The Black Student Protest Movement at Rutgers: A Case of Compromise and Qualified Success

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Abstract

Since the 1970s, there have been gains in access to higher education for people who have faced historical discrimination based on race, but disparities in admission persist at the most selective universities and colleges.\(^1\) College graduation rates mirror the same patterns of inequality that college access rates once exhibited. White and Asian students, high-income students, and students whose parents attended college graduate at rates far higher than those of their peers.\(^2\) Yet approaches to creating opportunity for those previously disenfranchised have been couched in terms of economic need and underpinned by the liberal principle of colorblindness.\(^3\) This is problematic because it negates the explicit racial justice demands of participants in the social movements who agitated for a transformation of colleges and universities into equitable and inclusive institutions. This paper takes a historical approach and examines the relationship between the creation of the Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) and the Black Student Protest Movement at Rutgers University in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Informed by Critical Race Theory, the focus is on the narratives of the individual people who collectively made up the Black Student Protest Movement at Rutgers. Analysis of archival data and oral history transcripts shows that EOF was a race-neutral compromise that fell short of the ideals of protesters. It also shows the social movement to have been strategic, rational, and explicit in its pursuit of racial justice. The demands of the Black Student Protestors at Rutgers for changes to admission policy,

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curriculum, campus culture, and community relations were met sympathetically by the administration of President Mason Welch Gross, but because of internal and external pressure from stakeholders who rejected the narrative of racism as the key factor limiting opportunity, the initial agreements Gross reached with activists were stripped of reference to racial reparations in order to appease opponents of change.
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Most of all, I owe a debt – in fact, all of us in higher education owe a debt - to the Black Student Protesters at Rutgers University and their peers at colleges and universities around the country. They selflessly challenged the strict exclusivity of higher education with firm values, hard work, and rare vision and seized the moment of national reckoning around race to create opportunities for those who would come after them.

The students of the Educational Opportunity Fund and the Rutgers Future Scholars Program inspired me to explore the question of why there is little if any mention of racial equity or reparations in institutional conversations about opportunity, and I am grateful to have had the privilege to be in the classroom with them over the past decade. I am also grateful to the Rutgers Writing Program for giving me the chance to work with brilliant and engaging young people alongside so many committed fellow educators to whom I am grateful for collegiality and friendship.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

“It has been and is the position of the Black Organization of Students that there can be no substantial changes in the total enrollment of black students at Rutgers-Newark without substantial changes in the overall structure of this institution. Specifically, this means changing Rutgers from the totally white, nationalistic, racist-oriented institution that it now is, through the structuring of policies, programs, curriculum, etc., expressly designed to meet the wants and needs of blacks in order that we might be more adequately prepared to undertake the task of improving the lot of our people in determining our own destiny.”

Problem Statement and Research Questions

Rutgers University was the site of some of the most famous Black student protests in the United States. In February of 1969, Black students from all three campuses – Newark, New Brunswick, and Camden – took actions that included dumping trays of food on the floor in the dining hall, occupying buildings, refusing to speak with white students and faculty, walking out of classes, blocking up toilets, and even setting small fires.¹ There is no doubt that Rutgers was altered in the aftermath of the protests. University administrators created new programs to recruit and prepare Black students for higher education, and made commitments to hire Black staff and faculty, reform the curriculum to represent Black culture and history, and to bring the resources of Rutgers into impoverished Black urban communities.² But the story is complicated. Predominantly white faculty, students, and university leaders, community action groups, the press, the general public, and the New Jersey state legislature reacted to student demands with

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¹ “Admissions Demands of the Black Organization of Students,” n.d., Box 22, Folder 6, Coll. RG 04/A16, Inventory to the Records of the Rutgers University Office of the President (Mason Welch Gross), Special Collections and University Archives, Rutgers University Libraries, Rutgers University.
highly divergent levels of sympathy. All these actors shaped the outcomes of the Black student protest movement and influenced the depth of change at Rutgers University.

This and other social movements of the 1960s and 1970s placed questions of fairness and inequality at the center of public debate in the United States as institutions of higher education began to recognize their role in perpetuating a status quo of elitism and exclusion.\(^3\) Colleges and universities responded to this political pressure by developing a variety of policies and programs to provide greater access to so-called non-traditional students, including people from racial and ethnic minority groups, women, and students of low socio-economic status, and they implemented changes to the curriculum that led to the creation of Black cultural centers, Black Studies departments, and ultimately the disciplinary fields of Latino, Asian American and women’s studies.\(^4\) Since the 1970s, there have been gains in access to higher education and in graduation rates for groups previously excluded although disparities persist in access to the most selective universities and colleges.\(^5\)

Yet access and changes to curriculum turn out not to have been the end of the story for those committed to addressing inequality. Over the decades, colleges and universities have continued to require students from groups who have faced historical discrimination to prepare for and adapt to the status quo on campus without asking the campus to transform itself into a space designed for and reflecting all students. Approaches to creating opportunity for those previously disenfranchised have been couched in assimilationist terms and underpinned by the liberal principle of colorblindness, which purports that race and ethnicity are less relevant to conversations about equality than the characteristics and circumstances of each individual.\(^6\) The ideology of colorblindness can be seen in the backlash against both desegregation and affirmative action programs.\(^7\) My argument is that both assimilationist and colorblind approaches
are limited in ways that negatively influence the success of students of color in higher education. These limitations can be seen in the race-based inequality and injustice that persists today despite the gains of the Black campus movement and the broader struggle for civil rights and liberation that inspired it.

My project examines the historical relationship between the creation of the Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) at Rutgers and the Black student protest movements. This project offers a review of the literature on social movements, the Black Campus Movement, and a discussion of Rutgers archival material and oral history relevant to understanding the chronology of events and the climate on campus and in New Jersey at the height of the protests and their immediate aftermath. My goal is to show that the demands of student protestors at Rutgers were met sympathetically by the administration of President Mason Gross, but because of internal and external pressure from other actors who rejected the narrative of racism as the key factor limiting opportunity, the initial agreements Gross reached with activists were stripped of true transformational power in order to appease opponents of change, and ultimately, to preserve the status quo on campus that privileges whiteness.

As historian Richard P. McCormick put it in his path-breaking book on the Black student protests at Rutgers, the student protestors’ goal was to forever alter the predominantly white university so that it met the needs of all students – not just white students. McCormick argues that:

For African Americans, this meant not only broadening access to higher education; it meant as well the construction of an environment within which they could feel emotionally and physically secure and where their cultural values would be respected and legitimized. In the view of some participants, what was required was nothing short of a revolutionary restructuring of American higher education.  

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But the record shows that while noteworthy gains were made in terms of access, the movement fell short of achieving a revolutionary restructuring of Rutgers University, a legacy that is evident on campus today.

This reality is visible in the Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF), which has a complex relationship to the Black student protest movement at Rutgers. It is both telling and important to the purpose of my study to note that the current language used in formal forums to describe the Educational Opportunity Fund, and opportunity programs like it, has been stripped of explicit reference to race or ethnicity, and instead describes student participants as “first generation’, “non-traditional” and “economically disadvantaged.” While these markers are certainly accurate, it is also true that the students in the EOF program at Rutgers are overwhelmingly students of color. This paper explores how what began as a protest movement with an explicitly racial project to redress not only economic inequality, but also racist structures resulted in institutional changes that primarily addressed economic inequality but not the racism that produces it. I would like to briefly outline the context in which this project is situated to illustrate the significance of understanding this moment in history.

Historic Inequality and Discrimination

Denial of education and school segregation that reinforced power hierarchies can be seen in the earliest educational endeavors in the United States.\textsuperscript{10} Even after the end of slavery and extension of citizenship to non-white people and women, school-based discrimination continued to be legal until the 1954 \textit{Brown} ruling. Other forms of discrimination that contributed to post-Brown de facto segregation largely continued. In the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, legal redlining in real estate sales and mortgage lending practices segregated communities for decades.\textsuperscript{11} The U.S. judiciary perpetuated de facto school segregation long after the Brown ruling through Supreme Court
Cases that between 1974 and 1990 chipped away at desegregation and affirmative action plans.\textsuperscript{12}
Gary Orfield notes that while housing patterns, which tend to determine school enrollment patterns, were shaped by deliberately racist housing policies that laid the groundwork for residential segregation, the status quo is “largely accepted as something natural, and a large majority of White Americans believe that nothing more need to be done to remedy the situation.”\textsuperscript{13} Real effort to end segregation “was only truly a national priority for less than a decade.”\textsuperscript{14} Viewing school segregation and stratification as socio-political constructs produced by a history of discrimination opens space for discussing the problem in terms of racism and power rather than as a byproduct of individual life choices or work ethics.\textsuperscript{15}

The failure to prioritize a critical issue of inequality located in schools has clear repercussions in the inequality of educational opportunity provided to American children today. And the failure to recognize that the reproduction of this inequality is a result of overt discrimination and structural negligence compounds the problem by giving tacit credence to the notion that there is something “different” about poor students of color that keeps them apart from others and apart from academic success. The effects of school segregation are then reproduced in institutions of higher education as students who are underserved in elementary and secondary school are distinctly limited in their college options and are often viewed as “underprepared” even when admitted.

College Persistence

Attaining a college degree is a high stakes issue on both private and public levels. There is a strong connection between earning a degree from a selective university and obtaining a well-paid, prestigious job.\textsuperscript{16} People with a four-year degree earn more, pay more taxes, are more likely to be employed, live healthier lifestyles and are less likely to be on public assistance than
others. For many, the intellectual development found in higher education is an intrinsic part of a fulfilling life. People make professional connections and build friendships in college that last their whole lives. In addition, not completing college after beginning a degree program can prove devastating to individuals who still have to repay debts incurred to fund their education. Society benefits from a well-educated population. Levels of education impact important social indicators and behaviors from “voting, health, unemployment, poverty, rates of incarceration, and school readiness of children, to rates of volunteerism.” In addition, a college-educated workforce contributes to the global economic competitiveness of a nation. For all these reasons, college success defined as degree completion is a significant issue that states, the federal government, and colleges and universities take seriously.

College graduation rates mirror the same patterns of inequality that college access rates once exhibited. White and Asian students, high-income students, and students whose parents attended college graduate at rates far higher than those of their peers. Across the United States, graduation rates are particularly low for African American and Latino students and low-income students. According to the U.S. Department of Education, of the cohort of students who began full-time studies at four-year institutions of higher education in 2010, 64 percent of white students and 74 percent of Asian students earned a bachelor’s degree within six years, compared with 40 percent of Black students and 54 percent of Hispanic students. However, these aggregate numbers do not help explain what is occurring at individual institutions.

The Problem at Rutgers University

The same patterns observed nationally exist at Rutgers although graduation rates are more equal across racial and ethnic groups than they are on average across the country. At the flagship New Brunswick campus, of students who began full-time, first-time study (meaning
they maintained a course load of 12 or more credits and did not begin their studies at any other post-secondary institution) in Fall 2013, 83 percent of white students and 88 percent of Asian students earned a bachelor’s degree within six years, as compared with 80 percent of Black students and 79 percent of Hispanic students. At the Newark campus, of students who began full-time, first-time study in Fall 2013, 77 percent of Asian students graduated within six years as compared to 69 percent of white students, 64 percent of Black students, and 64 percent of Hispanic students. On the Camden campus, 67 percent of white students completed their degree within six years, as did 78 percent of Asian students. Only 61 percent of Hispanic students and 53 percent of Black students graduated within six years at the Camden campus. Despite higher overall graduation rates at Rutgers versus all four-year higher education institutions nationally, inequality clearly persists as shown in the ethnic and racial gaps between students on all three campuses, and particularly at the Camden campus.

Like other institutions, Rutgers University recognizes student retention as an important goal and implements initiatives that aim to improve college readiness in students from socio-economic groups that have previously been excluded. Livingston College opened in 1969 with a specific aim of bringing together a diverse group of students to engage with contemporary issues. A suite of three student support services programs created at the federal level in 1970 to serve low-income students, known collectively as the TRIO program, has been operational on Livingston Campus since 1971. As mentioned previously, Rutgers continues to take part in the statewide EOF program, with roots in the Black student protest movement, to provide access and support student retention. In its current form, EOF states that its mission is “to ensure meaningful access to higher education for those who come from backgrounds of economic and educational
disadvantage. The Fund assists low-income New Jersey residents who are capable and motivated but lack adequate preparation for college study.”

Today EOF is viewed as New Jersey’s premier program to support low-income, underprepared students financially and socially with scholarships, counseling, and academic support. Historians laud this reform as the signal achievement of the civil rights movement at Rutgers. According to the Rutgers EOF website, the program has served more than 12,000 students at over 50 colleges and universities since its creation in 1968. At Rutgers alone, 600 EOF students are enrolled each fall. Nevertheless, my project addresses the question of whether or not the expansion of EOF really met the core transformational demand of the Black Student Protestors at Rutgers. They sought to reconstruct the university into a radically different kind of institution that empowered young Black people, one that engaged directly and transparently with the problem of racism on campus, in communities, and in the United States.

Research conducted in the Rutgers University archives indicates there was enormous political pressure on University President Mason Gross from state legislators, the general public, and some students and faculty not to negotiate with the Black Student Protesters or legitimate their grievances by considering their demands. This pressure contributed to the institutional outcome that addressed student demands in a colorblind fashion as a problem of economic disadvantage, which was a compromise imposed by state legislators to defuse racial tension. This approach was attractive to legislators because it offered opportunity to individuals who had been barred from higher education while not alienating the majority white public by acknowledging or addressing the fundamentally racist structures that underpinned the inequality of opportunity.

What is also missing from the success story told about the EOF program is that Rutgers had already negotiated its own separate programs at the grassroots levels with leaders of the
Black Student Protest Movement that were explicitly race-conscious programs. The three main campuses in Newark, New Brunswick, and Camden all created different strategies and different programs to suit the needs of their campus communities out of negotiations with students and faculty in each location. Simultaneously but separately, EOF was coming into existence through the Department of Higher Education (DHE) with funding from the state legislature, and eventually EOF replaced the programs that the University had developed in partnership with students.

Despite the clear gains made by Black and Latino students since the protests and the creation of EOF, this approach left unaddressed the issues of historical discrimination and structural racism. By neglecting to frame opportunity programs in terms of reparation for harm done to people from minority groups, including harm done by the State of New Jersey itself, the University failed both the demands of the students and the demands of justice. The culture of the campus was left intact, which negatively impacts campus climate today, and may contribute to the continued disparity in persistence to graduation that exists between racial and ethnic groups. By examining the history of what was and was not achieved by the protests, I hope to add a voice to the conversation about how Rutgers can move forward to improve the experience of higher education for Black students and other students of color, many of whom are at risk of dropping out of college, often with debt and disillusionment.

Statement of Purpose

My project is informed by Critical Race Theory and theories of social movements, which are analytical frameworks that have both been used widely in disciplines including law, sociology, political science, and history. There is much debate in the literature over the validity and usefulness of race as an analytical concept and over definitions of social movements, which I
will discuss in detail in the literature review. My primary goal is to understand how and why the explicit racial project of the Black student protest movement was excised from the programs and institutions established to meet movement demands, and how movement participants characterize their own understanding of those events and their outcomes. Theories of race and the effects of racism within educational institutions provide the conceptual lens through which I will examine this question.\textsuperscript{33} I rely particularly on theoretical work critical of the approaches of colorblindness and assimilation as a salvo against racism.\textsuperscript{34}

My secondary goal is to interpret the significance of this history for the campus climate today in terms of how that climate impacts the experience of Black students and other students of color at Rutgers University. While much research has been done analyzing social movements in general and the Black Student Protest Movement in particular, there is little work that explicates the process of institutional co-option and movement compromise that produced the outcomes that exist today at Rutgers.\textsuperscript{35} I hope that a thorough examination of the reasons why protestors’ success was limited will allow me to contribute to the conversation about race, ethnicity and inequality on college campuses.

My project is situated within the literature of the history of the campus movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s.\textsuperscript{36} Some colleges and universities responded with force and coercion. Others developed a variety of policies and programs to provide greater access to so-called non-traditional students, including people from racial and ethnic minority groups, women, and students of low socio-economic status. Across the country, universities and colleges implemented changes to the curriculum that led to the creation of Black cultural centers, Black Studies departments, and ultimately the disciplinary fields of Latino, Asian American and women’s studies.\textsuperscript{37}
I am inspired by the work of historian Jorma Kelala who writes of the historian-in-society; that is, the historian who acknowledges that historical research is not purely objective but is always situated within the social contexts of the present. Kelala sees the historian as a participant in cultural criticism who accepts the premise that challenging prevailing interpretations of the past has implications and consequences that are significant in the present. Acknowledging this reality obliges the historian to work doubly hard to produce sound research based on established practices of the discipline, and I hope I have met this standard in my own study, which I will outline further in the methodology section, below.

**Methodology**

I conduct my research through a historical approach that uses both archival data and oral history transcripts to answer the question of whether or not EOF met the demands of the Black student protest movement or was a compromise of the sort described above that fell short of the ideals of protesters. I am interested in how and why the outcomes of the Black student protest movement occurred and how the actors engaged in it perceived it at the time. I have two key data sources for my research. In the first data set are oral history transcripts of interviews with the Black Student Protesters that were undertaken by the Rutgers Oral History Archive, and video recordings from the 2015 conference “Black on the Banks: African-American Students at Rutgers since the 1960s” and the 2019 “Conklin Hall Liberation 50th Anniversary Panel.” I also examined archival material in the Special Collections and University Archives, Rutgers University Libraries, Rutgers University, which includes institutional documentation of the campus protests, the creation and implementation of the Equal Opportunity Fund, the creation and implementation of the now-defunct Rutgers-specific programs at each campus, and many
letters and newspaper clippings that illustrate the perspectives of students, faculty, alumni and others about the movement and its outcomes.  

The oral history and archival evidence together provide a rich portrait of events of the time and the discourse around them to enhance understanding of the roots of the opportunity programs in place today at Rutgers. The oral history and video transcripts are a conduit through which the stories of those on the vanguard of the Black Student Protests at Rutgers can help us understand the cultural, psychological, emotional, and social dynamics that are not reflected in the official record. The archival evidence reveals the official institutional record and illuminates the position of key actors within the establishment as well as the formal political and social dynamics that were at play. Taken together, the two types of data provide a rich understanding of the past at Rutgers.

Archival Methodology and Methods

The merits and drawbacks of archival research have been well analyzed by theorists over many decades. The central limitation of seeking an understanding of history from archival data is the constructed and circular nature of archives. As Derrida put it: “The archivization produces as much as it records the event.” Recognizing this, it is important for researchers to regard archival data as neither neutral nor universal and take steps to think critically about discovered material on several levels. First, researchers must recognize that an archive is a compilation of some but not all of the record of events and was filtered by individuals with their own ideas and interpretations of history, as well as by the physical destructiveness of time itself. Second, researchers should remember that their interpretation of materials is influenced by knowledge of what transpired during the intervening years, by the events of the present, and by the goals of the research project itself. Finally, researchers must acknowledge that there is a serendipitous aspect
to the discovery of material that, once analyzed, informs what new material is searched for and deemed important. With these methodological concerns in mind, a method for approaching the archive can be put in place.

In compiling data for my project, I followed specific steps recommended for approaching the “Black box” of an archive.45 I began by using the general catalog of the Special Collections and University Archives of the Rutgers Universities Library to access the “Rutgers EAD Finding Aids” list.46 From that list, the “University Archives” button links to the finding aid for “Rutgers University. As an example, one collection I examined is that of the “Office of the President, Inventory to the Records of the Rutgers University Office of the President (Mason Welch Gross), 1936, 1945-1971.” The aid for this collection includes detailed descriptions of the full collection of records. Relevant to my project is Series II, which links to “Subject Files,” Boxes 13-119. These boxes contain 12 folders labeled “Disruptions,” which are pertinent to the Black Student Protest movements, as well as other folders which proved important, for example, Box 28, folder 4 labeled “Civil Rights” and Box 33, folder 5 labeled “Disadvantaged Students.” In addition to using the finding aid, I sought the advice of university archivist Erika Gorder who recommended additional material relevant to my research. Of particular note was her recommendation to access the collection called “Black Organization of Students (Rutgers-Newark), 1967-1973.”

To organize the archival data that I am collecting for analysis, I make use of a smartphone app called “Tiny Scanner” to record images of material and export the images directly to the web-based research and citation tool “Zotero.” In Zotero, I organized documents by box and folder number, and added keywords describing content to each document to facilitate searching. Keywords include but are not limited to: Black Organization of Students, Director of Admissions, and Anti-Gross. Archival data analysis took place in conjunction with oral history
data analysis by cross referencing both data sets for these labels and for conceptual terms found in social movement theory and Critical Race Theory. More detail on this is provided in the section on oral history, below.

In undertaking this project, my goal was to remain mindful of the methodological complexities of archival research outlined in the literature. Hill offers several useful cautions for the researcher. He asks us to think critically about how the archive was shaped, by whom and to what purpose. He reminds us that behind the official communication, there may literally be marginal communication in doodles, tick marks, and notes. He acknowledges that as we read and re-read after discovery of new material, our initial ideas can and should change. He wants us to remember that we are visitors to the past and must be wary of projecting modern insight on to the historical record. And finally, he warns us that we can be duped by the evidence. These cautions inform my decision to include oral history in my project with the goal of triangulating across data sources to develop a fuller picture than either method alone can provide.

Oral History

In keeping with accepted research methods for qualitative historical studies, my project engages a secondary data set, an oral history, to add context to the archival record. This offers a complementary source of information that compensates for some of the limitations of relying solely on archival material by helping to corroborate or discredit what has been archived. Oral history is widely acknowledged as an effective way to illuminate counter narratives that exist alongside hegemonic narratives, and to validate the importance of individual actions, impressions, memories, and beliefs within the larger social and political scheme. It also reinforces a key tenet of Critical Race Theory, which is the notion that the very subjectivity of personal narrative is its strength. It reveals the psychological and social dimensions of events and
provides a different type of data set for historical analysis, one that can destroy mindsets that are based on a conventional wisdom produced by dominant groups in society. As legal scholar and Critical Race Theorist Richard Delgado writes, “Ideology – the received wisdom – makes current social arrangements seem fair and natural. Those in power sleep well at night – their conduct does not seem to them like oppression. The cure is storytelling (or as I shall call it, counter storytelling).” My project is informed by this idea, the idea that narratives have the power to both construct and destroy accepted understanding by telling a history narrated by people whose voices have been muted.

Oral history is a common methodological approach for historical studies that deal with issues of social justice. The reason for this is clear. Because oral history data are produced by participants themselves, those in subordinate race, class, and gender positions can have their perspectives privileged over the hegemonic telling of events. Many of the researchers who use oral history approaches are sympathetic to their interviewees and see their work as a social justice project to “reorient the dominant narrative” and make change. While this is a laudable goal, it also opens data interpretation up to bias. Researchers might, for example, shy from reporting unattractive qualities that place interviewees in a negative light, or might be manipulated by an interviewee with an agenda. There is also a problem of accuracy in oral history data as memory is imperfect and fallible. Further, there may be interpretive disagreement not only between subjects but between subject and researcher. Finally, publication of oral history can put subjects at-risk either socially, economically, or physically. These issues all raise ethical questions addressed through the professional standards of the Rutgers Oral History Archive. Triangulating the oral history and archival data sets mitigate but do not eliminate the vigilance necessary in using oral history methods.
Conclusion

Analysis happened at two levels for this project. First, I looked across the two data sets to find points of contradiction and coalescence in the archival record and interview transcripts. Second, I worked to make sense of those findings, with special emphasis on the contradictions, using the intersection of the conceptual frameworks of social movement and Critical Race theories. Key concepts include but are not limited to assimilation, co-option, interest convergence, revisionist history, and colorblindness. My intent was to allow the data to drive the analysis, and to be flexible in accounting for complexity and contradiction in the data. I wished to avoid imposing my theoretical framework upon the data in ways that might distort it. This approach produced an understanding of the “social meaning” of the outcomes of the Black student protest movement at Rutgers that has a valid connection to reality.\(^{60}\)

The social movements of the 1960s have inspired scholars, documentarians, artists and musicians for more than 50 years, and for good reason. The actions and counteractions, progress and backlash, were dramatic and profound, violent and romantic. Looking at the singular case of the Black Student Protest Movement through the eyes of the individuals who were its youthful protagonists serves to remind us that these events were instigated by real people with human agency who made an active choice to engage in their own moment. As will be discussed in the next chapter, history, social connections, and the racist framework of the United States provided a ready space within which the movement at Rutgers and the movement nationwide could flourish, but it was the students themselves who took the risks and did the work. Writing now, in 2020, the need to recognize and remember this work, its successes and its limitations, seems as important as at any time since 1968 as we now face a widespread racial reckoning at Rutgers University and across the United States, our own 21\(^{st}\) century racial project.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

“Members of the majority race should listen to stories, of all sorts, in order to enrich their own reality. Reality is not fixed, not a given.”

To understand the relationship between the EOF program and the Black student movement at Rutgers University and to assess the extent to which the creation of EOF satisfied protestors’ demands, it is essential to examine theoretical perspectives on race, social movements and the larger historical context of the black student movement in the United States. While there were differences in the structure and resources of the movement across institutions, there are also discernable patterns in goals, demands, and outcomes that can help inform analysis of the Rutgers case. This literature review will begin by theorizing the role of race in educational institutions, will then examine theories of social movements and their outcomes, and will close with a specific analysis of the demands of the black student movement and the ways in which those demands were received within different institutional contexts.

Race as Analytical Frame

I use the term “racial project” to describe my understanding of the Black student movement at Rutgers. This term comes from the theory of racial formation advanced by Michael Omi and Howard Winant.61 Their work views race as neither “objective nor illusory,” but rather “a concept that signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies.”62 This definition reflects their view that race is not biological, but is not purely imaginary either because of the common-sense understanding that race is a signifier that

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sorts people into social categories with material consequences.\textsuperscript{63} Omi and Winant acknowledge that race is constructed and is intersectional with ethnicity, class, gender, etc., yet in their understanding, race is not fixed, but is linked to both structure and culture, part of a dynamic process that changes over time and context through a series of racial projects.\textsuperscript{64}

Racial projects are what Omi and Winant call the dynamic unfolding events that are “simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of social dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines.”\textsuperscript{65} The term “racial project” is neutral on who the agents of racial projects can be. I interpret the Rutgers case as a multi-agent racial project. The black student protestors were advancing a racial project to reorganize the university structurally and culturally and to redistribute resources to achieve that reorganization. The predominantly white university administration recognized student demands as a racial project, and conceded that race was a component of the argument for reorganization and redistribution within the institution of Rutgers. The general public, New Jersey politicians, Rutgers students, faculty, and other actors involved in this case made efforts supporting or opposing student demands based on their own racial ideology. Hence, “racial project” is a useful analytical term that can be effectively operationalized in this context to account for multiple actors and ideologies.

Race, though, is not an uncontested concept, nor are Omi and Winant’s theories of racial formation and racial projects uncontested. Even before the Civil Rights Movement gained support from white mainstream Americans, Bayard Rustin was questioning the monolithic use of race as a foundation on which to build a movement for freedom.\textsuperscript{66} He was critical of Marcus Garvey, Booker T. Washington, and W.E.B. Du Bois in equal measure, arguing that allying with socialists and trade unionists would be the most effective way to advance the interests of Black
people by linking economics with racism. Later he rejected the ideals of Black nationalism because he found supporters’ tactics counterproductive and based on faulty logic that tried to detach the problems of Black people from those of all working Americans. Rustin, whose homosexuality was as central to his identity as his race or religion, wrote that the Black community cannot afford “go it alone strategies” because “it is, in fact, impossible to forge a creative, long-term social agenda based on racial, ethnic, or sexual goals.” Rustin argued for building coalitions on a program by program basis between advocates for Black people and mainstream groups with proven track records of cooperation on issues central to the needs of Black people who Rustin saw as particularly vulnerable to negative economic trends.

