President, National S. D. S., Topic: A New Foreign Policy for America. Box :3, Folder: 13

²² Ibid: flyer. Box 3, Folder: 13

²³ Ibid: flyer. Box 3, Folder: 13

matter of these “Teach-In’s” and student organized events were still challenging many popular norms and traditional values popular both at Rutgers and around the nation.²⁴

Not only did these groups maintain many societal norms but they followed University protocol as concerned free speech, student gatherings, and educational events. Nevertheless, these groups were still perceived as radicals on campus and found tacit support among both the then President of Rutgers University, Mason W. Gross, or the Board of Governors. An October issue of local NJ newspaper *Daily Home News* reported that Gross had commented in response to public outrage that, “the teach-in, did nothing to violate university rules,” while also citing the importance of “civil liberty” and “academic freedom.”²⁵ Clearly, the administration was skirting the context of these events, and instead chose to only acknowledge and defend the proceduralism and principles common to spaces in higher education. Ironically, the most radical action produced by this movement did not even come from the student body, but from a member of the faculty. A topic which will be discussed in a later section.

Additionally, the anti-war movement at Rutgers only represented a minority of the student body, with much of the student body holding very different perceptions of the War. According to an October 31st report from 1965 “3,300 of the 5,700 Rutgers University students” had “signed a petition supporting United States policy in Viet Nam,” a campaign which was co-sponsored by both the Young Republicans and Democrats officially operating on Rutgers campuses.²⁶ While only in the initial stages of their

²⁴ Ibid: Flyer title: “Free the Fort Dix 38,” dated September 17, 1965. Box: 3 Folder: 13

²⁵ Ibid: *Daily Home News*. October 8, 1965. Box:3 Folder: 11.

²⁶ Ibid: Trenton Sunday Times Advertiser, Sunday October 31, 1965. Box: 2 Folder: 2

campaign, Princeton also participated in this event producing 1,002 signatures from among 4,000 students supporting US policy in the War.²⁷ These statistics suggest that for as radical as these movements may have been perceived at the time, the general environment was not overpopulated with “college aged hippies” demanding their predecessors “give peace a chance.” Instead Rutgers campus, while displaying some radical opposition to the War in Vietnam, was a community representative of the greater US community (a fact that will be explored later) which largely supported the War- mostly for patriotic reasons.²⁸ Additionally, the tacit support of President Gross in this case served the purposes of pro-war students as well, as he had been quoted when referencing the teach-ins saying, “I cannot really feel that this is an appropriate meeting for a university campus...” ending his comment with, “this meeting, possibly through a misunderstanding of its nature, has received official permission, I shall not cancel the permission.”²⁹ Another instance of the proceduralism of academic norms being maintained and protected by power, while the content and substance of the event was totally ignored. Such ambiguity from administration served pro-war students ends far more than those opposed to the War, while also ignoring the contradiction of normal classes being cancelled for the teach-ins. Which in turn highlights the broader contradiction of the university.

²⁷ Ibid: Box: 2 Folder: 2

²⁸ Christian G. Appy. *Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers & Vietnam*. Chapel Hill & London, University of North Carolina Press. (pg. 4-5)

²⁹ Rutgers University. Office of Public Information. 1965-1966. *Inventory to the Records on the Vietnam War Teach-Ins at Rutgers University*. RG 07/A2/01: Rutgers University Libraries: Special Collections & University Archives. Flyer titles “Free the Fort Dix 38” dated September 17, 1965. Box:3 Folders: 7-9

Regardless of the mixed messaging from the administration, Rutgers anti-war movement represented a minority led movement which enjoyed support ranging from the tepid forbearance of Rutgers administration, to the full-throated political convictions of faculty, largely remaining on campus, only briefly disrupting normal class schedules, and only succeeded in altering the operating procedures of on campus military recruitment.³⁰ Despite these realities, the community response to these campus based actions would be overwhelmingly disproportionate.

LGBTQ On Campus:

Another, less impactful, but equally significant student led organization was the nascent LGBTQ movement represented in 1969 in the form of the Rutgers Homophile League which was the first openly LGBTQ organization in New Jersey and the second among university campuses nationwide.³¹ Sadly, this organization has little archival evidence to support its existence, other than the name of its founder Lionel Cuffie.³² Information found in Paul G. E. Clemons book *Rutgers Since 1945* which acknowledges this LGBTQ organization as both student led and actively organizing on campus.³³ While not overly visible on campus, the existence of this student led organization provides yet another example of the counterculture developing at Rutgers University, one which stood

³⁰ Box:3 Folders: 7-9

³¹ Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian Alliance at Rutgers University. 1977-1995. Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian Alliance at Rutgers University subject files. Coll. 30: John J. Wilcox, Jr. LGBT Archives, William Way LGBT Community Center. Box: 30 Folders: 3-8

³² Ibid: Box: 30, Folders: 3-8

³³ Paul G. E. Clemens. 2015. *Rutgers since 1945: A History of the State University of New Jersey*. New Brunswick, New Jersey & London: Rutgers University Press. (pg. 193-202) Includes a section which focuses and elaborates on the actions and campaign of Puerto Rican students at Rutgers University.

in direct opposition to popular conceptions of sexual identity during the period.

Additionally, it allows the reader to come to a more coherent understanding of the changes taking place on Rutgers campuses, changes that were being allowed to exist within the institutional structures of student led groups. While other movements would find a more overt and reactionary responses to their attempts for social and systemic progress, knowing that such a movement existed on Rutgers campuses illustrates the on the ground reality being shaped by the student body of this period and the social environment being independently developed. It also reveals the proportional relationship which existed between student led movements and power, while also illustrating the contradiction inherent to the project of higher education. Those that threatened power, and in certain cases forced change, have boxes of archival data related to them. Those that did not, have little to no evidence that they even existed. Both were educated at Rutgers.

Black Student Movement:

“The Black liberation movement did not unravel after the murder of Martin Luther King Jr. but grew, and irrevocably changed the landscape of American higher education.”³⁴

A far more radical and institutionally impactful movement for student reform came from the extreme minority of African American students represented on Rutgers

³⁴ Martha Biondi. 2012. *The Black Revolution on Campus*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, & London: University of California Press. (pg. 268)

campuses during the period of study. A sustained campaign, that would not only fundamentally change Rutgers but also impact higher education nationally, by successfully combating segregation in the liberal North where “the worldview of upwardly mobile middle class, wholly respected and admired...” was historically developed; partially “in defense of white spaces.”³⁵ Although the structures and the institutionally mandated steps this movement for progressive reform first took remained aligned to those already in place at Rutgers, their willingness and need to fight until their goals had been accomplished propelled this movements overall institutional impact beyond that of other student based movements. The Black student movement also proved an exemplar for other movements, such as among Puerto Rican students, in taking an institutionally accepted stand, developing an organization, and initiating and actualizing campaigns for change while also negotiating with University administration.³⁶ In short, this movement was able to transcend institutionally accepted protocol and create a forum for change by blazing their own trail and challenging what was politically possible through radical action.

It was in the form of the Newark based Black Organization of Students (BOS; which had replaced the more moderate NAACP as the campus organization of African American students) that African American students first set out to change the “segregationist policies” taking effect at Rutgers University.³⁷ Joined by the Black

³⁵ Kevin M. Kruse. 2005. *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism*. Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press. (pg. 77)

³⁶ Paul G. E. Clemens. 2015. *Rutgers since 1945: A History of the State University of New Jersey*. New Brunswick, New Jersey & London: Rutgers University Press. (pg. 172)

³⁷ Jason P. L. Boehm. 2020. *Oral History Interview with Vickie Donaldson*. Conducted at Rutgers University Newark on Tuesday February 25, 2020 with the written permission of the interviewee

Student Unity Movement based on the New Brunswick and Camden campuses these groups found inspiration for their movements after some of their founders attended an event held at Columbia University where radical Black leaders had spoken out about the reality of white supremacy and the growing movement for “Black Power.”³⁸ From its founding this group was also coequal among heteronormative sexual identities. Of the two original founding members one, Ms. Vickie Donaldson (who was interviewed for this study), also played a pivotal role in the Liberation of Conklin Hall.³⁹ An historical marker worth mentioning, for as the historian and Professor Kirsten Swinth notes in her book *Feminism’s Forgotten Fight*, “[i]n working through how such a new selfhood fit into movements for racial equality, black and Chicana feminists were a core part of the second-wave struggle to rewrite female selves.”⁴⁰ Ms. Donaldson certainly did just that, as her later actions will prove. Additionally, Ms. Donaldson reported to me that the BOS was also class conscious, aware of the bonds that could be created through class solidarity, and had made an alliance with the mostly white SDS predicated on the fact that, “poor whites couldn’t afford Rutgers either!”⁴¹ Both of these aspects illustrate that the BOS was not only progressive but perhaps more dialectically minded in their perceptions and conceptions of power and class relations.

³⁸ Ibram H. Rogers. 2012. *The Black Campus Movement: Black Students and the Racial Reconstruction of Higher Education, 1965-1972*. New York. Palgrave MacMillan. (pg. 83)

³⁹ Richard P. McCormick. 1990. *The Black Student Protest Movement at Rutgers*. New Brunswick & London: Rutgers University Press. (pg. 34-5)

⁴⁰ Kirsten Swinth. 2018. *Feminism’s Forgotten Fight: The Unfinished Struggle for Work and Family*. Cambridge, Massachusetts & London, England: Harvard University Press. (pg. 30)

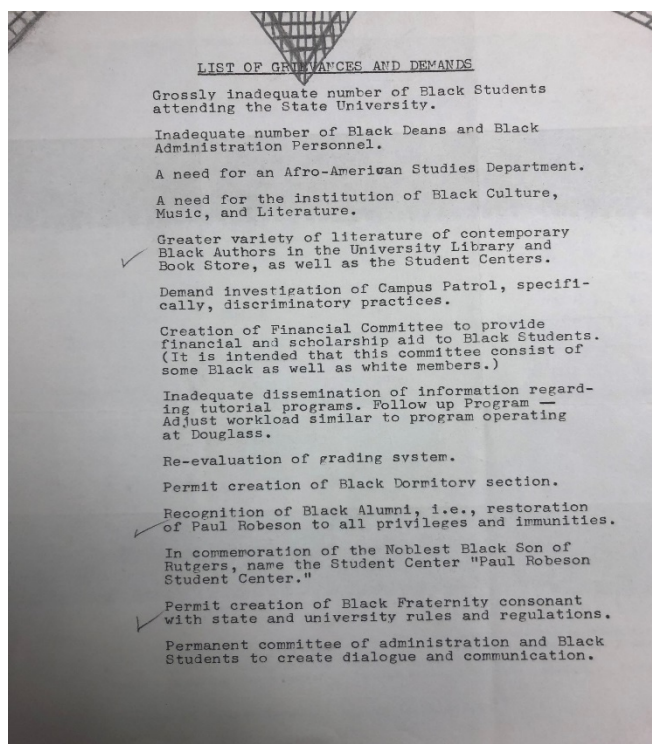
⁴¹ Jason P. L. Boehm. 2020. *Oral History Interview with Vickie Donaldson*. Conducted at Rutgers University Newark on Tuesday February 25, 2020 with the written permission of the interviewee

It must be noted here that Rutgers University was taking steps to reform more segregationist policies as it concerned its own student body, a topic more closely reviewed later. However, beginning in 1965 with around 100 African American students attending Rutgers, with the assistance and insistence of Rutgers faculty, administrators would work to increase that number to 413 by 1968, through an organized effort to recruit Black students.⁴² However, for those students, especially on the Newark campus, these gains fell short and the absence of not only other Black students, but that of any faculty member or high ranking administrator were very serious issues and persistent reminders that equal representation and opportunity was only available for a few Black students at Rutgers.⁴³ However, during this same period members of BOS had remarked that Rutgers acceptance policy and Admissions Office staff served as racist gatekeepers blocking people of color's access to higher education, that courses offered little in African American centered content, and those doing the teaching, aiding, and administration did not represent them; from Black students perspective the actions of the University had thus far fallen short.⁴⁴

⁴² Richard P. McCormick. 1990. *The Black Student Protest Movement at Rutgers*. New Brunswick & London: Rutgers University Press. (pg. 14-15)

⁴³ Kevin Mumford. 2007. *Newark: A History of Race, Rights, and Riots in America*. New York & London: New York University Press provided a coherent understanding of the general environment that had developed within and around the African American community during the period of study. The Rebellion had only just taken place but two short years before the actions of the BOS and other progressive organizations began their campaigns. Job loss, housing loss, and the economic and social realities produced by extreme poverty and exacerbated by racism must all be understood and accounted for when analyzing the movements of this period so that one may properly understand the historical context that led to what would otherwise be considered desperate or extreme measure. Mumford's book provides a clear and concise explanation of these associated events and realities during this trying period offering a wealth of primary sourced documentation to prove the significance and validity of this period study.

⁴⁴ Jason P. L. Boehm. 2020. *Oral History Interview with Vickie Donaldson*. Conducted at Rutgers University Newark on Tuesday February 25, 2020 with the written permission of the interviewee



The evolution of this movement has a much longer and more complex history than can be fully described here, and indeed it has been told elsewhere. Yet, its most important feature, for the purpose of this thesis, was Black students' ability to both demand, and more importantly win, progressive institutional reform by organizing a movement across the

Figure 2⁴⁵

University system. The Black student movement enjoyed alliances and cooperation with not only other minority student and community groups, but also with Rutgers local chapter of SDS, the Campus Christian Foundation, faculty, staff and even administrators suggesting again that along with class consciousness Black student movements were aware of the importance and necessity of allies.⁴⁶ Although overall a tenacious and persistent movement the tactics adopted by the BOS began with formal written demands, personal correspondence, and respectful dialogue with administrators such as Vice-President Talbott of the Newark campus, and President Mason Gross. One such

⁴⁵ Ibid: Box: 33, Folder: 7

⁴⁶ Rutgers University. Office of the President. 1936, 1945-1971. *Inventory to the records of the Rutgers University Office of the President (Mason Welch Gross)*. RG 04/A16: Rutgers University Libraries: Special Collections & University Archives. Box: 33 Folders: 8-11. BOS literature and flyers, along with a letter to President Gross

document sent by BOS to the President's Office numbered such demands as the inclusion of Black faculty and deans, the addition of African American Studies to the curriculum, the creation of committees to provide financial support to poor Black students, tutoring programs, the re-evaluation of the grading system, and even a permanent committee of Black students in open dialogue with University administration.⁴⁷ These demands illustrate that this movement understood what institutional boundaries and barriers needed to be reformed for their movement to achieve short-term victory. Additionally, these demands would eventually lead to more radical actions, and those actions would eventually lead to the change the original demands called for.

Again, as with the anti-war movement, those students dedicated to the movement for African American opportunity and representation on Rutgers three campuses were not monolithic. Many students and groups such as the Young Americans For Freedom, "opposed what Black students were doing on campus" and aligned with their own reactionary community organizations to oppose organizations like the BOS and the Black Panther Party of Newark.⁴⁸ These groups also made formal demands of Rutgers faculty, administrators, and even President Gross insisting that, "no amnesty, no surrender to racist-extremist demands," and that "police protection at Rutgers and enforcement of the law against (student) occupation," and the "suspension or expulsion of all students committing crimes on campus" should all be the policy for dealing with radical students at Rutgers University.⁴⁹ What the crimes referenced in these demands remain entirely

⁴⁷ Ibid: Box 33 & 35 Folders: 8-11 & 2

⁴⁸ Ibid: Box: 33, Folders: 10-11

⁴⁹ Ibid: Box: 33 & 34, Folders 10-11, & 1-6

relegated to the struggles produced by the long Civil Rights Movement which has been ongoing throughout all of US history and can never morally be considered criminal.