Like Rustin’s focus on linking the needs of Black people to the larger problems of capitalism, Robert Miles’ work focuses on class and capitalism as a system of social and political relations of power. He rejects “race” as an analytical concept, arguing that using it reifies the hierarchical social construct that it represents, thereby perpetuating racialized colonialization, exploitation, and oppression. Miles cautions subordinated people against using race as part of their political discourse: “At its core, the effort to transmute the concept of ‘race’ into an emancipatory category is a limited and unwise undertaking.” He argues for using the concept of “racism” instead as it represents historical specificity within the political economy and avoids essentialism. Antonia Darder and Rodolfo Torres build directly on Miles’ ideas, critiquing “race” as an idea that serves to essentialize and “colorblindness” as an ideology that ignores racism as a structural reality. They, too, argue that “racism” is the preferred analytical concept and seek to situate the conversation within the global capitalist system. Darder and Ngin write that “race” is a far too simplistic concept that sets up a limiting black-white binary and excludes the dynamic and complex ethnicities, nationalities, and class backgrounds of heterogeneous people who end
up grouped into single categories. They worry that advocacy based on racial categories ends up pitting groups against one another, Latino versus Black, Asian versus Black, etc., in conflicts that are ultimately based on phenology and ignore the underlying problem of economic inequality.

But scholars such as Cornel West, Ibram X. Kendi, Derrick Bell, Richard Delgado, and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, like Omi and Winant, argue that race cannot be jettisoned as an analytical concept because of the centuries-long social reality of white people in Europe and the Americas cementing their own self-interest by oppressing non-white people in racially discriminatory ways. Kendi argues that the structures created by powerful whites to benefit themselves economically, socially, and culturally precede racist ideas; he writes that discriminatory policies themselves produced racist ideas and the attendant ignorance and hate, not the reverse. West sees matters of race as having inextricably shaped United States’ history, and rejects as simplistic both the liberal notion that economic programs can solve “the problems” of Black people and the conservative idea that Black people need to improve their moral behavior to help themselves because neither approach reckons with public responsibility for the historical “circumstances that haunt our fellow citizens.” Delgado and Bonilla-Silva agree that race is constructed, but argue it still has a social reality. Bonilla-Silva writes that a society’s racial structure is “the totality of social relations and practices that reinforce white privilege.” Delgado rests his scholarship on “the premise that much of social reality is constructed. We decide what is, and almost simultaneously, what ought to be.” These arguments convincingly show that while there are dangers to using race as a central theoretical concept – most notably the dangers of creating essentialized categories and ignoring issues of intersectionality – race was the historic basis for social organization in Europe and the United States and remains so today, and thus provides a valid frame for this study.
Omi and Winant’s argument that “racial dictatorship” has been the norm in American society is convincing. Throughout U.S. history, this dictatorship presumed American identity to be white, which drove the structure of institutions and even the psyche of Americans. “Racism,” on the other hand, only became a commonly understood term in the 1960s, according to Omi and Winant, and so to ignore “race” is to ignore a fundamental way the world is structured. They further argue that abandoning race as an analytic concept unintentionally gives weight to conservative opponents of policies such as affirmative action, which I will discuss in more detail below.78 For these reasons, this project will rely on the concept of race and the theories of racial formation and racial projects. The inherent dynamism of these terms allows for an understanding of ideas about race and racism over time on both structural and cultural levels, and so is particularly helpful in studying the black student protests at Rutgers, which aimed at both the structure and the culture of the university.

A second important theory for understanding the Rutgers case comes from the critique of rights-based integrationist ideology developed within the context of Critical Race Theory (CRT).79 Derrick Bell developed the seminal CRT concepts of interest convergence and the price of racial remedies in his work on constitutional law and school desegregation, and both concepts help explain the trajectory of the Black Student Protest Movement at Rutgers from contentious action, to negotiation and accommodation, to backlash, to compromise. Bell’s principle of interest convergence states that the “interest of blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interests of whites,” and only so far as does not threaten the “superior social status of middle and upper class whites.” He argues that there may indeed be moments in which racial justice, or the appearance of racial justice, is perceived by whites as in their interest, for example, for the geopolitical purpose of burnishing the reputation
of the United States during the Cold War, or the social purpose of preventing instability in the wake of the murder of Martin Luther King, Jr. But this interest, according to Bell, will always be constrained by the imperative to maintain the hierarchy of white supremacy.

Bell contends that even if whites are committed to racial justice in the abstract, they will never commit to wholesale structural changes for which they have to surrender advantages gained through historic injustice. As he puts it: “society concedes its guilt, but denies its liability.” This refusal of whites to pay a price for wrongs not directly committed by themselves has important implications because one of the arguments underpinning this refusal is that blacks are inherently “less qualified or less deserving” by contemporary, so-called objective measures. Writing in 1979, Bell notes that the Deans of the four law schools in the University of California system insisted on a two-track admission system with different criteria for “minorities” to avoid “lowering” overall qualifications and thereby “discriminating” against better qualified applicants. Choosing this position rather than broadly rethinking the notion of what makes a candidate qualified to succeed educationally creates, according to Bell, a system whereby minority students may feel stigmatized while whites, particularly less-economically advantaged whites, feel aggrieved.

Building on Bell’s work, Gary Peller writes that the late 1960s and early 1970s was a pivotal moment of conflict within the struggle for racial justice, with liberal integrationist views ultimately prevailing over the ideals of black nationalism. He, like Bonilla-Silva and others, argues that the liberal “colorblind” approach has had the consequence of allowing a discourse of “reverse racism” to develop in the mainstream that equates any race-conscious demands with the essentialist ideas of white supremacists. Peller explains that “the symmetry of the integrationist picture is rooted in the idea that racism consists of possessing a race-consciousness about the
world, in thinking that race should make a difference in social relations.” In this conception, anyone who uses race to consider any issue is guilty of racism. Yet this ideological outlook is based on a simplistic understanding of the discrimination that is deeply rooted in U.S. history and culture. Further, it has provided a convenient rationale for the backlash from conservatives who object to attempts to alter existing social structures. But viewing educational inequity and stratification as socio-political constructs produced by a history of discrimination, in other words, as a racial project, opens space for discussing the problem in terms of race, racism and power rather than as a byproduct of individual life choices or work ethics, and it defangs the premise of reverse discrimination.

Howard Winant calls the post 1960s backlash provoked by affirmative action policies “hysterical” and claims they are designed to provoke ideological shifts among whites who might otherwise be sympathetic to the cause of racial justice. He writes that opponents of reform “represent whiteness as a disadvantage, something that has few precedents in U.S. racial history.” This discourse linking race-conscious affirmative action remedies with discrimination is visible today as it was during the era of the black student protests at Rutgers. Many scholars have advanced criticisms of “colorblindness” including Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Michelle Fine, Michael Omi, and Cornel West. As Cornel West puts it: “Given the history of this country, it is a virtual certainty that without affirmative action, racial and sexual discrimination would return with a vengeance.” The common thread running through these critiques is that to advocate for a colorblind approach to racial justice is to be ahistorical and naïve about the central role that race plays in U.S. society.

Moreover, creating affirmative action programs without reckoning with that history in a material way through reparations and the dismantling of entrenched standards of merit and other
structures that privilege the long-advantaged is not only limited but dangerously antithetical to the very issue it seeks to address. Historian Ibram X. Kendi argues that by neglecting to compensate for the centuries in which white people were legally advantaged in every realm of American life, the Civil Rights Act itself opened up space for a new racist idea: “it was an idea that ignored the White head start, presumed that discrimination had been eliminated, presumed that equal opportunity had taken over, and figured that since Blacks were still losing the race, the racial disparities and their continued losses must be their fault.”91 The notion that eliminating de jure discrimination rectified racism and created a post-racial society has been incredibly damaging to efforts to make institutions equitable, in higher education as in other sectors of American society.

Critical Race Theory also finds race neutrality problematic in light of the concept of merit within affirmative action discourse. Again, the idea of “colorblindness” is one of the key mechanisms by which this rationalization occurs. This perspective is embraced as a value by most white Americans because of an entrenched belief, based on their own experiences as white people, that in the U.S. people are judged not by their “color” but by their individual characteristics.92 Yet the reality is that primarily whites enjoy that privilege and thus take it for granted.93 Bonilla-Silva argues that individualistic beliefs coincide with the mistaken view that the United States is a meritocratic society in which people are judged purely on their credentials, skills, education, etc., despite some prejudice and discrimination in isolated instances. This can be seen in his description of the ways in which white individuals invoke colorblind racism as they encounter the sound of their own prejudices. For example, he details how even whites who believe themselves to be well-intentioned express racist views of minorities that rely on explanations of personal or cultural deficiency.94 Advancing the individualistic notion of
colorblindness ignores the centuries of U.S. history in which people of color have been denied the educational opportunities that would today mark them and their descendants as meritorious. Curriculum and pedagogy mirror and reward students whose behavior, norms, and values align with those of the favored, dominant culture. But the favored ways of being and thinking tend to reinforce white, middle class norms – and this is not a coincidence.

Structural and institutional inequality is accepted as either accidental or the product of differences in individual choices and work ethic by the vast majority of white Americans who then absolve themselves of the responsibility of remedying the situation even as they benefit from it. They link the success of those who are well-qualified, well-credentialed and meritorious to personal characteristics rather than a structure that bestows privilege to some in greater amount than others through better schools and other social goods. The sorting of privileges springs from the socio-cultural construction of who is “normal” and who is “different.” To be a white middle class American is normal. To be anything else is different. Martha Minow argues that the categories societies devise to group people determine who is included and who is excluded from mainstream political, social, and economic spheres. Such categories deliberately mark the excluded as “different,” which has the effect of obscuring the relationships of power and hierarchy that underpin the categorization to begin with. Those in the dominant groups are always included, and those who are subordinated are marked as “different” and thereby are excluded.

Critical Race Theorists argue that the discourse of affirmative action has led to the false perception that there is a neutral, purely descriptive set of criteria against which all people are judged when applying for jobs, admission to university, etc. Richard Delgado explores this premise through a constructed narrative about a Black law school applicant, Henry, being
rejected for hire by a predominantly white law school faculty on supposedly neutral grounds, but which actually are grounds that mirror their own experience and ways of being. Delgado writes,

School X hires professors of any color, so long as they are white. In Henry’s story, process questions submerge; the bottom line becomes more important. The story specifically challenges the school’s meritocratic premises. It questions, somewhat satirically, the school’s conception of a “good” teaching prospect and asks what came first, the current faculty (with its strengths and weaknesses) or the criteria. Did the “is” give birth to the “ought”?97

Delgado here highlights the way in which so-called neutral criteria are derived from the characteristics of those in power. He is not literally arguing that all new hires are white, but rather that all hires embody experience, qualifications, goals and values that align with norms set in place by white people. Peller’s work builds from Delgado’s premise, and he notes that the discourse of merit leads to the flawed view that “minority applicants are less qualified on neutral, impersonal, and objective criteria. Thus, to integrate institutions, we must compromise meritocratic standards either temporarily, in order to break cycles of institutional life that racial domination entailed, or permanently, by diffusing merit with other ends such as diversity.”98 But the concept of merit itself is not neutral because it was produced within historically racist cultures and social structures. By leaving the concept of merit unexamined and holding it up as impersonal and objective, integration becomes much like assimilation. It allows opponents of affirmative action to argue that beneficiaries of affirmative action are unqualified or underprepared because they do not meet a standard developed within a racist context.

Michelle Fine’s work sheds light on the effects such standards of “merit” have on students of color who are locked outside the structures of privilege upheld by institutional practices. She argues that the privatization of education through tutors, SAT prep, and enrichment classes; housing segregation that correlates with educational opportunity; and social networks that convey or deny a safety net ascribe merit and “smartness” to white beneficiaries.99
Fine describes the empty promise this sets up: “[T]hose who have been historically excluded may be invited in but most will “fail” to perform “to standard.” Some will drop out. A few will go nuts. A handful will survive as “the good ones” with questions of structural and psychological loyalty littering their souls. The institutional mantra of deficit and merit will triumph, bolstered by the hand wringings of “we tried.” Merit is a red herring, a measure developed by people who seek to maintain their own place on top of the hierarchy, and who through their social position developed institutions to maintain this status that still exists today.

These ideas have important implications for the case of Rutgers University. The salient points can be summed up in Peller’s words:

Serious limits to the integrationist vision existed from the beginning; the fact that support for substantively reformist programs such as affirmative action is articulated in the defensive rhetoric of “remedy” or “diversity,” posed as counterbalancing factors to “lack of merit,” is only one manifestation of the deeper ways that civil rights reformism has worked to legitimate the very social relations that originally were to be reformed. The framework based on these twin concepts of “remedy” and “merit” can help explain why the race conscious student movement at Rutgers produced a public outcry that conflated the demands of African American students with “reverse racism” and the destruction of the institution’s quality and reputation.

Social Movement Theory

The debate over what constitutes a social movement is driven by the desire to differentiate social movements from ephemeral fads and spontaneous crowd action on the one hand, and stable, static interest groups on the other. Scholars have taken a variety of analytic approaches to understanding social movements since the 1960s. The first wave treated collective behavior from either a mass psychology perspective that grew from studies of fascism, or a natural-history conception based in the history of organized labor and other emancipatory
movements. Social movement researchers eventually moved beyond these two conceptual lenses as neither proved sufficient for making sense of the new context of the civil rights and student protest movements. Scholars then began to converge around three main analytical perspectives: political-process, rational-action, and resource-mobilization.

Mario Diani’s work in the field attempts to synthesize this variety of analytical perspectives on social movements. He defines them by the characteristics of their dynamics: “a) networks of informal interaction; b) shared beliefs and solidarity; c) collective action on conflictual issues; d) action which displays largely outside the institutional sphere and the routine procedures of social life.” These dynamic aspects align with what is generally agreed on by social movement researchers, that a social movement is marked by both spontaneity and structure, is ideologically focused on achieving an outcome, has members who are consciously part of the group (though the group itself may raise consciousness), and advocates for change as a result of a crisis of some kind. This conceptual model can be effectively applied to the Black campus protest movement, which grew out of the Civil Rights Movement, was galvanized by assassinations and urban uprisings, and articulated a clearly defined slate of demands put forward by formal student organizations.

If the beginning of the 1960s was characterized by the movement to non-violently convince white Americans to grant Black Americans their basic civil rights, the second half of the decade – after the tragedy of assassinations, the viciousness of retaliatory white racism, and the destruction of urban uprisings – was marked by a radicalized movement to convince Black Americans it was time to demand their rights by whatever means necessary. This shift from the non-violence of the Civil Rights Movement to the radicalism of the Black Power Movement had a major impact on Black students on campuses across the United States, from Historically Black
Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in the south, to white-dominated Ivy League universities in the north, to public institutions such as the University of California and the City University of New York (CUNY).106 Adopting some of the tactics of campus disruption used by white students during University of California Berkeley’s Free Speech Movement in 1964-65 and other anti-Vietnam War protests, Black students on countless campuses disrupted academic life by occupying buildings, walking out of class, and engaging in acts of vandalism.107

Theorizing social movements is key to understanding collective symbolic behaviors that can create or resolve conflict, provoke individuals and groups to develop new ideologies, and push the evolution of social issues that ultimately shape societies.108 Freeman and Johnson argue that social movements exist on a continuum between spontaneity and structure, marking them apart from trend or fads on the one end of the spectrum and formal interest groups on the other. They write, “It is the tension between spontaneity and structure that gives a social movement its particular flavor.”109 In this view, while both impulsive actions and strategic lobbying may be ways to effect change on public opinion or policy, they cannot be correctly called social movements. Social movements are groups of like-minded people coming together to achieve ideologically driven change through specific actions.

Freeman further argues that certain conditions must exist for a social movement to be created. She writes that there must be a pre-existing communications network that can be co-opted for the purposes of the social movement, and a crisis or an individual who begins organizing the movement.110 Using this lens, Freeman asserts that the communications networks in Black churches and Black colleges that preceded the Civil Rights Movement were co-opted in the struggle for civil rights, and that the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was a product of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), helping to explain why
most of the early sit-ins of the Civil Rights Movement occurred in towns with Black colleges. This theory can be extended to the current analysis and suggests that the networks of Black students that were built during the Civil Rights Movement were the precursors to the Black Student Protest Movement. As will be discussed in more detail below, the radicalization of individuals who had participated in the Civil Rights Movement and who were outraged by the assassinations of Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. were catalysts for the consciousness-raising of the young people who began to fight against white dominance on college campuses.

The formation of social movements is one thing, but the achievement of their desired outcomes is another. While some social movements do achieve at least part of their goals, most social movements decline before they meet all their ideological objectives or they decline before the long-term or unintended consequences of their movements are clear. Polletta and Jasper argue that movements often decline because participants stop believing the movement represents them or because intersectionality begins to erode the senses of collective identity felt by members. As an example, they note the cross-cutting impact of class and race identity in the decline of the women’s movement. Frederick Miller delineates four reasons to explain social movement decline: co-option, failure, repression, and success. Co-option occurs when individual leaders are offered incentives that cause them to abandon the goals of the group or when the group becomes so bureaucratized and centralized that it can no longer be considered a social movement. Failure is simply the dissociation of a group before any goals are achieved because of strategic or structural flaws. Repression and success best explain the ultimate decline of the Black Campus Movement.
Repression describes how agents of the reigning power make it impossible for social movements to function and impossible for people to join them by using coercive tactics such as infiltrating organizations, physically attacking or harassing group members, or indicting activists for crimes. A notorious case of social movement repression was the Chinese government’s use of lethal force against student protestors in 1989. Using game theory as a theoretical frame, Fang Deng describes a scenario in which the Chinese government was caught between two constituencies that exerted different influences on its responses to the protests: the international community, which would condemn force, and the local and provincial governments, which needed reassurance of central control. Ultimately, the authorities determined that the political demands of the protestors were more threatening to the internal stability of the country than international condemnation would be, and they opted for violent repression. Similar weighing of interests took place when state and university leaders made decisions about how to respond to the Black Campus Movement decades earlier, as I will discuss below, and the scale of such decisions varied greatly from case to case.

Miller’s fourth explanation for decline – success - is also useful for understanding the trajectory of the Black campus movement. Social movements that are wholly successful tend to be those with one clearly defined demand such as the removal of a particular leader, whereupon they disband. Most social movements, however, tend to have a more complex trajectory. As Miller puts it: “Few movements see the satisfaction of all their demands. Instead, they make or are forced into compromises that only sometimes are advantageous to the movement.” In this conceptualization, movements undergo a process of absorption by which social movements are swallowed into “the structure of the polity, converting them into interest groups.” An example of decline by success can be seen in the group Students for a Democratic
Society (SDS), which was a large and influential actor in the leftist movements of the 1960s. SDS grew out of white student involvement in the Civil Rights Movement and culminated in the political mainstream’s acceptance of many of its positions, notably its anti-Vietnam War stance and its advocacy of curriculum change and student empowerment on campus. The growing popularity of the group made it difficult to maintain a structural model of shared decision-making and direct democracy as numbers swelled. Fears of being absorbed into the mainstream caused factions and splits within SDS as some members moved further left, eroding the structure of SDS and leading to its decline. Some demands of the Black Campus Movement similarly came to enjoy mainstream acceptance, but its more transformational goals did not.

There are certainly disputes about social movement theory in the literature, with scholars arguing that specific factors may be over or under emphasized. David Snow and Dana Moss argue, for example, that spontaneity may be a key overlooked factor that can help explain the dynamics of social movements and may even be the defining characteristic of some kinds of movements. They find that to be the case in social movements that emphasize deliberative democracy, innovation, creativity, and religion. Polletta and Jasper make the case that the concept of “collective identity” has been asked to do too much analytic work, arguing that an individual might join a movement because of shared interests even while not identifying with or even despising group members. In his work on the Arab Spring in Syria, Leenders finds narrowly constructed explanatory frameworks unhelpful. He writes, “structural factors alone—or in the case of game theory, generically applied deductive logic—cannot fully explain revolutionary mobilization as protestors act and improvise to overcome obstacles particular to the context in which they operate.” There is also debate among social movement theorists about why individuals and movements mobilize at different levels, which has prompted calls for
more comparative work in the field.¹²⁶

Yet despite these inevitable disagreements on the theoretical framework for analyzing social movements, the designation is clearly applicable in the case of the Black Student Protest Movement at Rutgers University. Tilly’s synopsis is useful for the purpose of this project:

Although no single view has emerged unquestioned from all this exploration, on the whole social-movement analysts have ended up thinking that movements depend intimately on the social networks in which their participants are already embedded, that the identities deployed in collective contention are contingent but crucial, that movements operate within frames set by historical accumulation of shared understanding, that political opportunity structure significantly constrains the histories of individual social movements, but that movement struggles and outcomes also transform political opportunity structures.¹²⁷

Each of these points aligns with the case at hand in this project. As sketched above, and as will be discussed in detail in chapters 3 and 4, the Black Student Protest Movement at Rutgers was set in motion by students linked socially on campus who had a strong sense of duty and purpose as African Americans. The movement operated with the history of segregation, white supremacy, Jim Crow, and the Civil Rights Movement. The assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the urban uprisings of the 1960s were in the forefront of participants’ minds. Geopolitical and national politics created an opportunity for student protesters to take collective action, but that opportunity was constrained by the politics of what Derrick Bell would call the price of racial remedies.¹²⁸ And finally, the movement itself did transform political opportunities as the very few African American students at Rutgers laid the groundwork for the larger numbers who would be their successors.

The issue of whether or not the Black Student Protest Movement can rightly be deemed a social movement is not one of mere semantics. In fact, some of the backlash against the gains of the student movement specifically, and the Civil Rights Movement broadly, was based on the criticism that remedies to address discrimination were in fact remedies to address the demands of
narrow “special interests” rather than a response to broad, historically rooted social injustice. Diani notes that some scholars writing about student movements were viewed as skeptically by their colleagues as was their subject: “many specialists came to the subject as sympathizers, advocates, or direct participants in the struggles they were interpreting, with a consequent investment in defending the new challengers against widespread accusations of impulsiveness, self-indulgence, and incoherence.” The attempt to reduce the far-reaching and transformational goals of the Black Student Protesters to the narrow self-interest of a group trying to improve its socio-economic standing belies the reality of the movement nationally and at Rutgers, as will be seen in chapters 4 and 5.

The Black Campus Movement

Recent scholarship about the widespread social movements that manifested on university campuses in the late 1960s and early 1970s has sought to recall the accomplishments of the Black Student Protesters, and correctly notes the many gains that came as a result of their actions. Martha Biondi argues that the history of the student activists has been largely forgotten perhaps because the students’ confrontational tactics prevented them from being widely viewed in American society as heroic advocates of civil rights. Her work highlights the gains made by African American students, as well as students from other historically underrepresented groups such as women, Asian Americans and Latinos, in the face of violent repression. Biondi notes particularly the intellectual gains made by students who operationalized theories of Black Power into concrete actions such as developing open admissions policies, establishing Africana studies departments, and building bridges between urban communities and local universities.

In Biondi’s telling and others, the story of the Black Campus Movement is one of progress and reprisal. Biondi characterizes it as a “dialectic of reform and repression” and emphasizes the
truly brutal state violence unleashed against students on many campuses across the United States. State and university leaders at the time of the Black Student Protest Movement faced multiple levels of pressure in deciding how to respond to student protests, some of which were violent and destructive in nature. Urban uprisings in the United States, including a traumatic one in Newark, N.J. in July 1967 that has direct bearing on the Rutgers case, created a context in which state and university leaders across the country had a strong desire to quell campus riots and protests. They feared outright rebellion but also felt pressure to show strength for the benefit of white middle class voters. Biondi cites the events of the San Francisco State College case as typifying a cycle emblematic of the Black Campus Movements across the country: “black student assertion, a punitive response, an unsympathetic media, and external political pressure to reject negotiation in favor of bringing in the police.” Case studies from across the United States reveal clearly this pattern of repression as one side of the story of the protests.

On the other hand, many in the mainstream public as well as many university officials and faculty members had been supporters of the Civil Rights Movement and by extension were supportive of Black students in the campus movement. Students had inspired society and proven their courage and legitimacy by going into the hostile South to fight for civil rights. The youth activists of the Civil Rights Movement and Black Campus Movement were exceptional in the history of student movements because of their willingness to accept great personal risk to achieve their ideological goals. Franklin writes that they were admired for “their unique brand of courage, strategic and tactical innovation and willingness to organize in racially hostile communities that frightened many veteran activists.” While my research seeks to explore the limits of the movement’s success at Rutgers, there is no question that the movement achieved material and ideological successes in admissions, new programs, and
Successes were won, but that very success may have provided skeptics and hostile opponents of the movement with the opportunity to characterize compromise as victory and stop momentum toward the movement’s transformational goals.

Repression and Absorption

Repression played a large role in the decline of the Black Campus Movement nationwide. Students were charged with criminal offenses, placed under surveillance, and even killed. At Mississippi Valley State, 896 marchers were arrested in 1970; and at Jackson State, two students were shot and killed by police dispatched to break up protests in 1970. Riot police were ordered to the campus of City College of New York (CCNY) to disperse protesters from Black and Puerto Rican groups who had occupied a large swathe of the college for 14 days. Black faculty who supported the movement faced repercussions. Nathan Hare was fired from Howard University in 1967 in retaliation for his radical views, and was then fired from San Francisco State College (SFSC) in 1969 despite having been recruited there specifically to spearhead the development of a Black Studies program. Inspirational Black Power leaders were killed and jailed across the United States in 1970. States passed laws banning various forms of student activism, and the movement was further undermined when civil rights activist Roy Wilkins threatened that the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) would sue any institution that created segregated programs for black students within universities. As the movement made gains, repression ensued.

HBCUs were particular targets of venom by whites as they served as catalysts for change first during the Civil Rights Movement and then during the increasingly militant Black Campus Movement. Activists were shielded from direct repression on HBCU campuses because they are private institutions, but during the Civil Rights Movement the colleges themselves came
under the attack of those determined to uphold the racial order: “state legislatures, racist citizen’s organizations, and other groups hostile toward the colleges’ role in the black freedom struggle. The public role of the private colleges made them enemies of the state”\textsuperscript{148} Later, HBCUs themselves became targets of the Black Campus Movement, as students demanded a Black studies curriculum instead of the conventional canon found at Traditional White Institutions (TWI).\textsuperscript{149} Despite initial acceptance of demands for curriculum change, there was eventually a repressive backlash against some of the Black studies programs instituted at HBCUs and TWIs, notably the firing of Nathan Hare from both Howard and San Francisco State, and the 1970 arson attack at Cornell University that destroyed the building housing the Africana Studies and Research Center.\textsuperscript{150}

On some campuses, violent repression was eschewed in favor of the quiet reining in of the most transformative elements of change. Julie Reuben notes that some institutions, like Howard and Yale, resisted pressure to institute Black studies programs that were a radical departure from academic norms while others seemingly agreed to protestors’ demands but then later quietly shifted programs back to the “academic mould.”\textsuperscript{151} These examples and others show that repression and absorption were tactics employed by state and university leaders to resist change and protect the status quo. Repression was a reaction to fear and hostility toward growing black militancy and empowerment. Absorption was a more nuanced method of acquiescing to the letter but not spirit of demands. Thus, many partial successes culminated in absorption to the reigning order.

qualified Support and Limited Success

A key reason for the failure of most student protest movements is a lack of connection with the community.\textsuperscript{152} In the case of the Black Campus Movement, the connection and support
of the community varied greatly by and within campuses. In some cases, mainstream acceptance of students’ demands was a foundation for the movement’s success, in others, as seen above, repressive tactics shut it down, and in still other cases, authorities and university leaders responded in conflicting ways. CUNY students, for example, were supported by New York City Mayor John Lindsay and the large minority communities of New York, but opposed by the Jewish Defense League and white working class groups such as Irish and Italian people.\textsuperscript{153} CCNY’s president, Buell Gallagher, was largely sympathetic to the protestors and initially resisted police interference in campus protests, but ultimately felt forced to resign as did the many faculty members who resigned in solidarity with him.\textsuperscript{154} Some white students were supportive and seized a building in solidarity with the Black and Puerto Rican student groups, while others, particularly in science and engineering, were furious about the disruption.\textsuperscript{155} Campus was polarized.

At the Big Three Ivy league universities, Princeton, Harvard, and Yale, the community was largely indifferent to the struggle of Black students, yet there is some evidence that the Newark uprising provided a particular impetus for supporting change at Yale because of Newark’s demographic and geographic similarity to New Haven. Yale officials may have been willing to accept black students’ demands to avoid violent disorder even they did not embrace protestors’ goals.\textsuperscript{156} Karabel argues that the presidents of the Big Three took the threat of violent revolution quite seriously and were very impressed by the dire warnings of the Kerner Commission report of 1968.\textsuperscript{157}

The Ivy League strategy was not to overhaul the status quo, but to create a generation of “responsible” elite Black leadership within the existing system – leaders in the mold of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as opposed to the “extreme” Stokely Carmichael. This strategy, Karabel
writes, would “strengthen both the stability and the legitimacy of an increasingly beleaguered social order.”\textsuperscript{158} But even this limited change did delegitimize admission practices that favored some students over others, specifically, legacies, the affluent, white Protestants, prep school students, and athletes: “Paradoxically, then, the black struggle for inclusion - often thought to create fundamental conflict with the logic of meritocracy - contributed to the emergence of admissions policies at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton that were far more meritocratic in 1970 than in 1960.”\textsuperscript{159} Alumni and some conservative faculty at the Big Three did openly revolt against changes in admissions policy, but the university leadership largely prevailed in its plan to preserve the established order by controlling its transformation.

Demands of the Black Campus Movement

Many radical students participated actively in the Civil Rights Movement when they were in middle and high school and brought their memory of work in the community with them to campus; they were “veterans” and were not willing to take the rejection of campus authorities without a fight.\textsuperscript{160} However, some of the demands made by Black Student Protesters were more likely to be agreed to than others. As noted above, specifics varied across campuses, but there were three major demands that emerge from patterns in the literature: access to admission, curriculum change, and campus change. The next section of the paper will briefly examine each of these demands.

Access to admission.

The number one demand that appeared nearly universally on lists presented to faculty and administration by protestors was for more Black students to be admitted to the institution.\textsuperscript{161} Numbers of Black students at some of the most selective institutions in the country were dismal. Combined together, Princeton, Harvard, and Yale had only 15 African American students in their
freshman classes of 1960 of a total of 3,000 students. At City College of New York (CCNY), the flagship school of the CUNY system, only 10 percent of the student body was non-white in comparison to 55% of non-white New York City high school students. Protestors demanded financial aid, scholarships (not just merit but also need-based), waivers for application fees, waivers for entrance requirements (like the SAT), special admissions criteria for Black students, the hiring of Black admissions officers, financial aid counselors, and faculty members, and the appointment of Black people to boards of trustees. Students had a utopian goal of educating young Black people who could be sent into Black communities to help achieve power and transform neighborhoods.

Scholars generally agree that the movement had numeric success in improving access to higher education for minority students. More Black students were enrolled in higher education after the movement than before and programs did persist that supported less advantaged students. But a broad overhaul of admissions standards and practices was not achieved. Nor was the vision of building bridges between university students and Black communities achieved on a large scale. Very few campuses were able to sustain community programs and projects that Black and other students of color created as resources dwindled and media attention turned to the anti-war movement. Neither did campus change of the kind envisioned by protestors come to fruition. Instead, those students admitted were asked to assimilate themselves into the prevailing culture that had been produced over decades, if not centuries, in a nearly all-white environment.

**Curriculum change.**

The student protestors demanded the inclusion of the history and culture of Africa, African people, and the African American experience taught from the perspective of Black scholars. On some campuses students demanded full-fledged departments of Black Studies or
Africana Studies, on others they sought the creation of new Black/Africana Studies courses, and on still others they wanted new content embedded in existing curriculum.\textsuperscript{168} By the early 1970s, 800 colleges and Universities had Black studies programs, which is seen by many scholars as a great success of the movement. Today, there are fewer such programs than there were just after the Black Campus Movement, but ethnic and women’s studies are still a prominent part of higher education in the United States.\textsuperscript{169} Gerard DeGroot gives direct credit to the movement for this “profound” curricular reform and characterizes it as one of the great and long-lasting successes of the protests.\textsuperscript{170} An argument can be made that these changes to curriculum across the country were among the most lasting victories of the movement.\textsuperscript{171}

However full success may not have been achieved. Reuben writes that “activists were unable to impose broader changes in academic practices which they believed essential to a “relevant” curriculum.”\textsuperscript{172} Students were disappointed in most efforts to overhaul the grading system and fire racist professors, and they were generally prevented from taking a leadership role in decisions about curriculum content and recruitment of faculty. Biondi writes that in seeking to institutionalize Black Studies at SFSC “the students failed to achieve either autonomy for the department from university oversight, or student control of departmental affairs and governance. And compounding matters, the department had to endure a general crackdown from the administration.”\textsuperscript{173} As at SFSC, administrators and faculty members at many universities rejected the very notion of Black/Africana studies as a legitimate discipline, stifled student involvement in the development of new departments and courses, and worked actively to hire faculty members who would not be too radical and fire those who were.\textsuperscript{174}

\textbf{Campus change.}
Protesters sought to create a hospitable, supportive, and empowering campus climate for Black students that embraced Black culture, Black consciousness, and Black life. In support of this they advocated for the hiring of Black faculty members and administrators and the creation of Black cultural centers and Black residence areas. Additionally, protestors called for Black representation in student government. In short, they wanted to transform institutions of higher education into spaces in which Black students and other minorities were not treated as welcome or even unwelcome guests, but rather where they could be integral member participants without being asked to assimilate to whiteness. These demands were tightly coupled with calls for social justice and with an ideology of explicit anti-racism and Black empowerment.

Campus change was arguably the least successful for protesters and is the most relevant to my study. Though black fraternities and sororities, racial and ethnic organizations, and cultural events do exist on campuses across the United States, there has not been the thoroughly radical and empowering change envisioned by the Black Campus Movement. DeGroot notes that many initial changes in areas like assessment, recruitment of staff and faculty, and teaching were quietly short-lived: “American university authorities proved remarkably adept at containing, manipulating and re-directing the tide of change, so much so that, when the shouting ceased and the sit-ins ended, status returned resolutely to quo.” As theorized by Miller in his discussion of social movement decline, once some of the least objectionable aspects of the Black Campus Movement’s demands were absorbed into the mainstream – admissions and curricular change - its larger racial project was undermined by that success. Increased access to higher education and curricular reform reflected much of the discourse of the Civil Rights Movement and to a large degree jibed with mainstream political beliefs about equality and were thus labeled acceptable. However, larger transformational goals that challenged the very nature of campus life, and the
even larger goals of achieving social justice in American society were stymied. In much the same way, the Civil Rights Movement achieved legislative goals but did not succeed in alleviating the racism and inequality that continues to exist in the United States.

Conclusion

This review of the literature shows that more research needs to be done from the perspective of the students who participated in the Black Campus Movement. Most studies, particularly those written prior to 1990, are based on reviews of internal institutional documents. Very recent work, particularly the work of Ibram Rogers, seeks to place Black students at the center of the conversation about the movement, and to recognize the heroic and sacrificial actions of Black students who sought not only to better their own educational opportunities, but to transform the academy into a more just and inclusive learning environment, and to transform the United States into a more just and inclusive nation. I hope to similarly situate my own larger research project.

The frames developed in history, sociology, and political science for understanding the outcomes of social movements rather than their reasons for formation are relevant and useful to my larger project about the case of Rutgers University and the EOF program. Instead of focusing on why the Black student protests occurred at Rutgers, the concepts of success and absorption will be useful ways for me to frame future study about how EOF came to be the dominant mechanism for educational equity at Rutgers and how protesters involved in the Black Campus Movement at Rutgers perceived that outcome.

Finally, the literature reviewed here makes it clear that the changes to higher education brought about by the Black Campus Movement are not simply a laudatory example of progress toward racial justice. The story is much more complex. For all the gains made at the curricular
level, and all the increases in the numbers of students of color in higher education today, the academy has not transformed itself as the racial project that 1960s protesters had hoped with the attendant transformation of notions of merit and eradication of racism. As Reuben argues, “Their ultimate goal was to transform academic practices that seemed to inhibit political activism. To some extent, [black studies] programmes have kept alive students’ vision. They have brought political and social issues into the curriculum,” yet larger reforms failed such as building bridges between students and the community and giving students greater control over curriculum and programming.177 Disparity still exists in terms of access and also in terms of degree completion, with white, Asian, and affluent students attending competitive universities and attaining college degrees at much higher rates than their poorer peers and their African American, Latino, and Native American peers.178 The dominant culture on campuses in the United States continues to reflect the dominant culture in the larger society – that of middle class whiteness.

My project builds on the scholarship of Biondi, Clemens and others who have studied either Rutgers University and/or Black campus movements by contributing two specific stories to the history of the era. First, I provide a student-centered perspective on the Rutgers protest movement by focusing on the process of negotiation and compromise between students and the institution. By examining not only the archival record but also oral history transcripts and recorded panel discussions that highlight the voices of those who participated, my aim is to understand people’s knowledge, experiences and behavior, opinions and values, and feelings about the events of the era.179 Second, I shift the frame that much of the literature focuses on - college access, curricular change, and the hiring of Black staff and faculty - to that of culture and discourse. By looking at the history of a single program that was initially situated within the discourse of reparations for historic discrimination but became stripped of mention of race and
ethnicity, I hope to contribute to our understanding of the significance of such compromise and illuminate ideological goals of the past that still have validity today.
Chapter 3

The Imperative for Change at a White University

“I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids – and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination – indeed, everything and anything except me.”

There is no explicit mention of race and ethnicity in the eligibility requirements of EOF, nor is racial justice an explicitly stated goal. In fact, EOF is but one of many pipeline and support programs at Rutgers University that ask students to prepare for and adapt to the status quo on campus, in other words, to assimilate to dominant norms, without asking the campus to transform itself into a space designed for and reflecting all people and all cultures. Yet the historical record shows that the Black Student Protesters at Rutgers had an explicitly racial project in mind when they began organizing for change, and it was a project that extended beyond the campus itself. In an open letter distributed to white students on the Douglass College campus of Rutgers University in New Brunswick on February 27, 1969, Black students called on their classmates to heed their calls for racial justice:

We, the Black students of Rutgers-Douglass, have become aware of our responsibility to the wider community of the state. We, the Blacks of this University, feel that the well-being of Blacks in this state is important to the well-being of everyone in this state. The Rutgers University administration has been unwilling to deal with the true problems of the Black community. They have been playing word games with us as they have been with you. Blacks can no longer tolerate this. \(^\text{180}\)

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As this declaration clearly shows, the student protestors on all three campuses of Rutgers University linked their demands to the wider Black community in New Jersey and directly articulated their protest movement as a racial justice project and not strictly an economic or education access project. Protestors aspired to spark a revolutionary transformation of the culture of higher education and the state of New Jersey, and the language in this letter is important to remember when thinking about the absence of any reference to race or ethnicity in today’s EOF program. As historian Richard P. McCormick argued, the students’ goal was to forever alter the predominantly white university so that it met the needs of all students – not just white students. But the record shows that while noteworthy gains were made in terms of access, the movement fell short of achieving a revolutionary restructuring of Rutgers University as a racial project, a legacy that is evident on campus today.

This chapter examines the factors that allowed the social movement behind the racial project to form through narratives of the lived experiences of the protesters before and just after their arrival on the Rutgers campus. Their own words tell the story of the impetus for collective action students took in service of the racial project that was the Black Student Protest Movement at Rutgers. The first section is framed by Tilly’s notion of social movements as founded on participants’ common understanding of history. The second section discusses the positionality of Black students in the context of the predominantly white Rutgers campus. And the third and final section explores how students experienced racism at Rutgers University in the late 1960s and early 1970s. These three sections together tell the story of how a group of individuals situated in a particular time and place came to form the social movement at the center of this paper.
All of the African American students who began studies at Rutgers University in the late 1960s had the lived experience of growing up in an unequal society structured by race (as well as other factors such as class, religion, and gender), whether they were raised in Virginia, New Jersey, Germany or somewhere else on the map. The purpose of this section is to look at the way students’ various pre-college experiences of race and racism became the basis of collective understanding that was crucial to the formation of the Black Student Protest Movement at Rutgers. This is what Tilly calls the “historical accumulation of shared understanding,” which, along with the strong sense of duty and purpose derived from the students’ Black identity, laid the groundwork for the creation of social networks in which movement participants were embedded. I will trace this shared understanding through four areas of experience: segregation and racism; the Civil Rights Movement and Black Power; identity, community, and social networks; and academic preparation and merit. Chapter 4 will discuss the political opportunity structures that framed the struggle and its outcomes, another key piece of Tilly’s framework for understanding social movements.

Segregation and Racism

The experience of racism, however differently manifested in individual cases, was a shared thread that ran through the lives of the African American students at Rutgers. Legal segregation was a reality for many of those who grew up in the South, or who grew up in the North but were sent to the South to spend the summer with grandparents, aunts, and uncles. Black Rutgers alumni recall segregated movies, buses, and stores. Dr. Rosalind Carmichael, Douglass College class of 1972, spent her early childhood in New Jersey but moved to Columbia, South Carolina in the eighth grade. There she would have a new experience:
I was used to going to the library. When we moved to Columbia, South Carolina, I found out you couldn’t go to the public library—Black kids couldn’t go to the public library. This is in 1964 … When segregation was over, we could go the public library and I was so excited. I could go to the library. So I walked … I just walked in—really excited because I was going to get a card. Looking back now, you could tell—everyone was white and you could tell they really didn’t want me there. The librarians didn’t want me there, but I was determined. I asked for an application for the card. The man kind of pushed it. I filled it out. Still no fear—I really was not afraid. I filled out the form. At that point, when you filled it out, you could get your card that day. You didn’t have to wait. I gave him the application and I’m standing there. They created the card. I remember it was a man. He created the card. I reached out my hand for the card. He threw it on the floor. The point is, do you pick it up so you can come back or do you get angry and walk away? I wanted to read. I picked up the card. I left. I shared it with my mother. I was upset, but not destroyed because I understood what was going on.\textsuperscript{184}

Carmichael credits this early tenacity as years later informing her student experience at Douglass College and her career as a teacher in Newark, N.J. where she encouraged her own students to read, and to specifically read Black writers. “Maybe I am where I am today because I picked up that library card,” Carmichael says. “I picked it up. I didn’t let anybody say no, you can’t come in here.”\textsuperscript{185}

Racism in the North was as much a reality as in the South. Dr. Cheryl Clarke, who was born in 1947 and grew up in Washington, D.C., came to graduate school in New Brunswick in 1969 and earned her master’s degree in English in 1974. She recalls a family trip to Atlantic City, N.J. when she was a small child: “You could walk the whole length of the damn boardwalk, but you didn’t go and integrate in an all-white section of the beach. You just went to your part.”\textsuperscript{186} Schools were not exempt from this same de facto division or from overt racism. Dr. Jeffrey Sammons, a professor of history at New York University and alumnus of Rutgers College, 1971, experienced the latter when his New Jersey school told his mother he had to repeat Kindergarten because he was “emotionally immature.” His mother fought the decision throughout the entire summer and, ultimately, he was promoted to first grade, but Sammons still thinks about the impact had she not prevailed. He asks: “Can you imagine what kind of
consequence that would have had for me?” Years later he met another Black man from the same town who had the exact same experience. Sammons does not see that as coincidence.

“There was a conspiracy, I believe, against young Black men,” he says.

Segregation, too, was commonplace in the north. The parents of Bruce Hubbard, Rutgers College class of 1969, moved from Chattanooga, Tennessee to Neptune, New Jersey, motivated in part by the advantages their son would gain in a well-resourced integrated school. However, Hubbard, who would go on to graduate from Harvard Law School in 1972, recalls a segregated community and high school:

I went in the seventh and eighth grade at Ridge Avenue School in Neptune, New Jersey, which were essentially de facto segregated, even though they were in New Jersey, because of where you lived. I think there was one white girl in our classes. She was, like, a migrant worker’s child, and so, she lived in a black neighborhood. We didn’t hit integration until we got to the ninth grade. They were on an 8/4 system, which means that you went through elementary school to the eighth grade, graduated, and then, you went to high school together. At the high school, because I had done well, they tracked us. So, I went through high school in a tracking system where I was in a college prep program and I would see a lot of blacks only at lunch and at gym. There was one other black girl who essentially went through all my classes. She was off-the-charts smart. She ended up going to Temple, Dr. Anita Roach Rogers, and she and I went through that college prep program.

Hubbard recalls open racism in his high school that went all the way to the top, with the principal asserting over the intercom that interracial dancing was not allowed at Saturday night sock hops. Hubbard knew that his race prohibited him from any leadership roles in the student activities that would enhance his college application, “[w]e couldn’t get elected dogcatcher,” he recalls, so he created a literary magazine with himself at the helm. But then, “A group of white kids came in, planned, organized, outvoted me, took it over and, my senior year, I didn’t have a title.” Of this and many experiences like it, Hubbard says, “I was affected by that, because I decided, when I went to Rutgers, that I was going to be everything I wanted to be and nobody was going to stop me.” Hubbard did indeed become a campus leader during his years at
Rutgers College, serving in student council and in many other key roles, just as the campus was becoming politicized and across the nation student movements were growing in number and influence.

The Civil Rights Movement and Black Power

Before the class of students who studied at Rutgers University in the late 1960s and early 1970s arrived on campus, an earlier cohort of Black Rutgers students brought awareness and experience of the Civil Rights Movement to campus. Donald Harris, who graduated from Rutgers College in 1963, is arguably the person who first woke the Rutgers New Brunswick campus to the reality of oppressive, deadly racism in a personal and visceral way. Harris was arrested in Americus, Georgia in August of 1963 while working for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) registering African Americans to vote. He was charged with insurrection, a crime that was then punishable by death. As he describes it, authorities in Georgia determined that he and the three SNCC workers he was operating with were the clear "outside agitators," ... So, the cops just came down, boom, boom, boom, boom, and broke the thing up. ... They used billy clubs and cattle prods, electric shock things, and, very quickly, we were ... taken off to jail. ... As a result of that, there was just a continuous wave of demonstrations in Americus, mostly kids, you know, and up to about a thousand kids were jailed, so much so that they were pushing them out. ... They didn't have space for them in Americus. They were pushing them out and the kids were in Lee County and other jails in other counties. Now, we're sitting in jail, didn't know that much about the whole thing, to tell you the truth.¹⁹³

Among the things that Harris did not know until later was that his arrest had galvanized many members of the Rutgers community thanks in large part to his parents’ letter writing campaign to bring attention to his plight. The daily newspaper on the New Brunswick campus, the Targum, raised money for his legal defense, and rallies and speeches were held to support him, including a speech given by Rutgers President Mason W. Gross.¹⁹⁴ Finally, Harris was released after a court declared the insurrection charge unconstitutional. His ordeal provoked a robust response on
the Rutgers campus in the moment, but the overwhelmingly white space had seemingly little appetite for institutional transformation for years to come.

Black students who came to Rutgers just around the time that Donald Harris graduated and was arrested had varying levels of participation in the Civil Rights movement, but all were acutely aware of the growing struggle for racial justice. Although many Americans were impacted by racist atrocities and murders, it was possible for those living outside of the South to be supportive but not actively involved. Joseph Charles, Rutgers College class of 1964, grew up in Jersey City, N.J. in an integrated working-class neighborhood of African American, Eastern European and Italian American people, and he was the first member of his family to attend college. While he was “race conscious, obviously race conscious,” he thought of education in individualist terms before he got to Rutgers. Charles spent summers with family in the South as a child, and he recalls that some of his cousins there were directly affected by the court’s ruling in Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka and the Civil Rights Movement. “That was impactful for me, but it didn’t register as such,” he explains of his early years. But like many of his Black peers at Rutgers, that personal distance from the events of the time would change upon arriving to study at a nearly all-white university.

Some Rutgers students were directly involved in the Civil Rights Movement prior to attending college either because of the geography of their upbringing or because of their parents’ encouragement – or both. Dr. Cheryl Clarke recalls that in high school she saw demonstrations nearly every day from the window of her school bus as she traveled from one side of the city to the other, passing the White House along the way, and two key experiences of the Civil Rights Movement had a large impact on her. As a fourteen-year-old girl and seeking independence, she decided to go shopping on her own:
Of course, I wanted to go into Woolworth’s, so I crossed the picket line. This woman said to me, “Why are you going in there? Don’t go in.” I just went in. I bought whatever I had to buy, came out and went home. I said, "Well, they were picketing Woolworth's and I went in anyway." My mother said, "Don't ever do something against somebody who's doing something for you." That's one thing.\(^{196}\)

Her mother’s admonition stuck with her, and later she would sometimes get off the school bus, join the demonstrations she saw from the window, and then go to school. She also considers the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom “a defining moment, I would say, for me because it taught me the importance of standing up for myself or standing up for my belief in myself. Also, it taught me to reject so-called second-class citizenship – second-class citizenship for some, third class for others.”\(^{197}\) Like Clarke, Dr. Barbara Morrison-Rodriguez grew up in Washington, D.C., and also attended the march with her parents, and she expresses a similar awakening of consciousness. Being in the crowd for Martin Luther King’s famous “I Have a Dream Speech” in 1963 had an enormous impression. “It was unbelievable,” she recalls, “I think for me what I was most proud of was all the people who showed up there. I didn’t march at Selma and I didn’t have people put dogs and fire hoses on me. So I can’t imagine what kind of courage that took. That’s courage of a whole other order … I was just so proud of people for standing up.”\(^{198}\)

That pride is echoed in the words of Dr. Joy Stewart Williams, Douglass College class of 1968, who was raised in a Civil Rights family who were full proponents of Dr. Martin Luther King and integration. “I perceived that education was key to my community’s upward mobility,” says Williams.\(^{199}\) Similarly, Jocelyn Francis-White, Douglass College class of 1972, learned African American history from her grandparents and her mother who were all educated. She says, “Each generation wanted the next generation to be more successful than they were. So this was ingrained in us … it was like a legacy we had to maintain, we had to encourage and share the knowledge with other people.”\(^{200}\) The belief in the power of education was not remotely
clichéd or abstract amongst the Black Student Protesters at Rutgers. Many of them had been fighting for educational equity long before they arrived for a college education.

Rutgers University students who grew up in the segregated south were personally close to and directly affected by this struggle for educational equity. Bryant Mitchell, Rutgers College class of 1969, calls his father, an Episcopal minister, “an ardent Civil Rights activist” who took on a leadership role in the fight for the rights of Black people in Charlottesville, Virginia. As a twelve-year-old, Mitchell was a plaintiff in an integration suit against the Charlottesville school system. The lawsuit was a success, but as Mitchell puts it, the Black students who were admitted to the previously all-white school were deemed intellectually incapable of learning in a white students' curriculum, right. So, they had all fourteen of us tutored in the superintendent's office, which happened to be just about four blocks from our house and behind the elementary school I would've gone to, but the named plaintiffs represented grades one through twelve … It was a very, very interesting time, because, despite the fact, after that one year of being tutored by the retired teacher, white teacher, to teach all fourteen twelve grades in one room, in two rooms, really, they said, "Well, we're still not going to let you integrate the schools." So my father had to tutor me for a year. He tutored Judy Saunders and myself. We were in the same grade.201

This demeaning experience that exposed the limits of legislative victory did not deter Mitchell or his family. His father continued his activism, and Mitchell left Charlottesville to attend a Quaker boarding school in Pennsylvania, taking advantage of a scholarship program that had been set up by the state with the intention of allowing white Virginians to form and attend private schools and thus avoid integration. “Well, the dummies wrote the legislation so [that] it didn’t say whether you wanted to go to school in state or out of state – as long as you were a Virginian, you were entitled to this scholarship,” says Mitchell.202

However, while some parents actively participated in the Civil Rights Movement with their children, including them in what would become historic events like the March on Washington and the lawsuits that built on the legacy of Brown, other parents feared for and
sheltered their children from the uprising. Raised in Washington, D.C., Michael Jackson, Rutgers College class of 1971, believes that his parents protected him from knowledge of some of the worst racism they faced and hid from him their support for the civil rights struggle because of that fear:

I mean, they really didn't speak about the things that were going on and I understand why. I mean, you have to [think], "Do I tell my son that I'm getting screwed?" We always look for a better day. It wasn't until I was a freshman at Rutgers, in the second semester, that my mother told me about how they'd grown up here in Washington. The Black Power Movement was in swing, in vogue, and she was like, "Well, every day, we sang Lift Every Voice [and Sing] before we said the Pledge of Allegiance," or sang one of the national patriotic songs, and all the things that they did to survive in this place, in this society. It was eye-opening. I was a little peeved, "Why didn't you tell me this?" but I understood why she didn't tell me this. I don't know if you have kids, but you have to choose when you tell them [certain things]. She had African-American males and I know if she had told me some of the stuff that happened to them, I would have been angry as a young person. The neighborhood that I lived in was--early, before we moved uptown--was a pretty rough neighborhood and I might have done some things that I shouldn't have done, rebelling against the authority of my parents, as teenagers are wont to do, and then, maybe not thinking there was much of a future for me. We know, from the prison pipeline, that it's primarily Africos males and other marginalized people.203

Despite his parents’ protective measures, Mitchell became politically active in junior high school as part of an integrated group of students who advocated for schoolbooks and other educational resources. Meeting at a Quaker house on Sunday afternoons, he and his classmates learned about the law and how to lobby Congress, what he calls a “practicum for what we were learning in history and civics.”204 To his lingering disappointment, Mitchell’s father, who was a police officer, forbade him and his brother to attend the March on Washington, warning them that authorities were expecting trouble.205 Once again, his parents were protecting him from a potential confrontation that might derail his future, balancing their own church-based activism with the safety of their children.

Further north, there was a strong connection to events in the south and the same protective instinct in worried parents. M. Wilma Harris was born in 1944 and grew up in New
Jersey. She began her studies at Douglass College in 1962 and was not a Civil Rights activist in high school although she had been aware of the struggle since the *Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka* ruling in 1954. She recounts her understanding of events to Molly Graham in an interview for the Rutgers Oral History Archive:

MG: Were you also aware of the sit-ins and the protests?

MWH: Oh, yes. I was old then. I was like sixteen. They were like my age at North Carolina and Woolworths. I don’t think I ever supported Woolworths after that because then there were enough little five and tens; I didn’t have to support them. Yes, I was aware, but not active in.

MG: Did your parents align themselves at all with the Civil Rights Movement?

MWH: Not really. I think they thought it was risky. It was not one of those things discussed. I knew that their only child was not going to go on a bus someplace and potentially be killed. I was wise enough to not even broach that subject. Like, “You want to do what?” And why is that? Did I reap the benefits? Most definitely. Did you see *Selma*?

MG: Yes.

MWH: Wasn’t that powerful? I remember that. I remember those kids in the church that was blown up two days after my birthday in 1963. [Editor’s Note: M. Wilma Harris is referring to the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing. On September 15, 1963, the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama was bombed by a white supremacist and four girls were killed.] I said, “This is really, really one sick place if you do that to kids in a church.” There was no way not to be impacted by it.