However, one example of these “crimes” could be the mass demonstration African American students held on the New Brunswick campus. As an act of solidarity with their counterparts in Newark, who were at the time occupying Conklin Hall in February of 1969, Black students at New Brunswick in unison flipped over their lunch trays in the cafeteria.⁵⁰ Although, one cannot be certain, the only evidence of “crimes” found in the archives were committed by a group of New Brunswick students fighting on campus and the only African Americans involved in the scuffle were not Rutgers students.⁵¹ Finally, Black students at the Camden campus, although also organized as a branch of the Black Student Unity Movement participated primarily in “discussions, meetings, and an agreed upon sit-in” with campus administration and faculty never actually performing any activist based actions as radical as their comrades at Newark and New Brunswick.⁵² Unlike the other two campus movements which achieved more significant academic and institutional reforms due to their actions, Camden’s African American population enjoyed very little of those concessions.⁵³ An interesting

⁵⁰ Richard P. McCormick. 1990. *The Black Student Protest Movement at Rutgers*. New Brunswick & London: Rutgers University Press. (pg. 48-60)

⁵¹ Rutgers University. Office of the President. 1936, 1945-1971. *Inventory to the records of the Rutgers University Office of the President (Mason Welch Gross)*. RG 04/A16: Rutgers University Libraries: Special Collections & University Archives. Box: 30, Folder: 13. Contains several University documents detailing tensions between white and Black students at Rutgers New Brunswick during the latter 1960’s.

⁵² Richard P. McCormick. 1990. *The Black Student Protest Movement at Rutgers*. New Brunswick & London: Rutgers University Press. (pg. 60-4)

⁵³ *Ibid*: (pg. 64)

predicament which suggests again the complexity of the university system and the conditions which allow for institutional alterations. In any case, the accusations of criminal activity by Black students appears to be erroneous.

As the BOS had spent several semesters attempting to work within the confines and constructs of the University system, in an effort to find methods and means for their support, they met with little success and often found their interactions with the administration to be abrupt and unclimactic. In one instance which took place in the spring of 1968 Richard Roper, the Chairman of the BOS, stated in a letter to the then Vice President and Treasurer of Rutgers University, “[t]o our dismay, we, the members of the Black Organization of Students at Rutgers-Newark, have learned that a request by the University for funds in the amount of one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) was deleted from the University budget by Governor Hughes. These funds were earmarked for Equal Opportunity Projects, specifically: compensatory education, talent research programs, faculty exchange, and financial aid for minority group persons.”⁵⁴ As a state institution Rutgers University was/is mandated to follow oversight from state government. This arrangement of state control would alter over Rutgers history as we will see below. However, this instance illustrates where officially mandated, and University approved, actions were derailed by the bureaucracy of an historically white supremacist society which was often not willing to commit taxpayer money to the project of providing equal access for African Americans and other oppressed communities in

⁵⁴ Ibid: Box: 33, Folder: 7

education. It also illustrates that the methods proscribed by the University for dealing with institutional issues did not yield just ends for Black students.

The takeover, or more appropriate, Liberation of Conklin Hall represents the most impactful and transformational moment in student led movements for progressive reform analyzed during this period. With the aid of student allies, community organizers, staff, faculty, the administration, and even Newark high school students (who came to augment the crowd which had gathered outside Conklin and supported and provisioned those inside) the African American students of Rutgers-Newark campus won significant concessions which expedited and solidified Rutgers commitment to make institutional changes to their admissions process, funding priorities, academic courses, and racial representation among the faculty and staff.⁵⁵⁵⁶ This action would, as evidenced above, prove to also produce the most significant amount of backlash towards the Black student body, faculty, and eventually the administration. This reaction will be explored further in a later section. However, in an effort to aid in the understanding of BOS's motivations

⁵⁵ Jean Anyon. 1997. *Ghetto Schooling: A Political Economy of Urban Education Reform*. New York & London: Teacher College Press: Teachers College Columbia University. Anyon provides crucial contextualization surrounding the public schools where many of the African American students wishing to enroll at Rutgers University came from. Detailing the uneven and unjust appropriation and distribution of taxpayer funds to urban schools and their communities Anyon illustrates that the demands of those students protesting the unfair and racialized practices of Rutgers came from a long history of being neglected both systemically and economically which produced an environment where young African American students were blocked from obtaining a quality education. Additionally, Anyon provides source material for contextualizing the response of these students' parents and community organizers who worked to fight the injustices of what can only be described as a deeply unfair and racist educational policy especially as it concerned urban spaces. This important understanding allows for one to grasp the reality of just what these students were fighting for and the long history they were attempting to diverge from in order to simply gain some level of social and economic security long denied to the African American community.

⁵⁶ Richard P. McCormick. 1990. *The Black Student Protest Movement at Rutgers*. New Brunswick & London: Rutgers University Press. (pg. 34-46)

during that particular time, why they chose this particular moment in US history, Ms. Donaldson explained why she and her comrades chose this time to act. “After the Rebellion, Newark was a panacea of community political activism... we were a perfect storm... we knew what we were doing, and we knew how people would react... we were talking about the absence of Black bodies at school... but we weren’t righteous and alone.”⁵⁷ Thus, it appears that this most successful of student led movement possessed a dialectical analysis of their environment, the institution, the general population, and historical contextualization. This revelation also suggests the continuation of the contradiction within the university as much of that knowledge which allowed for such a sophisticated analysis was earned at Rutgers, only to one day be justifiably used against it.

The response to the most radical of actions the BOS took part in, produced a reaction from the Young Americans For Freedom which had turned their student led organizations attention to acting in direct opposition to what they described as “the alarming recent anarchic trends on university campuses throughout the country,” citing that “the Black Organization of Students at Rutgers in Newark has, with the support of the Students for a Democratic Society, illegally occupied Conklin Hall on the Newark campus.”⁵⁸

⁵⁷Jason P. L. Boehm. 2020. *Oral History Interview with Vickie Donaldson*. Conducted at Rutgers University Newark on Tuesday February 25, 2020 with the written permission of the interviewee

⁵⁸ Ibid: Box: 33, Folders: 10-11

Although an adversarial force championing the current structures of power, it still never managed to stop the ultimate gains of the Black student movement on campus. Proving the validity of Ms. Donaldson's statement that the BOS knew what they were doing.

Rutgers Faculty:

The faculty of Rutgers, like that of the student body, was not a monolithic force when it came to campus activism. However, those who did participate in such actions as teach-ins and the facilitation of Black student organizations like the BOS, were able to greatly impact, influence, and implement the changes that were eventually won at Rutgers University during the 1965-72 period. What faculty did, how they acted in response to student led movements, and what sacrifices were made among Rutgers mostly white and male faculty during this period will be the subject of this section. However, we must first establish what the faculty of Rutgers during the period of analysis possessed in terms of certain perceptions and convictions, all of which must be understood in analyzing their stance; one of opposition to the hegemony of the institution where they had devoted their life's work to. As we will come to discover much was at risk for faculty in attempting to meet the demands of students. Students that they taught and guided and who were according to many of the faculty aware that, "changes had to be made."⁵⁹

The risks faculty took in aiding student led movements took many forms. However, so did the way in which Rutgers University dealt with unruly faculty who

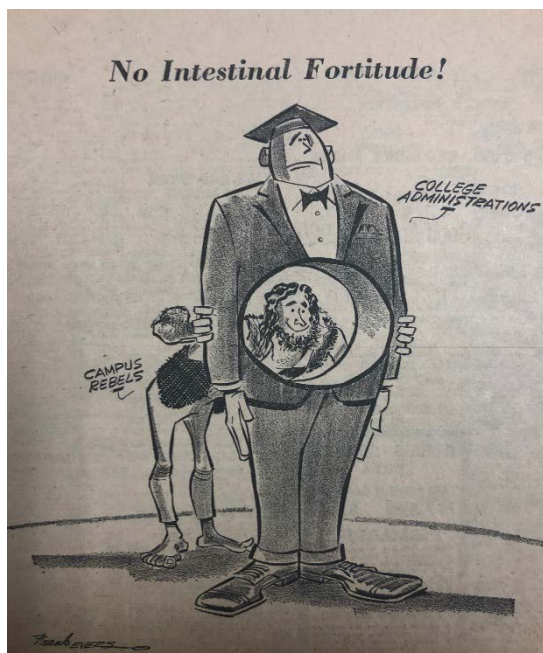
⁵⁹ Richard P. McCormick. 1990. *The Black Student Protest Movement at Rutgers*. New Brunswick & London: Rutgers University Press. (pg. 20)

bucked the status quo. An important precedent had been set at Rutgers when in December of 1952 Professor M.I. Finley, along with two other instructors, were dismissed from Rutgers University employment due to their pleading of the 5th Amendment during the McCarthy Trials of the Second Red Scare.⁶⁰ An act that revealed the massive pressure to appeal to the dominant anti-communist ideology of the day, as well as, stripping Rutgers faculty of their right to choose their own colleagues as was part of their American Association of University Professors (AAUP) negotiated labor contract.⁶¹ This incident also reveals an important distinction between the virulently anti-communist leadership at Rutgers University under then President Lewis Webster Jones, and the more academically liberal tenure of President Mason W. Gross.⁶² This institutional distinction, at its core a matter of personal ideology, would matter greatly to the way in which some of these events were to finally play out.

⁶⁰ Ellen W. Schrecker. 1986. *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism & The Universities*. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press. (pg. 171-74)

⁶¹ Ibid: (pg. 171-93)

⁶² Paul G. E. Clemens. 2015. *Rutgers since 1945: A History of the State University of New Jersey*. New Brunswick, New Jersey & London: Rutgers University Press. (pg. 1-31)



⁶³ It was during the early days of Gross's leadership, and under the pressure of a unified faculty organized with the AAUP, that Rutgers Educational Planning Policy at a January 1967 Board of Governors meeting was changed to allow for the "free pursuit and dissemination of knowledge and free artistic expression, every member of the faculty of this University is expected, in the

classroom and studio, in research and professional publication, freely to discuss subjects with which he is competent to deal, to pursue inquiry therein, and to present and endeavor to maintain his opinions and conclusions relevant thereto."⁶⁴ Although a restatement of prior academic principles this tactic was clearly influenced and executed by a faculty dedicated to the project of academic freedom while also remaining very aware of recent developments where such protections became exceedingly necessary.

Historically faculty at Rutgers University, while not a militant force of International Workers of the World (IWW), have displayed an inordinate amount of worker solidarity in forming, operating, and participating in union struggles especially within the milieu of the Cold War period. A fact Rutgers faculty doubled down on when in January of 1969 they decided to allow the AAUP union to exclusively represent

⁶³ President, Rutgers University. Office of the. 1936, 1945-1971. Inventory to the records of the Rutgers University Office of the President (Mason Welch Gross). RG 04/A16: Rutgers University Libraries: Special Collections & University Archives. Box: 34, Folder: 2

⁶⁴ James P. Begin. 1956-1985, (bulk) 1967-1974. *Guide to the James P. Begin Papers*. R-MC 048: Rutgers University Libraries: Special Collections & University Archives. Box: 3, Folder: 2

faculty in all bargaining issues related to their employment.⁶⁵ Displaying what Professor of Education-Labor Studies Dr. Allan Weisenfeld described as “the principles of organization and cooperation and the recognition of common interests of all those who work in any way, whether mostly by the head, or with their hands, or mostly with their voice...”⁶⁶ While the development of a faculty union and the collective action of the same can act as a hallmark of the popular conceptions and attitudes among Rutgers faculty during the 1965-72 period, it is important to remember that not all faculty felt such solidarity when it came to the student body. As the educator and writer Robert Engvall wrote in his book *Inside the Faculty Union*, “[u]nionism offers a chance for people to step up and work on behalf of others, just as it offers many of those others the chance to avoid responsibility at all costs.”⁶⁷ Irrespective the reasons or convictions which drove Rutgers faculty to collectivize during this period specifically, their unified commitment to university principles such as academic freedom, the ability to bolster their institutional power, and their conviction to academic integrity collectively made Rutgers temporally unique. Thus, as we come to the campus actions Rutgers faculty took part in, we find a united workforce represented by a labor organization and freed from the past oppressiveness of the previous University administration.

⁶⁵ Ibid: Box: 1, Folders: 6-8. AAUP official documents

⁶⁶ Ibid: Rutgers Newsletter dated 12/5/1969. Box: 3, Folder: 2

⁶⁷ Robert Engvall. 2018. *Inside the Faculty Union: Labor Relations in the University Setting*. Lanham Boulder-New York-London: Rowman & Littlefield. (pg. 116)

Anti-War Movement:

During the campus protests against the War in Vietnam faculty took an active role. Teaching, debating, and participating in direct actions Rutgers faculty, without the protection of University protocol/policy that would come, made open and at times radical statements which did not align with the popular discourse of US society.⁶⁸ Although, it was Professor Eugene Genovese who garnered the most attention by utilizing his institutional privilege to draw attention to the fact that not only was there a body of the US public opposed to the war, there were even some who openly hoped for a Viet Cong victory. As Genovese put it during an anti-war campus event in October of 1965, “[t]herefore unlike many of my distinguished colleagues here this morning, I do not fear or regret the impending Viet Cong victory in Viet Nam. I welcome it.”⁶⁹ While this comment did nothing to organizationally empower the student activists opposing the War, it did provide both an important lesson to students on the consequences of speaking out against popular ideology, while also bringing public attention to the movement itself. Additionally, it opened the public space for debate on this issue regionally and other professors from Montclair University to Monmouth College also began to publicly criticize and denounce US actions in Vietnam.⁷⁰ Whether that attention and debate would be welcomed, or foster any positive change, will be covered later in this study.

⁶⁸ Judith Stein. 2010. *Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the Seventies*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press. (pg. 17-21)

⁶⁹Rutgers University. Office of Public Information. 1965-1966. *Inventory to the Records on the Vietnam War Teach-Ins at Rutgers University*. RG 07/A2/01: Rutgers University Libraries: Special Collections & University Archives. Box: 2 Folders: 4-6. Multiple newspaper reports all citing the exact same quote.

⁷⁰Ibid: Box: 3 Folder: 13

Black Student Movement:

During the Liberation of Conklin Hall faculty were taking steps to fundamentally change various structures of Rutgers University. From admissions protocol, to the course curriculum faculty gathered in relatively large numbers to accommodate the demands made by African American students. As Professor Richard P. McCormick reported years later, "I was aware, and other members of the faculty were too, that on all of these campuses where movements were under way, the blacks were presenting their demands, quite understandably, to deans and presidents of boards. I saw problems with that, because many of the demands they were making fell properly within the province of the faculty; for example, in the area of admissions requirements, in the area of curriculum, and so on."⁷¹ As the students had not initially come to them, they (the faculty) would go to them, the students. This kind of active and institutionally bent aid would prove invaluable to the Black student movement at Rutgers.

McCormick goes on to explain how the faculty reacted to the events which took place on February 24, 1969. "Well, we had a scenario prepared. The black students presented their demands. Then... I presented the resolution... which was to the effect that the faculty would not take up any other business until all of these demands had been addressed, and that a special committee be appointed (and we knew who the members of the committee would be) to meet immediately following the end of this meeting to

⁷¹ Michael J. Birkner. 1997. "The Turbulent Sixties at Rutgers: An Interview with Richard P. McCormick." *Journal of the Rutgers University Libraries*, Vol. L VIII 42-61. (pg. 48)

prepare a response to these demands.”⁷² On following day at what McCormick describes to be a much calmer and orderly meeting between the faculty and BOS in the Busch Campus Center; “We established a Transitional Year Program (TYP) and, because it was a new program, we argued we could accept applications for it, and that we would seek to raise the number of black student by 100... this so called Transitional Year Program became what we know today as the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP).”⁷³ This program, one originally proposed by BOS and later defunded by the state government, illustrates one of many instances where faculty went to great lengths to meet Black students where they were, and from there, meet their demands.

On March 11, 1969 faculty met at Douglass College on the New Brunswick campus and formally presented a 25-point document which directed actions towards not only meeting the demands of African American students who had recently occupied Conklin Hall on the Newark campus, but the expansion of many of them.⁷⁴ These changes included such measures as the demanded hiring of Black faculty, as well as, the added measure taken by faculty of requiring certain key positions from admissions, to financial aid, to administration be filled by African American staff, along with special programs directed specifically towards Black Rutgers students. All such posts would eventually be filled by African American candidates, while faculty simultaneously created avenues for young Black students to move on to graduate school so that future

⁷² Ibid: (pg. 49)

⁷³ Ibid: (pg. 49)

⁷⁴ Rutgers University. Educational Planning & Policy Committee. 1951-1986. *Inventory to the Rutgers University Board of Governors Educational Planning & Policy Committee*. RG 02/C2: Rutgers University Libraries: Special Collections & University Archives. Box: 4, Folder: 1

positions could be filled by African Americans on every level of Rutgers growing campus system.

In the end, the faculty of Rutgers University during the period of 1965-72 often took on the role of educator/activist and institutional reformer while still managing to meet their research and other administrative requirements. While the hard work, changes, and risks taken by faculty would produce some of the most egregious consequences for academic freedom, faculty control of the University, and student teacher relations (as the backlash from both the community and the state most significantly impacted their particular subculture of the University) their efforts and actions remain elements of a collective history which produced one of the most diverse modern campuses in the US. However, as with so many reformist movements, there were those who did not receive the same attention from faculty and administration. While Rutgers faculty worked side by side with African American students and all three campuses, the students of Camden were never given the same level of programs, funding, or academic attention as Newark and New Brunswick had won.⁷⁵ An indication perhaps that for any one group, population, or community the significance and intensity of the actions taken in route to their collective goals are directly related to the consequences of the outcome, and/or a simple and repeated lack of willingness to provide proper funding for public education.

⁷⁵ Richard P. McCormick. 1990. *The Black Student Protest Movement at Rutgers*. New Brunswick & London: Rutgers University Press. (pg. 60-4)

Administration and President Mason W. Gross:



⁷⁶ When holding the events which took place at Rutgers University during the period of 1965-1972 up against other universities of the period the actions and demeanor of the then President Mason W. Gross, the Board of Governors, and the administration in general appears to be less than oppressive, and in some cases downright amenable. In truth the most radical of actions taken by students on campus could

not have succeeded without the assistance of one of Newark's dean's, Malcolm Talbott.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Rutgers University. Office of the President. 1936, 1945-1971. *Inventory to the records of the Rutgers University Office of the President (Mason Welch Gross)*. RG 04/A16: Rutgers University Libraries: Special Collections & University Archives. Box: 34, Folders: 1-6

⁷⁷ Jason P. L. Boehm. 2020. *Oral History Interview with Vickie Donaldson*. Conducted at Rutgers University Newark on Tuesday February 25, 2020 with the written permission of the interviewee.

As a result the majority of the reaction generated during this period would be publicly directed at President Gross and his administrative staff who had to directly cope and manage with not only the coordination of implementing the changes produced by their students actions, but the organizational, institutional, and political upheaval that came with Rutgers University failing in their institutional mandate. That of producing obedient citizens.

Anti-War Movement:

In the case of the anti-war movement at Rutgers University the level of support and participation varied greatly from that of the faculty. As mentioned briefly above, President Gross was not exactly in support of the various teach-ins which took place on Rutgers three campuses. In fact, when Gross was interviewed by the *New York Post* in October of 1965 he stated, “[t]here seems to be little intent to secure a sober and balanced discussion...” when referring to the teach-ins.⁷⁸ However, Gross had a strong commitment to the idea of academic freedom and the principles of the 1st Amendment. President since 1959, Gross had been a philosophy professor who rose to national prominence when he appeared on the television show of host Herb Shriver where he showcased his academic prowess.⁷⁹ Prior to his tenure at Rutgers Gross taught at

⁷⁸ Rutgers University. Office of Public Information. 1965-1966. *Inventory to the Records on the Vietnam War Teach-Ins at Rutgers University*. RG 07/A2/01: Rutgers University Libraries: Special Collections & University Archives. Box: 3, Folders: 2-5. Various newspaper reports and University articles.

⁷⁹ Rutgers University. Office of the President. 1936, 1945-1971. *Inventory to the records of the Rutgers University Office of the President (Mason Welch Gross)*. RG 04/A16: Rutgers University Libraries: Special Collections & University Archives. Box: 7, Folder: 2. Personal memorabilia collected by Gross.

Columbia, served in the Army Intelligence Corps., and was “active in the Cold War effort.”⁸⁰ Hence Gross was no radical, simply committed to what he viewed to be essential elements of US society and higher education. Therefore, when Gross eventually chose to stand in defense of Professor Genovese’s pro-Viet Cong comment, as well as the teach-ins themselves, his decision was rooted in ideological principles and the proceduralism of both the University and the US, not a defense of Genovese himself, and certainly not his political ideology.

President Gross and the university would be assailed from elements of the society which have historically comprised the developmental forces of consensus. Newspaper articles, angry letters from state politicians, pressure and exasperation from the Board of Governors, and the consternation and contempt from elected officials all of which found blame with Gross for allowing such “un-American activities” to take place on his University’s campuses.⁸¹ That he was merely defending principles supposedly sacred to US civic religion seemed to have gone unnoticed.

Black Student Movement:

When it came to the actions which culminated into the Black student movement Gross, some representatives from the administration, and a certain member of the Board of Governors all found themselves in the position of both aiding, defending, and in some

⁸⁰ Paul G. E. Clemens. 2015. *Rutgers since 1945: A History of the State University of New Jersey*. New Brunswick, New Jersey & London: Rutgers University Press. (pg. 15-18)

⁸¹ Rutgers University. Office of Public Information. 1965-1966. *Inventory to the Records on the Vietnam War Teach-Ins at Rutgers University*. RG 07/A2/01: Rutgers University Libraries: Special Collections & University Archives. Box: 3, Folders: 2-5 & 11: The Alexander Library Archives located at Rutgers University in New Brunswick literally house multiple boxes filled with hate mail addressed to President Gross personally, in many cases laden with threats of violence and racist remarks.

cases even abetting the actions which took place on Rutgers campuses, in particular on February 24, 1969 in Newark.⁸² For while not perfect, and as will be discussed later stunted in many ways, it would be inaccurate to view the actions taken by Gross and his cohorts as anything but progressive for the period. Martha Biondi writes extensively of the popular perceptions concerning movements for Black liberation during this period and she states that, “[t]he phrase ‘Black Power’ may bring to mind ghetto uprisings and incendiary rhetoric, but the rise of Black Power on campus had a strong intellectual dimension.” As detailed below the perspective Gross and other University affiliated employees took towards the BOS appears to have certainly been aware of the intellect, determination, and sophistication of their Black students. Another aspect of this history which exposes both the contradiction of higher education and a collective conviction to integrity.

“I worked very, very closely with the leadership of the black students- a remarkably dedicated, well-informed, concerned, responsible group” said Richard P. McCormick Professor of History at Rutgers-Newark and the Chair of the Select Student Faculty Committee, formed immediately after the Liberation of Conklin Hall which had been charged with considering the demands of African American students.⁸³ When asked who the strongest allies of the BOS’s actions on campus were among the administration (including the Liberation of Conklin Hall) Vickie Donaldson reported that Professor of Political Science Norman Samuels, Bob Curvin the Chairman of the Newark chapter of

⁸² Jason P. L. Boehm. 2020. *Oral History Interview with Vickie Donaldson*. Conducted at Rutgers University Newark on Tuesday February 25, 2020 with the written permission of the interviewee.

⁸³ Michael J. Birkner. 1997. "The Turbulent Sixties at Rutgers: An Interview with Richard P. McCormick." *Journal of the Rutgers University Libraries*, Vol. L VIII 42-61. (pg. 50-2)

the Congress Of Racial Equality (CORE) and a part-time instructor on the Newark campus, Chairperson Bessie Nelms Hill (the only African American member of the Board of Governors), Sue Perry a member of the staff in the University's Physical Plant, and especially Dean Malcolm Talbott as key allies all of whom aided in their actions leading up to and during the Liberation.⁸⁴ Clearly, African American students on Rutgers campuses had earned the respect and even admiration of many members of the Rutgers community. All of which should have acted as guardians of institutional authority and the status quo, not the accomplices of student radicals. Revolutionary theorists have suggested a key factor in any revolutionary action succeeding is the alliance of once opposing forces, such as the middle-class allying with the working-class.⁸⁵ In this instance, figures of institutional authority, definitionally agents of hegemony, chose in this instance to side with students rather than the state, social norms, or the institution itself. Without minimizing the work of organizations like the BOS this factor must be acknowledged as key to the overall success of this progressive movement, and again exposes the contradiction of the university.

While the actions taken by Gross, Talbott, and Board member Nelms Hill were more institutionally grounded, although still very important, it was people like Samuels and Curvin who educated and guided members of both the BOS and The Black Student Unity Movement. Sue Perry, who provided the crucial information about the physical aspects of Conklin Hall the BOS needed to know if they were to successfully occupy and

⁸⁴Jason P. L. Boehm. 2020. *Oral History Interview with Vickie Donaldson*. Conducted at Rutgers University Newark on Tuesday February 25, 2020 with the written permission of the interviewee.

⁸⁵ Karl Marx. 1885/1963. *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. Hamburg, London, & New York: International Publishers. Marx's writings here both satirize and analyzes the political environment and events taking place in France the late 19th century.

hold the building, provided on-the-ground guidance.⁸⁶ These contributions to what was ultimately a radical action for progressive change not only illustrate the institutional support Black students had obtained, but equally important, the environment an academic space can develop and foster especially in the case of Talbott, Samuels, McCormick and Gross all of whom were white middle-class men. In comparison to the more racist and mainstream opinions of many university administrations and staff around the nation during the period their counterparts at Rutgers were in some ways radicals themselves.⁸⁷ Lastly, this instance of administration aiding radical students illustrates the appearance of the internal contradiction of the university, a space which is systemically meant to exist as an institution charged with molding obedient and productive citizens, but instead through education produces radicals.

Vice-President and Dean Malcolm Talbott had met with and advocated for African American students and their organizations from everywhere within the Rutgers system, from Board Meetings to his own Chaired Committee of Concern.⁸⁸ However, Talbott's most extreme effort on behalf of his African American students took place when he put his body on the line to stop Newark Police Chief Dominick Spina's attempted armed storming of Conklin Hall during the Liberation, an event that would

⁸⁶ Ibid: Tuesday February 25, 2020

⁸⁷ Martha Biondi. 2012. *The Black Revolution on Campus*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, & London: University of California Press. The whole of this book covers various Black Student movements none of which appear to have met with the same success or cooperation as took place at Rutgers.

⁸⁸ Rutgers-Newark. Office of the Vice-President. Committee of Concern. 1960-1971, (bulk) 1967-1968. *Records of the Rutgers University-Newark Vice-President (Malcolm Talbott): Committee of Concern*. RG N7/G3/03: Rutgers University Libraries. Special Collections & University Archives. Box: 1, Folder: 2. A committee dedicated to creating and fostering relationships between Rutgers-Newark and the city of Newark itself.

assuredly have ended in police violence as evidenced during the 1967 Rebellion. As Vickie Donaldson reported during her interview, Vice President Talbott had been in a committed romantic relationship with Dean C. Willard Heckle who she and some other BOS members had become very close with.⁸⁹ This in-turn allowed them both preferential access to Talbott, as well as a kind of social solidarity as members of historically oppressed groups, which in-turn developed into a relationship of mutual respect and trust.⁹⁰ This personal relationship allowed for an extraordinary level of support from Talbott. Regardless of Talbott's personal affinity for his African American students however, he was such an overt advocate for BOS and their demands that he would later be accused by state authorities of actually helping to plot and execute the Liberation of Conklin Hall with BOS.⁹¹

As for President Mason Gross, who would come to reap the most focused and public backlash to the events which had taken place on his University's campuses, if he could not be credited as an ally of the Black student movement, he did ultimately sacrifice his career to meet their demands. Having finally signed the demands made by both The Black Students Unity Movement and the BOS in 1969, which organizationally represented all three campuses Black student liberation movements, Gross had chosen a

⁸⁹Jason P. L. Boehm. 2020. *Oral History Interview with Vickie Donaldson*. Conducted at Rutgers University Newark on Tuesday February 25, 2020 with the written permission of the interviewee.

⁹⁰ Ibid: Tuesday February 25, 2020

⁹¹ Rutgers University. Office of the President. 1936, 1945-1971. *Inventory to the records of the Rutgers University Office of the President (Mason Welch Gross)*. RG 04/A16: Rutgers University Libraries: Special Collections & University Archives. Box: 35, Folders: 3-6. Minutes from a NJ State hearing accusing/researching how Rutgers administration lost control of the campus to radical students.

side, one counter to the dominant ideologies, systems, and narratives of the period.⁹² As evidenced above Gross had cosigned all of the institutional, economic, and educational reforms that would come as faculty and African American students created their new curriculum, programs, and spaces at Rutgers University.⁹³ Although President Gross was not at the forefront of the Civil Rights Movement, nor could he be described as anything but a political conservative, although liberal, he still chose to act in a way which was counter to the hegemony of the period. Even though he must have been quite sure, given the backlash produced due to the anti-war teach-ins during 1965, that the public perception concerning these events would be negative Gross acted for the betterment of Black students. Whether Gross accurately perceived what was to come is unknown, the political and systemic backlash that would culminate in the detrimental decline of his standing with Rutgers Board of Governors, the alumni, with many state and federal politicians, the general public, and the most personal result, the precipitous decline of his physical health would still ultimately be his fate.⁹⁴

⁹² Bruce J. Schulman & Julian E. Zelizer. 2008. *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970's*. Cambridge, Massachusetts & London, England: Harvard University Press. This title provides various essays collected by members of the academic community which catalog, describe, and detail the history of the rise of Rightwing ideology as both a combative force to the then popular New Deal and Great Society Programs developing during the early 1960's and a coordinated and concerted effort to destroy the welfare state and social democracy. According to the authors this campaign continues to this day.

⁹³ Rutgers University. Educational Planning & Policy Committee. 1951-1986. Inventory to the Rutgers University Board of Governors Educational Planning & Policy Committee. RG 02/C2: Rutgers University Libraries: Special Collections & University Archives. Box: 5, Folders: 2-4. Official documents confirming the changes to Rutgers systemically as to meet the demands of Black student movements.