That impact shaped the generation of Black students growing up during the Civil Rights Movement. Even those who were not directly involved were closely watching, absorbing the ideals, just as they were when Black Power and Black Nationalism began to emerge as liberationist ideologies later in the decade.

Those ideas about Black Nationalism and Black Power were growing even early in the 1960s. Betty Davis, for example, arrived at Douglass College from her home in Washington, D.C. the year before Donald Harris’ arrest, in 1962, and she recalls dinner-table conversations
with her parents about Black Nationalist Malcolm X when she was in high school. Her father, she said, was “very much in favor of what he was saying,” and “my mother not as much.” Rosalind Carmichael learned years later that her mother had been more emotionally connected to events of the time than she had realized: “She never followed [Malcolm X] or she never really read about him, but when they talked about him, she watched it. She said how upset she was when he was killed. I never even knew she thought that way.” She remembers watching events unfold on television, but she was not intimately involved. “When I was raised, it was about survival,” says Carmichael, “It was all about making the money to pay the rent and buy the food.” One of her aunts attended the March on Washington in 1963, but her own mother struggled financially when Carmichael was young, and was preoccupied with raising her daughter.

By the latter half of the 1960s, many young people, including many of the Black students at Rutgers, began to embrace the tactics and principles of Black Power. Dr. Patricia Graham graduated from West Side High School in Newark in 1966 and attended Essex County College before transferring to the Rutgers Newark College of Arts and Sciences and then to the newly opened Livingston College of Rutgers University in New Brunswick. While a student at Rutgers, an Essex County College professor who lived in her family’s neighborhood invited her to attend a Black Panther conference at Yale University in New Haven, CT: “It was a how-to-become-a-community-organizer kind of conference,” describes Graham:

The Panthers, at that time, remember, they were in New Haven, they were established. That was their headquarters, actually, of the Panthers on the East Coast, that was New Haven, the city of New Haven. They had a breakfast program, where they would feed the children, give them breakfast, because many of the poor children didn't have breakfast. They were established as community outreach. What was amazing to me is that Yale University would have this convergence of all of these college kids from all races coming from as far away as California up to New Haven and that the college students at Yale would give up their dorm rooms for a weekend so that we could have a Black Panther
Like Graham, Greg Stewart, Rutgers College class of 1971, attended high school in Newark, entering just after the Newark Uprising in 1967, and while he identified with SNCC in high school, he related to Stokely Carmichael, “not so much the John Lewis element.” Similarly moving toward Black Power, Vickie Donaldson, an alumna of the Rutgers Newark College of Arts and Sciences and Rutgers Law School, recalls being invited to a campus meeting of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People by classmate Richard Roper who graduated from the Newark College of Arts and Sciences in 1968, earned a master’s degree from Princeton University in 1971, and currently serves on the Rutgers University Board of Governors. As Donaldson remembers:

I was walking across the campus, and I saw a skinny brown man in a green pea coat ... it happened to be Richard Roper. And he was the first person that I had seen who was Black. It was that stark. He told me that there was a meeting of the NAACP, and having come out of the Civil Rights Movement and being newly Black Nationalist, of course I went to the meeting with the intent, no, we’re not gonna do this, we’re gonna do something a little bit more militant,” she recalls.

Donaldson would go on to become one of the core group of student activists who occupied the Conklin Hall building on the Newark campus in February of 1969. Having grown into young adults during these momentous social movements for racial justice, the Black students of Rutgers University shared an understanding of the causes and goals of these movements no matter how disparate their personal experiences and levels of participation. Raised in a moment where people were coming together to create networks of activists based on shared goals and ideals – and shared risk and danger - laid the foundation for the student protests themselves.

Identity, Community, and Social Networks
The organizational structure of the Civil Rights Movement provided networks that were ultimately extended to college campuses and created an opportunity for the Black Student Protest Movement. Donald Harris emphasizes the importance of the relationships among the people in SNCC during its early years: “I mean, the level of trust and confidence and belief and camaraderie, in part because of the danger. I mean, yes, there was some danger there and we knew it. Some of us thought we were immune to it. ... It brought us together in a belief in what we were doing, a belief in each other and an unconditional trust that no one would corrupt ... what we were trying to achieve.”213 Many years after Harris’ imprisonment, student organizers on the three Rutgers campuses, maybe of whom had been allied with SNCC in high school or earlier, built similar trusting and supportive relationships founded on not only shared goals but also shared friendships, experiences, and a sense of urgency and frustration at the slow pace of change.

The experience of racist institutions and racial violence inculcated a strong sense of identity and community in the Black students of Rutgers University in the 1960s and 1970s. For many, the very segregation that so nakedly manifested social injustice allowed for the formation of tight-knit, nurturing communities. Many of the Rutgers alumni who grew up in all-Black communities and attended all-Black schools recall a supportive, nurturing environment. Michael Jackson, who after Rutgers earned a Masters of Divinity from the University of the South’s School of Divinity, says neighbors looked after one another: “We were privileged, in the sense that we were insulated – we were taken care of. This was truly a village. I remember, over on Seaton Place, I broke a window and the lady kept my ball and gave it to my father. [laughter].”214 Dr. Barbara Morrison-Rodriguez grew up in an economically heterogenous neighborhood where Black doctors, lawyers, small businessmen, postal workers and janitors all lived in proximity.
She describes it as a “tightknit community of people who were mutually caring.”215 That community provided a refuge from the challenges of the era. She recalls: “My parents and the neighbors did a really good job – my teachers – of building this little cocoon of protection around us.”216 Leaving the communal and familial connections of such neighborhoods to attend Rutgers would be difficult for many of the Black students as they found themselves isolated on an almost all-white campus.

Many Black alumni expressed a sense of obligation to their families and their communities; they simply could not fail because of the sacrifices made on their behalf and because they knew that they would unfairly be seen by whites as representatives of their entire race. Dr. Jeffrey Sammons had to contend not only with racism, but with the moniker of “illegitimacy” as he was raised by his unmarried mother. She and his grandmother pushed Sammons to become educated: “I could not fail because I would be failing them.”217 M. Wilma Harris felt a great sense of responsibility and obligation to do well specifically because of her race. She recalls thinking that if she didn’t succeed, the university would be loath to admit other Black students. She felt, “I’m doing it in the name of my race.”218

But the effects of direct interpersonal racism and structural racism were inescapable and even their parents and communities could not shield the students from all of it. Of this racism, Betty Davis says, the “impact is fairly obvious. If you hear enough of that kind of thing, although you get support from your family and friends about who you are, you get a lot of other negative support. So, yeah, it makes growing up difficult at times, I think, wondering who you really are and what you’re really worth.”219 Dr. Morrison-Rodriguez, who would go on to earn both a master’s degree and a PhD in Social Welfare Research Evaluation from Columbia University, experienced that doubt in her ability and value because of the messages she received as a child.
The racist, segregated society signaled to her that white people were privileged, that they were in charge. “I thought – because that’s what we had been told is – that they were better, they were smarter. The nice thing for me about going to Douglass, when I learned that I could compete academically, is that there were white people who were smarter than me. There were some as smart as me. There were some that were not as smart.” Some used the racism they experienced as a kind of fuel for success. Bruce Hubbard notes that he was the first Black student from Neptune to attend Rutgers College. His experiences of racism in high schools and his parents’ ambitions for his education became his own motivators: “Opportunities came to me because I was looking for them and I was very Machiavellian, I’m not going to lie about that. And I was going where I wanted to go.” But leaving warm and nurturing communities to study at a predominantly white university placed a personal burden of its own on young Black people even as it empowered them.

The burdens of integration were very real. For Lynn Whatley, Rutgers College, 1970, much was lost as well as gained. “Integration was to a great extent, what we know to be assimilation,” he asserts, and “assimilation can lead to cultural annihilation. I really believe that was one of our problems when we ventured into integration: we didn't have a real plan.” Barbara Morrison-Rodriguez agrees: “There was a downside to integration, we paid a price. There were some benefits, but we paid a price.” One price was the trauma of conflict and confrontation, a price that has been long-lasting for many. Randy Green recalls a physical altercation between a group of Black students and white fraternity brothers, culminating with the Black students barricading themselves in their dormitory for safety while white students yelled racial epithets at them. Campus police and administrators called to intercede focused on disarming the Black students. “Who was at risk?” asks Green. He asserts
I did not come [to Rutgers] to be abused and misused. I’m an intelligent person, so make no mistake about that, but if you want to take it deep, we’ve got that, too. I’m not going to be pushed around … We are human beings. We did not come here to survive Rutgers, we came here to triumph. You are not going to steal the day from us. This is our birthright as well as it’s yours. What makes you think you can attend here by yourself? What give you the right to ordain the treatment of people of color in this university? Who do you think you are? You may think, is Randy Green angry? You’re damn right [laughter]. How does a 65-year-old man stay angry this long? Ask my wife. It ain’t easy, but I’m doing it.224

Green lightens the recollection with laughter, but the anger is nevertheless palpable even across the many decades since he was a student. And he is far from the only one of the Black alumni to articulate still having feelings of anger or sadness when remembering their days at Rutgers.

Frank McClellan confesses that he felt depressed when asked to be a panelist at the Black on the Banks conference but was able to recall some positive experiences from Rutgers that lifted him up and made him want to participate.225

To protect themselves from overtly dangerous racist incidents like the one Randy Green describes as well to overcome the sense of isolation and anger that came from not being able to identify with much of the culture of the campus, the Black students formed tight social circles.

Barbara Morrison-Rodriguez recalls that

As nice as the white students were to me, they were not my social peers. I didn’t speak their language, I didn’t eat their food, I definitely did not like their music … We created our own social spaces and for us, thank God, that Ernie [Ernest Edwards] and Curt [Morrison] and some of the other brothers got some apartments off campus. I could not wait for the weekends. We had a blast. And that was really our social anchor. We created, for many of us, the kinds of situations that we came from, from high school and our home communities, we re-created here so that was our social experience.226

Overt racism was not part of the Rutgers experience for Lynn Whatley either, but he also remembers moving out of the dorms as soon as he could in order to live near other Black students off campus.227 Curt Morrison, Rutgers College 1971, recalls feeling isolated in class during the week, but having a lot of fun partying on the weekends.228 “We were of Rutgers, but
"not in Rutgers," is how Greg Stewart puts it. His strategy for overcoming the isolation was to emulate Frank McClellen whose name, Stewart says, was passed down to the Black students who succeeded him at Rutgers as the model of “how you struggle through this place.” These social networks based on shared experience and identity would later form the foundation on which the student protests were based.

Academic Preparation and Merit

The criteria for determining who is qualified to attend college has been rhetorically linked to American ideals of both meritocracy and egalitarianism, goals that have been frequently at odds. Harold Wechsler has argued that Americans have been ambivalent about who the qualified student is. Should admission be based on a meritocratic selection of those who qualify from all social strata or should only a privileged caste attend college? As historians have shown, access to higher education in most of American history was limited to white, male, Christian elites, and served the function of credentialing and reproducing a leadership class. But as Martha Biondi tells us, in the late 1960s, Black student activists and their allies “rejected the market-driven approach that dominates the contemporary landscape of higher education, and viewed the discourse of merit as laden with disguised class and race privilege.” The case of the Black Student Protesters at Rutgers fits Biondi’s profile, and attempts by the University to respond to the protesters’ critique through changes in curriculum, admissions policy, and faculty recruitment were met with a fierce backlash from defenders of the status quo conceptualization of merit.

Many of the African American people who were students at Rutgers University in the late 1960s and early 1970s vividly recall the life experiences that hindered them from attaining the same markers of merit as their white peers. Attorney Bruce Hubbard, who graduated from
Rutgers College in 1969 and Harvard Law School in 1972, remembers that white Rutgers classmates from suburban New Jersey had significantly more academic preparation than he did:

I stayed in pre-med for two years. I caught hell in it, in the STEM program. I was fighting against type and there was a great deal of what I considered to be discrimination, too. I was seeing guys from places like Fair Lawn, New Jersey, who they had come to Rutgers with their faculty and they had aped the curriculum. So, when I was a first-year student, I started studying with these guys and they had the same book, the same course, the same workbook that they had had as seniors. So, they were essentially repeating their senior year as a freshman, because they had aped the course. They were doing very well, but we were seeing this stuff for the first time. That was a revelation for me, in terms of what schools do, both in terms of preparation for SATs and the boards and things like that.232

The disparity in access to college prep curriculum was not noticed by Bruce Hubbard alone. Greg Montgomery, Rutgers College, 1968, says that at first, he had a difficult time studying biological sciences at Rutgers. “There were so many students who had the math books, the chemistry books, the biology books in high school, and that wasn’t me,” recounts Montgomery, who ultimately graduated Phi Beta Kappa.233 Similarly, George Hampton, Newark College of Arts and Sciences, 1975, nearly failed out of Rutgers during his first year. “I was not prepared,” describes Hampton, who attended what was then South Side High School but is now Malcolm X Shabazz High School in Newark, N.J. Hamptons says, “I knew I was smart, but I learned very quickly none of the white kids were smarter than me, they were just more skilled than me. They had already read Shakespeare. No, I had never read Shakespeare. I mean, a little bit, but not very much.”234

The same experience of unequal preparation existed at the graduate level. Dr. Cheryl Clarke, who earned a PhD from the Department of English at Rutgers University and went on to have a distinguished career in higher education, recalls that lack of access to academic preparation and poor performance on standardized tests would have been an impediment to her career progress had the criteria for merit not been flexibly applied in her case:
I never did well on standardized tests. I went to Rutgers for graduate school in English from '69 to '74, and I got a master's. Initially, I was in a Ph.D. program. I wasn't ready for a Ph.D. program in English at a place like Rutgers, really, because their English Department was very crack. I was still reading primary texts. They were reading critics. I just got a master's and left. I came back in '91 because I did want a doctorate and I wanted it in English. Do you know Barry Qualls? No. He was head of the English Department then. He was an old friend. I said, "Look, I want to get back into the English Department." He said, "That will be great, Cheryl." He said, "Just apply." So, I applied. I got accepted. I didn't take a GRE. I wasn't going to.235

This difference in preparation to meet a standard of merit produced in a racist context was acknowledged by some within the University and, of course, explicitly expressed later in the demands of the Black students on all three Rutgers campuses, but was poorly understood or ignored by many faculty and members of the public who equated lower test scores and lack of access to preparation with limited ability.

Not only were many of the Black students deprived of equal college preparation, they found that even when they did excel in high school, it still was not enough. Alumni recall having their aspirations discouraged by guidance counselors at their schools, an experience that for many young people can be a blow to self-confidence and surely must have blocked countless talented young Black people from pursuing their goals. M. Wilma Harris got a negative reaction from her guidance counselor when she expressed a desire to attend Douglass College, a reaction Harris never shared with either of her parents:

the guidance counselor, Ms. Boyer, who was supposed to be guiding people, said in her condescending, snotty way, “Wilma, I really think Douglass wants better than you.” I knew not to be a wise ass. I said, “Thank you, Ms. Boyer, but let’s let Douglass decide.” I never told my parents that because if she was a guidance counselor, and she was white and she says this, then she’s probably right. I didn’t want them not being supportive based on what this woman had said. So little subliminal messages--but not so subliminal; in your face messages, in her case. You should be encouraging students and saying, “Well, this is what you need to do to ensure that they’ll want you,” as opposed to, “Don’t even waste your time, waste your money.”236
The same kind of negative attitude met Betty Davis when she set forth to attain her goal of attending university and then law school. Although she believed in herself,

Guidance counselors, though, weren’t necessarily as enthusiastic about me going to school as I was. What I can remember about that time is despite them, I was still going to go to university, but I can’t remember a particular reason why I felt that way … All-black colleges in the South was where they decided I should go to school, if I went to school at all. The other thing was to go to secretarial school. That was a thing that was pushed a lot, but I had decided, no, that wasn’t for me.237

Michael Jackson, too, was steered away from selective four-year colleges even though he told his counselor about his goal to attend a sports media program at University of Kansas and become a sportscaster. His counselor neglected to even send his transcript to Kansas:

Actually, her advice to me was to either join the Army or go to the University of Maryland and, back then, the University of Maryland was not what it is today. So, I was originally on the waiting list at Rutgers, and then, another guy in my class, in my homeroom, Dennis (Hoover?), he was also on the waiting list and I think he was disappointed when he didn't get chosen and they chose me. I was like, "Okay," and that was it.238

Discouraging attitudes, low expectations and outright neglect from guidance counselors were impediments that had to be overcome by many of the Black alumni.

Not all high school staff took a deficit perspective with Black students, however. Some of the alumni recall great support from staff at their schools. Dr. Barbara Morrison-Rodriguez speaks fondly of wonderful teachers and counselors at her segregated school, most of whom were Black. One in particular stands out:

Her name was Beatrice Harvey. There’s a backstory there that I don’t—Miss Harvey was our teacher and our guidance counselor. I don’t know how many girls actually were at Douglass in 1965, but I can tell you that three of them were from my high school. That’s one black high school in Washington, DC, that sent three girls to Douglass. Four--there were four of us. Miss Harvey was from New Jersey. There was something about her life or connections or something where there was this connection between her and Rutgers and Douglass. She sent what she considered to be her best and her brightest girls to Douglass. She encouraged us to get out of Washington. She encouraged us to expand our horizons. I don’t know if she had any connections with anybody at Rutgers. I don’t know
if at some point she had applied herself. She was considerably older than us, so she would have gone in the ‘50s, maybe even ‘40s, rather than the ‘60s. But she was our gateway.

Bryant Mitchell had a gateway of his own. He was able to attend a private boarding school on a scholarship, and that opened up opportunities for him. However, he learned decades later that he had come close to not being admitted to that boarding school at all because of the assumed lack of academic rigor in Black public schools in the south. He was told by a former teacher, Bill Berkeley, that it was the support of the school founder who had interviewed Mitchell that clinched his admission:

He says, 'Yes, the kid is very intelligent and everything, but all of his education has been in black schools in the South,’ which he knew were underfunded, under everything, underachieving, everything. He says, 'I'm just wondering, I don't know if he could keep up here.” And I just found this out last summer, at our fiftieth reunion. Bill Berkeley told me that, and then Bill said that some of the other [administrators], Bill said he spoke up and all and he said, “No, we're going to give this guy a chance,” and made honor roll all the way through.

What these stories indicate is that there were individual champions who encouraged Black students to pursue their goals, but that generally, the school systems not only failed to support and promote them, but sometimes actively blocked their progress.

Of course, many Rutgers students did have pre-college preparation to meet the dominant standards of academic excellence. Even then, though, they were often doubted, ignored, or even derided by white faculty and staff. Vickie Donaldson had attended a small, all-Black school in South Florida where she was taught the grammar of General American English and the literature of William Shakespeare. She recalls that her first-year English composition teacher at Rutgers peppered the class with questions, asking them to raise their hands every time they knew some fact about a Shakespeare play.

After a while, there was only one hand going up. And he said, how do you know so much about Shakespeare? So I said, well in my high school, a little Black school in Florida, in order to graduate we had to do a senior thesis, and mine just happened to be how
Shakespeare develops character. So I read 23 works in order to write the paper. And then he said, well what about grammar? So, you know, not many people can tell you what a dangling participle is or what an infinitive is, so I won the battle, but more than letting him know that I was gonna be here, it told me that I could do this. My mother said to me when I came to Rutgers, your job is school. She died with my bail money in her wallet [laughter].

Donaldson was not the only student who had her academic preparation challenged. Thomas Roberts, Rutgers-Newark class of 1973, and Seton Hall Law School alumnus was a very accomplished student at his high school. He asks, rhetorically: “Why did the professors always ask me what my SAT scores were?” At Rutgers College, Frank McClellan made the Dean’s List his first year, and he brought his grades to the football coach who asked him “‘How’d you do that?’ and I said, ‘I studied! That’s what I came here for, to study.’ And so he looked at me as if I had done something wrong.” That moment was a turning point for McClellan. He began exploring his Black identity, forming, with classmates, an African American student society that brought guests to Rutgers, including Roy Innis of the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE).

A kind of superior attitude existed within institutions of higher education whereby even strong students with good grades were not seen as culturally prepared for college. Even though he was not supported by his high school, Bruce Hubbard managed to land an interview for admission to Dartmouth College on the strength of his grades. But he discovered that his own notions of how to dress and present himself at the meeting were not in synch with the expectations of his interviewees:

So, I went to the Dartmouth interview and there was a huge table in Colts Neck and there were all these white guys. I had gone with my friends to Newark and we had the Easter Monday Ball at Convention Hall. Everybody would buy, like, a fancy suit and you’d go to church on Easter, and then, you’d run home and take it off, because, on Easter Monday night, you wanted to go to the party. So, mine was sort of white iridescent and, when the light hit it, it would change color. So, we had gone to Newark and we thought we were just the hottest thing going. I had some, like, maybe the shoes were sort of purple-y, alligator-y, and it was hot, hot. So, I mean, I’ve got my Dartmouth interview, I put on my new suit. I go and I look around the room and all these white guys, they’re tweed-ed up,
with the arm patches and tweed. The guy who's at the head, the first thing he says to me is, "Nice suit." So, that's the first time I got it and I said, "Well, thank you very much." The next question he asked me was, "Did your father go to Dartmouth?" and I started to see how that system operated. I said, "No." Knowing what I know now, I would've said, "Who black in 1965 has a father who went to Dartmouth?" Like, I mean, I subsequently found out that there were people who [did]--I have friends I went to law school with whose fathers actually did go and had been there … So, knowing now, it's not an unreasonable question, but, anyway, I was "flotsam and fluff" for them and I didn't get admitted. So, of the schools that I was admitted to that were majority schools, Rutgers was the best.242

Hubbard tells this story with humor, but it is indicative both of the establishment’s belief in its own superiority and of the way that superiority is reproduced over generations. Many of the alumni narratives reveal the perceptions and prejudgments they had to constantly disprove and the obstacles they had to overcome to meet standards of merit and notions of cultural acceptability that were not designed to reflect their own achievements and lived experience.

This superiority was not limited to the Ivy League. Rutgers University itself did little to promote promising Black students from its own campus neighborhoods. As an undergraduate at Rutgers-Newark, Vickie Donaldson herself went to the public schools in Newark, N.J. to recruit students to apply to Rutgers-Newark because the guidance counselors in the high schools there were simply not encouraging their Black students to apply, and the University had no recruiting networks in its own campus city. Donaldson brought the high schoolers to the admissions office, they were accepted, and many ended up Phi Beta Kappa, Donaldson recalls. “The public schools were telling people not to apply; Rutgers is an Ivy, unless you’re in the top decile, you won’t get in” was the message, she says.243 The discouraging attitude directed at Black students didn’t end in high school. Dr. Carole Sampson-Landers, class of 1969, was consistently told by her advisors at Douglass College that she would never make it in medical school: “Had I listened to my advisors I would not be here today.”244 These experiences expose the effects of false conceptions of merit on Black students who were seen by gatekeepers as not meriting entrance to prestigious
courses of study at predominantly white institutions of higher education. But as the 1960s began to give way to the more militant 1970s, the Black students at Rutgers began rejecting the message that they were inferior and less meritorious than their white contemporaries. Leon Green, Rutgers College, 1971, describes them starting to push back against the narrative. “We would not be a disadvantaged culture,” he says. The institution of Rutgers itself “had to understand that we had something to offer; it had to understand that we were their intellectual equals.”

The Predominantly White Campus

What many of the Black student alumni of the 1960s and early 1970s recall as their first impression of Rutgers University was the sheer whiteness of the campus. When Frank McClellan pulled up at Rutgers College in 1962 after his drive east from Pittsburgh, “I looked around and I saw nothing but white people. So my father said to me, do you know what you’re doing, Frank?” McClellan reassured his father, but as time wore on, he, like many of his classmates, felt an acute loneliness and isolation. Thomas Ashley, Rutgers College class of 1964, first visited Rutgers as a basketball recruit. Part of that visit included a trip to a fraternity where he recalls being treated very graciously, but he discovered upon arriving as a student that the fraternity did not allow black people. He felt depressed, isolated, alone: “I was alone for at least five days and I did not see another black person.” The members of the Jewish fraternity on campus were the most friendly to the fewer than 20 Black men at Rutgers College, recalls Joseph Charles, class of 1964, noting that he remained friends with them into the 21st century. The Black students simply knew they would never be asked to join any of the others: “You knew you were not welcome,” explains Charles. The exclusion and isolation provoked strong reaction in many of the Black students. As Thomas Ashley put it: “There were just none of us around, and I had to adjust. But
at some point, you started becoming angry because, especially in the basketball experience, there were just no Black people, and I couldn’t understand why.”

Over time, all the Black students at Rutgers College came to know one another, but because they were so few in number, they were unable to address problems or implement programs. “There wasn’t that core, that critical mass that could get together to think about doing things as a group, as a movement. We were so separated and our thinking was so focused on getting through what we had to get through that it happened later with Frank [McClellan] and his class, and that’s a good that we should credit his class and those who came after him for,” says Charles, who graduated three years before McClellan.  

McClellan’s time at Rutgers bridged the critical years between little active campus protest and very few Black students to small increases in the number of Black students and vocal activism. He was the only Black person on the football team, the only Black person in attendance at a mixer, and he soon realized he would have to get off campus in order to survive with any kind of social life: “From that point forward, my life was about searching for Blackness.”  

As a panelist at the Black on the Banks conference in 2015, McClellan read aloud the first paragraph of the prologue to *Invisible Man*, cited at the beginning of this chapter. “That’s how I felt at Rutgers,” he says. In the South, it was clear there was a battle going on, but at Rutgers, “it’s like the university said, you’re here, but so what,” McClellan says.  

No one paid attention to the Black students or addressed their lived experience of the national struggle for civil rights in any way, and to them, it felt like they simply did not matter.

The women at Douglass College at the same time were equally few in number, but experienced a warmer, closer-knit community at the women’s college than the men experienced at Rutgers College. M. Wilma Harris describes it as “a very special place with special people”
and says she didn’t feel terribly isolated because of the caring and warm feeling she developed with the other Black students. 253 Juanita Wade Wilson, Douglass College class of 1966, remembers two professors, Dr. Emily Alman and Dr. Cecelia Hodge Drewry, inviting her and other classmates for dinner at their homes. However, the racial makeup of the student body did not escape notice of the women any more than it did the men. “It was very white [laughter],” Betty Davis tells her interviewer for the Rutgers Oral History Archive, describing her first impression of Douglass.

Douglass leadership chose to pair the African American students with white roommates rather than grouping them together in a dorm, and both Betty Davis and Juanita Wade Wilson later discovered the parents of their white roommates had been told in advance their daughters would be living with a Black student. As Davis explains it

My parents weren’t asked [laughter] if it was okay if I was paired with a white student, which I found really interesting. They said, “Okay.” In a sense, to be fair, they were attempting to do something that hadn’t been done before, and this was their way of trying to do it. I guess figuring, well, there’s a likelihood that some black parents wouldn’t want that, so they would have to ask the parents of the white student whether that was okay. 254

Davis and her roommate co-existed peacefully enough, and Wilson roomed with her first-year roommate all four years. The latter pair are still friends and visit each other regularly. But at the time, Wilson recalls going to civil rights meetings, coming home upset, and not understanding why her roommate wasn’t equally angry. “She was really strong to stick with me for four years,” says Wilson, noting that the roommate eventually worked for equal opportunity at Rutgers. Wilson says her roommate credited her with the career choice. “I am doing this because Juanita taught me about the way things were,” recounts Wilson. 255

Just as was the case with their male peers at Rutgers College, the Black women at Douglass in 1965 found it difficult to create a space of their own on campus because they were
so few and were so separated. Dr. Barbara Morrison-Rodriguez says that it was hard for the

Black Douglass women to stick together:

They strategically scattered us, although I think that at that time, Douglass didn’t want
the perception that they were segregating us, so they certainly weren’t going to put us all
in the same dorm or in the same house. To me, it felt like one of us was on each campus.
That’s how it felt to me, like we were so scattered. When we got to know each other, we
sought each other out. But we were not enough of us to form a black house, for example.
That happened later.256

Once the number of Black students at Douglass College grew, however slightly, and as the
culture at large became more activist, it was easier for students to join together to push for
initiatives around the idea of Black identity and culture. A Black House did come into being by
the time Rosalind Carmichael graduated in 1972. As she tells it

We did have – we were able to get what we called, “The Black House.” We were able to
get a house where Black women lived … I think Douglass didn’t want any controversy.
They didn’t want any publicity. Pretty much what we asked for, which was not much,
they said, just go ahead. I think we got it. But it wasn’t – even though we had a group, it
was just about one or two or three women who did the actual strategizing and talking to
the dean. We never went en masse to challenge or anything. We didn’t operate like
that.257

There were, of course, en masse protests at the Rutgers Camden, New Brunswick, and Newark
campuses in 1969, most famously the occupation of Conklin Hall at Rutgers-Newark, but
continuous mass protest and disruption was not a feature of daily life at Douglass College.