⁹⁴ Michael J. Birkner. 1997. "The Turbulent Sixties at Rutgers: An Interview with Richard P. McCormick." *Journal of the Rutgers University Libraries*, Vol. L VIII 42-61. (pg. 60)

The Boundaries of Hegemony:

Now that the environment and events taking place at Rutgers University during the period of 1965-1972 have been broadly reviewed the topic of hegemony can be properly addressed. Understanding the context of the movements mentioned above is an essential element for understanding just what halted the gains of these student led movements for progressive reform. Additionally, it is important to mention that while many personal opinions, beliefs, and ideologies all collide in such instances the ultimate reasoning for the reactionary and often violent response from students, alumni, faculty, staff, administration, Board members, the general public, and political leaders does not come down to individual perceptions but the collective understandings, beliefs, and perceptions of a society. And in the case of the US this means a society saturated in white supremacy, misogynistic conceptions, pro-capitalist ideologies like hyper-individualism, and the nearly endless list of other elements which make up the superstructure, which in turn cyclically supports the base. In short, there is no one person, group, organization, or entity which like some comic book villain designs the whims and machinations of society, there is just the hegemony of the US capitalist system.

Students and their Parents:

In addition to the petition the Young Americans For Freedom and other conservative groups had disseminated on Rutgers campuses during the anti-war demonstrations and teach-ins of 1965, was their response to the collective actions of Black students on Rutgers campuses in 1969 which took on a more reactionary, (in modern terms) white nationalist tilt, as opposed to the popular conservatism of the period. At the same time Rutgers University, itself an institutional agent of hegemony charged

with programming students to be productive members of society, contradictorily manifested a community focused on fostering intersectionality and programs for the correcting of historical wrong doings. Meanwhile, the rest of the surrounding community, state, and nation were in a much different space ideologically, educationally, culturally, and materially. These elements combined made the progressive student movements at Rutgers representative of a relative minority population. For as many of the students of Rutgers University were fighting for a more progressive society, an even greater number of students were working against them actively, or apathetically. Meanwhile, forces beyond their comprehension were working to redirect the path of a nation which was rapidly deindustrializing and entering a period of economic downturn which Judith Stein calls “The Great Compression,” citing A. H. Raskin of the *New York Times*, “[t]he typical worker- from construction craftsman to shoe clerk- has become probably the most reactionary political force in the country.”⁹⁵ Historical ideological hallmarks like The Powell Memorandum, the GE sponsored anti-labor workshops hosted by then actor Ronald Reagan, and the machinations of neoliberal economists like Fredrick Hayek and Milton Friedman were all establishing themselves in ways which directly opposed the kind of change progressive students were fighting for during the period.⁹⁶ Thus, the

⁹⁵ Judith Stein. 2010. *Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the Seventies*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press. (pg. 15)

⁹⁶ Kim Phillips-Fein. 2009. *Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement for the New Deal to Reagan*. New York & London: W. W. Norton & Company Inc. Both Phillips-Fein and Judith Stein’s books allowed for an understanding of the economic, political, and material reasons that the US was turning so reactionary after a period of relative social democracy. Although still the most economically prosperous nation in the world the US began to see declines in profit due to the slow rehabilitation of international markets around the globe. This new globalized world created a moment where capital could go global unlike the workforce itself. According to both books this shift in economic principles coincides with a redirection in domestic policy especially where social welfare and infrastructure were concerned. These shifts in discourse, economic priorities, and Social Darwinism were not only bankrolled by financial and corporate forces but ideologically

economic, material, and political reality of the US was in fact diverging from anything that had been developed and fostered by progressive students, faculty, and staff at Rutgers University during the 1965-1972 period. This very important factor establishes the posture of the bulk of the nation and the enormity of the task progressive students had taken on.

“I am now ashamed to say, ‘I’m from Rutgers.’”⁹⁷ A sentiment which opens an alumni’s letter to Mason Gross in March of 1969 referring to the events surrounding and the Liberation of Conklin Hall back in February of the same year. “The letter ends, [y]our records will indicate that over the years I have not forgotten Rutgers. But, if there is a single additional indication of administrative pusillanimity, this year is positively my last contribution.”⁹⁸ Another letter written by alumnus Templar S. Cawthorne and addressed to President Gross again threatened, “I do not feel like continuing financial support for

enforced by them as well. National and international campaigns were conducted in order to “convert” millions of working and middle classes (mainly white) Americans that individualism, capitalist principles, and anti-government sentiments were foundational ideas of the nation itself. As each title painstakingly details this campaign was multifaceted, broadly based, and financed by some of the wealthiest people, organizations, and corporations in the world. Perhaps most significantly these titles also illustrate how all of these conservative libertarian-based oligarchs backed and framed many of the movements for racial, social, economic, sexual, and gender-based justice as the enemies of all things US. In addition to the societal and systemic effects the Cold War had already instituted within the US psyche as well as the hegemony itself, the forces working for positive change in the 1960’s and early 70’s were about to be outspent, outmaneuvered, and ultimately oppressed into obscurity by this ideological movement. This is the reality that Rutgers led movements for progressive reform faced at the end of the period of study. After their long and hard-fought campaigns for social and systemic justice had been won the nation itself turned inside-out and suddenly became a space where such victories would be gutted, stunted, and/or abolished entirely.

⁹⁷ Rutgers University. Office of the President. 1936, 1945-1971. *Inventory to the records of the Rutgers University Office of the President (Mason Welch Gross)*. RG 04/A16: Rutgers University Libraries: Special Collections & University Archives. Box: 30, Folder: 13 Letters from alumni, parents, and students of Rutgers

⁹⁸ Ibid: Box: 30, Folder: 13

Rutgers today.”⁹⁹ Another letter dated January 6, 1970, sent from an alumni living in Detroit, Michigan informed President Gross that his actions surrounding both the anti-war and the African American student movements had “unquestionably ‘adhered to our enemies and gave them aid and comfort’ which I hope you know is TREASON according to Article III, paragraph 3 of our Constitution.”¹⁰⁰ Alumni and Trustee Committee member Foster B. Whitlock sent another letter on December 15 of 1969 to castigate Gross and his actions during the student led protests which had continued through much of his later tenure as President to say, “[i]f this is the kind of thing that goes on, on the campus, I am absolutely disgusted and would like my name removed from the Trustees Committee of Livingston College.”¹⁰¹ These are some of the boxes worth of letters President Mason Gross received from alumni alone, almost all of which were negative. All of them spoke ill of Gross’s actions during the student led movements, and all made some form of threat concerning contributions, campus involvement, “un-American” activities, or as was cited above warnings about Gross’s compliance with the US Constitution.¹⁰²

In a letter addressing Gross and referencing the Liberation of Conklin Hall the President of the Oil-PAK Company and alumnus Pat N. Pastore told the Rutgers President. “[y]ou should have stood firm against such a group (what Pastore described to be 10 Black students and 20 of their friends) and their idiotic demands.” Going on to

⁹⁹ Ibid: Box: 30, Folder: 14

¹⁰⁰ Ibid: Box: 30, Folder: 14

¹⁰¹ Ibid: Box: 30, Folder: 13

¹⁰² Ibid: Box: 30, Folder: 14

assert, “it does appear to many of us graduates who worked hard and diligently for an education, that Rutgers will deteriorate to a position of mediocrity. The future grads will look like idiots. The time is now to protect what our people have built with sweat and blood over the many years.”¹⁰³ Of course historically speaking Rutgers had participated in the keeping of enslaved peoples on its New Brunswick campus during the colonial era making such an assertion ahistorical and exposing just how racist of a statement was being made.¹⁰⁴ Still, the assertions made here offer some of the many examples discovered in the archives. Archives filled with overtly racist tropes, casually racist language, and nostalgic belief patterns based on fiction. Elements repeatedly found in so many of the letters Gross received in reference to the Liberation of Conklin Hall and the anti-War movement. It also becomes clear that although NJ lay in the Northern region of the US, an often-assumed liberal bastion and member of the Civil War’s Union, it appears to have been, and perhaps may still be, an overwhelmingly racist and reactionary state.¹⁰⁵

Similar complaints from parents of Rutgers students and current students of Rutgers also came into the Office of the President by the boxload as well. Writing in a letter dated December 29, 1969 a Mr. Fairchild reported to President Gross that not only was he “concerned for the future of our young man presently a freshman at Rutgers,” and that the African American students were “enemies of Democracy,... students who would

¹⁰³ Ibid: Box 33, Folder: 9

¹⁰⁴ David Fowler. 2010. “Benevolent Patriot: Henry Rutgers, 1745-1830” Special Collections and University Archives: Rutgers University Archives. <https://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/scua/henry-rutgers>

¹⁰⁵ Although not listed, nor used, for reference purposes Dr. Clement Price’s book, *Freedom Not Far Distant* analyzes and catalogs the trajectory and development of slavery in New Jersey.

turn our University campus into a staging area for their acts of violence, riots, civil disorder and blasphemous acts against God and Country” should be expelled.¹⁰⁶ Another parent of a Rutgers student, James R. C. Cook wrote to inform Gross that, “last year, the black people demonstrated to obtain free college education for their people, regardless of their ability to make good grades in High School. Your University agreed to these demands. Now their own people are trying to tear down and destroy your campus and its way of life.”¹⁰⁷ Multiple assertions that the society of white NJ residents was somehow separate and distinct from that of Black NJ residents, in addition to warnings of violence which had never actually happened serve as markers illustrating the milieu of the period. Illogical fear of people of color, and subconscious devotion to white supremacist ideology and civic religion.

Many students also found Gross’s actions to be unacceptable as it concerned student led movements for progressive reform and wrote him personally to let him know. In a letter dated May 3, 1970 undergraduate Barbara D. Bjerke wrote President Gross to ask “[w]hen are you going to consider and support the students who are interested in pursuing an education? When are you going to consider the middle-class whites who pay your salary and get crumbs after the [deleted repeated word; original typo] university doles out vast sums of money to support militant black students and puts up bail for ‘intellectuals’ who don’t give a damn about this country?” On October 13, 1969 Gross received a letter from another Rutgers student who wrote, “[y]our actions closely parallel that of an autocratic system of administration... I am saddened and dismayed that you

¹⁰⁶ Ibid: Box: 30, Folder: 13

¹⁰⁷ Ibid: Box: 30, Folder: 13

have succumbed to such a perverse ideology. You have tarnished the renowned reputation of Rutgers for all time to come.” In one of the more interesting and reactionary letters addressed by a student to Gross, Inez L. Franko, wrote to complain that she felt that communist infiltration was a real issue at Rutgers. “Senator McCarthy should certainly be in his glory now. He has an opportunity to drive a nail into the palm of his former opponent. And the rabble of the streets will give him the thunder to complete the scene while tears from us who see the death of a great nation will rain in torrents... those people who are ‘protesting’ are either being duped by an insidious force or are the perpetrators of deliberate unrest in this country.”¹⁰⁸ The letter includes a postscript stating that a “Mrs. Rosenthal is the ablest English teacher I have ever had and that none could match her ability in that field.”¹⁰⁹ Suggesting that the aforementioned communist infiltration was not universally applicable to Rutgers faculty and also illustrating a continued pattern of racism and devotion to US civic religion among the Rutgers community.

These letters exemplify what was a collection of several hundreds of letters addressed to President Mason Gross from alumni, parents of Rutgers students, and Rutgers students themselves; casting Gross, the figurehead of Rutgers, as the target of blame for the actions which took place on campus, and where they overwhelmingly directed their reactionary response to the internal unrest taking place at their University. Many of these letters exemplified overtones of both covert and overt racism and are only the smallest sampling of the deluge of primary source material casting these issues and

¹⁰⁸ Ibid: Box: 30, Folder: 16

¹⁰⁹ Ibid: Box: 30, Folder: 16

actors in a similar light. Each reactionary expression taken together leaves little doubt that the precarious economic conditions and social upheaval of the period (all of which had been perceived as a threat to this subgroup of Rutgers/NJ's vast community) caused them to lash out at these perceived threats to the dominant narratives and racist material structures which allowed them their historic feeling of social superiority and economic security.

A challenge to the status quo, the accepted everyday expectations they had come to unconsciously accept as the proper way for society to operate had been challenged, and their collective response was both reactionary and in defense of their societal positionality, socially and economically- both in a perpetual state of precarity since 1967. When we acknowledge hegemony as the collective aspects of a society, and that the whole of everything economically and culturally established in society reinforces the hegemony of society, it becomes clear that many of these Rutgers community members responded to student led progressive movements for reform as agents of US hegemony; defensive, reactionary, and angry at the challenges "their" system had been exposed to. Afterall, these students were actively opposing equal access to higher education and supporting an imperialist war, and yet they were students at the same institution their progressive counterparts also attended. That contradiction is manifested at the point where conceptions of hegemony do not align, and far too often a student's choice of subject major. Whether aware of it or not, reactionary elements of the NJ population appear to have recognized Rutgers role in the production of obedient and productive citizens, and in perceiving a failure in this role (the base/superstructure dialectic) by Rutgers (materially linked to their financial assets) these populations reacted in the only

way institutionally powerless populations perceiving material and social threats to their socioeconomic stations usually can-through collective reactionary backlash.

Faculty and Staff:

This reactionary and defensive response to the student led movements for progressive reform taking place on Rutgers three campuses was discovered to exist among very few faculty members, but much of the staff at Rutgers. The staff: those workers who do the clerical, accounting, and administrative work that keeps the machinery of the University going. During the period of study, an overwhelmingly white, male, and working-class population.¹¹⁰ In the main this negative reaction to the policies and institutional alterations Gross had agreed to after the actions of the Liberation of Conklin Hall revolved around issues which directly link to aspects of the society's largely unconscious commitment to white supremacy, social constructs concerning racial identity, and traditional academic and institutional norms established in historically misogynistic, racist, classist, and economically unjust institutions known as universities and colleges. Ironically, many of these constructs and protocols were in fact both exploitative and oppressive to this population of Rutgers employees, yet counter to their class interests, this population chose to defend the long held institutional norms which had produced such unequal access to higher education.

One of the few examples of faculty who felt any indignation towards the sanctity of academic norms being restructured can be witnessed in the public comments of Rutgers Professor of Political Science Joseph Silverstein, who "particularly objected to

¹¹⁰Jason P. L. Boehm. 2020. *Oral History Interview with Vickie Donaldson*. Conducted at Rutgers University Newark on Tuesday February 25, 2020 with the written permission of the interviewee.

the no-flunk rule,” a concession Black students had won after the Liberation designed to give the disadvantaged students coming from inadequate public schools the time needed to acclimate to their new academic environment and increase their potential to succeed.¹¹¹ Silverstein commented further that such an academic policy made it, “hardly an academic atmosphere,” and that “[t]here is a standard assumed by the university, and if students don’t meet it- well?”¹¹² Again, an academic policy obviously designed to curve the massive inequality, of not only the underfunded and hyper-segregated school system of NJ educating Black students who may attend Rutgers University, but the racially and economically unequal progression of US history as a whole, both of which greatly impacted educational opportunity for people of color. The fact that an intelligent Professor with the credential of PhD would not be able to perceive this very real reality can only be credited to his unconscious conviction to the dominant narratives and academic norms of the period, the privilege of his social and class position, or both.