The Newark campus was situated in a paradox. It was a nearly all-white institution in the
middle of a predominantly Black city, a city that had just experienced a traumatic racial uprising
in which people died and were injured and there was great property damage.258 Patricia Graham
recalls a fairly intense dislike of Rutgers-Newark when she arrived: “Oh, I didn't like Rutgers-
Newark, because mostly I was the only black student in class or there was one other student.
After having that experience at Essex County Community College, where professors were very
warm and friendly because it was a small school, they knew us all personally, and then just
transferring over to Rutgers in Newark, which was a little bit larger, it just felt kind of cold and impersonal.” Vickie Donaldson first attended in 1967 just months after the Newark uprising. She saw no other Black people on campus, apart from a member of the kitchen staff, for her first two weeks on campus. “All the walls were white, all the faculty was white, all the students were white,” she remembers. This was quite disorienting to students like Graham, Donaldson and others who had been active in the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power Movement, or both, and who were unused to being so isolated during the course of every day.

None of the Black alumni of the era who attended Rutgers-Camden have been interviewed by the Rutgers Oral History Archive, but the University’s Special Collection does include a number of writings from students there at the time. Myrna Williams, Rutgers-Camden class of 1969, wrote a short reflection called “Black Feeling” that describes her sense of having an outsider status on the campus:

As I walk about the campus of Rutgers College of South Jersey: extension of Rutgers, the State University, that black feeling stretches out to squeeze me out. I notice looks that don’t see me or see but don’t see. In my class rooms I always feel the pins and needles sticking my meat as I watch the preformed conception in front of me avoid my face, it seems to look only when it thinks it has said something that I should appreciate. I see the white mass carry out acts that have been portrayed as the “things college kids do”, yet I don’t do these things. I don’t dance at the frat parties on Friday night, I don’t go with the sorority sisters on their day out, I don’t even pay attention to the “all students invited” signs. I know and they know that the poster lacks the adjective “white” before the word “students”. They tell me that I am welcomed, maybe I am surfacely, but deep down the differences prevent the truth: I wouldn’t enjoy doing “their thing” and that’s what all is here: “their Things”, from the top layer to the undercrust. I come and I go, into a world and back to my world each day.

This account echoes the feelings of students across all three campuses that they were somehow interlopers in a white space, wildly outnumbered, grudgingly welcomed, at best, and general ignored by their white peers and the institution itself. Invisible.
Being ignored and feeling irrelevant was a huge change for the students who had come from nurturing majority-black neighborhoods and schools. While many alumni have positive memories from their time at Rutgers, the culture shock was not easy to experience. Dr. Barbara Morrison-Rodriguez recalls that “For many of us, that warm, nurturing and loving environment that we had from our churches, our families, and our schools, even in our segregated communities, wrapped a cocoon around us, and it protected us from a lot of ugliness. And once we were shipped up here, it was, like, in your face.” Davis, too, recalls difficult times as a Black individual on a nearly all-white campus in the context of national upheaval marked by violence and assassination as much as by hope and change. For her, being a Douglass College student was always emotionally difficult, dealing with the change in the environment that I was living in, issues that were going on in the world at that time, the separation in a sense that existed between black students and white students. In some ways, I wouldn’t change it, because all of the emotions and things that I was going through helped me to grow and helped me get more of a sense of who I was and what I might want to do with my life. I look back on it and I remember some of the negative emotions, but in a sense I wouldn’t change it. I still look back on it very fondly.²⁶²

There was support from each other and from some faculty to help mitigate the difficulties confronting Black students, and also from people in the campus community, but no formal support from the institution itself. Patricia Felton-Montgomery, class of 1968, recalls that the African American women who worked at the dining hall on Douglass College showed particular support to the Black students during her years of study, and expressed pride in them. She remembers they made sure she had plenty of food and would sometimes invite her and other Black students to in their homes on Sunday, provided they also attended church with their families. For Felton-Montgomery, this emotional support was invaluable and impactful: “When you would feel lonely away from home, they would hug you and kiss you and tell you how proud they were of you and that they wanted you to succeed. And that meant an awful lot.”²⁶³
Such support networks did provide a salve of sorts for the students but being on the vanguard of integrating a predominantly white institution took a serious toll. Juanita Wade Wilson sums up the feelings of many of her classmates this way: “I hear in all of us a loneliness, the searching for self and Blackness, yourself in Blackness.”

At first, the fear and anticipation of racism kept Dr. Barbara Morrison-Rodriguez depressed and self-isolating in her room, afraid to go out or even to eat in the dining hall. Given the racial conflicts of 1965 and 1966, she says

I expected to have to defend myself. I expected to be in fights, in disagreements. You know what? For the most part, that didn’t happen ... I think that kind of self-isolation was my way of trying to protect myself from being rejected. I learned later that it really wasn’t necessary. People like [M. Wilma Harris], who had been there before, and some of the other girls just kept saying, “just be yourself. Let it go. Everybody will not like you. But everybody will not dislike you either. So just be yourself and go on and get your education.”

For her and many of the students who attended Rutgers in the earlier years of the decade, the best way to survive was to just try to fit in. But as the national political climate changed, Black students became more self-assured and assertive. Morrison-Rodriguez left Rutgers at the end of her junior year after she married and had a child. When she returned to complete her degree in 1970, she noticed a huge difference:

The vibe was different. There was a different kind of vibrancy. There was a different kind of intensity in the atmosphere because I think of all these social movements that were going on and the students were much more politicized and much more politically engaged, even in class. The tone of the discussion was more debate and advocacy around issues. It was just the whole climate was completely different when I left and when I came back.

Like Frank McClellan at Rutgers College, the years Barbara Morrison-Rodriguez experienced at Douglass College were a pivotal turning point in the history of the university and the United States. But even as more Black students were admitted to the University and the national
political climate opened up space for protest and activism, Black students continued to feel isolated and detached from the white students and faculty around them.

It is not uncommon for students to struggle when they first arrive at university, but while this transition is difficult for students of all races, it was particularly so for Black students who felt they had no institutional support or guidance. Dr. Byron Raysor feels that he wasted his first two years at Rutgers, which he spent feeling depressed and confused. He put his undergraduate studies on hold and served in the Vietnam War, returning to complete his degree in 1974. “Who were you to turn to in moments of strife? There was nobody here, so we had to turn to each other,” Raysor recalls.\(^{267}\) He credits Frank McClellan with helping many of the students at Rutgers College find their own identity as Black men. One of those men, Lynn Whatley, Rutgers College class of 1970, moved out of the Rutgers dormitories and into off-campus housing to be near other Black students as soon as he possibly could. He needed support and was unable to find it from mentors within the white culture that dominated Rutgers College. He felt disturbed and confused about why the University would place him in housing without any other Black students. “This community flipped me. I was a nice guy, but I realized I had been put down in the vanguard of the Black Power Movement,” recalls Whatley.\(^{268}\)

Of course, not all the Black students experienced Rutgers in the same way, and there is a difference in outlook between students who graduated in 1969 or earlier and those who followed. While not denying the existence of very real racism on campus, Bruce Hubbard says he never felt isolated and loved Rutgers, calling it the best four years of his life. He was elected to the Rutgers College Student Council and became a student representative to the Board of Governors. He thought each of his Black classmates should join a different fraternity so when other Black students came later, they wouldn’t have to be the first to integrate. He says that the plan worked
great except that “two years later when the program came in 1968, and the brothers came in, [they said] ‘what are you Uncle Tom’s [sic] doing in the white fraternities?’” Hubbard was referring to the admissions program negotiated with Rutgers President Mason Gross, which will be discussed in the next chapter. This anecdote, jokingly offered, illustrates the changing mood amongst Black students over the course of the 1960s as noted by Barbara Morrison-Rodriguez.

In contrast to students who would later call for the establishment of a Black house, Bryant Mitchell, who had been part of an integration lawsuit as a child in Virginia and graduated in 1969 before the campus protests, was not interested in living on a newly established all-Black dormitory floor:

“There’s no way I was going to live in a black student section. I didn’t come all the way to college, man, to separate myself. I mean, doesn’t the definition of college mean you explore? I mean, you can voice your opinions and everything and you can unite for special issues and things, but half of college – that’s why when they talk about remote learning and all though the Internet. I don’t care what people say, we’re social animals. You’ve got to know people and the more variety of people you know, the tolerance for people [that are] different from you. So, I never even thought of that, but then again, I’m looking at kids who have just grew up in an all-black environment – maybe they can’t make that adjustment without it being an issue. That’s just not me.”

Mitchell had a diverse group of friends during his time at Rutgers. He roomed with an Orthodox Jewish student, a white student who was the president of the Rutgers chapter of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), a Puerto Rican student, and finally, with Michael Jackson, who is cited in this chapter and others. The differing perspectives of Rutgers students who embraced integration and those who sought race-based housing and cultural groups reflected the national debate about how best to serve the interests of Black people. And while integration became the dominant doctrine, embraced by white liberals, the human costs of integration were very real and most certainly did not eliminate racism either at Rutgers or in the country as a whole.

Racism on Campus
Bryant Mitchell jokes that his huge Afro – “one of the biggest Afros on the East coast” - and his year living with the SDS president may be what earned him the enmity of the coaching staff of the Rutgers football team, on which he was a star player. But in seriousness, he attributes it to race: “I really got less support than some of my white teammates,” says Mitchell. While white players were invited to speaking engagements, introduced to local businesspeople, and promoted to professional football teams, he was given little if any of that kind of opportunity. “I realized Rutgers hadn’t promoted me much at all,” he recalls, “It’s something that all the other schools were doing for their athletes.” The lack of support for Black athletes was pronounced. Michael Chavies, Rutgers College class of 1971, played football and baseball during his first two years at Rutgers, but quit both teams to “hit the books” and prepare to apply to law school. “We didn’t get a lot of support from the coaching staff here,” he recalls, “we received our mentorship internally from one another.” The connection to teammates and classmates is what kept Ernest Edwards, Rutgers College, 1969, from feeling isolated even when a terrible injury he sustained in football practice ended his collegiate athletics career. He filed a lawsuit against the coaching staff, and according to Edwards, his coach lied on the stand about giving him the instructions that led to his injury. “Something snapped in me,” says Edwards of that experience in court. Shortly afterwards, he joined the Nation of Islam, and “I’ve been blessed as a result of it.”

Athletes were not the only students who felt acutely the lack of mentors. Frank McClellan says that the biggest effect of the invisibility he felt on campus was that since no one saw him, no one mentored him. “You had to silently figure out a way that you were gonna have a social life, how you were going to build a career, how you were going to make a choice about what you did after that,” he explains. Thomas Ashley was discouraged by the whole
experience. “I was just glad to leave [Rutgers],” he recalls, “I felt myself competing against myself. I wanted to do more, but there was no one around to help me.”

Lynn Whatley, too, felt the strain of being placed in a white culture without support. He laments not being able to be friends with a teacher, someone to nurture him, particularly someone who looked like him. “That was part of what was missing here on the Rutgers campus,” Whatley says.

To make matters worse, not only did they have no mentors, but the Black alumni recall that there was effectively no meaningful inclusion of African American history, politics, or literature in the curriculum until the late 1960s after the student protesters themselves demanded its inclusion. Rutgers-Camden student activist Roy L. Jones, class of 1970, summed up this feeling when he cited “this institution’s educational dehumanistic irrelevance.”

There was also neglect from staff in student support roles. On the Newark campus, students considered the financial aid office to be overtly hostile to Black people. Thomas Roberts, Rutgers-Newark class of 1973, recalls that neither he nor his friends received scholarship or financial aid. “We found out later on that the student aid office had a real problem with supporting non-whites,” says Roberts. Black students had to be strong, he recalls, to deal with “some of the institutionalized racism and just the individual racisms that we would face on a daily basis.”

To educate themselves about the academic topics that they did consider relevant, the students turned to each other rather than to the institution. George Hampton recalls recognizing how much he had to learn from his peers at Rutgers-Newark:

The point is, is that it was quickly, I learned quickly that - two things. One, it was very important to be around people like Vickie [Donaldson] and [Richard] Roper and some of the others because I learned quite frankly, I’m just being honest, I learned very quickly about that. That is really, this issue about Pan Africanism, and all that, I picked this up from these kids running around with these square things in their hands. What are these square things? I think it was Vivian, Vivian said, they’re called books, George [laughter]. You know. But the point that I’m simply making was the students then who ultimately, I learned the most from, it was the students then who are still my friends to this day.”
Students in New Brunswick had a similar experience. M. Wilma Harris recalls taking a survey course in history that covered a mix of arts, literature and politics, and another course on the Harlem Renaissance. Joy Stewart Williams and Bruce Hubbard cite Professor Eugene Genovese as being an influential faculty member who cared about African American history, and as Williams put it, awakened them to the beauty of African culture. Paulette Sapp Peterson, Douglass College, 1971, and a superior court judge in New Jersey until 2015, never had Cecelia Hodge Drewry as a professor, but recalls her as being a great influence. But these are singular examples. More common is the sense of detachment from curriculum and faculty. Frank McClellan recalls that as juniors and seniors in New Brunswick, their self-education began an awakening: “You can see how the mind becomes alive because something is going to the core and has meaning.” This awakening came primarily from within themselves as many of the alumni recount that their professors neither sparked nor recognized the interests of the Black students.

In fact, many of the Black alumni experienced the effects of ignorance and outright mistreatment from professors. Joy Stewart Williams recalls insensitive or racist belief systems from faculty who considered themselves liberal, “yet they were not familiar with the African American history and culture enough to have informed opinions, in my opinion.” She recalls as an example discussions devolving into debates about the alleged middle-class aspirations of Black students. Bruce Hubbard remembers a chemistry professor who would not recognize his raised hand. He finally had to stand up and say, “Can you see me now?” in order to be called on. Greg Stewart felt that “We weren’t received relatively well by the professors. We were ignored, and so it was very appropriate I think when Frank read from the isolated, um, the *Invisible Man* because that’s what I identified to at Rutgers, that we were invisible.” A terrible
example of the negation of topics important to Black students is given by Rosalind Carmichael. She had a professor who would not allow her to do a final project on the writer of her choice because that writer was Black. As she tells it:

I have a story. I won’t say the professor’s name because I’m not sure that’s who he is. But I had a professor and we had to do a paper on a writer that we liked. I liked Langston Hughes. I wanted to do my paper on Langston Hughes. This is a twenty-five, thirty page paper on Langston Hughes and his work. I told the professor, and he said, “No.” He said, “Because there are no African American writers of note and so you cannot do that.” I’m eighteen, nineteen. What am I going to do? You’re not going to do it. The fight wasn’t there yet to challenge him … This is just how he felt and this is what he told his student, unfortunately. That could have been an impetus for me to start reading more and more black authors. I’m going to see. I know what he said can’t be true. My education in African American literature didn’t begin until I went to Douglass. It wasn’t so much the courses, until the Black professors started coming. The lecturers started coming and we were able to explore what we wanted. Then I just started reading. I just loved to read. But I read everything. I just don’t read Black books. I read everything.289

The effect of this faculty member’s refusal to allow Carmichael to choose Langston Hughes as her subject, and all the other instances of ignorance, insensitivity, and outright racist disrespect experienced by these Black students, became part of the accumulated motivation that fueled their protest movement. The movement and its outcomes will be discussed in the next chapter, but the last several sentences of Carmichael’s narrative show clearly that she moved from discouraged to engaged as more Black professors joined the Douglass faculty.

Apart from racist interactions with faculty and staff, the students also experienced overt racism from their white classmates, occasionally violent as noted above in Randy Green’s narrative. Barbara Morrison-Rodriguez, Bruce Hubbard, and Leon Green, Rutgers College class of 1972, all remember being called the n-word during their years at Rutgers.290 The reality of the Rutgers’ culture was clear to Green:

Here we are, struggling to get to Rutgers, we’ve gotten here, this is supposed to be an elevated, intellectual state university in New Jersey … an almost, as we was constantly told, was the almost Ivy League school dating back to 1766. And yet, right in our faces,
no matter how much struggling we had done, from their perspective, we were n—s, and that was the reality.  

Curt Morrison, Rutgers College class of 1971, looked up one day at a building colloquially known as one of the “River Dorms” to see the letters S-P-O-N-G-E displayed in each window to form a single word. Upon investigating, he and friends learned this stood for “Society for the Prevention of N—s Getting Everything.” “We got everything? This is everything?” jokes Morrison when remembering this example of white student racism. As he tells it, he and friends went to speak to the residents of the rooms “to engage in academic discourse”:

I remember very vividly when the young man opened the door and he saw three or four of us that were there and he started …. Buh buh buh buh buh buh … and no physical harm happened, we were just asking him what this was all about. He felt that we were trying to do, intended to do, harm, but that was not the case. Ultimately, it ended up one of the preceptors was a friend of ours from Phi Sig and we ended that hopefully with some educating of the young man on our part.

This is an example of overt racism, and there were others, from an altercation during a Four Tops concert to the family pressure on a white Douglass student not to continue dorming with her Black friend past the first year. Leon Green recalls that despite it being the era of in loco parentis, they had no one to look out for them, and were seen by their classmates as inferior “interlopers.” But as the Rutgers and the nation moved toward the latter half of the 1960s, the attitudes of Black students had changed, and the stage was set for the Black Student Protest Movement to begin in earnest. It was time for change at a predominantly white institutions, and the students were going to make it happen, joined together by the shared experiences and understanding of racism and of national events, both before and after their studies began at Rutgers.
Chapter 4
Disruptions, Demands, and New Agreements

“Let’s make no mistake about what happened here in ’69. ’69 was about white supremacy. It was about hatred. Let’s understand that.”

Despite the stir caused by Donald Harris’ arrest on August 8, 1963, there was generally little student protest on the Rutgers-New Brunswick campus in the early years of the decade. At Douglass College, Betty Davis, who graduated in 1966, witnessed few acts of political activism around racial equity during her four years of study. She discusses this with Molly Graham, interviewer for the Rutgers Oral History Archive:

MG: Were students at Douglass becoming politically active while you were there? It was the beginning of the civil rights movement.

BD: Not so much. I was part of the NAACP group that was there at the time, starting in my sophomore year. [Editor’s Note: Founded in 1909, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is a civil rights organization that works to ensure political, social, economic and educational equality.] There was a bit of activism then, but it was starting to change after I left. I think up through 1966 and that class, while we were aware of things that were going on, there wasn’t the kind of activism that started [in] ’67-’68.295

Like Davis, M. Wilma Harris tells her interviewer, Molly Graham, that she saw little anti-racist activism at Douglass College between 1962 and 1966. She describes a campus just at the brink of change:

MG: The world was changing so rapidly at that point.

MWH: Later, it was changing very rapidly, because we hadn’t really gotten into Vietnam when I was a student. They were talking about it. It was my junior or senior year that the Civil Rights Act was signed. I think it was my junior year. There was no affirmative action, which came like in ’65. It was at the springboard of all of those things happening.

You could sense the times, they were a-changing, but not sure how they were going to
go, knowing that there was a need for the times to be a changing.

MG: Were the changing times reflected in any way at Douglass?

MWH: Sure they were. I’m sure. God. I know we had a bus that went to a rally for LBJ
[Lyndon B. Johnson] in Woodbridge or Fords or something, because Goldwater was just
so far to the right. [Editor's Note: Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater was the Republican
nominee during the 1964 Presidential race.] Now of course, considering what’s out there,
he looks like a Centralist, be that as it may. There was a Rutgers chapter of the NAACP,
but not Douglass because [it’s] too small an entity. No. Nothing that comes to mind, other
than the rally for LBJ and that was early ’64.296

Yet the relatively quiet environment at Rutgers University in the early part of the decade would
soon give way to activism and protest as the struggle for Civil Rights led into urban uprisings,
and growing Black nationalist sentiment spurred student-led action for reform on campus.

As described in the previous chapter, the individual and shared experiences of racism, the
growing articulation of their identity as Black people, and the national context of a growing
movement for racial justice began to radicalize even those students who had not been particularly
active in social movements before they came to Rutgers. As noted by his classmates, Frank
McClellan emerged as a campus leader in New Brunswick, becoming a bridge between the
students who graduated in 1966 or earlier and those who graduated in 1969 or later, sometimes
several years later in the case of those who served in the Vietnam War. As summarized by Joy
Stewart Williams, Douglass College class of 1968: “We here at Rutgers, led by Frank
McClellan, had a collegiate militant perspective, and we agitated around local and national social
issues relevant to the struggles of the day.”297 This group of students in New Brunswick formed
the first Student Afro-American Society (SAS). They invited speakers to campus such as Roy
Innis of the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE) and activist and intellectual Bayard Rustin,
and held consciousness-raising events about Black Power. And it was this group of students who
would pass the baton to those who studied at Rutgers during the height of the racial justice
movement that escalated into outright protests and campus disruptions after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in April of 1968.

For students studying at Rutgers in 1967 and later, things began to change dramatically. Many of the students then entering the university had been more actively involved in the Civil Rights Movement while still in high school than their predecessors had been, and they were inclined to embrace the ideology of Black Nationalism. Dr. Barbara Morrison-Rodriguez entered Douglass College as part of the class of 1969, but marriage, a baby, and the Vietnam War intervened, and she put her studies on hold, left New Brunswick, and later returned to complete her degree, which she earned in 1971. She told interviewer Molly Graham that she aligned herself with all of the national protest movements as they gained momentum:

I thought they were all--first of all, I had a husband I didn’t want to go to Vietnam, so I was definitely anti-war. I sort of woke up to Civil Rights because it was in dialogue and looking at what people were talking about that I realized how segregated and discriminatory my early life was. I think when you’re young and that’s all you know, you don’t have a context for looking at it in any other way. That woke up me up to a lot of things. My mother had always been a feminist long before because she just believed that women were capable and competent and she wasn’t going to let anybody discriminate against her because of her gender. She wasn’t going to play second fiddle because of her gender. So I already had a very strong feminist model in my own household. The feminist movement made absolute sense to me.298

At the same time that students such as Dr. Morrison-Rodriguez were making connections between the national social movements and their own lives, student leaders at all three Rutgers campuses were becoming specific and strategic in thinking about how to advance their goals.

In February of 1968, a group of students at Rutgers-Newark who were concerned about the slow pace of progress toward racial equity at Rutgers approached Malcolm D. Talbott, the University Vice President in charge of the Newark Campus, and offered their help recruiting black students since the University had not been successful in doing so despite implementing new recruitment policies as early as 1965.299 As mentioned in chapter 3, Vickie Donaldson was
one of the leaders of this initiative. Called the Black Organization of Students (BOS), the group met later that month with faculty and administrators on the Newark campus to voice their discontent on issues such as low Black student enrollment, the small number of Black faculty, and the lack of courses and library material of relevance to them. Students in New Brunswick made demands similar to their classmates in Newark and on campuses nationwide, and they also sought to reinstate the status of Paul Robeson, Rutgers’ most famous alumni, who had become nationally maligned for his supposed communist ideology. In New Brunswick, Jerry Harris, Rutgers College class of 1969, was at the helm of the SAS and recalls that they adopted a “collective impact model” as their guiding strategic principle. “My entire presidency of SAS was about giving parties,” jokes Harris, but he quickly clarifies the seriousness of his statement by emphasizing that this was a conscious approach in which “the relationships preceded the work.”

At the same time the BOS leaders first approached Talbott in February 1968, a University Committee on Equal Opportunity issued a statement proposing changes that aimed to admit more “deprived students” from “minority groups,” hire staff from minority groups, better train current staff to give attention to “the problems of deprived persons,” recruit minority group faculty from both inside and outside academia, develop graduate students from minority groups into faculty members, and use the University Extension Division and Cooperative Extension Service to educate the community at large about the importance of equal opportunity. Yet while the substance of this particular statement largely dovetails with the initial demands of the BOS, relations between the administration, faculty and the Black students on all three campuses would become contentious, with friction over goals and priorities that were not in alignment, and differences over implementation and pace of change. Considering the deficit language used by
the institution to describe the people it hoped to serve, the misalignment seems inevitable. Students were empowered, were standing up and showcasing their contributions and their successes and were refusing to remain invisible. This powerful self-identification did not align with the rhetoric of deprivation and disadvantage.

The incremental pace of change simply became untenable after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., which many of the Black alumni now see as the critical turning point in their movement. Greg Stewart, Rutgers College, 1971, calls King’s murder “one of the most significant events that ever happened in the history of Rutgers, or for that fact, the country,” and recalls a dramatic change in their movement at Rutgers from that point forward. The assassination of the revered and beloved Civil Rights leader was a call to action for students, and it created a space in which University administrators signaled willingness to pay attention to the experiences of Black students on campus. Two students from Rutgers College, Michael Jackson and Bryant Mitchell, spoke directly to President Mason Gross about how to respond to King’s assassination. As Jackson recalls that conversation:

Actually, it was Bryant that probably convinced Mason to close the school. The night of the 4th [Dr. King's assassination], all kinds, there was a riot in New Brunswick, we were talking about doing this and doing that, and somebody said, "Well, we need to talk to the President." So, Bryant [Mitchell] and I went up to Dr. Gross's house and he admitted us. This is about one o'clock in the morning. It was late and they talked a couple of hours and Bryant was passionate and convincing. I remember Gross saying, "Yes, but we didn't close the University for JFK," and Bryant let him know that this was not the same kind of situation and that it would probably be much better, go on and on, and so, they closed the school the next day. I didn't know Gross well, but Bryant spoke well of him and he handled the Genovese* thing in '64 well and stood up for his professor and academic freedom and freedom of speech and all of that. So, I think he was a good guy. I never had a relationship with him, only through Bryant, but I respected him for listening to us and I'm glad he shut the school, I really am, because I don't know what would've happened if he hadn't. Then, he was a good administrator and he had good staff. They knew what they were doing and I think, or I believe, Mason understood the times. "The times were a

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* Mason Gross defended Professor Eugene Genovese from calls for his firing after Genovese declared himself a Marxist and Socialist and expressed support for the Viet Cong at a teach-in about the Vietnam War on April 23, 1965.
changin’,” and they needed to get on the boat and I think they took the lead of what was happening in schools.\textsuperscript{305}

Not only was Mason Gross and his administration moved to listen to students and act accordingly but the students also responded with action. Stewart says Dr. King’s death “triggered a whole series of demonstrations, teach ins, movements, actions” that brought together Black students, the two Latino students who were their classmates, and the few white radicals on campus.\textsuperscript{306} The organizers of these events would begin to develop concrete strategies to push the University to make significant changes for racial justice.