These dominant ideologies were also held by then Superintendent of Newark Schools Franklin Titus’s whose 1965 public comment in reference to the state of NJ’s urban based public schools revealed his convictions, “[t]he Newark school system is beset with all of the problems common to most large, old, crowded slum ridden, metropolitan cities from which there has been an exodus of great numbers of small families of substantial means and an influx of even greater numbers of new large families

¹¹¹ Rutgers University. Office of the President. 1936, 1945-1971. *Inventory to the records of the Rutgers University Office of the President (Mason Welch Gross)*. RG 04/A16: Rutgers University Libraries: Special Collections & University Archives. Box: 30 Folder: 17. A public comment made to various local newspapers

¹¹² Ibid: Box: 30, Folder: 17

of small means.”¹¹³ Benignly accepting as inevitable and unchangeable the phenomenon of white flight, suburbanization, racist housing policies, unequal access to opportunity, and all the other aspects of US society which produce such instances and definitionally make the US a white supremacist society. For these highly educated elites of the NJ educational system it is as if nothing can be changed, and that all was as it should be, why the change, why the fuss? Although these examples illustrate some of the shortcomings of neoliberalism, they also highlight an assumed conviction and lack of political imagination born of an unconscious faith in the hegemony.

Although many in the faculty not only supported and in fact designed and facilitated many of the changes that were to come post-Liberation, many Rutgers staff found the policy of augmenting the all-white Admissions Office staff at Newark with an exchange of African American staff members, a demand of both the BOS and The Black Student Unity League, an unacceptable stipulation to concede. In a letter addressed to Dr. George Kramer, the then Vice-Provost and Dean of Admissions on the New Brunswick campus, and signed by the “Admissions Staff” at Newark stated that they had “taken a stand in the removal of Mr. Robert K. Swab, Admissions Director, and Mr. C.T. Miller, Assistant Director, and we are in protest.”¹¹⁴ Never mind that both Swab and Miller had not been laid off, but only reassigned to oversee admissions at the “professional schools, Pharmacy, Nursing, and Business,” only removing them from the School of Arts and

¹¹³ Steve Golin. 2002. *The Newark Teachers Strikes: Hopes on the Line*. New Brunswick, New Jersey & London: Rutgers University Press. (pg. 42)

¹¹⁴ Rutgers University. Office of the President. 1936, 1945-1971. *Inventory to the records of the Rutgers University Office of the President (Mason Welch Gross)*. RG 04/A16: Rutgers University Libraries: Special Collections & University Archives. Box: 30 Folder: 17. Personal correspondence, letter of protest written by Rutgers staff, and newspaper articles

Science, apparently such a change in the all-white staffing on the Newark campus would not be tolerated by the staff.¹¹⁵ Again, an instance illustrating where the smallest change to the status quo produced a reactionary response among those members of the Rutgers community who saw the resources, norms, and/or priorities of the University shifting to those it had never even considered before. That the demands of Black students did not materially affect the staff of the Admissions Office in any way is yet another indication that a more pernicious and subconscious force was at work, influencing and informing their reactionary response.

Indeed, the response to Gross, clearly varied yet reactionary in its context and intent, took many different forms. One of the more extreme reactions by staff which was produced by student led actions on campus, came from a member of the Health and Human Physical Education staff, a Ms. Margery Turner, who urged President Gross to, “[t]ap all dormitory lines” and to create security measures which would leave students with little doubt that their actions would be punished finishing, “[w]hen one knows he can’t beat the system there is no challenge to try.”¹¹⁶ Regardless, a large sector of Rutgers University’s massive campus based community remained so adherent to the dominant narratives, structures, and norms of the period that they broke ranks and, in many cases, spoke out in defense of hegemony when elements of that force were being threatened even though these challenges did not affect them personally or materially. This preferential loyalty to the status quo rather than the institution that payed their bills

¹¹⁵ Ibid: Box: 30, Folder: 17

¹¹⁶ Ibid: Box: 30, Folder: 17

represents a contradiction which can only be explained by an illogical commitment to ideology, or rather the superstructure/base construction, i.e. hegemony.

Some of the ire and frustration directed at President Gross was also laid before the Board of Governors as well. In both the anti-war and Black student movements they had, according to public opinion, failed to fire Genovese for his pro-communist/anti-American comments, while also feebly deferring to President Gross and his administrative staff when it came to the concessions made for African American students post-Liberation. Many complained that the Board had “created confusion about the roles of the community colleges, the state colleges,” since Rutgers had gone ahead with their new “open-admission” policy, a response to the dramatically low numbers of African American and other people of color on Rutgers three campuses.¹¹⁷ Calls demanding to know why the dispensation of funds were going to African American students and not poor white students, and even the insistence the University acknowledge and fund various white Euro-American student groups in an cynical effort to steer funds, now earmarked for students of color and historically oppressed communities.¹¹⁸ However, while the concessions made to Black students created an extreme backlash towards the Board, it was the closing of the case concerning the comments of Professor Genovese concerning the War in Vietnam which generated the most indignation towards the Board itself. It appears that the hegemonic influence of Cold War propaganda had a significant effect upon NJ’s population in 1965 as anti-communist sentiment appears to have still

¹¹⁷ Ibid: Box: 34, Folders: 1-6. Official correspondence between Gross and his administrative staff concerning such changes and newspaper articles responding to these actions

¹¹⁸ Ibid: Box: 107, Folders: 6-10. Written request by students to start both a Polish and Italian student group funded by the university following the Liberation of Conklin Hall.

been at its peak. Conversely, the efforts of the Black student movement generated a backlash that was far more focused on President Gross in 1969-70. While the latter is frankly the persistent perpetuation of racism in the US, the popular public reactions/opinions on the Genovese incident confuse nostalgic imaginary conceptions of US history with Constitutional protections and established history. An illogical position to hold, and yet all the more disconcerting as the demand to fire Genovese was strongest among elected officials.

Elected Officials:

In 1965 Independent conservative candidate for Governor, Robert E. Schlachter, stated to a meeting of 21 county coordinators that he was, “calling on New Jersians to join him in bringing about a house cleaning at Rutgers University and any other state supported college or institution that chooses to protect at public expense Marxists, socialists, and communists and their army of fellow travelers.”¹¹⁹ Another candidate for Governor in 1965, State Senator Wayne Dumont, who made the issue of reining in Rutgers faculty, administration, and the institution itself a top priority of his campaign, interestingly combining it with his intention to “keep Rightwing extremists from controlling the Republican Party,” became so laser focused on Rutgers it eventually cost him an election.¹²⁰ Dumont, a Republican, who would lose to Democrat Richard J. Hughes in the 1965 NJ Governors election, had in the past championed the cultivation of popular discourse and peaceful social disobedience, viewing them as foundational

¹¹⁹ Ibid: Box: 115, Folders: 10-1. Various local newspaper clippings citing the same speech.

¹²⁰ Ibid: Box: 33, Folder: 8 newspaper articles

principles of the nation and protected by the 1st Amendment.¹²¹ However, following the events taking place in NJ between the years of 1965-1972, including the student activities at Rutgers, the politics of Essex, Bergen, Camden, and Middlesex counties shifted to the Right going from complete Democratic Party control to an almost equal representation by Republicans in the NJ State Senate and General Assembly.¹²² Many of these new Republican representatives were running on platforms of law and order, less government, and low taxes in a reactionary response to factors like the Great Compression. This shift in the political milieu, from New Deal to no deal policies along with the perpetual presence/influence of structural and social racism, turned Dumont from a New Deal conservative to a reactionary Libertarian. Each of these political actors, all of which possessed institutional authority on the state level, sighted Rutgers as a potential threat and enemy to the social fabric and security of NJ. These positions on both the Black student and anti-war movements were in keeping with the dominant narratives and discourse of the period, and yet they were in fact both contradictory to the principles of liberty and freedom US civic religion holds dear, while also systemically antithetical the Constitutional protections. Illustrating that the influence of the superstructure/base relationship and its inherent contradictions had warped the public and systemic

¹²¹ Ibid: Box: 35, Folders: 1-6. Various newspaper articles, correspondence with Gross and Talbott

¹²² State of New Jersey. Results of the General Election: Held November 2, 1965, Compiled by the Secretary of State, State of New Jersey. November 2, 1965. Accessed via internet on 01/22/2020 nj.gov: <https://www.state.nj.us/state/elections/election-information.shtml>. State of New Jersey. Results of the General Election: Held November 2, 1971, Compiled by the Secretary of State, State of New Jersey. November 2, 1971. Accessed via internet 01/22/2020 nj.gov: <https://www.state.nj.us/state/elections/election-information.shtml>

perceptions so much that elected officials, definitionally agents of hegemony, were perpetuating this contradiction.

Although, he never championed any of the student led movements at Rutgers Governor Hughes remained largely supportive of Genovese's right to free speech in 1965.¹²³ However, in 1969 Hughes would react to the actions of Black students by immediately calling out his State Police force, seemingly without any thought that such a response could potentially produce a violent clash with students occupying Conklin Hall, a reaction that had produced only violence at many other universities around the nation. Additionally, Hughes never took a stand against an event that included white protesters during the occupation of Conklin Hall. An event where under the orders of infamous local demagogue and political leader Anthony Imperiale white students attempted to break down the doors of Conklin Hall with a telephone pole; an act which included going through members of Newark's Black Panther Party and Wilson High School who were blocking the doors.¹²⁴ These variations between these two incidents illustrate that in the instance where 1st Amendment rights were in question Hughes was able to hold fast to the mandates of his post. However, in the case of Conklin Hall's Liberation Hughes clearly allowed dominant conceptions/perceptions about racial constructs to greatly

¹²³ Rutgers University. Office of Public Information. 1965-1966. Inventory to the Records on the Vietnam War Teach-Ins at Rutgers University. RG 07/A2/01: Rutgers University Libraries: Special Collections & University Archives. Box: 4, Folder: 2. Newspaper reports from various NJ outlets named throughout study.

¹²⁴ Jason P. L. Boehm. 2020. *Oral History Interview with Vickie Donaldson*. Conducted at Rutgers University Newark on Tuesday February 25, 2020 with the written permission of the interviewee.

influence his actions and inactions. In short, a clear historical example of structural and systemic racism.

Anthony Imperiale the leader of a white reactionary group known as North Ward Citizen Committee (a group charged with beating both African American and Latino residents of Newark in order to keep them out of white neighborhoods), and later a State Assemblyman had won infamy and renown during the days of the Newark Rebellion.¹²⁵ An outspoken and combative figure in Newark's political scene Imperiale viewed the actions which took place at Rutgers Newark during the Liberation of Conklin Hall as a direct threat to his community and the city itself. Known for his clashes with Newark activist, poet, and Black intellectual Amiri Baraka, Imperiale had clear convictions to ideologies such as white nationalism/supremacy, had taken part and led groups intent on reactionary violence, and was vehemently anti-communist. Imperiale has an infamous reputation in the city of Newark and much of the surrounding area even today, a hero to reactionary whites and a villain to all else. If he holds any historical significance other than that of reactionary demagogue, it is that his particular brand of politics is representative of the historical evolution of a large bloc of reactionary NJ politics drawing an undiluted line from 1965 to today.

Writing from his State Office to President Gross in February of 1969 Imperiale stated that, "you [Gross] should be charged with gross negligence for not taking the proper action against those responsible [Black students] ... I demand that every student

¹²⁵ Brad R. Tuttle. 2011. *How Newark Became Newark: The Rise, Fall, and Rebirth of an American City*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rivergate Books an Imprint of Rutgers University Press. pg. 179

involved in this seizure of Conklin Hall be expelled.”¹²⁶ Imperiale went on to also castigate Dean Malcolm Talbott for, “allow[ing] this terrible thing to happen in our college.”¹²⁷ Going on to accuse Dean Talbott of being, “neglectful in the past by the appeasement policy that you [Talbott] have adopted...”¹²⁸ Finally, addressing Gross again Imperiale stated, “I accuse you of being weak and demand your removal.”¹²⁹ Imperiale would go on to state that he took this position so “the future of our country be maintained,” a clear and undeniable verbal admission of a reactionary and racist response from a state official to the simple demands of equality.¹³⁰ Imperiale had both shown, and stated, that the racist ideology, aspects of civic religion, and reactionary politics he championed had no tolerance for a society where higher education be made available to ALL potential students, i.e.- equality. Instead, his US was one where the civic religion, ideas and narratives concerning patriotism, war, white supremacy, imperialism, social constructs, etc. should never be challenged and must needs be maintained, even fought for. Imperiale, like so many other middle- and working-class whites in NJ, had once again associated their precarious economic and cultural dominance, then in economic decline, with the growing demand of historically oppressed people simply asking for the same privileges the former had historically enjoyed. That maintained divide, whether

¹²⁶ Rutgers University. Office of the President. 1936, 1945-1971. *Inventory to the records of the Rutgers University Office of the President (Mason Welch Gross)*. RG 04/A16: Rutgers University Libraries: Special Collections & University Archives. Box: 33, Folders: 8-10. Letter from State Assemblyman Anthony Imperiale to President Mason Gross

¹²⁷ Ibid: Box: 33, Folders: 8-10

¹²⁸ Ibid: Box: 33, Folders: 8-10

¹²⁹ Ibid: Box: 33, Folders: 8-10

¹³⁰ Ibid: Box: 33, Folders: 8-10

class or race based, was (and remains) an essential element of US hegemony. One which was clearly being defended by representatives of state power.

However, Imperiale was not alone. Letters from other State officials and elected leaders would also find their way to President Mason Gross's desk. State Senator J. Edward Crabiel of Middlesex county wrote to inform President Gross saying, "I have refrained from publicly commenting on the controversy in a hope that perhaps this would help you, as certainly a public clamor will not in any way ease tensions."¹³¹ The Senator then went on to reiterate that no student group had the "right" to occupy a building, and that if Black students refused to leave a building, "an adequate number of police should be used" in their removal.¹³² Although the Bulk of Senator Crabiel's letter went on to suggest how Rutgers should be run, breaking down how the various subcategories of people who staff and run such a large university system should operate, he did end by describing himself as a "loyal Rutgers alumni."¹³³ Regardless his feeling of loyalty the Senator still ultimately wrote in defense of the same principles Imperiale spoke of.

Senator Edwin B. Forsythe of Burlington and Ocean counties also wrote in February of 1969 to express his opinion on the actions surrounding the Liberation of Conklin Hall. "This does not mean that I agree with the demands listed. In fact, I think many of them are not only without merit but quite dangerous to the goals of this or any college."¹³⁴ Going on to express that "I must vigorously disapprove of the use of force,

¹³¹ Ibid: Box: 34, Folders: 1-6. Letters from State representatives to President Mason Gross.

¹³² Ibid: Box: 33, Folders: 1-6

¹³³ Ibid: Box: 34, Folders: 1-6

¹³⁴ Ibid: Box: 35, Folders: 3-6

sit ins or other disruptive methods in these situations. Primary to the maintenance of our society is order. Without order there can be no justice...”¹³⁵ State officials regularly appeared in the archives all describing the events at Rutgers, and methods for resolving it, often in a reactionary and defensive manner. A peculiar response to a relatively small group of students, but an understandable response to a threat of the dominant narratives and ideologies of the day.

State Senator Austin N. Volk, of Bergen county, also wrote Gross saying, “I would render an ultimatum within five minutes [referring to any student occupying University property as an activist] and would have a limited deadline of 15 minutes for the students to vacate the room and restore peace. At that time, if the premises were not vacated, I would immediately take the action that was taken four hours later [referring to the calling of the police at an earlier student led demonstration].” Indeed, many State officials took the time to write to the University, usually addressing their messages to President Gross, but all maintaining varied levels of concern and advice on how to “handle” the student body. While such letters may appear the responsibility of a state representative when it comes to a state institution, it is the messaging that is of interest, not the act itself. And in each letter the messaging was clear: students should maintain their adherence to the dominant narratives, norms, and systems of this society, any challenge to them regardless the reason was dangerous. Again, the contradiction of higher education appears. An institution designed and funded to produce obedient and

¹³⁵ Ibid: Box: 35, Folders: 3-6

productive citizens, instead producing radical student led movements which in each instance were demanding changes beyond the scope of the university.

Law enforcement also weighed in on the activities taking place at Rutgers as evidenced in the Chief of Camden's police force's letter to Rutgers in 1969 demanding "to be constantly appraised of the problems that are developing..." going on to stress a "confidential resume of the situation and what you [Rutgers Administration] believe to be major problems for the remainder of the school term" be sent to him immediately.¹³⁶ This letter suggests the immediate response of law enforcement was the establishment of what can only be described as a police state. All in response to the actions of a relatively small group of students at Camden, the cell which offered the least radical campaign, again reveals the presence of agents actively, although perhaps unconsciously, rushing to defend against any threat to the dominant ideologies of the society.

While these examples are, as above, only a small portion of the flood of letters President Gross and the University received in regard to the student led actions taking place on Rutgers three campuses during the period of 1965-1972 the culmination of the state response was still to come. However, before facing that moment in Rutgers University's long history we must first analyze what the media was saying, and what role they played in these events.

¹³⁶ Ibid: Box: 107, Folders: 6-10. Letter from Chief of Police of Camden to the Administration of the Camden campus.

As news media was/is temporally influential and historically shaping perceptions and conclusions concerning everyday events, the role of both NJ and US media must be analyzed prior to the official actions of the state so that a coherent perspective can be maintained when constructing the influence of this matrix of societal hegemony. In short, politicians read and are in turn influenced by the news media just like anyone else.

News Media:

The perceptions and conclusions being developed by media were all but an echo, or inspiration, of those actor's representative of so many subgroups throughout the nation and state who stood in defense of the status quo. As we will come to see, although the details of these actions are available in concise and accurate detail in various forms both then and today, the numerous media outlets operating in this period essentially fueled a reactionary campaign against Gross, Rutgers faculty, and the students fighting for progressive change by misleading the population with their prose. Though these well documented events at Rutgers are recorded in books, and the very archives this thesis works from, in many cases media inaccurately described these events in the pages of NJ's print media. Revealing that, as an institution, mainstream media serves to protect the status quo, actively and passively acting as an agent of hegemony. As the intellectuals and authors Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman point out in their book *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* "the large bureaucracies of the powerful subsidize the mass media, and gain special access [to the news], by their contribution to reducing the media's costs of acquiring... and producing, news. The large entities that provide this subsidy become 'routine' news sources and have

privileged access to the gates. Non-routine sources must struggle for access and may be ignored by the arbitrary decision of the gatekeepers."¹³⁷ Working from Herman and Chomsky's conclusions we can then frame student led movements in the category of "non-routine sources" placing them in a perpetual state of "other" from both an institutional and societal prospective that was being shaped by news media.

The anti-war movement which had taken place on Rutgers campuses never culminated in anything more than a "polite" sit -in, a minor adjustment to recruiting protocol, and a radical comment made by a member of the faculty, yet these actions were still portrayed as un-American and heinous threats to the fabric of society by news media.¹³⁸ In addition to this obvious ideological spin media gave voice to likeminded individuals, institutions, and organizations all of which would have been relatively of the same class and race operating at a level of privilege which allows for writing to the editor. Such as the American Legion, which incidentally possessed a long history of calling out "communist behavior" on university and college campuses, had also written a declaration in response to the student movements at Rutgers.¹³⁹ In a paper of unknown name found in the archives at Rutgers an article was found stating that, "some 75 men, representing the statewide group [of the American Legion], said in an unanimously

¹³⁷ Noam Chomsky & Edward S. Herman. 1988. *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. New York: Pantheon Books. Introduction.

¹³⁸ Michael J. Birkner. 1997. "The Turbulent Sixties at Rutgers: An Interview with Richard P. McCormick." *Journal of the Rutgers University Libraries*, Vol. L VIII 42-61. (pg. 60)

¹³⁹ Ellen W. Schrecker. 1986. *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism & The Universities*. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press. (pg. 68, 90, 104, 113-15, 207, 213, 222, & 326)

approved resolution such teach-ins at colleges should stop.”¹⁴⁰ This same “resolution” unsurprisingly called for an investigation from the House Committee on Un-American Activities and the Senate Internal Security Sub-committee, due to the “Marxist-Socialist pronouncements” made by Professor Genovese at a teach-in.¹⁴¹ The highlighting and printing of such announcements, coming from an private social club representing an extreme minority of the population, was a conscious choice made by this media outlet. The information coming from the American Legion is meaningless to the material reality of NJ’s population and has no effect on their day-to-day lives. Yet, as the message was in defense of the dominant social and cultural norms of the period it gets printed, disseminated, and provokes/invokes an illogical reaction. All of which protects and defends the status quo.

In March of 1965 the Editor of the *Hudson Dispatch* took up column space to weigh in on the anti-war teach-ins taking place at Rutgers University at the time. Writing in response to a Rutgers history Professor who likened US Army actions in Vietnam to that of Nazis, the Editor entered the following into the record; “Our army’s orders are to bomb military objects only, and if innocent Vietnamese who are nearby are killed, it is coincidental... Our commanders have not ordered our soldiers to seize hostages from a village who refused to collaborate and line up these innocent people and shoot them...”

¹⁴⁰ Rutgers University. Office of the President. 1936, 1945-1971. *Inventory to the records of the Rutgers University Office of the President (Mason Welch Gross)*. RG 04/A16: Rutgers University Libraries: Special Collections & University Archives. Box: 115, Folders: 10-15. Copy of letter written by American Legion name of newspaper cut off from the photocopied version found in the archives

¹⁴¹ Ibid: Box: 115, Folders: 10-13

On whose conscience is this imbalance of justice?”¹⁴² A series of statements that history confirms are categorically inaccurate, however, they were in keeping with dominant narrative in US society concerning the War in Vietnam, the very reason they were printed. Again, illustrating the role of news media in supporting the superstructure/base construct.

In an issue of the *Herald News* dated August 23, 1965 a report was published highlighting the number of letters the paper, its associated affiliates, and competitors had received denigrating and condemning the anti-war teach-ins at Rutgers University.¹⁴³ Comments from residents were almost ideologically indistinguishable, calling university professors Marxists, warning of the rise of communist and socialist infiltration and/or revolution. Terms like “un-American” and “traitors” fill any number of random lines in the various columns of print. A unifying narrative is produced which makes clear that any discussion of the US being wrong or unjust in its war with Vietnam, was categorically erroneous and immediately made one a dangerous radical.¹⁴⁴ Articles reminding readers that their sons were fighting and dying in Vietnam to fight communism and all its evils, and even going so far as to threaten to end political careers if action was not taken to stop the anti-war actions at Rutgers filled various newspapers pages.¹⁴⁵ Illustrating both what

¹⁴² Rutgers University. Office of Public Information. 1965-1966. Inventory to the Records on the Vietnam War Teach-Ins at Rutgers University. RG 07/A2/01: Rutgers University Libraries: Special Collections & University Archives. Box: 4, Folder: 2. Various newspaper articles all casting the teach-ins as negative

¹⁴³ Ibid: Box: 4, Folder: 2

¹⁴⁴ Ibid: Box: 4, Folder: 2

¹⁴⁵ Ibid: Box: 4, Folder: 2

the dominant narrative and ideology of the period was, while also highlighting yet another example of local media utilizing its limited page space to devote columns of type to promoting Red Scare behavior, anti-government sentiment, and the “cleansing” of the US’s institutions of higher education.¹⁴⁶ Such Cold War campaigns were developed and perpetuated in the pages of many newspapers and have a well-documented history. Books like Ellen Schrecker’s *No Ivory Tower* and *Many are the Crimes* both of which detail the extremes US institutions have gone to in an effort to eradicate any element of anti-capitalist sentiment, socialism, or communism from the imaginations of the people.¹⁴⁷

In another letter to the Editor published in September of 1965 a NJ resident reported that, “it is enormously important that Genovese and his ilk not only be removed from Rutgers payroll, but from all government supported payrolls... a man on the payroll of a tax supported institution should not be allowed to speak like that,” apparently insinuating his authority over the University by right of tax dollars paid.¹⁴⁸ Another article repeated the “injustice” that simply being a “Marxist” or a “Socialist” did not warrant “grounds for dismissal.”¹⁴⁹ While the printing of such “letters to the Editor” is a common occurrence in any newspaper, the repeated appearance of such subject matter

¹⁴⁶ Ibid: Box: 4, Folder: 2

¹⁴⁷ Ellen W. Schrecker. 1986. *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism & The Universities*. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1998. *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Both provide detailed histories of anti-communist and anti-socialist behavior and campaigns. One from the perspective of the university and the other a broader analysis of McCarthyism, or the Second Red Scare, in the US during the 1950’s and 60’s detailing how many lives of mostly innocent people were destroyed by these modern day political witch hunts.

¹⁴⁸ Rutgers University. Office of Public Information. 1965-1966. Inventory to the Records on the Vietnam War Teach-Ins at Rutgers University. RG 07/A2/01: Rutgers University Libraries: Special Collections & University Archives. Box: 4, Folder: 2. Various newspaper articles from the counties and state of NJ

¹⁴⁹ Ibid: Box: 4, Folder: 2

can only suggest that the messaging was approved of institutionally/organizationally by the paper itself, it was in popular public demand, or both. Regardless the motivation, these articles are again a small example of the series of boxes containing these daily produced and analogous convictions shared via NJ's news media.

Traveling all the way to the *Chicago Tribune* in November of 1965 the anti-war teach-ins at Rutgers, now national news, appears to have maintained the same narrative being developed in NJ in the Windy City. The *Chicago Tribune* quoting the then Vice-President, Richard Nixon, "Do the principles of freedom of speech require that the state subsidize those who would destroy the system of government which protects freedom of speech?"¹⁵⁰ The writer of the article went on to suggest that the issue of free speech and the War in Vietnam should be seen through the logic of the Vice-President, meaning its protections should not apply. More importantly both the Vice-presidents speech and the writer appear to say that the employment of any state worker who did not promote US interests in Vietnam was tantamount to actively aiding the threat of communism. The exact same issue over state employed radicals and their free speech, and the exact same conclusion, appeared in a November 1965 issue of the *New York Journal American* where author John Chamberlain concluded that Genovese was a "bad scholar" and that both he and Rutgers "should not be excused" for allowing such speech against the US's actions in Vietnam to take place on campus.¹⁵¹ Although framed in typical Cold War

¹⁵⁰ Ibid: Box: 4, Folder: 2. Chicago Tribune. November 8-9, 1965

¹⁵¹ Ibid: Box: 4, Folder: 2. Various local newspapers

rhetoric this is a clear example of news media making the case for disregarding the 1st Amendment rights of the people.

The onslaught of the media campaigns castigating Rutgers for anti-war teach-ins only came to an end when the topic was interestingly incorporated into the then NJ Governors electoral race. Democratic candidate, and incumbent, Richard J. Hughes who had chosen to defend Rutgers in its struggle to protect “academic freedom and more importantly the 1st Amendment rights of student and faculty alike” had reframed the issue around these foundational principles.¹⁵² Hughes’s opponent, State Senator Wayne Dumont, had taken the opposite position and had been calling for faculty terminations and leadership changes at the State University for months on end in every NJ outlet. Through the ambiguity of partisan politics, the contentious campaign having incorporated this key topic of contention, a resolution was reconciled and a reframing of the issue as a 1st Amendment issue as subject to all NJ’s residents was created. Essentially, Hughes and his campaign team had flipped the narrative on Dumont, casting him as an authoritarian extremist and an enemy of free speech, which, if often misunderstood by the general public was still one of the nations most sacred and foundational principles. In this way Hughes utilized convictions to US civic religion and nostalgic foundational beliefs about “the founding” to cast himself as the champion of freedom.

In November of 1965 even the *New York Times* reported on Hughes electoral win, “[h]is (Hughes) re-election is particularly gratifying because of the courage with which he championed the cause of academic freedom at Rutgers, the state university, in the face

¹⁵² Ibid: Box: 3, Folder: 6

of an exceptionally vicious attack.”¹⁵³ The same article went on to cast Hughes as a defender of free speech, and without ever acknowledging the contradictions, the media began to flip the narrative utilizing patriotic and nostalgic wording to render an image of issues concerning free speech and the foundational principles of the US. In doing so, whether conscious or not, the media evacuated the issue of communism and the free speech of state workers and instead cast Hughes defense as just and quintessentially American. Almost immediately the recent attitudes about the teach-ins and protests of Rutgers student and faculty towards the War in Vietnam was forgotten. As the *New Times* stated, “the attachment of the American people to the basic principles of liberty under the Constitution is proved once again by their support in yesterday’s New Jersey election of the defender of freedom of speech against a jingoistic, rabble-rousing assault.”¹⁵⁴ The public perception of the events surrounding the Vietnam War teach-ins and the radical comments made by a university professor had been altered in the imaginations of media by the campaign and was thus in turn reframed and resubmitted to the general public from this new perspective. While the actions of media outlets were not intended to protect those radical and progressive students speaking out against injustice, it did have the effect of calming the year long storm that had been raging. However, even the *New York Times* for all of its importance and influence did not create a monolithic opinion shared by all. Especially not for Pete Hamill of the *New York Post* who in his late 1965 column titled “Teach-In” continued to castigate professors like Genovese,

¹⁵³ Rutgers University. Office of Public Information. 1965-1966. Inventory to the Records on the Vietnam War Teach-Ins at Rutgers University. RG 07/A2/01: Rutgers University Libraries: Special Collections & University Archives. Box: 4, Folder: 2 New York Times article which due to poor copy clarity could not make out name of author

¹⁵⁴ Ibid: Box: 4, Folder: 2

university leaders like Gross, and of course continually warning of the perpetual threat of communist infiltration into US society.¹⁵⁵

The media had been relentless in its initial campaign to oust what was largely perceived to be a communist threat from university campuses. In fact, the only thing that garnered more outrage from NJ's media were the actions taken by African American students on Rutgers campuses in 1969. Whether small independent outlets, or larger state distributed media sources, NJ's media once again adopted a reactionary perspective when it came to the youth of the state. While the particular forms of public outrage were expressed in an innumerable amount of ways the overall general message developed by the media was quite clear.

In an article from the *Daily Record* dated February of 1969 writers described the Liberation of Conklin Hall as, "[t]he danger exposed at Rutgers..." going on to state "Rutgers officials... have yet to prove they understand the prime issue--the danger--confronting the educational world: The aim of unqualified individuals to prescribe college policy through threats of violence and to dictate who shall administer this policy."¹⁵⁶ Never mind that Black students had made no threats of violence, or the immediate question raised by the assertion that Black student were "unqualified," who else would be a better expert in combating institutional and social racism at Rutgers than African Americans? However, the intent and messaging of the article remains clear enough, the threat is one which questions the status quo, demands answers and actions

¹⁵⁵ Ibid: Box: 4, Folder: 2

¹⁵⁶ Rutgers University. Office of the President. 1936, 1945-1971. *Inventory to the records of the Rutgers University Office of the President (Mason Welch Gross)*. RG 04/A16: Rutgers University Libraries: Special Collections & University Archives. Box: 33, Folders: 8-9

from institutional authority, the threat is Black, and intends to change the system. In short, the hegemony is yet again being endangered.