Of course, the institution’s response to Martin Luther King, Jr.’s death was not universally praised. Jeffrey Sammons recalls being outraged by a visiting minister’s failure to even mention King’s death at a Kirkpatrick Chapel church service the Sunday after the assassination. Sammons confronted the minister in front of Rutgers University Chaplain Bradford S. Abernethy. “How could you be a man of the cloth and not recognize what has happened and address it?” Sammons demanded of him. Sammons recalls Abernethy calling him in afterwards, and Sammons responded by writing an open letter decrying the incident in \textit{The Daily Targum}, the Rutgers College newspaper. Patricia-Felton Montgomery, class of 1968, agrees that the response to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr’s death was “inappropriate and not what we would have hoped for such a great American,” and she recalls that of the three representatives the University sent to the funeral from Douglass College, only one was from New Jersey.\textsuperscript{307} Greg Stewart was so emotionally hurt that he was unable to study, and he felt that the trauma would have justified some academic time off: “One is entitled to some kind of remedy if you’re hurt so badly by an event that occurs.”\textsuperscript{308} Stewart talked about his pain with his friend from high school in Newark, Leon Green, Rutgers College class of 1971. Green recalls being so shocked by King’s death that it produced a personal internal shift that left him even
more dedicated to the fight for racial justice than he had been. His shock was rooted in a true sense of vulnerability. “If Doctor King can be assassinated, absolutely no one, not one of us was safe,” Green felt. The heightened sense of urgency experienced internally by students led them to develop closer ties to activists on the Newark and Camden campuses, recalls Jerry Harris. Despite students on the three campuses having somewhat different demands and different relationships with the communities in which they were situated, they were united in no longer being willing to tolerate a lack of progress. Harris says, “King’s assassination made things substantially different.” Or as Jeffrey Sammons puts it, the murder was “traumatic but also transformative.”

On April 19, 1968, Black student representatives from all three campuses appeared before the Rutgers Board of Governors (BOG) and presented a “List of Grievances and Demands.” The list comprised 14 items and noted: the “grossly inadequate” number of Black students, Black Deans and administrators at Rutgers; called for the creation of an Afro-American Studies Department, a Black culture institute, and more representation of contemporary Black authors at the libraries, bookstore and student centers; demanded the investigation of the “discriminatory practices” of the Campus Patrol; asked for a re-evaluation of the grading system and better dissemination of information about tutorial programs; requested a Black dormitory and permission to found a Black fraternity; sought to rename the student center for Paul Robeson, the “Noblest Black Son of Rutgers,” and formally recognize other Black alumni; and called for the creation of a scholarship committee that included Black members, and a permanent committee of University administrators and Black students that would foster ongoing dialogue. Michael Jackson, Rutgers College, 1971, describes the scene at which students discussed the specifics of their demands with Rutgers College leadership:
I was on the negotiating committee, but I didn't stay after Greg took—when we got to the negotiations, Dean [of Rutgers College (1967-1972) Arnold] Grobman put up their version of the Transitional Year Program and Greg (Stewart?) said, "No, that's not right." So, he took the chalk out of Dean Grobman's hand and an eraser and erased everything the Dean of the College had put up there. He said, "This is the way it's supposed to work," and there were, I think, ten or twelve students, maybe not that many, the deans, heads of departments, and they start taking notes from him. I said, "It's over now," [laughter] and I don't think I went back to it. I said, "The process of co-option has begun," and, I mean, we were teaching them. It's like, "Okay," so, I left, but, then, I mean, I left the negotiations, because they didn't need me to do anything more, because I was more of an "other voice;" to move things forward, I could be a little argumentative from time to time … Now, nothing happened with our demands for another year. There was an occasion in the spring, I think it was February of '69, that there was this big confab at the gym, where the administration was challenged, and then, things moved after that. Now, there was also, concurrently, stuff going on in the Legislature and I got that from [Mr. Jackson gets up to retrieve a book] from Richard McCormick's book, Black Student Protest Movement at Rutgers. So, a lot of things were already going on that dated back to '65, I think, that the Regents [Rutgers Board of Governors] were talking and the Legislature and there was some coordination between the campuses, Rutgers-Newark, Rutgers College, I guess Douglass Campus.313

Jackson’s recollections very much align with the archival record. After an initial response from the University, discussed above, the pace of changed remained slow until students again asserted themselves in February of 1969, working directly with University leaders to initiate a new opportunity program at the most granular level. Jackson calls this cooperation “co-option,” linking the collaboration between protesters and administrators that occurred at this point to the decline of the more “argumentative” phase of the movement and the rise of one marked by negotiation and compromise.314 As the administration began to launch its new programs, programs developed with significant student participation, battles with the N.J. State Legislature over funding that were rooted in ideological opposition became one of the main obstacles to implementation.

The Board of Governors early on agreed in principle that many of the students’ demands needed to be addressed yet left it to the individual campuses to implement. In a letter to University Provost Richard Schlatter, advertising executive and Board of Governors trustee
Charles H. Brower wrote that while the BOS representatives were “overdemanding and less than friendly, I still believe we must look at the situation calmly, and judge what is best for the university.” He went on to address each of the 14 BOS demands, either agreeing they should be feasible for the BOG to meet or, with regard to creating an Afro-American studies department and re-evaluation of the grading system, agreeing in principle but noting such changes could only be made by administration and faculty. Interestingly, the only point on which Brower openly disagreed was on the renaming of the student center for Paul Robeson, a change the BOG had the power to make. Robeson’s reputation among many Americans had at that time been tarnished because of his supposed support for the Communist party. Brower noted that while he personally had no negative feelings about Robeson, “it would be politically disastrous for Rutgers,” which might impede efforts “to do more than a minimum for the Black students themselves.” This comment was both prescient and shortsighted. Brower clearly anticipated there would be political hurdles to transforming the university, but his hope that rejecting this one demand might stave off the backlash was quite futile.

Students were terribly disappointed by their inability to convince the administration to rename the student center after Paul Robeson although the University did eventually establish both a center and an academic honors program in his name. It was a bitter pill for students to swallow. Bruce Hubbard had a heated exchange with Mason Gross and Richard Schlatter over it in which he publicly accused them of hypocrisy for their stance on Robeson:

Anyway, I had learned that Schlatter had been a card-carrying Communist during the ’30s in the period before the Stalinist purges. So, he's sitting there, as a member of the Board of Governors, and we are in front of TV and radio. It’s an open meeting and I'm the representative on the Board and they’re telling us no. I said, "Well, how is this possible? You've got a card-carrying Communist sitting right beside you who's on the Board. I mean, so, is this fair and equitable?" "Goddammit, Hubbard, that's goddamn dirty," Gross cursed me out. I mean, I was scared, because I was a graduating senior and he and Schlatter were my professors. So, I'm saying, "Okay, you stood up." They gave us a room
in the student center named after Paul Robeson, after I embarrassed them, but, now, I went home and I said, "Oh, shit. Now, you got what you wanted, but, now, you've fucked yourself." So, I immediately walked down the street and Schlatter lived on College Avenue. I went to his house and his wife let me in. I apologized to him and told him I was sorry. I didn't mean to affect his career or his life, and he accepted the apology. Then, I guess in the week after that, I apologized to Gross and he forgave me …

Hubbard made his peace with Gross and Schlatter, but Bryant Mitchell felt equally let down by the University’s unwillingness to honor Robeson, and he attributes their reluctance to political pressure, quite literally, from the N.J. state legislature. He recalls how strongly he and his classmates felt about the importance of honoring Robeson, not only because of his vast accomplishments but also because they identified with him because of the racial discrimination he, like them, had endured in his life. They sought, Mitchell said,

respects for one of the greatest alumni who ever went to the school, but it's because it's a political process. Legislatures run state colleges. When you have to deal with them in your negotiations you're really up against a formidable foe, and all that recognition for Robeson, especially if it were for his political leanings, but what they didn't understand, see, nobody—you understand this, because you're a history major. You understand history exists in context and you understand—you'd have to understand—that a man who's discriminated against by a color is going to look for other avenues where he can get respect. He may not even know. He may not even remain a Communist all his life because he may find out, "Look, God, this is just plain old discrimination. It doesn't make any difference what my political leaning is or what," or, "I want to be a Communist," but you find out it doesn't work as good in the system here, or Communism has the same kind of sameness of everyone, squashing creativity and all of that. But politicians can't afford to look at things that exhaustively. They're looking for votes. That's their job. So, they really fought it, man. The school really just really didn't [stand firm].

Charles Brower’s political calculus held sway, and the administration refused to back down on its refusal to meet this demand. Martin Luther King, Jr. might be openly revered, but the University was not willing to take a risk on leading the vanguard for Robeson’s national rehabilitation.

Shortly after the BOG meeting, the Rutgers News Service issued a press release defending the University’s response – past and present – to the question of “Negro participation
in the university at all levels,” reporting that while things hadn’t been moving as fast as they would like, there had been “substantial progress” in implementing new policies. The structure of the release, which quoted Provost Richard Schlatter, largely mirrored that of Brower’s letter. It addressed BOS demands one by one, listing changes that were or would be underway to address concerns about admissions, faculty and staff recruitment, curricular and cultural changes, scholarship funds, academic support, open dialogue with college Deans, Black student housing and the creation of a Black fraternity. The press release did not mention the students’ demand for an investigation of the Campus Patrol and rejected the renaming of the student center for Paul Robeson, claiming building names were only changed with the support of a “major donor.” It closed with a reminder from Schlatter that the February, 1968 statement from the University Equal Opportunities Committee referenced above was university policy.

The tone of the press release, including Schlatter’s statements, were largely matter of fact with no sweeping pronouncements on the importance of racial justice and equity. Yet it is hard to imagine that the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., just weeks before the Black students presented their grievances, did not influence administration and trustees’ initially positive response to the students after years of foot dragging. A draft statement about the assassination prepared for Mason Gross called the act “a great loss, not only in the death of a dedicated leader of his people, but also in the irreparable damage to our national prestige and our individual reputations. None of us can escape a share of the blame for this tragedy.” Gross expressed here a sense of personal responsibility, and in citing “prestige” and “reputation” may have been providing a rationale for his own response to Black student demands and protests in the years to come.
In addition to their own feelings about the assassination, there is no doubt that members of the Board of Governors and the University administration were listening to the sorrow and anger of students. The predominantly white Rutgers Student Council had convened a special meeting in the days after the assassination to honor King’s memory at which they passed several motions intended to achieve “racial harmony in the Rutgers community.” A typed copy of the Student Council’s statement announcing these motions appears in the archived Mason Gross papers with a handwritten note of unknown origin reading “Motions Applicable at the Board of Governors Level” along with a list of numbers corresponding to seven of the motions. The minutes of that Student Council meeting list all motions passed; the seven motions noted by hand on the statement are starred in pen on the minutes. The starred motions address the creation of an Africana Studies department, the establishment of a Black fraternity chapter, the creation of dorm space for Black students, the suspension of campus groups that have discriminatory policies or engage in racist activities, the renaming of the student center in honor of Paul Robeson, the issuing of a formal welcome to Paul Robeson should he choose to speak on campus, and the halt of construction on the National Football Hall of Fame until the question of Robeson’s membership “be satisfied to the satisfaction of the student body.” The similarity between the Rutgers College Student Council’s motions and the grievances and demands raised by the BOS less than two weeks later are striking and it is clear that there was contact and alignment between the two organizations. Bruce Hubbard served on the student council, as a representative to the Board of Governors, and he was part of the network of Black students at Rutgers. The annotated documents suggest someone in the administration, if not Gross himself, was paying attention to and sympathizing with what the students had to say.
Fear that student unrest would result from grief and anger over Dr. King’s murder may also have played a role in the decision of the Board of Governors and Mason Gross to strike a cooperative tone with the Black Organization of Students. The Newark uprising of July 1967 was recent and traumatic, and campus violence was happening around the country. Self-identifying as “White” and “Black,” two groups of Douglass College students issued separate, strongly worded statements denouncing King’s murder and decrying racism. The white Douglass College students committed themselves to continuing King’s “militant, non-violent struggle against white racism, at whatever cost” (underline in original). The Black students of Douglass College denounced white apathy supporting white racism, and stated “Black people are being destroyed, exploited, held down and held back, and deprived of all rights and equal opportunities. WE, BLACK PEOPLE, HAVE REACHED A BREAKING POINT” (uppercase letters in original). As was the case that the Rutgers College Student Council’s motions closely aligned with the soon-to-be-voiced demands of the Black Organization of Students, so, too, did these separate statements demonstrate similarities in style and tone and demonstrate collaboration. These obvious networks among students would have signaled to University leadership that a student movement was in the making, one they may have hoped to pre-empt or contain with conciliation.

After the initial pledges of support, the University’s efforts toward equal opportunity did continue. The changes were more incremental than transformational. Ten “action-oriented committees” were established comprised of faculty, students, administrators, and community members; three admissions officers were hired to specialize in minority recruitment; talent search and other special admissions programs were instituted accompanied by summer orientation and preparation programs for students admitted through those programs. The
University in 1968 hired 20 Black faculty members and 14 Black and Puerto Rican staff members, and a recruitment and training program for clerical workers was put into place. New curricular and community programs were instituted, and the University’s expenditure on “equal opportunity purposes” grew from a few thousand dollars to $850,000.329

Yet in the academic year following the King assassination and the subsequent pledges to further the goals of equal opportunity, the number of African American and Latino students enrolled at Rutgers University remained abysmally low, a glaring representation of exclusion and inequality. Overall Black enrollment at Rutgers University went from 1.96% in 1967-68 to 2.77% in 1968-69. The largest Black enrollment was at Douglass and Newark colleges, with 4.1 and 4.4% African American enrollment, respectively. The lowest was at the flagship College Avenue campus with Black men making up only 1.49% of the all-male student body. And while data for “Spanish surnamed” students was unavailable for the 1967-68 academic year, “Spanish surnamed” students made up only 0.97% of the overall student body in 1968-69.330

By early 1969, students had grown impatient with the pace of reform and Black students on all three campuses decided to it was time to force institutional change. Leon Green remembers that after the year of forming committees, writing demands, and making presentations, nothing much happened. “The problem is that when you’re oppressed, you want change 100 years ago. When you’re not oppressed, you want change in 100 years. If things are going well for you, why change it?” Green asks, rhetorically.331 Students decided to take matters into their own hands. Speaking at an event commemorating the 50th anniversary of the student occupation of Conklin Hall on the Newark campus, Wendell P. Holbrook, Associate Professor of African American and African studies at Rutgers-Newark, said BOS members utilized the “tactics and strategy bequeathed to them from the Civil Rights Movement,” and were “savvy,
well read, and well informed about the importance of careful planning and step by step execution of protest for change.”

Having more Black students on the campuses, however few the overall numbers still were, did make a difference in their organizational power. Bruce Hubbard, who graduated in 1969, notes the contrast between his first two years at Rutgers College and his final two when there were more Black students enrolled in the university. The younger students in New Brunswick were more assertive than students in earlier years had been, he recalls, and they galvanized the movement:

Anyway, that group led demands for more things and there was more tension after that group hit the campus. Because of that, we started asking for money, programs, faculty and a whole series of things. That had not been happening until the numbers hit a critical mass, okay. All this came to a crescendo when I was a senior and we had a takeover of the President's Office, Mason Gross, and we had been pushing for a whole series of issues for black students--more black students, more black faculty, more black financial aid, more black administrative staff--the same things we're pushing for now.

The demands being made of the administration that Hubbard describes were not haphazard; they were the result of careful strategy and tactics and were modeled on demands being made on other campuses across the country. The networks between the slightly larger group of Black students were growing in strength and effective coordination. If there was a sense among some in the general public that student protesters were vandals or rabble rousers, intent on nothing more than tearing down the status quo, the historical record of careful organizational strategy belies that characterization.

As discussed earlier, the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., brought student groups together within the New Brunswick campus, but Jerry Harris notes that it also brought students across the Newark, Camden, and New Brunswick campuses together for the first time. “We got tired in early 1968 of there not being any motion,” remembers Harris. He lived in an apartment under Dean of Student Affairs Earle Clifford’s house, and Harris recalls it as the
communications center of the movement. Students had a mimeograph machine, and people came and met, including students from Camden and Newark. The cross-campus activists decided there would be “a series of orchestrated activities” on each campus, with each group doing what it wanted, but in a coordinated fashion.\textsuperscript{334}

The demands on each campus did not overlap precisely, however, as each location had its own specific priorities. Harris recalls that the students from Newark “were a little bit more edgy about what they would put up with.”\textsuperscript{335} Vickie Donaldson and George Hampton, Rutgers-Newark alumni, remember friendship and collaboration with New Brunswick students including Jerry Harris and Leon Green. “Jerry Harris, specifically, was always running back and forth between the campuses,” recalls George Hampton, class of 1975 and one of the Conklin Hall liberators.\textsuperscript{336} New Brunswick was perceived as more conservative than Newark and following Newark’s lead, according to an audience member at the Conklin Hall celebration.\textsuperscript{337} “Rutgers College was the White House and we were the outhouse,” joked Donaldson in response, adding, “We were great friends with them. There were so few of us on all the campuses that we knew each other. But particularly those students who were activists, were activists with each other.”\textsuperscript{338} Each campus movement also had its own unique relationship with the city in which it was based. The Camden and Newark campuses had much closer ties to the community than either Rutgers or Douglass College did with New Brunswick. The Committee for a Unified Newark trained people for activism, as did the Black People’s Unity Movement in Camden, and the students there were part of those communities and had that infrastructure to rely on.\textsuperscript{339} However, despite the differences in demands and tone of approach, students on the three campuses planned together the coordinated series of actions that would make national news and lead the
administration of Mason Gross to propose sweeping new changes in response to student demands.

One demand common across the three campuses was for curricular changes, the expansion of resources and cultural opportunities relevant to Black students, and a greater connection to the communities in which they were based. Patricia Graham had some access to curriculum she considered relevant at Essex Community College before she transferred to the newly opened Livingston College in New Brunswick, but in both locations, she was part of protest movements to expand such resources:

At the community college, we had some black history courses, and we were involved in social movements about relevant courses at Rutgers also during that time. Rutgers, when I was there, Rutgers College was all male and Douglass was female and Livingston was the coed campus. We were marching for what they called relevant courses. We wanted to learn about our own culture and ethnicity. We wanted courses that addressed issues like that, and we were not high on joining fraternities and sororities. We tended to see that as very silly kind of behavior back then.340

Students in Camden were equally serious and linked their demands for curriculum change to a desire for academic preparation that would allow them to understand the history and culture of Black people and to address the specific needs of the Black community in Camden and beyond. Camden activist Roy Jones wrote that

The curriculum here disregards the mind set[sic] of the black student … The figurative language and culture of black people are more than grounds for extensive research. Africa was once believed to be uncivilized and barren of culture. The complexity and astuteness of the black experience is worth delving into. Rutgers has not deemed the black experience as important as their own racist neurotic experience. The black aesthetic is very much a part of the black experience, and this factor alone warrants attention and extensive study. This aesthetic manifestation is evident in black literature, music, philosophy language and science … Educational reality for black students is not;[sic] social theories, John Locke, Charles Dickens, protons and neutrons, distributional frequencies and white history.341

In addition to calls for new courses covering topics Black students longed to study, students in Newark and Camden, in particular, called for expanded community engagement. The BOS called
for an institute of Black studies that would take as part of its subject the city itself and would overcome what they called an inexcusable “absence of identification materials for black students at this university.” Roy Jones called for a Camden Urban Education Center to “help in solving the urgent problems of the urban milieu … This university must begin to bring into focus the practical day-to-day uses of scholarship.” Many of today’s Rutgers extension programs have their roots in this advocacy work, and all three campuses now have long-standing departments or programs in African and African American studies, but at the time these demands were met by faculty reactions ranging from skepticism to hostility.

The first salvo of the students’ coordinated movement came on February 10, 1969, when the BOS in Newark issued a list of demands for restructuring the admissions process that included the removal of the director, Robert Swab, and his assistant, C.T. Miller. They called both men “basically prejudiced,” and singled Miller out as being “hostile, derogatory [sic] and arrogant in dealing with Black applicants.” Three days later, University vice president Malcolm Talbott met with department heads at Rutgers-Newark to share BOS demands and the University’s proposed responses to them. He requested they respond in writing if they wanted a faculty meeting on the issue. Of the 21 departments and institutes represented, 16 required no further meeting and supported the University’s handling of the issue. Only the Departments of Chemistry and Philosophy asked for a meeting while the remaining three did not respond, suggesting that at this point, most of the faculty was in alignment with the university’s response.

Talbott met with Black student representatives on February 20, 1969 and verbally outlined the University’s response to their demands. A day later, BOS students alerted him in a letter that his response was “totally unacceptable.” On February 24, 1969, more than two
dozen students occupied Conklin Hall on the Newark campus; the protesters pledged to stay until their demands were met. Vickie Donaldson describes the occupation plan, recalling that women made the liberation possible:

Sue Perry worked for physical plant, she stole the floor plans. She’s too old to go to jail. Statute of limitations [laughter]. And if she had not done that, even though she did not participate in the takeover, we would not have known the guards’ schedules, we wouldn’t know which doors to close, when they would make their rounds and how many minutes it would take us to actually occupy the building, which ended up being less than six minutes. If Gloria had not been a participant, we would not have known how to manage the switchboard. If Dottie and people who worked for the university had not supported us, we would not have had food.

If Bessie Hill had not structured the demands … there were three sets of demands since we’re talking about the actual takeover. There were three sets of demands. When the third set, which we had modified, were rejected, there was a vote by BOS. BOS members, there was a democratic process that said we would not take drastic measures in response to having the demands not met. So there was a group of folk, not with the permission of BOS, not with the support of BOS, who took the initiative to do what they thought they needed to do. Women were responsible, to a great degree for the success of that. They even bought the chains, people, you know, to lock the doors.

The methodical approach of the students and their incremental and professional approach to advancing their demands is noteworthy. They established a relationship with Civil Rights activist, Bessie Nelms Hill, who had been appointed to the Rutgers Board of Governors in 1965. They engaged in a series of negotiations based on written demands with administrators followed by a well-coordinated action taken by individuals who distanced themselves from the formal organizational structure (though there was of course, overlap between BOS membership and the liberators). Moreover, the carefully thought out Newark action was planned in coordination with protests on the two other Rutgers campuses, which followed in succession.

A day after students entered Conklin Hall, Black students in New Brunswick took actions in solidarity that included dumping trays of food on the floor in the dining hall, refusing to speak with white students and faculty, walking out of classes, blocking up toilets, and even setting small fires. And at around 10 p.m. the day following that, about 30 students in Camden,
including campus leaders Roy Jones, Thomas Warren and Myrna [Williams] Thompson and students from two local high schools, marched into the student center, requested the students inside leave or spend the night, and then padlocked the doors shut. President Mason Gross was personally involved in conversation and negotiation with the students on all three campuses, and he notably refused significant pressure to call in law enforcement to quell protest, a position that would earn him both commendation and condemnation from students, alumni, the public and the legislature.

After three days of negotiations between BOS representatives and University officials, the students in Newark occupying what they had deemed “Liberation Hall” left the building after securing promises from President Mason Gross that the University would make sweeping changes to admissions practices with the goal of increasing black enrollment. Talbott met with faculty in Newark on February 27th to explain the terms of the agreement, but there is no evidence that faculty were consulted or involved in negotiations before that point, something that would become a major issue in the coming weeks. The students’ demands and the terms of agreement are too long to reproduce within this text, but are reproduced in Appendices A and B.

But by March 5th, 1969, the BOS felt compelled to issue a press release stating that the University was failing to live up to its promises: “Inconsistencies between agreements reached by the Administration and the Black Organization of Students and what the University has since attempted to alter has led to an accusation by BOS that the University is attempting to renege on its commitments.” The press release does not specify what the University had reneged on at

* “Admissions Demands of the Black Organization of Students,” n.d., Box 5, Folder 10, Coll. RG 15/F2, Inventory to the Records of the Rutgers University Dean of Student Affairs (Earl W. Clifford, Jr.), Special Collections and University Archives, Rutgers University Libraries, Rutgers University; “Press Release on Black Organization of Students Demands and University Responses,” March 3, 1969, Box 29, Folder 1, Coll. RG 15/F2, Inventory to the Records of the Rutgers University Dean of Student Affairs (Earl W. Clifford, Jr.), Special Collections and University Archives, Rutgers University Libraries, Rutgers University.
this point, but it does cite the transcript of a negotiation meeting held during the occupation of Conklin Hall attended by Mason Gross, Malcolm Talbott, Lincoln Lawrence, an African American admissions officer at the Newark campus, three unnamed representative of the BOS, and several others. That meeting focused almost exclusively on the students’ admissions demands, particularly their demand for the removal of Swab and Miller, so it seems safe to assume the students felt the University did not intend to follow through on addressing this demand, and, in fact, that particular demand would become an enormous political problem for Mason Gross.354

Tension between students and the institution itself would worsen in the coming days. On March 6th, representatives of the Newark College of Arts and Sciences (NCAS) faculty met with BOS representatives to discuss elements of the agreement considered in their jurisdiction - scholastic standing and admissions - and also listened to a statement from the admissions committee which was “not in accord with BOS demands.”355 Later that day, the faculty issued a statement supporting the goals of creating a statewide system of higher education “to the end that every holder of a high school diploma shall find that form of higher education which is best suited to his needs, abilities, and aspirations” but voted 95 to 40 to accept the recommendations of the admissions committee, not the BOS, effectively repudiating the agreed upon terms that ended the protest.356 This marked one of the first public signs of a fissure between the faculty and the administration over pledges Mason Gross and Malcolm Talbott had made to students.

University leadership seemed not to heed this sign of faculty discontent, or perhaps they took the next step as a reaction to it. On March 14th the Board of Governors passed a resolution authorizing the creation of a “far reaching experimental and even revolutionary program for educationally and economically disadvantaged students” to be called the Urban University
Program (UUP). The program would at the outset serve only high school students from Camden, Newark, Piscataway and New Brunswick who met the New Jersey Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) standard for financial need and who would not be admitted to any of the University’s colleges under standard admissions criteria. EOF had been created in November, 1967, in response to the Newark uprising and provided financial assistance to “economically and educationally disadvantaged” students through the state’s institutions of higher education. But the amount of money Rutgers was receiving through EOF at that time was only a fraction of the estimated cost of the newly announced UUP. Moreover, although its inception was linked to the racial unrest in Newark, no direct mention of racial or ethnic justice was articulated as part of the EOF mission. The BOG resolution announcing the UUP also used race-neutral language, but University leadership did not shy from characterizing it as a program to help students from racial and ethnic minority groups overcome discrimination and unequal schooling. In addition, the three cities that were to become the beneficiaries of the UUP were home to many African-American people, particularly the city of Newark, making it a de facto truth that a large proportion of program participants would be Black. Thus, the question of funding for the UUP program was murky from the start, its focus on the three Rutgers campus cities raised immediate questions of unfairness in the rest of the state, and its origin as a product of negotiation between the University and Black student activists made it an easy target for those hostile to any race-based affirmative action programs.

There were many critics among the faculty on just such grounds. In an undated statement issued after the March 14 BOG resolution, the Newark College of Arts and Science faculty elaborated on its position. It is worth citing the statement at length for a first-hand view of discontent in the faculty. First, the faculty noted its disdain for the way in which the UUP came
into existence – “hastily worked out under duress” – and its conviction that faculty needed a role in implementing the UUP to guarantee the “quality of education at Rutgers does not suffer.”