In March of 1969 Jesse Helms the Executive Vice President and Vice Chairman of the Board of WRAL-TV published an article from his native North Carolina (NC).¹⁵⁷ The substance of the article included a scathing critique of Black student actions like those on Rutgers campuses. “The riff-raff on campus have been permitted to disrupt—and, too often, destroy –campus orderliness for too long already.”¹⁵⁸ Helms went on to castigate the leadership of universities which allowed for such “contrived and childish outbursts” to escalate among student bodies writing, “[t]he price of timidity...” which had left “countless other institutions so hopelessly wracked by turmoil...” at “other institutions which lacked the courage, or the direction, or both, to put down such foolishness at the outset.”¹⁵⁹ Although a tangential critique of Rutgers, the messaging and narrative remains clear and is exemplified many times over in the archives. It is also important to note that this letter was produced in NC, yet the language and substance remain in line with those written in NJ. Letters and reports from around the nation all framing Black student movements as threats and potential sources of violence, while also denigrating the leadership, faculty, and curriculum of universities nationwide also reveals the presence of a coherent and unified narrative being unconsciously, or consciously, developed by the nations news media.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid: Box: 33, Folders: 8-9

¹⁵⁸ Ibid: Box: 33, Folders: 8-9

¹⁵⁹ Ibid: Box: 33, Folders: 8-9

From the *Newark Evening News*, to the *New Jersey Star Ledger*, and the *Daily Record* countless articles were written framing the events which took place at Conklin Hall as negative attacks on the fabric of US society by radical and potentially violent Black students from a city that had only a few years before “rioted.”¹⁶⁰ In the March 10th issue of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* reporter Desmond Ryan spoke with students on the New Brunswick campus about the actions which took place on Rutgers-Newark campus choosing to print the comments of one student who claimed, “the majority of white students are against the blacks. They say what he [Gross] has done will lower standards.”¹⁶¹ While another student’s cynical comment added that “[m]ost of the white kids are apathetic, except for the [SDS]. And they’re just using the black kids to get their own demands in.”¹⁶² Interesting perspectives contradicted by Vickie Donaldson who referred to the SDS as “allies” and claimed they had “participated in supporting” the Liberation of Conklin Hall.¹⁶³ While the bulk of many white students did not support the actions of their African American classmates, they did not actively oppose them or participate with those that did. Illustrating that the news media preferred to report on a University that was still producing students it was institutionally developed to produce, while highlighting racial divides. However, an important point to recall here is that the

¹⁶⁰ Kevin Mumford. 2007. *Newark: A History of Race, Rights, and Riots in America*. New York & London: New York University Press. The entirety of this book covers the issues, economic, cultural, social, and systemic which involve and surround the 1967 Rebellion of Newark.

¹⁶¹ Rutgers University. Office of the President. 1936, 1945-1971. *Inventory to the records of the Rutgers University Office of the President (Mason Welch Gross)*. RG 04/A16: Rutgers University Libraries: Special Collections & University Archives. Box: 34, Folders: 1-6

¹⁶² Ibid: Box: 34, Folders: 1-6

¹⁶³ Jason P. L. Boehm. 2020. *Oral History Interview with Vickie Donaldson*. Conducted at Rutgers University Newark on Tuesday February 25, 2020 with the written permission of the interviewee.

subject matter, themes, and quotes produced by these various local news media outlets were chosen, framed, and presented by them. “Them” being a particular, especially at this time, homogeneous representation of a certain upper/middle-class, white, men.

The slant of newspaper and television coverage was so obvious and scathing that in September of 1969 Rutgers Office of the Dean released a public statement to students, their parents, and alumni stating the following:

“During recent years, events on our college campuses have been given unprecedented coverage by the news media. Such accounts usually concentrate on sports news: a campus building occupied by dissonant students is newsworthy; a resolution of campus issues through extended debate among concerned persons is not. And the reverse is also true: the thorough revision of the curriculum at a college may be an exciting development of the utmost significance and importance to the life of that college and the education of its students; to newspapers and television such a development is rarely worthy of mention. The remarks that follow are designed, in part, to provide a background and supplement to some of the accounts that have appeared in the public media.”¹⁶⁴

This eloquent and professional memo represents the only evidence of anything that could be categorized as a rebuke of the narrative news media were creating as it concerned Rutgers and its students. However, it still bears noting that Rutgers felt compelled as an institution of the state to attempt to correct the record.

Finally, an issue of the *Weekly World News* was found in the Alexander Archives which touted the actions of Notre Dame President Father Hesburgh who had instituted “on the spot expulsions” for any student taking part in activism or protest.¹⁶⁵ While this was not the case at Rutgers the response of the general media appears to suggest that they

¹⁶⁴ Rutgers University. Office of the President. 1936, 1945-1971. *Inventory to the records of the Rutgers University Office of the President (Mason Welch Gross)*. RG 04/A16: Rutgers University Libraries: Special Collections & University Archives. Box: 35, Folder: 2. Newspaper articles

¹⁶⁵ Box: 34, Folders: 1-6

wish it were so. Although grounded in a Democratic Party stronghold, in a Northern liberal state, and in a purportedly desegregated society NJ's media provided nothing less than reactionary and/or racist narratives in their countless editorials and opinion pieces which were devoted to the events which took place on Rutgers campuses throughout the period of 1965-1972. A period where maintaining the legitimacy and authority of the society's hegemony was linked to nations ideological survival, and although perhaps unconsciously, the general media of NJ proved to have been very effective agents of hegemony.

The State:

The final stroke of hegemonic backlash which was brought to bear on Rutgers University came directly from the state itself. Under the authority of the State Constitution the elected leaders of the State Assembly came together to form a committee and under the authority of that committee interrogate and accuse President Mason Gross and Rutgers University of negligence, misguided leadership, and anarchic campus behavior among other things.

On May 12, 1969 Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 86 was introduced in Trenton, "A Concurrent Resolution directing the Senate and General Assembly Standing Committees on Education to hold public hearings on and to study and examine the operational programs at Rutgers, the State University."¹⁶⁶ Headed by Assemblymen Kean, Ewing, Caputo, Assemblywoman Margetts, Assemblymen Coury and Curcio the hearings appear to be reminiscent of the trials held during the McCarthyite/Red Scare Era

¹⁶⁶ Box: 35, Folders: 3-6. Minutes of the State Assembly Committee meeting and its line of questions and responses from President Mason Gross.

only a little over a decade before, with various members of the state legislative body grilling President Gross, and whomever else they pleased in an effort to ascertain how students could have effected such change at the University, and more importantly, how to keep it from ever happening again.¹⁶⁷ “The joint committee is authorized to accept the assistance and services of such employees of any State, county or municipal board, bureau, commission or agency as may be made available to it,” including the funds, provided by the taxpayer, to pay for travel and other miscellaneous expenses the endeavor would incur.¹⁶⁸ An instance indicating that power will somehow find and spend whatever it needs in defense of itself. Clearly, the State of NJ found this matter of considerable importance and the investigation of the University a top priority given the date of its initiation and the budgetary support. Remembering this was a measure taken in response to the actions of a minority of students, some of which represented the most oppressed and institutionally powerless groups in US society. Historically oppressed groups which were only asking for the same opportunities, freedoms, and access to justice other members of the US were then experiencing. Additionally, the student’s demands, while presented as radical, were fundamentally in keeping with the rhetoric of US civic religion. Yet, in the protection of the societal norms, structures, institutions, systems, dominate culture, and social constructs which make-up and allow for an historical bloc to maintain control, nothing is to be risked, even at the expense of total contradiction. What this moment does reveal in brilliant coherence is the state,

¹⁶⁷ Box: 35, Folders: 3-6

¹⁶⁸ Box: 35, Folders: 3-6

definitionally agents of hegemony, converting from rule through consent to rule through coercion.¹⁶⁹

Further the Committee remarked on the massive outpouring of negative response towards the events taking place at Rutgers. “Whereas, The Legislature and the members thereof have received many critical letters and comments from citizens of the State regarding the programs at Rutgers, the State University.” Letters, and newspaper columns, and television programs, and interpersonal conversations which collectively produced enough societal pressure to provoke the instinctual politics of the majority white suburban population of NJ, a reactionary politics intent on maintaining the status quo and dominant narratives of the day. Why these movements garnered such a response is again explained by Professor Roderick A. Ferguson, “when students challenged the university, they were calling for new social and intellectual makeup of the university and for a new social order in the nation at large.”¹⁷⁰ Therefore, we see this reaction from the state due to the severity of the threat these students movements actually posed. As their very demands are in fact demands which call for fundamental changes to the society itself not just the institutions, changes that could potentially go so far as to be categorized as revolutionary. As hegemony links all aspects of a society, in terms of the base and superstructure, for an institution to make such changes permanent would no doubt first necessitate the system itself to change. In short, student led movements for progressive

¹⁶⁹ Antonio Gramsci. 2000. *The Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected writings 1916-1935*. Edited by David Forgacs. New York: New York University Press. (pg. 263-5)

¹⁷⁰ Roderick A. Ferguson. 2017. *We Demand: The University and Student Protest*. Oakland, California: University of California Press. (pg. 9)

reform were definitionally antithetical to the very essence of the state, and the project of higher education, as they definitionally demanded changes to the society itself.

The questions these elected officials chose to use when interrogating President Gross were assumingly the culmination of an exhaustive and fully funded research project utilizing any and all resources the Committee deemed necessary to ascertain the veracity of events at Rutgers University. “What will be the University’s response if another building is occupied?”¹⁷¹ And another asking why Gross had reported, “that the University’s routine had not been disrupted” by the students actions yet, “the Committee has been informed that there have been only three weeks of normal classes on the Newark campus since Christmas. Will you please explain?”¹⁷² Gross was also asked to produce a copy of the original agreement he had signed with the BOS during the Liberation of Conklin Hall, while also being asked the stupefying question of “[w]hat specifically have you done since your assumption of office to help educate disadvantaged students?”¹⁷³ A line of questioning illustrating an almost cynical intent to publicly discredit Gross and his leadership considering that Rutgers was/is a state university. Whether to deter attention away from the growing student movements popping up around the nation, or to punish him for what they viewed to be a personal failing, or both was never accurately ascertained during research. Regardless, this moment marked the

¹⁷¹ Rutgers University. Office of the President. 1936, 1945-1971. *Inventory to the records of the Rutgers University Office of the President (Mason Welch Gross)*. RG 04/A16: Rutgers University Libraries: Special Collections & University Archives. Box: 35, Folders: 3-6. Minutes of the State Assembly Committee meeting and its line of questions and responses from President Mason Gross.

¹⁷² Ibid: Box: 35, Folders: 3-6

¹⁷³ Ibid: Box: 35, Folders: 3-6

beginning of the end for Gross and the continuation of a conservative backlash aimed, for now, at Rutgers.

However, Gross was not alone in the managing of Rutgers, something the Committee also knew which is why they inquired about other members of the Gross Administration as well. “What is your view of the fact that Vice-President Talbott and other administrators actively encouraged the boycott of classes in Newark? Did you at any time direct them [administrative staff] to withdraw their support of the boycott?”¹⁷⁴ President Gross answered this question by stating that to his knowledge Talbott simply supported “the objectives of the boycott” not the actual boycott.”¹⁷⁵ Saying, “I have no evidence that he actually endorsed the boycott.”¹⁷⁶ Ignoring the facts that both a sit-in and a building occupation are not definitionally boycotts, that many of the operational expenses at Rutgers even then had to be reported to the state, and that Rutgers was/is The State University of NJ, one can clearly see that what may be described as an inorganic narrative was being developed by the line of questioning. A narrative in keeping with news media and public opinion, yes. However, inorganic as it was designed to do so. The assertion that it was “fact” that Talbott was collaborating with the Black students on Newark’s campus, the insertion of Gross into the question as to continue linking him with the phenomenon of student activism, as if to suggest that the removal of Gross might end the scourge of “communist activity.”¹⁷⁷ The assertions that some kind of danger was

¹⁷⁴ Ibid: Box: 35, Folders: 3-6

¹⁷⁵ Ibid: Box: 35, Folders: 3-6

¹⁷⁶ Ibid: Box: 35, Folders: 3-6

¹⁷⁷ Ibid: Box: 35, Folders: 3-6

being developed and honed at Rutgers, and that all of this was taking place under the leadership of Gross. All of these narratives, inorganically developed, and all linking the systemically worrying issues at Rutgers to one person. Archival evidence illustrates that these elements served to create a narrative, one which skirts any questions of the system itself in place of the failings of one man, and the subtle but persistent suggestion that Rutgers itself was somehow only now producing these radical elements.

Finally responding to the line of questioning President Gross remarked, “[t]he impression conveyed [by the line of questioning] is that the University as a whole has no concern for the community in which it finds itself. If one looks at the University as a whole instead of picking out one committee of one college, he will find a tremendous commitment to the community”¹⁷⁸ Indeed one such committees archives, utilized for this thesis, was named “The Committee of Concern,” and happened to be headed by Vice-President Talbott, and was dedicated to community outreach in Newark.¹⁷⁹ However, it is important to acknowledge here that Gross was attempting to enter into the record that the narrative the state was developing in these hearings was only true in certain instances and only where important context had been removed. A tactic of manipulation designed in this case to again establish the narrative of the irresponsible and out-of-touch President of the State University. And as with each of the liberal institutions analyzed here completely steering away from the systemic, social, cultural, political, and economic issues which were the true source of students concerns, demands, and campus actions. The student

¹⁷⁸ Ibid: Box: 35, Folders: 3-6

¹⁷⁹ Rutgers-Newark. Office of the Vice-President. Committee of Concern. 1960-1971, (bulk) 1967-1968. Records of the Rutgers University-Newark Vice-President (Malcolm Talbott): Committee of Concern. RG N7/G3/03: Rutgers University Libraries. Special Collections & University Archives.

activity at Rutgers for almost a decade was for the state, not the result of systemic and structural failure, but the fault of one lone manager, of one small and replaceable aspect of the system itself, an sporadic anomaly as opposed to a systems wide failure.

The Committee would go on to question President Gross about the allocation of funds at the University.¹⁸⁰ Not to determine whether students were receiving much needed financial aid for programs and curriculum, but to suggest and regulate the financial capabilities of a man, Gross, who from the Committee's own assertions had obviously lost control of his University. A factor the Committee chose, after a well-funded and extensive investigation, to include in the Resolution's line of questioning.¹⁸¹

However, as the goal of authority is to maintain the societal and economic structures of the system that empowers them to do so, the maintenance of these structures is then paramount. When the Committee asked President Gross what the exact number of African American students would be in the coming semester the intent appears to have been to once again to defend the status quo.¹⁸² With no evidence of concern for an historically oppressed population, the Committee continued its questioning by inquiring as to whether or not a policy of accepting more African American students would not effect the "motivation of students in high school, and the admissions of the average

¹⁸⁰ Rutgers University. Office of the President. 1936, 1945-1971. *Inventory to the records of the Rutgers University Office of the President (Mason Welch Gross)*. RG 04/A16: Rutgers University Libraries: Special Collections & University Archives. Box: 35, Folders: 3-6. Minutes of the State Assembly Committee meeting and its line of questions and responses from President Mason Gross

¹⁸¹ Ibid: Box: 35, Folders: 3-6

¹⁸² Ibid: Box: 35, Folders: 3-6

students into the university”¹⁸³ Although the word is never used the implication here clearly being how will white students react to the presence of more Black students? Of course, the desegregation of Rutgers, or indeed public education in NJ broadly, would dramatically alter the status quo. The Committee would go on to ask questions pertaining to where Rutgers would get the money to fund the new programs they had promised to African American students?¹⁸⁴ Providing further evidence that their concern was for only a certain sector of the student population (the children of white middle/working class taxpaying voters) while implying that Black students should not expect state funds to finance their educations.