Second, the statement sought reassurance from the Board of Governors that the “programs and activities for students admitted under regular procedures” would not suffer as a result of the creation of the UUP. Third, the statement called for the proportion of “disadvantaged students under special programs to the number of students admitted to regular programs be the same at all campuses,” noting that because of “basic population statistics, the University’s new programs will have by far its heaviest impact in Newark,” a reference to Newark’s status as a majority Black city. The juxtaposition of “regular” versus “disadvantaged” students is telling. It indicates a preoccupation with protecting the status quo and fear that the Rutgers-Newark campus would become host to large numbers of underprepared African American students, clearly an unwelcome proposition. The faculty warned that without proportionality across the three campuses and provision of additional funding to Newark to compensate for any expansion of students, the Board will inevitably deny educational opportunities to the children of non-disadvantaged working people in Newark and to many students, black and white, who do not live in Newark and whose parents cannot afford either private or residential colleges. Such a step would deny the disadvantaged student a place in a college of quality and at the same time embitter inter-group relations by educating some students at the expense of others.

Implicit in the faculty’s statement is the notion that an influx of black “disadvantaged” students would both deteriorate the quality of education at Rutgers and deny the kinds of students who traditionally attended Rutgers in Newark – white students – the educational experience that was their right. By using negative rhetoric filled with warnings that framed the University’s efforts as a zero-sum game rather than as an expansion of opportunity to those historically denied it, the
NCAS faculty effectively set themselves up as opponents to opening Rutgers to racial, ethnic and economic diversity in all but the most theoretical terms.

Black students in Newark felt that with a few exceptions, the faculty were largely against them, which is in part why tensions persisted on campus throughout the month of March, 1969. “Well, they voted no every time,” says Vickie Donaldson. She mentions the two faculty members who did support the BOS and its demands: former Rutgers-Newark Provost and Political Science Professor Norman Samuels and Rutgers-Newark Law Professor Al Slocum. “They took on entire faculties,” recalls Donaldson, “Al Slocum stood vigil at the law school. [Norm Samuels] probably got threatened to be beat up at every faculty meeting they had. But for his leadership, and a couple of other people, too, but he was the heartbeat, he was the conscience of the faculty. And every vote came down to almost the last two or three people making those decisions. But we would not have been able to do anything because the faculty controls, it is an academic institution, and that’s just how it works.”363 Today, Donaldson is a member of the faculty in the very African American and African Studies Department that she and her classmates fought to institute in 1969. She teaches a course called “Race, Poverty and Protest” and her office is in Conklin Hall.364

Mason Gross also negotiated with Camden protesters, agreeing verbally and then in writing to 16 of the protesters’ demands around admission, faculty and staff hiring, finding funding for scholarships, creating an urban studies program, adding relevant library resources, and developing a slate of programs that would allow the community of Camden to take advantage of cultural and educational opportunities on the Rutgers campus.365 The Black student organization in Camden was called the Black Students’ Unity Movement, an affiliate of the Black People’s Unity Movement in the city of Camden, and in the forefront of students’ minds
was opening the gates of the University to the people of the city. Upon receiving the signed letter from Mason Gross agreeing to those 16 demands, the students dispersed from the student center, the same day that the Conklin Hall occupation in Newark ended. The campus newspaper, THE GLEANER describes the scene this way:

The Dean used an electric megaphone to announce to a group of some 50 or more students that a statement signed by President Gross and affirming in writing what he had promised them verbally the day before was on its way to the R.C.S.J. campus via special messenger.

Dean Millett expressed his thanks to the students who had assembled in front of the College Center for their patience. He then said that if the black students left the Center, then classes would be cancelled tomorrow, Friday, and next Monday and Tuesday, March 3 and 4.

The Dean noted that the purpose of the shut-down would be to arrive at an understanding of the situation. He emphasized that if the students did leave the building, it would be particularly important that every student be on campus on the open days so that they would be able to get involved in some kind of attempts at understanding. The Dean also said that no demands or pressures would be put on the students because of lost time.

(THE GLEANER has been in touch with the New Brunswick campus and through sources has learned that classes there have also been cancelled Friday, Monday, and Tuesday.)

Approximately 30 minutes after Dean Millett’s announcement on the corner of 4th and Penn Sts. and also after similar ones in Armitage Hall, a special courier drove up to the campus Security building and entered. Minutes later, Ted Reid and Mr. James Ricks were passing Mason Gross’ signed letter through a College Center window to the black students.

Within fifteen minutes less than 25 black students emerged from the center. Roy Jones, a B.S.U.M. members and spokesman, later explained the decrease in people leaving the building. He said that sometime before noon the students from the community had left by a rear exit to be able to be in front of the Center when the black students emerged and thus be able to afford them more protection. They were led by black and white students across the street and over to the United Christian Fellowship headquarters at 314 Linden Street.

As in Newark, the students from Camden emerged unscathed from their protest with the benefit of written commitments from Mason Gross himself. However, this was not entirely the end of the story on either campus as the implementation of commitments ran up against the constraints of opposition and lack of funding.
Camden protesters did not shy from direct and public attack on the University administration. According again to the campus newspaper, THE GLEANER, representatives from inside the occupied student center called their reporter at 4:30 a.m. to issue the following statement:

From the B.S.U.M to the college community: It is not enough to support the B.S.U.M. demands on moral grounds or in principle. We take this position simply because Mason Gross and Dean Clifford are not moral men or men of principle. Your support must be vocalized. Your support must commit the University to a place in the 20th century or relevancy. You may ask what can we do as faculty and students. We say ultimate control of the University lies in your hands. When we walked out of the church we censored groups. How will you censor your President? Let’s call a man a man, a reality a reality, and Gross an ineffective, insensitive excuse for a President. HARAMBE (Swahile for Let us all pull together.)

Of course, this statement was made before Gross acquiesced to almost all their demands, at least in principle. But in terms of tone, Camden students were like their counterparts in Newark. In a BOS communique articulating its admissions demands, students wrote

It has been and is the position of the Black Organization of Students that there can be no substantial changes in the total enrollment of black students at Rutgers-Newark without substantial change in the overall structure of this institution. Specifically, this means changing Rutgers from the totally white, nationalistic, racist-oriented institution that it is, through the structuring of policies, programs, curriculum, etc., expressly designed to meet the wants and needs of blacks in order that we might be more adequately prepared to undertake the task of improving the lot of our people in determining our own destiny.

In Newark, this language was particularly used to criticize what the BOS saw as the administration’s failure to reform the Newark admissions office and its staff, which was one of the primary factors motivating the Conklin Hall liberation. Camden and Newark students voiced anti-administration, anti-institution rhetoric, but discourse was different on the flagship Rutgers campus.

Officially, student-faculty-administration relations were more cordial on the New Brunswick campus. Student protests there did not rise to the level of entire building takeovers,
and under pressure from black student activists, and presumably to avoid the escalation of
disruption, the deans of Rutgers and Douglass colleges agreed to cancel classes on February 28
and March 3 and 4 to discuss student demands and grievances. Closed committee meetings
comprised of students and faculty were held throughout the two days, and workshops and
cultural programs planned by students and faculty were open to all not involved in those
meetings. The actions and statements from New Brunswick college deans that followed were
fairly conciliatory in tone. A press release announced that the Douglass College faculty agreed to
25 measures in response to grievances by black students to “improve the education of all
students at the women’s unit of the State University,” noting that “Douglass currently has 115
black students in a student body of 2,779.” Rutgers News Service reported that Dean Arnold
B. Grobman of Rutgers College “congratulated both the student body and the faculty for
‘significant and extraordinary efforts in taking positive steps toward resolving our problems. But
we still have a long way to go,’ he noted.” Faculty at both colleges made commitments
supporting efforts to recruit and admit more Black students, hire more Black faculty and
administrators, and create academic support programs for “disadvantaged” and “inner city”
students. And while both faculties articulated support for the concept of an Afro-American
studies program, neither voiced support for a new Afro-American department.

Despite the serious nature of students’ demands and the confrontational language in
which they were often expressed in written communications, in New Brunswick, the early
occupations were civil, even genteel. As Bryant Mitchell tells it:

I remember, one night we were negotiating, the black students and Mason, in his office.
Mason just got tired and he says, "I have to go home and get some sleep. We'll pick up
tomorrow morning at eight o'clock, if you'd like. Please don't trash my office, if you
could." He looks at me directly. [laughter] So, the man was just so smart, I mean, the way
he handled it even. He says, "We have some problems here and we can't resolve them
tonight. I'd better go back and recharge and let's pick up again tomorrow." I mean, it was just all so much common sense.373

He goes on to describe the demeanor of Mason Gross through the takeover of his office and subsequent negotiations:

Oh, very stately. It's like I told you. That's Queens College and you've seen pictures of the Oval Office and stuff--it was like that kind of an atmosphere--very, very nice antique furniture and all, very tastefully done, sort of formal, spacious, with a whole bunch of little kids sitting on the floor. I mean young students, not nearly enough chairs in there for us, but it was very civil. I mean, it wasn't insulting in any manner. I don't know how anybody could be insulting the way Mason could conduct a meeting, and by that, I mean ninety percent listening. He had enough sense not to just fight back, but to listen. Between that and knowing him personally, and seeing how good a teacher he was too, I mean, there's no way I can't be biased. [laughter] He's about six-foot-five. I mean, it was just what a flagship university needs, man. But especially to deal with a New Jersey Legislature, man. I mean, New Jersey's a mobster state and everything else. [laughter]374

Whether it was a tactic to defuse, simple respect, or some combination of the two, Gross’ manner of engaging with students at the height of tensions and his rejection of police interference in campus events, earned him a place of respect in the memory of many alumni.

But however tense and adversarial the public relations were between the Black Student Protesters in Newark and the administration, the Black alumni do recall the good relationships they had behind the scenes. At the Conklin Hall commemoration panel discussion, Norman Samuels, from the audience, interjected that “there is one point that should be emphasized in the interest of avoiding revisionism. Malcolm Talbott was quietly one hundred percent behind you,” to which one panelist, not visible in the recording image, can be heard replying “That’s right,” while another says, “This is correct,” and George Hampton nodded his head in assent.375

Donaldson agreed, and then recounted her recollection:

[Malcolm Talbott] spoke to Mason [Gross], he spoke to Tom Kean,* he made sure that the governor - Malcolm was very influential and we do honor, I think, to both the truth and to

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* Thomas Kean, a Republican, served for ten years in the New Jersey Assembly and was Governor of the state from 1982-1990. He chaired the 9/11 Commission from 2002 to 2004 at the invitation of U.S. President George W. Bush.
Malcolm if we recognize that he was a key person in the resolution … and it would not have happened without Malcolm’s direct, but very quiet, behind the scenes involvement … Students, you have to know more about the folk who you see in opposition than they know about themselves. I didn’t say about you, about themselves. We knew more about the university’s history, and we equipped Malcolm, we could call him Malcolm with great affection because I was raised right, I’m not being disrespectful. Dr. Talbott was the head of the Newark campus at that time. Um, and because he saw our diligence, he saw the hard work, uh, he had no reservations supporting us.376

Another audience member credited Mason Gross with supporting the protesters, remarking that he had done his best to find funding for the programs he had promised, even in the face of faculty and external opposition. The audience member voiced certainty that Gross didn’t want the agreements to collapse for lack of money: “Gross wasn’t going to go out that way. Remember, he’d already defied the police. Not just the Newark police, but also told the state police, bye, this is our campus,” to which a panelist, again, not visible on the video, can be heard saying “And we respect him for that, believe me.”377 But as we will see in the next chapter, even administrative support from the very top, and the faculty support in New Brunswick, could not protect the specific programs the student protesters had developed in painstaking detail with the University. External pressure and the legislature’s determination to starve these initiatives of money would ultimately force Rutgers to make major compromises in its mission.
Chapter 5

Aftermath and Conclusions

“Affirmative action enables members of the dominant group to ask, “Is it fair to hire a less-qualified Chicano or Black over a more-qualified white?” This is a curious way of framing the question ... in part because those who ask it are themselves the beneficiaries of history’s largest affirmative action program.”*

As could have been predicted by Critical Race Theory, the discourse of merit and reverse racism were weaponized by opponents of new policies and programs developed to respond to the demands of the Black Student Protesters at Rutgers University. A political and ideological opening for progress toward racial justice based on sympathy for the Civil Rights Movement and shock about the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. started to close once whites felt their superior status threatened. White alumni, members of the public, legislators, and others began to feel their interests did not converge with those of the Black students and moved swiftly to retaliate.378 Criticism from within and outside the University did not sway Mason Gross; he remained unflappable and continued to move forward with the commitments he had made. But the legislature had enough resentment toward his independent initiative to create the Urban University Program (UUP) and enough control over educational funding that it was able to force compromise.

Aftermath

President Mason Welch Gross was sympathetic to the demands of protesters, as were some faculty members and administrators. Like Gallagher at CCNY, Gross resisted the involvement of police, and tried to forge agreements with protesters on the Newark, New

Brunswick, and Camden campuses.\textsuperscript{379} There were many agreements made between the Rutgers administration and the Black Student Protesters, as noted in the previous chapter, but the new Urban University Program (UUP) was the centerpiece, and college-specific initiatives like the Transitional Year Program (TYP) at Rutgers College and the Special Entrance Program (SEP) at the Newark College of Arts and Sciences were developed with an enormous amount of student input and faculty involvement.\textsuperscript{380} Gross described the UUP as a new admissions track serving the “underprivileged” in New Brunswick, Camden, and Newark. To give a sense of the scope and goals of the UUP, in an interview with the Associated Press, he estimated 875 new students would be admitted to Rutgers: 500 from Newark, 175 from New Brunswick, and 200 from Camden.\textsuperscript{381} By contrast, the statewide EOF program was based on a legislative act in June of 1968, dictated by rules and regulations implemented outside of the university, housed within the state bureaucracy, and devoid of any mention of race or ethnicity.

Gross, his allies, and the students intended the UUP and its corollaries to exist alongside the existing state EOF program and to respond very specifically to the racial project initiated by the Black Student Protest Movement. This is evident in the language used at the time by students, faculty and administrators alike as presented in this project through archival material and oral history. Gross drew a distinction between the general admissions policy for students who had traditionally been admitted to Rutgers, i.e. white students, and the UUP, an “entirely extra and entirely special” new admissions program that would admit additional students, and he took pains to say that traditional students would not be replaced by the new students.\textsuperscript{382} Mason Gross was asked by NBC journalist Frank McGee to respond to charges that a program specifically benefitting Black students was tantamount to racism with whites as victims, and Gross responded that “we’re taking care of economically and educationally disadvantaged
students … They have been discriminated against in the past, and we’re trying to correct that. Now if that’s racist, it’s a new use of the word to me.”383 But pushback against the notion of a race-based program meant to correct past injustices is evident in document after document in the archives, dating back to before the programs were even fully conceptualized, much less realized. Opponents quite clearly understood that this movement and the resulting agreements were about racial justice; it was a racial project to both proponents and opponents.

Many liberal whites in the state were sympathetic to the Black students’ demands and saw them as an outgrowth of the Civil Rights Movement. But despite the thoughtful, deliberate and even collaborative approach of their social movement, the Black Student Protesters were seen, or at least characterized, by a significant number of white students, alumni, legislators and members of the public as violent and threatening, particularly the Black Organization of Students on the Newark campus, which enjoyed close ties and support from the larger city of Newark constituency.384 This hostility may have been an outgrowth of fear engendered by the Newark uprising, and a general sense of resentment among some whites that “unqualified” students would be admitted to Rutgers because of the illegal and noisy disruptions of a radical minority.385 One Rutgers trustee pointedly sent Mason Gross a copy of a letter he had written lauding Theodore Hershbergh of Notre Dame for mandating that any student disrupting campus be expelled: “If more college and university Presidents don’t stand up to be counted and take a “get tough” position, this country is clearly in for deep trouble.”386 This was a rebuke to Gross who had resisted any police involvement on campus despite pressure from law enforcement and the legislature to impose coercive measure to control student disruptions.387 His willingness to negotiate with protesters was interpreted by many as mollycoddling a small, irresponsible minority.388
Before I turn to analysis of the discourse of opponents to the racial justice initiatives at Rutgers, I would like to note that there were many voices in New Jersey who supported the efforts of University officials to address the demands of the Black Student Protesters. The League of Women Voters of New Jersey issued a statement to legislators in support of funding the UUP, noting that both it and the Educational Opportunity Fund program were necessary to meet the needs of “all who want and can benefit from education beyond high school,” and citing specifically Black and Puerto Rican students as among that group. William L. Eichelberger, the Protestant chaplain of the Campus Christian Foundation at Rutgers-Newark, praised Talbott and Gross for putting “human rights above property rights” in their handling of the Conklin Hall takeover, and accused lawmakers with gubernatorial aspirations of exploiting the protests for their own political ambitions. “This is indeed a despicable act of dragging the state university into the political arena as a means of furthering their personal political ambitions,” wrote Eichelberger. He was not alone in this analysis. In response to a speech critical of Gross given by Republican State Senator Frank X. McDermott, Ed Mack, Rutgers College Class of 1955, wrote in a local newspaper that McDermott was a “demagogue”:

Of course, it’s hard to distinguish yourself when there’s a crowd running for the Republican nomination for governor. And so a powerful negative attack that touches on an issue which has roused most of America may look to you like the easy path to fame and the governor’s chair. Had your case been directed to those youthful mobsters who are attempting to disrupt society for the sake of dismantling our way of life, you’d have my full support. But there in Newark was a group of young Blacks asking one major concession – a chance for their brothers to become part of the establishment. And Mason Gross offered them that slight chance. Now you condemn him for a long overdue act of Christian charity … Then you took the brief Rutgers incident and attempted to make it look as though our state university was the “seedbed” of all campus radicalism in New Jersey and the United States … You created straw men to burn before your Hunterdon [County] hosts last Thursday night. Then demolished them proudly. But, I submit, senator, that this is political fakery of the worst kind.

Despite the problematic characterization of Gross’s UUP as an “act of Christian charity” rather
than an initiative to rectify exclusion and injustice and the unclear reference to “youthful mobsters,” Mack’s letter, and the others, show the perceived political nature of both Gross’ response to the Black Student Protest and the backlash against that response.

Mason Gross also received many personal letters of support from alumni and members of the public. Ocean County Judge William H. Huber, Rutgers College Class of 1944, wrote Gross with thanks and admiration and praised him for his “courage, wisdom and humanity,” emphasizing that “Rutgers’ standards will not be lowered; Rutgers’ contribution to New Jersey will be greatly enhanced. Our University has an obligation to serve the State, and I can think of no better way.” Rutgers alumnus Charles E. Lawrence, Rutgers College, 1961, wrote to express pride at being “associated with an institution which is making a commendable effort in forwarding the implementation of the values so often heralded and so rarely acted upon (for “practical” reasons) in our society.” Some writers expressed gratitude that Gross had not responded in such a way as to escalate the confrontation with the Black Student Protesters. “I still believe that apathy’s a far greater danger than action, even tho [sic] some of that action has taken very undesireable [sic] forms. A great danger at present is the reaction to student violence which may well make intelligent progress more difficult. The more racial factors become involved, the more shrill the cries of those who demand stricter controls,” wrote Frank L. Clayton, a two-time Rutgers graduate, 1918 and 1932. Margaret Archibald, too, wrote to praise Gross for a level headed approach that had defused tension: “I must write to tell you how heartening it was to hear your sane and informed statements about your decision to enroll all students who are qualified to your college regardless of race – color – etc. … It is men and women of your caliber who will save us from the National trend to force – violence – and ultimate disaster.”
There were certainly supporters of Gross and the Black Student Protesters within the University. Charles Brower defended Gross tirelessly against critics, characterizing opponents as “soreheads” with “bellyaches,” and he drafted a form letter to be sent out to rebut the reams of negative letters sent to Gross. Bowers’ form letter read, in part:

[Mason Gross] has been, in the opinion of all who have worked with him, by far the best leader we ever had … I suggest that you weigh this record against whatever recent mistakes you believe that he has made. Finding the balance very much in his favor, I then suggest that you write him a friendly letter and try to help him.\(^{396}\)

Some white students, too, expressed support for race-based change. It is hard to know how welcome administrators found the endorsement, given the fraught history of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) on campuses nationally, but the Rutgers chapter of the SDS called BOS demands “legitimate and justified” and urged their white classmates to support them, and expressed “unequivocal support” for the Black Students Unity Movement in Camden.\(^{397}\) I was unable to find any evidence that a substantial number of white students heeded the SDS call for support. However, the entire faculty and student body of the Graduate School of Social Work did pass a resolution to support the BOS, expressing “admiration and gratitude” for their leadership.\(^{398}\) And a student at the Graduate School of Education, who identified himself as white, wrote Gross in 1968 to endorse the New Brunswick Student Afro-American Society demand to rename the student center for Paul Robeson.\(^{399}\) But despite some support for the manner in which the Gross administration responded to the Black Student Protest, it a fact that there are eight folders of letters in the archives criticizing the same versus the one folder of supportive letters. Similarly, there are two folders of letters from alumni opposing the creation of new programs to meet protesters’ demands, and only one of support. A great number of the letters express opposition in explicitly racist terms, terms that will not be reproduced in this paper.
Much of the hostility stemmed from a general sense that unqualified students would be admitted to Rutgers because of the noisy disruptions of a radical minority, tarnishing the university’s standards and image. A Missouri man wrote to Gross that because of Gross’s willingness to meet students’ demands, “[t]he reputation Rutgers has enjoyed for scholastic integrity will be soiled in the minds of sensible Black and white people throughout the world.” Another member of the public wrote to ask Gross “what undeniable force convinced a mere handful of misled individuals to impose upon you, the learned authority, such demands, and release upon society those with the credentials of your university not earned on as equal a basis as their predecessors?” An editorial in the Newark Sunday News expressed the assumption that changes to admission standards would be “lowering” those standards, and thus the quality of education:

The university still promises to issue "true" Rutgers degrees. This presumably means that lowering admission requirements won’t lower standards for winning diplomas, but at the same time it invites a cruel delusion for many young people. Knocking down entrance requirements may get more men and women into college classrooms, but it will not assure their ability to learn much from the experience. It could, in fact, lead to pressure to lower the level of college teaching. The value of the degree would then be lessened after all, for disadvantage and "advantaged" alike. And who would gain from that?”

These are but a few examples that show how proposed changes to an undefined standard of merit, and the assumption that those changes would diminish standards, were common in the discourse of those opposing efforts to make Rutgers University a more inclusive institution.

On campus, there was both overt and veiled criticism of the protesters and the response from Gross. In New Brunswick, a Rutgers College student wrote a letter to Gross that tried to strike a conciliatory tone but rejected the claims of racism inherent in protesters’ demands. The writer claimed to support the aims of the Black students “insofar as they represent a drive for equality,” but expressed skepticism about the “feasibility” of Black studies as a department, and
warned that while efforts should be made to be sure “hidden prejudices” didn’t affect hiring decisions, Black professors should not be hired at the expense of “lowering the quality of instruction at Rutgers.” The writer went on to state that progress toward equality should address cultural and economic deprivation “rather than skin color.” The fear of explicitly addressing racial injustice and the reparations that might then be due historically oppressed people is palpable in this communication. By focusing on socio-economic class rather than race, this letter exemplifies how the ideal of colorblindness was used as an argument against explicit racial justice change, much as Bonilla-Silva would expect.

It is striking how much of the negative response to the University’s plans to address student demands was based on the claim of reverse racism. A resident of Ridgewood, N.J. wrote: “I believe it is outrageously discriminatory to select one group to be admitted with lower qualifications.” A Port Reading, N.J. man asked Gross in a letter “What are you trying to pull? Why are you giving in to the negroes [sic] demands? What about the whites? When they won’t be admitted even though their marks are higher, are you trying to drive the whites out of the state?” Some students were also unhappy with what they saw as an attack from the Left. The Rutgers University Chapter of the Young Americans for Freedom threatened legal action should the University not refuse amnesty to protesters, not provide police protection for students at Rutgers Newark, not suspend or expel all students who commit “crimes” on campus during disruptions, and should the University give in to “racist-extremist demands.” A group calling itself the Polish-American Organization of Students at Rutgers-Newark issued a set of seven “demands” that mimicked the BOS calls for changes to admissions, curriculum, etc. Similarly mocking, the “Modern Alliance for Italian Americans” demanded, among other things, the admission of Italian-Americans in proportion to the community, the addition of courses on
Italian History and the Art of the Renaissance, and an increase in the frequency of Italian music played on the campus radio station. The final item on the group’s list threatened “drastic action” if demands were not met, and it closed: “we can play outside the rules of our Academic Community as diligently as any interested group on campus.”

Quite apart from the fact that several of these “demands” were likely already met, there can be no doubt that the parody of BOS demands was a race-based and racist criticism.

Ultimately, many if not most white students may simply not have wanted the status quo of the Rutgers campus culture to change, much less the state or national culture. Once abstract notions of equity became concrete in Black students’ demands for change, and once white students realized their own experience of higher education would necessarily change, the backlash ensued. At the 50th Anniversary commemoration of the Conklin Hall takeover, an audience member who described himself as having been a member of the Newark Student Union and the Black Panther Party said that white Rutgers students resented Black students for highlighting the social problems that existed just beyond the boundaries of the campus. “You know, this was an evil place. It was a hateful place in 1970,” he asserted, referring to the Rutgers-Newark campus. He recalls that Black student activists wanted the University to engage with community problems such as drug addiction, high infant mortality, and sexually transmitted disease. “As a backlash, the white students hated our guts,” said this unnamed audience member.

Jocelyn Francis-White of Douglass College similarly recalls Black students connecting their movement to the larger social justice issues of the times. “America was on fire and this permeated onto the college campus,” she says, noting that many of the same issues facing Black Americans then are still at the forefront of protest now such as police brutality, health care, bias and prejudice, and inequality. Rutgers-Camden students linked their
movement closely to the needs of their city as did Black students in Newark, and campus activist Roy Jones would later make an unsuccessful bid for mayor of Camden. In later years he became active in the environmental justice movement for low-income communities that experience terrible levels of pollution, and he attributed his lifelong activism to his early years at Rutgers. Referencing the 1969 takeover of the student center on the Camden campus, he is quoted in the *Rutgers Camden Magazine* as saying: “This event shaped my life for the next 48 years.” Yet it seems that many white students did not want their lives similarly changed, nor did they want their University experience permeated by the calls to action issued by their Black peers. Rutgers University alumni were much the same in wanting to protect the status quo.

A particularly virulent source of criticism of the Black Student Protesters and the response of Mason Gross came in an April 28, 1969 letter to alumni from Rutgers Alumni Association President William E. Jeney. This letter sharply criticized the administration’s handling of campus disruptions and rejected proposed changes to admissions policy. Jeney and the Executive Committee strongly recommended that “there be no change in the standards of admission, or Rutgers’ academic standards, which would result, immediately or ultimately, in the deterioration of the quality of a Rutgers’ [sic] degree.” To be sure, there were many letters in the archive criticizing Jeney and the Alumni Association Executive Committee, but far more were supportive of Jeney’s stated position and opposed to Gross and the BOG. A Dallas, Texas alumni wrote that he couldn’t understand how Gross could “preach non-discrimination on one hand and practice it with the other … for reverse discrimination is no better, no more moral, or no more correct than direct discrimination.” A writer from Convent Station, N.J. called the new admissions criteria “blatantly discriminatory” and warned the “quality of the “Rutgers degree” must inevitably decline under such a policy.” Sixteen alumni signed a letter to Mason Gross
calling higher education an earned privilege and not a right, and asserting that educationally 
disadvantaged people, given an opportunity, would not value it “because they know they have not earned it or deserved it … Rather than raising the educationally disadvantaged to the level of the educationally advantaged; [sic] the educationally advantaged will be lowered to the level of the disadvantaged.”416 The letter goes on to say that the admission of “unqualified” people will cause the institution’s reputation to suffer and that the new students will “definitely be taking up space that qualified students should be occupying … Soon the institution will regress to the status of an overglorified [sic] high school at best.”417 Again, we see the equation of change to diminished standards and the assertion that whites’ rights were being infringed upon.