The Committee continued to question and make demands of President Gross. One demand was the complete breakdown of “the organization of administrative structure of the University including Student-Faculty organizations... who makes the appointments; who makes policy decisions; what is the power of each entity within the structure?”¹⁸⁵ This line is of particular interest as one of the decisions the Committee would come to when their witch-hunt of an inquiry was over was to strip the University, and faculty, of much of their institutional authority and independence. As Professor Richard P. McCormick would reflect years later, “one of the consequences of it all was legislation that constrained Rutgers in its management of its funds. It set up stricter state controls over how Rutgers used its funds- a punitive measure... outside the University there was considerable hostility to the actions taken by black students and toward the efforts made

¹⁸³ Ibid: Box: 35, Folders: 3-6

¹⁸⁴ Ibid: Box: 35, Folders: 3-6

¹⁸⁵ Ibid: Box: 35, Folders: 3-6

to address those concerns.”¹⁸⁶ It is clear that in the end both the University, and its faculty were punished for their role in these challenges to US hegemony.

One of the final questions asked of Gross was what his “understanding of the Legislative authority over the University” was?¹⁸⁷ Whatever his understanding, President Gross clearly got his answer once the state imposed its new controls over Rutgers. Defeated, publicly disgraced, and worn from stress Gross left Trenton in late 1969 in low spirits. In an interview he gave in 1997 Professor Richard P. McCormick a colleague and lifelong friend of Gross explained, “ the battering that he took from the black student protest and the Vietnam demonstrations, though more was involved... took a toll in terms of his support within the Board of Governors, within the alumni, among politicians, [and] the general public. Physically he changed tremendously... he wasn’t in good health... these things weakened him, no question about it.”¹⁸⁸ Gross announced his retirement in May of 1970, he passed away seven years later in 1977 still concerned with the state of the University.¹⁸⁹ Writing to the Editor of the *Herald News* in August of 1970 Rutgers University student Howard R. Osofsky stated, “[t]he resignation of Dr. Gross is indeed one of the monumental tragedies to plague the State Educational System. In addition, the

¹⁸⁶ Michael J. Birkner. 1997. "The Turbulent Sixties at Rutgers: An Interview with Richard P. McCormick." *Journal of the Rutgers University Libraries*, Vol. L VIII 42-61. (pg. 51)

¹⁸⁷ Rutgers University. Office of the {President. 1936, 1945-1971. *Inventory to the records of the Rutgers University Office of the President (Mason Welch Gross)*. RG 04/A16: Rutgers University Libraries: Special Collections & University Archives. Box: 35, Folders: 3-6

¹⁸⁸ Michael J. Birkner. 1997. "The Turbulent Sixties at Rutgers: An Interview with Richard P. McCormick." *Journal of the Rutgers University Libraries*, Vol. L VIII 42-61. (pg. 60)

¹⁸⁹ Paul G. E. Clemens. 2015. *Rutgers since 1945: A History of the State University of New Jersey*. New Brunswick, New Jersey & London: Rutgers University Press. (pg. 30-1)

only thing that is “Communist inspired” is the *Herald-News*, since it does not “tell the news like it is.” I suggest the Herald-News disenfranchise itself from the revered field of journalism.”¹⁹⁰ A quote that once again highlights the contradiction of the university as an institution of indoctrination while also being a source of radicalizing information, and also highlighting that the work of Gross and his administrative allies did not go unnoticed by their many students.

Conclusion:

Though not all was loss and negativity. The BOS and The Black Student Unity Movement did win demands that structurally changed Rutgers University. “A network of action-oriented committees had been established ... composed of faculty, students, administrators, and community people” to find ways in which they could implement the demands made by African American students.¹⁹¹ African Americans were added to the faculty and staff at Rutgers-Newark almost immediately, with the eventual addition of 20 Black faculty and 14 Black and Puerto Rican administrative staff members.¹⁹² Rutgers had already implemented structures to increase the Black student population by 5% for the 1970 semester and with gradual increases thereafter.¹⁹³ However, these concessions did not alter the structuring of the University system itself, nor did it radically change the

¹⁹⁰ Rutgers University. Office of the President. 1936, 1945-1971. *Inventory to the records of the Rutgers University Office of the President (Mason Welch Gross)*. RG 04/A16: Rutgers University Libraries: Special Collections & University Archives. Box: 34, Folder: 7. Newspaper article

¹⁹¹ Ibid: Box: 35, Folder: 2-6

¹⁹² Ibid: Box: 35, Folder: 2-6

¹⁹³ Ibid: Box: 35, Folder: 2-6

way in which higher education conducted itself financially or culturally. Although, these actions did ultimately result in institutional change and for that they are both worthy of remembrance and should be commended.

The advancement of student led movements for progressive reform continue to exist today. At Rutgers there are now numerous groups organized and led by students dedicated to LGBTQ rights, and to people of all ethnicities, creeds, and beliefs as each attempt to broaden the social horizons of Rutgers intersectional community. Existing day-to-day in the privilege that was won for them and now largely unknown (unless one were to walk the corridor of the third floor of Conklin Hall) students of Rutgers University can today boast of being one of the most diverse campuses in the nation.

Yet, many of the same issues and limitations are still in place as the system itself was never abolished or, as in many cases, simply reemerged from the aftermath of a nation's backlash, one inspired by economic precarity and capitalist globalization, by the fear of radical actions of oppressed populations and minority groups, by the rise of Rightwing ideology, and by a mega-funded campaign to bend the politics of the US Rightward from the 1970's and on.¹⁹⁴ Thus, while the significance of the victories won by progressive students should not be forgotten, they were in fact greatly overshadowed by the backlash of the 1970's and 80's and today are only allowed to exist institutionally as symbols.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ Bruce J. Schulman & Julian E. Zelizer. 2008. *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970's*. Cambridge, Massachusetts & London, England: Harvard University Press. The subject matter of this entire book is concerned with the rise of the political Right throughout the 1970's and 1980's.

¹⁹⁵ Kim Phillips-Fein. 2009. *Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement for the New Deal to Reagan*. New York & London: W. W. Norton & Company Inc. The entirety of this book deals with this funded, coordinated, and planned hegemonic shift in US society.

This Rightwing backlash took many forms. One such form it took at Rutgers was the newly mandated, created, and empowered Rutgers Police Department. It was not coincidental that the passage of Chapter 211 of New Jersey Laws allowing for the creation of the University's own armed and duly appointed police force took place in 1970.¹⁹⁶ Just a little over a year after the Liberation of Conklin Hall and the reorganization of Rutgers admissions policy towards people of color. It was through this law that the one-time Campus Patrol became an actual police force able to carry deadly weapons, make arrests, and investigate crimes on Rutgers campuses.¹⁹⁷ While this measure could easily be explained as a simple security measure, Rutgers administration claimed it was to mostly deal with the issue of student parking due to an increase in student population, its implementation so soon after the events which had taken place on Rutgers three campuses leaves more than enough room as to speculate what the actual reasons for this rather extreme and reactionary security measure were.

Another aspect of backlash that appears to have been produced by the actions of Rutgers progressive student movements, especially the ones led by Black students, was the controversy over a massive monetary gift. Although the headline of the *Evening News* in spring of 1969 read "Engelhard's Gift of \$1.25 Million to Rutgers Scored by Blacks," the reality was quite different.¹⁹⁸ Charles W. Engelhard Jr., the inspiration for Ian

¹⁹⁶ Rutgers-Newark. Office of the Vice-President. Committee of Concern. 1960-1971, (bulk) 1967-1968. Records of the Rutgers University-Newark Vice-President (Malcolm Talbott): Committee of Concern. RG N7/G3/03: Rutgers University Libraries. Special Collections & University Archives. Box: 6, Folder: 1

¹⁹⁷ Bid: Box: 6, Folder: 1

¹⁹⁸ Rutgers University. Office of the President. 1936, 1945-1971. *Inventory to the records of the Rutgers University Office of the President (Mason Welch Gross)*. RG 04/A16: Rutgers University Libraries:

Fleming's James Bond villain Goldfinger and the owner of many gold mines in South Africa, was no stranger to the hyper-exploitation of Africans and African Americans. A fact he consciously supplemented with the regular charitable contributions he was known to have made, such as his gift to Rutgers in 1969, at the time the largest ever received by the University.¹⁹⁹ While the headlines of newspapers framed this issue concerning the dispensation of much needed funds to the State University from a very particular (and racist) perspective, the reality was much different. In fact, Engelhard Jr. made sure his money went to the construction of, and completion of, the Business School in Newark and no archival evidence that his money was redirected towards African American students was ever discovered.²⁰⁰ Engelhard's money had come from his inheritance of \$20 million, an inheritance he had transformed into a staggering \$250 million by the mid 1960's, an accomplishment made possible by the hyper-exploitation of Black African workers in South Africa.²⁰¹ Such a personal commitment to colonialism would suggest that Engelhard would not take moral issue with denying funds to Rutgers most historically oppressed student populations. Regardless, the comic book villainy of the man, the news media used this story to confuse, heighten racial tensions, and continue to incite ill will towards the African American community (a project overtly begun in 1967) of NJ in a situation where the accusation was from the first erroneous.²⁰² In addition, the

Special Collections & University Archives. Box: 43, Folders: 1-6. Newspaper articles, internal Rutgers memos, and reports.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid: Box: 43, Folders: 1-6

²⁰⁰ Ibid: Box: 43, Folders: 1-6

²⁰¹ Ibid: Box: 43, Folders: 1-6

²⁰² Kevin Mumford. 2007. Newark: A History of Race, Rights, and Riots in America. New York & London: New York University Press. The entirety of this book covers the issues, economic, cultural, social, and systemic which involve and surround the 1967 Rebellion of Newark.

contradictions continued to perpetuate and replicate themselves. The complexity of the University grew and deepened and the definitions between right and wrong, up and down, became blurred and somehow taking money from colonialist capitalists was in keeping with the institutional mission statement of Rutgers University.

Even today the struggles which had been “won” in the period of 1965-1972 are still being fought within the Rutgers community. In 2018 Professor James Livingston, of the Rutgers History Department, was castigated in the public eye and almost sanctioned due to a satirical comment he made on social media where he inconveniently reminded the public of the US’s predilection towards white supremacy²⁰³ In 2019 Rutgers faculty came very close to its first ever strike due to issues relating to a lack of representation of people of color and women among Rutgers faculty. Meanwhile, the administration of the Office of the President has in succession passed to a man, Dr. Robert Barchi, who found the dispensation of \$5.5 million dollars in the form of bonuses to his top administrators to be good business practices at a public university. Meanwhile, tuition skyrockets, and nationally university/college graduates collectively owe \$1.6 trillion in student loan debt.²⁰⁴ And while students drown in massive student loan debt part-time lecturers (PTL’s) at Rutgers have been reduced to itinerant workers making only a little more, or less, than poverty wages with no job security or healthcare, and this highly exploitative

²⁰³ Hannan Adely. 2018. “Rutgers Clear Professor Who Says, ‘He Hates White People.’” Northjersey.Com. <https://www.northjersey.com/story/news/2018/11/15/no-punishment-rutgers-university-professor-over-white-people-comments-facebook/2016377002/>

²⁰⁴ Rutgers-AAUP. 2019. Website containing various facts concerning the labor struggles on campus along with the particulars of President Robert Barchi’s administration of the University. Accessed on 02/19/2020. <https://www.rutgersaaup.org/>

trend in staffing higher education is only growing.²⁰⁵ For all the struggles of those progressive student's led movements many of the issues they fought against appear to still be with Rutgers. Or rather, the system, norms, structures, institutions, popular conceptions, and economics have since realigned, assimilated, and reconfigured in order to reestablish a status quo which still leaves people of color, the queer community, women, faculty, students, and all of Rutgers vast community firmly under the influence of a capitalist system that operationally reproduces inequality, bigotry, hyper-individualism, and various forms of exploitation.

In understanding this theory of hegemony, and its relevancy to the period of 1965-1972, one can coherently track the existence of this abstract and amorphous force throughout the history of US society. This understanding also makes clear that it was not a particular group, lone institution, or single state apparatus that stood against the student led movements of Rutgers. Instead, a developed and perpetuated superstructure in support of the base and together fueling the capitalist system perpetuated a reemergence of these events at the very institution where this history took place.

In the final moments of my interview with Vickie Donaldson she offered a postmortem on her and her comrade's actions at Rutgers in the 1960's. Unprompted and without preamble Ms. Donaldson revealed:

“Look... institutional racism didn't subside, Rutgers is an institution, it doesn't walk around in thin air, it walks around in real people. So, the people who are peopling the University have essentially not been the folk who institute change, prompted change. They took advantage of opportunities created by the change that we did. I mean look at Cantor's staff, she got Black folk all around, all women...right, but have you created access for Black men? The women, one of the Vice-Provost or whatever they're called, said to me 'I'll have to run this by

²⁰⁵ Ibid: Accessed on 02/19/2020. <https://www.rutgersaaup.org/>

*the Board' when I am asking her to do something for the empowerment of Black folk. She's Black and she says 'I don't have any power here' then what the hell are you doing here? But to say that to me of all people, says how much they just occupy and benefit from the positions of change without being change agents... that's the institutional character that they perpetuate... but the failure is that we did not implement the gains of our struggle and Malcom [Malcolm X] said once, now I understand it of course, he said the only people who can implement the fruit of their struggle is you. Look at Clem Price, he wasn't motivated by the things that motivated the real essence of our movement. He was teaching at Essex we went over there and stole him. He had a master's degree and they ushered him though tenure... and he was ultimately the only one who really benefited from that. We were all in his first ever class African American history, we filled his classes, so he was able to fulfill his symbolic roll at the University. And he was useful to the University because with him they didn't have to implement the gains of the struggle. He was one of my best friends, so I don't mean anything by it, its just what happened. If you look closely at what actually has been accomplished its not that different today than it was then, and it could all go away at the stroke of a pen because the institutional character of Rutgers has not changed."*²⁰⁶

The limitations of hegemony are vast, beyond the scope of this micro analysis and its impact on the whole of any society are conceivably incalculable. While the struggles of those progressive student movements during the 1965-1972 period still exist in the archives of Rutgers, and in the memories of those who took part still with us today, the reality of what all that organization, planning, and struggle actually produced has only gone as far as the administration, institution, and state would allow for. One of the more important factors here is to remember that Rutgers was a "best case scenario" in terms of the environment, attitude of the administration, and cooperation of the faculty. Rutgers University was among one the most favorable environments for real structural and systemic change to be fostered within in the whole of the US construct at that time, and yet...

²⁰⁶Jason P. L. Boehm. 2020. Oral History Interview with Vickie Donaldson. Conducted at Rutgers University Newark on Tuesday February 25, 2020 with the written permission of the interviewee.

Although we can see today the many initiatives the University promotes which possess all the hallmarks of intersectionality, the real systemic and institutional barriers that have historically kept certain populations from obtaining a degree in higher education still remain. The social constructs, dominant narratives, and culture largely remain intact and the reactionary politics of suburban NJ have gone so far that by 2016 many residents of this once liberal bastion voted for one of the most overtly racist, misogynistic, and xenophobic Presidents in the modern history of the US. And though I wish it were not so, what this thesis has tried to illustrate is that historically speaking student led movements for progressive reform have always been limited by the boundaries of hegemony, creating a kind of perpetual war within the society itself. A war that under the current systems, short of a revolution, may never end.

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