There were critics in the Rutgers faculty on just such grounds, particularly among the faculty in Newark. In a letter summarizing “a scattering of hasty opinions from my colleagues,” Louis R. Zocca, Chairman of the Department of English at Rutgers-Newark, wrote that the general view is that the authors of the demands are a minority group, bent on coercing the preponderant majority of the student body and the University into granting concessions which may ultimate prove unwise. Such vociferous demands on the part of Black students may, in the end, harden the attitude of the voters and the citizenry into withholding support to a State University. At best, it may drive most of our good students who want to study to seek a more congenial atmosphere at other colleges.

There is great resentment at the “effrontery” in demanding the scalps of Mr. Swab and Mr. Miller. Too little is understood by these “militants” of the effort and devotion which these administrators give to their jobs.

As for myself, having had the benefit of the point-by-point analysis of the BOS demands at the Chairmen’s meeting, I incline toward the view that as we have already granted a number of these “demands,” we should yield gracefully on a number of other points where possible. However, I think that establishing the principle that no one group or minority should be favored or slighted is imperative in a New Jersey state university. It follows that we must pursue a policy which favors the admission and upgrading of all minorities, on a basis of merit and qualifications, not of religion, color, or any other distinguishing feature. I think that we must point this out in class, in discussions, in faculty meetings, in editorials, on the radio, everywhere. [underline in original document]

Again, I think that we ought to impress on the BOS group that if they are as sincere in their demands as we are in trying to meet them, they should form a group to
ferret out talented, [sic] students, direct them to us, let us test them, admit them, and educate them, if these applicants have the requisite qualifications.\textsuperscript{418}

Quite apart from the condescending tone of this letter with regard to the validity, seriousness, and even sincerity of the Black students’ demands, it a clear expression of support for the status quo and support for the principle of colorblindness. The writer claims steps already taken are sufficient, undermines the entire call to rethink merit and qualifications in terms of racism and opportunity, and places the burden of remediating University failures on the students themselves, asking them to “ferret out” potential Black students on their own.

Opposition appears to have been widespread in Newark even if the grounds for that opposition may have differed among individuals and departments. In an undated statement issued after the March 14 BOG resolution, the Newark College of Arts and Science faculty as a whole elaborated its position. It issued a statement calling for the proportion of “disadvantaged students under special programs to the number of students admitted to regular programs [to] be the same at all campuses,” noting that because of “basic population statistics, the University’s new programs will have by far its heaviest impact in Newark,” a reference to Newark’s status as a majority Black city. The juxtaposition of “regular” versus “disadvantaged” students is telling. It, too, indicates a preoccupation with protecting the status quo and fear that the Rutgers-Newark campus would become host to large numbers of underprepared African American students, clearly an unwelcome proposition. The faculty warned that without proportionality across the three campuses and provision of additional funding to Newark to compensate for any expansion of students, the Board

will inevitably deny educational opportunities to the children of non-disadvantaged working people in Newark and to many students, Black and white, who do not live in Newark and whose parents cannot afford either private or residential colleges. Such a step would deny the disadvantaged student a place in a college of quality and at the same
time embitter inter-group relations by educating some students at the expense of others.\textsuperscript{419}

Implicit in the faculty’s statement is the notion that an influx of Black “disadvantaged” students would both deteriorate the quality of education at Rutgers and deny the kinds of students who traditionally attended Rutgers in Newark – white students – the educational experience that was their right. By using negative rhetoric filled with warnings that framed the University’s efforts as a zero-sum game rather than as an expansion of opportunity to those historically denied it, the NCAS faculty effectively set themselves up as opponents to opening Rutgers to racial, ethnic and economic diversity in all but the most theoretical terms.

Perhaps piqued that Mason Gross had circumvented their work and launched initiatives of his own in concert with the Black Student Protesters, the Ad Hoc Committee that had been charged in May, 1968 with exploring affirmative action options asserted their opposition to the UUP plan and the general agreements the University had reached with protesters in Newark:

\begin{quote}
[i]t is our belief that any change in the admissions policy of the University should be responsive to the needs of all citizens and students of New Jersey and should not be based, individually or collectively, on race, ethnic origin, economic factors, or geographic location … We strongly recommend that there should be no change in the standards of admission, or Rutgers’ academic standards, which would result, immediately or ultimately, in the deterioration of the quality of the Rutgers’ [sic] degree.\textsuperscript{420}
\end{quote}

Of particular contention was the University’s decision to transfer Robert Swab and C.T. Miller out of the Newark admissions office at the behest of the BOS. Staff of the admissions office circulated a petition in support of the two men, and several resigned in protest. \textsuperscript{421} The Ad Hoc Committee in its report wrote that it “abhor[ed]” the fact the two men were transferred “in compliance with the Black Organization of Students demands.”\textsuperscript{422} As was seen in the position of the Newark College of Arts and Sciences, above, the Ad Hoc Committee was fearful of a drop in standards and prestige caused by the admission of Black students, was angry at not being
included in the process of creating new programs, and was essentially unsympathetic to the project of racial justice if it in any way represented a transformation of the status quo. A less direct attack came from Rutgers-New Brunswick Professor Norman Childers who drily suggested undergraduate and graduate students be polled on their thoughts about how to handle potential riots and how to discipline potential rioters, and that once the results were in, “the president could proceed accordingly with considerably more authority than if he were trying to make decisions on his own authority.” He closed the letter with “Just a suggestion for any value it may have.”

However, other faculty members did personally rally to the cause of aiding students who did not have the financial means to attend college. In New Brunswick, Professor Lowell A. Douglas proposed that faculty members voluntarily allocate one percent of their payroll to a fund for “disadvantaged students.” In June of 1969, a group of four faculty members penned a letter urging their colleagues to contribute to this fund as a tangible symbol of their commitment to the new opportunity program, which was still severely short of money. They explained that this donation was necessary


TO CHALLENGE THE UNIVERSITY AND THE STATE TO FACE UP TO THE FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS INVOLVED IN PROVIDING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS IN NEW JERSEY;

TO ASSURE THE BLACK STUDENTS, TO WHOM ON MARCH 4 THE FACULTY MADE A COMMITMENT, THAT THE COMMITMENT WAS MADE IN FULL FAITH; and

TO EXPRESS A PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO SOCIAL JUSTICE (uppercase letters in original)
This method of fundraising was successful enough that the money provided substantially for initial financing of the Transitional Year Program (TYP), which was a preparatory program embedded in the suite of initiatives that also included the creation of the UUP.426

The media response to the protests and Gross’s handling of the protests was mixed and largely mirrored (or fueled) public opinion. A WCBS radio editorial called protesters’ demands “unreasonable” and claimed they:

trample on the rights of the majority with impunity, even contempt. They prattle about “liberation” – and commit acts of the most gross intolerance … We think it is unfortunate that Rutgers’ President, Dr. Mason Gross, capitulated so swiftly and so overwhelmingly under duress. His action cannot fail to serve as an alluring example of the fruits of intimidation for militants on other campuses. This new order of student militants is more anxious to burn than learn.427

This perspective echoes that of many members of the public and the state legislature, as noted above. Other media responses, such as that of Frank McGee of NBC radio, took a more balanced approach. After interviewing Gross, faculty members, and members of the public, McGee observed that Rutgers would have a hard time securing funding for its programs from the hostile legislature, that alumni and white parents would remain fearful that their children would be denied entry to Rutgers, and that Black students on campus might advance the cause of “separatism” in studies and housing. But, he argued, hope had been raised for thousands of African Americans across the states and “while Rutgers’ chosen course is perilous, the choice of doing nothing would be even more perilous.428 Newspapers in Trenton, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Newark, and New York took similar editorial positions: They reported on Gross as an urbane and committed man and on the protesters as potentially dangerous, but with demands that had to be heeded if only to prevent more unrest and possibly violence.

Faculty, students and alumni were not alone in their hostility to the initiatives taken by Gross, Talbott, and the Board of Governors. The New Jersey state legislators who controlled the
purse strings were extremely angry about what they characterized as the “appeasement” of student protesters, and Republican members, particularly those with an eye on the gubernatorial election, criticized Gross relentlessly.\textsuperscript{429} Professing himself interested in the welfare of the students, Republican State Senator Alexander Matturri chastised Gross for “not performing his duties and obligations” by allowing a small group of “militant” students to disrupt the education of thousands of other students. Senator Matturri wrote Gross to urge the expulsion of students and the firing of any faculty who had taken part in the Conklin Hall takeover: “I feel it is incumbent upon you as President of the University to condemn these protesters. They represent a very small irresponsible minority.”\textsuperscript{430} In a letter to a constituent who had written to complain to him about the handling of disruptions at Rutgers Camden, Republican State Senator Edwin Forsythe asserted that he vigorously disapproved of “the use of force, sit ins or other disruptive measures in these situations. Primary to the maintenance of society is order. Without order there can be no justice not even the freedom to discuss the important problems of our society.”\textsuperscript{431} This was the ideological outlook of many of the legislators who controlled New Jersey. Many legislators were extremely angry about what they characterized as the “appeasement” of student protesters.

As noted above, Republican State Senator Frank X. McDemott on several occasions delivered public remarks critical of Gross and his handling of the protests, prompting a Republican Club in Midland Park, N.J. to write a critical letter to Mason Gross condemning the “cancerous growth of lawlessness and violence on college campuses and into our high schools.”\textsuperscript{432} McDemott’s law partner, Vincent Apruzzese, was hired to represent embattled Newark admissions officers Swab and Miller in a threatened lawsuit against the University that demanded reinstatement to their original posts and a public statement of support from the
University. The outlook of many of the legislators who controlled state funding for Rutgers University was decidedly against the Black Student Protesters and their clearly articulated racial project for educational equity. At the same time that Mason Gross was developing the UUP, TYP, and SEP through negotiations with student protesters, faculty, and administrators on all three Rutgers campuses, legislative support for EOF was growing. EOF had come into existence through the Department of Higher Education in 1968, and the same legislators who were openly hostile to the Black Student Protesters were in favor of funding EOF, a program that did not explicitly mention race in its eligibility requirements.

The Black Organization of Students called the backlash and the politicking around their demands as they saw it: racism. Language in a BOS press release in Newark stated that University agreements, which BOS members thought to be honorable commitments, have now become points of political contention between members of the faculty, administration, the university committee on admissions and state politicians. The political backlash created by several politicians is the same kind of racism that has perpetuated racist over-reactions to issues involving institutional change in the past.433

This naming of the backlash was astute. While there is a great deal of explicit racist language in the archival record, much of the discourse publicly used by faculty and politicians was couched in terms of colorblind “fairness” based on the economics of opportunity for all New Jerseyans. Undeniably, there were white students in the state who suffered from economic deprivation and poor schooling. But that line of argument deflected attention from the core principle of racial justice that motivated the Black students’ movement. Progress to racial justice requires the beneficiaries of racism to acknowledge both the history of racism and the existence of systemic and institutionalized racism, and opponents’ desire to discuss educational opportunity without regard to race denied history and ignored the structures that perpetuated inequality.
The political contention and “racist over-reactions to issues involving institutional change,” as the BOS put it, continued unabated. Even those sympathetic to the Black Student Protest Movement began to see the writing on the wall. In a letter to Mason Gross, Rutgers College Professor Richard P. McCormick outlined the problem facing the UUP:

As I see it, the legislators have every right to want to know who is in favor of the program. They have obviously had a great deal of adverse reaction from their constituents; they are leary of supporting something that seems generally to have aroused hostility.

We are asked, in effect, what is the demand? At this point we can not with any confidence say that the faculties of the several colleges favor the program, nor can we count on the students, their parents, or the alumni. If there is support, or even understanding around the state, I am unaware of it.

McCormick had deftly read the reality facing the efforts of Gross to defend programs born out of direct conversation with those to whom it most urgently mattered: the Black students, their families, and their communities. While he himself was supportive of the students and their goals, McCormick saw clearly that external opposition had become nearly insurmountable. And he was proven correct. Ultimately, the legislature expressed its hostility to the programs created through negotiations between University leaders and protesters by refusing to fund them, and instead forced all money earmarked for “disadvantaged” students at Rutgers to be channeled through the EOF budget. By 1972, the grassroots programs had all given way to EOF.

Student activist Harrison Snell, Rutgers-Newark class of 1970 and Rutgers Law School class of 1973, remembers this as a compromise. He notes that the BOS demanded 30% Black student enrollment at Rutgers, and the administration responded that to meet this goal they would implement the EOF program at Rutgers and Black students could come under that program and the regular admission program. “So this was their compromise in regards to the demand,” says Snell. Vickie Donaldson, BOS leader at Rutgers-Newark, remembers the oppositionist politicking, and believes that the state leaders who supported the students in principle found the
race-neutral EOF program to be a more politically acceptable way to advance students’ goals than the UUP and its articulated racial project. She describes the sequence of events after the takeover of Conklin Hall this way:

The demands were presented to Mason Gross who on the third night dispatched a state trooper with written consents in his signature to the demands, 11 of them, that the University would agree to. The agreements were subject to ratification by the Board of Governors … [BOS member] Richard Roper who worked for the Chancellor of Higher Education, Ralph Dungin, at the time, orchestrated discussions that had to be had in the New Jersey Assembly because Rutgers is a state university and could not consent to expenditures or policy changes without going through those processes. [Thomas] Kean* was the Chairman of the Assembly Education Committee and he was an advocate of the things we asked for and the demands because he said they were reasonable.

The most significant demand was that the enrollment of minority students at Rutgers, disadvantaged students. Disadvantagement became a term came after the fact. Rutgers had to find a way to fund those things that it had to agreed to in writing when it consented to the demands, a way to fund it was initially a little program that became Urban University that became the EOF program as a funding formula. And by the way, more non-black students have benefitted from and been supported by EOF than all the black students combined. So at that time, you should know, that atmosphere, even poor white kids couldn’t come to Rutgers during that time. If you didn’t a have a heritage and you didn’t have a ten-decile high SAT score, I don’t care who you were, you couldn’t come, period. So if we get the record straight without revisionist leanings, we'll know that but for Mason’s - Dr. Gross’s - consent, and the legislature’s approval and ratification, and the board of governors’ adoption of those things, none of this would be possible.438

Donaldson’s history is telling on several levels. First, she articulates again the behind-the-scenes relationship students had developed with state officials and the support of some of those officials, debunking the characterization of the protesters as criminal rabble rousers acting on destructive impulse. Second, she points out that the term “disadvantaged” was imposed on EOF externally, and not from the students themselves, who never presented themselves in those deficit terms. And finally, she points out that because it is a race-neutral program, EOF benefitted poor white students as much as Black students. While this latter fact is not articulated in negative terms by Donaldson, it does provide support for the argument that EOF was

* He was then a Republican member of the New Jersey General Assembly
ultimately a compromise funding scheme made to deflect faculty, legislative and public opposition to any program seen to specifically redress the historic exclusion of Black people from Rutgers University.

In addition to demands for changes to admissions policy and practice, changing the curriculum was another of the protesters’ key demands. As was the case with the implementation of the new admissions programs such as the TYP and UUP, students took a lead role in shaping what the curricular initiatives looked like. Michael Jackson of Rutgers College was among those on the forefront of doing that work:

One of our demands in ’68 was for a black studies department, which didn't come into being until the Fall of ’69, I think, and I was on the committee to draw up the major. We decided that black studies was just too out there. So, to our credit—and Dr. Harold Weaver was on the [committee], it was Dr. Harold Weaver, Gregory (Stewart?) and me, we were the committee that drew up the African and Afro-American Studies Department—-we wanted to give credence that African Studies was a relevant academic study and Afro-American Studies. Then, the other thing we wanted to do was to honor Paul Robeson, because all the honors programs were [named for] Henry Rutgers, so, we established the honors program for the African and Afro-American Studies Department to be [named for] Paul Robeson. So, I majored in African Studies, Greg did Afro-American Studies, we were both the first Paul Robeson Scholars. So, when we graduated in ’71, we were the first graduates of the African and Afro-American Studies Department, which became Africana Studies, is now the Africana [Studies Department].

Michael Jackson recalls that the committee began the project by pulling courses that already existed at Rutgers under a single umbrella so there would be enough options to build a major. However, there were very few that fit the bill, and he and his colleagues had to think broadly about what courses already on offer leant themselves to the study of African American or African people or of Africa itself. Jackson describes the process this way:

what we did is looked at the catalogs of Rutgers College, Livingston College and Douglass and saw what was [available], anything that could reference the African-American experience. Now, Douglass had a few, Livingston had most of them, particularly in the African [field], because I took African literature at Livingston, African art …That's how we did it. So, what was available, put it all together and said, "This is
enough to have the minimum for a [major]." Let's see, "Independent Study, Problems in Race and Culture, Topics in Political Theory and Cultural Geography," and then, in my senior year, I took "Primitive Art" and two Robeson study projects. In the Fall of '69, I took "Introduction to African Lit," "Work in a Contemporary Society," "Topics in Political Behavior" and "Cultural Geography." So, we saw what had any reference to African-Americans or Africans that were already on the books. Then, of course, after '71, the things expanded and most of my [classes], let's see, African art was taught by a Kenyan, Ernest Dunn taught the African literature--so, most of the teachers were AfriCos- -but that's how we did it. We took what there was, I guess a couple courses came online, then, there were the independent studies and they've got beaucoup stuff now that you can choose from.440

Jackson describes almost an entrepreneurial process of capitalizing on existing resources that would eventually lead to the creation of innovate curricular initiatives taught by scholars of color. The students’ success in establishing what would become the Africana Studies department in New Brunswick, the African American and African Studies department in Newark, and the Africana Studies program in Camden was meaningful and long-lasting. This accomplishment mirrors a larger pattern that occurred across the United States, a pattern that is considered by scholars to have paved the way for the institutionalization of ethnic studies and women and gender studies as an integral part of higher education.441

Some of the expansion of courses and Black faculty referred to by Jackson came to Rutgers by way of the Black Arts Movement and the inception of Livingston College. Patricia Graham, Livingston College class of 1974, spoke with Rutgers Oral History interviewer Molly Graham about what it was like to be a student during first the years after Livingston College opened its doors:

MG: The kind of people who came as a guest lecturer or speaker or were professors then were really experts in their field. I am thinking of Nikki Giovanni.

PG: Nikki Giovanni was a professor there.

MG: So was Toni Cade Bambara.

PG: Yes, oh, my God, yeah.
MG: Which is incredible.

PG: [Yes]. Isn't it? And Sonia Sanchez, all in one campus, and they were friends. [laughter]

MG: Did you ever think what are they doing in New Jersey?

PG: No, because I knew that Rutgers was a progressive school, and Rutgers was becoming a more diverse university. Livingston College, I was told at the time, it's an experiment. Have you heard that? They were going to put all this cultural stuff there, and it would attract certain students who wanted this life experience. Oh, my God, all I can say is thank you, Rutgers, because it was incredible, an incredible experience, to wake up in the morning, walk out onto the campus, and here you're meeting people from different ethnic backgrounds, different races, and your professors, you didn't have a fear of, "Oh, the professor isn't going to understand me." There were resident directors of different ethnicities and different ages, some younger, some older. Some of the residence directors even had professions that were outside of what they're doing. I remember this one resident director was a professional photographer, and I guess he was doing this resident director work to live and do his photography. Some of them had other [jobs], or they might have been doctoral students. It was just an incredible experience. I loved undergrad school. [laughter] 442

As the “experimental college” described by Graham, Livingston became seen as a more radical space than either Rutgers or Douglass College, much more like Newark and Camden. It is interesting to note the remark Patricia Graham makes about not having to worry whether professors understood her when she was a student at Livingston College. The presence of faculty of color teaching what seemed to her contemporary, relevant subjects was enough to assure her that they would. The culture of Livingston was unique in New Brunswick. M. Wilma Harris had already graduated from Douglass College when Livingston College opened, but she returned to Douglass to work as a Counselor-in-Residence in 1969. She noted stark differences between students at the new versus traditional colleges, telling interviewer Molly Graham that Livingston women did not like the Douglass women:

MG: How come?

MWH: I think because the Douglass women were perceived as middle class, bourgeois and the Livingston women were the real black women. They had done the struggle. Many
of the Livingston women were from large cities as opposed to the suburbs. There was a class distinction. I wasn’t a student, so this was from a different lens looking at it.

MG: How did Douglass woman feel about Livingston women?
MWH: Probably the same. Who are these hooligans over here? [laughter] Less so than when I went to Douglass, but still more than with Livingston, many Douglass students felt Douglass was the "eighth" seventh sister.

This difference between students at the colleges in New Brunswick has echoes of the difference in levels of political activism between students who started their studies near the beginning of the 1960s versus the end of the decade. But over time, departments at Rutgers and Douglass College did begin to hire Black faculty members, notably, in 1972, Board of Governors Zora Neale Hurston Professor Cheryl Wall who spent her career advocating for the inclusion of Black women in English literature curriculum.443

The short-lived Urban University Program offered specialized courses to students that were meant to be as contemporary and relevant as those being offered at Livingston College. Dr. Cheryl Clarke was a graduate student in English at the time and was hired to teach for the UUP before it was displaced by the EOF program. Clarke, who is an African American woman, spoke with Rutgers Oral History interviewer Kathryn Tracy Rizzi about her experience of teaching and her memory of the series of events that led to the creation of the UUP:

CC: I taught this course called something like "Culture and Identity." I can't remember, but I know it had "Culture" in it. I had to teach writing. I had to teach writing to people like me, who were not prepared for Rutgers, except they were less prepared for Rutgers than I was for Rutgers. They were kids that had very poor educations and no preparation for college. They were channeled into this program which the EOP [Educational Opportunity Fund] Program is a descendent of. Now, the EOP program--people hated that program. Faculty hated that program. They badmouthed that program all the time. We were teaching these courses, hoping to develop kids toward college-level English courses. They were taking some courses for credit, but the courses they took with us, no credit, which was a bad idea, is a bad idea. That was really tough.

KR: Those students, after they finished the Urban University Program, which college at Rutgers were they going to?
CC: They would go to either Douglass, Rutgers or Livingston, yes, one of those three. They would go into one of those three if they could--well, they were already accepted in the university. It was not a problem of them being accepted into the university. They were already there, but did the colleges want to accept them? Well, I can't remember how it worked, honestly. Many went to Rutgers, and many went to Livingston. Many of them were not successful, but the program grew. Now, it's a very well-respected program. It has a large constituency of support at the state, among its alumni and among its students' parents. Nobody's going to mess with it now, but then it was definitely not appreciated.

KR: Why did Rutgers have this program?

CC: Because students had demonstrated and said, "You need to honor some of the black and Latino people who pay taxes. You need to do something to recruit more black and Latino students." They said it in Newark and they said in New Brunswick and they said it in Camden. There were protests--this was before I came, this is something I read about I guess--all over the state for Rutgers to integrate. So, they developed the program I worked in. They talked to black people they knew at the state. They hired more black and Latino staff. They called upon the black staff that was already there to help with this project, to put their shoulders to the wheel. Mason Gross was president then. He was liberal. Then, after him was Ed Bloustein, who was very liberal. That's how these programs got started.

It was always a struggle as to whether they would be able to hang in the university, because of the attacks on the part of other academic departments, especially English. The reason the English Department has writing centers now is because of programs like EOP [Educational Opportunity Fund Program]. They realized that when you help black students, when you develop educational prerogatives for black students, you're also helping white students. I taught white students, too. I taught in that UUD [Urban University Department] program for two years, and then I taught in the English Department for two years, though I shouldn't have been teaching because I didn't know anything about teaching. White students couldn't write either.444

Clarke’s narrative suggests that there was continued internal hostility from faculty to the program President Mason Gross had developed in collaboration with students in its incarnation as the UUP and later, EOF. While she doesn’t specify the nature of the hostility, from the context of her remarks, it seems likely that it came at least in part from the sense that students were not prepared and not meriting admission to Rutgers, which aligns with opposition voiced as the program was being imagined and first implemented. Interestingly, Clarke points out that in her experience teaching, white students were equally unprepared and benefited equally from support
initiatives launched as a result of the Black Student Protest Movement, undermining the many cries of reverse racism launched by opponents of Gross’ initiatives.

Community engagement was another critical demand issued by Black students, primarily in Camden and Newark. Vickie Donaldson notes that the city of Newark, hometown to movement leader Amiri Baraka, was a hub of the Black Arts Movement and progressive politics. She remembers that student activists “urgently requested” that prominent African American people be invited to campus including poets Nikki Giovanni, Carolyn Rodgers, and Amiri Baraka, community activist Gus Heningburg, Democratic Congressman Donald M. Payne, Rutgers Board of Governors member Bessie Nelms Hill, and the Newark-based Congress for Racial Equality (CORE) leader Robert Curvin. And they did come to the Newark campus, breaking down some of the barriers between the institution of Rutgers and the surrounding community.

In Camden, the administration called on the Rutgers Bureau of Community Services to earmark $50,000 for community and student projects and voiced a commitment to opening up a fine arts building to community programming. At the April 8, 1969 meeting of the Rutgers-Camden Teacher Education Committee, members discussed offering a slate of courses to prepare Rutgers-Camden students to student teach in Camden public schools. However, by 1971, the language used by administrators about community outreach projects was more defensive and decidedly less optimistic:

Everyone must understand that the mandate and the budget of this College only enable us to do teaching and research, and we are pressed to do a good job in these areas within the resources that are given to us. A great amount of what has been requested of us is not within our ability to supply and indeed, would require a Legislative redefinition of our mission, with appropriate funding.

The College does allow community organizations to use its facilities providing that they operate within broad guidelines and do not conflict with student use. Examples of organizations that have used our College Center and lecture rooms are: NJ Coalition of
High School Students, SANE, and a wide assortment of civil rights groups, day care center interest groups, etc. that make arrangements through the Bureau of Community Services.

As I pointed out to you in the past, the University has established an agency on this campus for the express purpose of cooperating with the community. This agency, which does not come under the jurisdiction of this College, is the Bureau of Community Services, which is under the direct supervision of Mr. James H. Ricks and the ultimate control of Dean Hamilton Stillwell of the University Extension Division.447

In New Brunswick, too, community engagement was seen as being in the purview of the University’s extension program and not its core academic mission. The response across campuses seems like a case of good intentions butting up against funding priorities. Given the battle Mason Gross had to fight to fund the UUP, there seems not to have been much willingness to open up a second funding front for community engagement programs.

Black students wanted the campus changed. They sought a transformation of the University into a space in which Black students, faculty, and staff were neither few in number nor viewed askance by white people for their supposed inferior qualifications. But this transformation was slow to come, and even after the height of the protests, Black students continued to feel targeted and harassed. One incident of harassment on the Rutgers College campus was chronicled in the student publication the Black Voice. The storyteller refers to the “Black House” located at 17 Bartlett Street in New Brunswick, which was a social and cultural space for Black students:

It was about 3:00 A.M. in the mourning [sic] on August 30, 1971. I had just arrived in town, I had caught the last train from Newark where I had picked up a few books which I thought would be good for the Black House Library. So I walked to the Black House from the train station. I knocked on the front door but there was no answer although the lights were on all over the House. So I decided to go around the back door, because if anyone was upstairs, they would hear me. As I walked to the back door, I saw a campus police car coming up. He walked up to me and asked to see my identification. As I went for my wallet another car pulled up. The cop that I was with said, “I know you. Your name is Elmore!” After I had answered him by replying, yes, I showed him my ID card. He checked it and said, “Well, we’ll have to taky [sic] you to the station.” So I got into the car. When we got to the station, and explained what was going on to the sergeant, he
was ready to release me. But the white cop did not want to see that, so they made a phone call. First the sergeant talked, then he told the white cop to get the phone. A brother who was the second officer to come in on this, said “Don’t worry. Everything should be alright.” But as the white cop came back from the phone he told the sergeant to pick up the phone again, then he told me that I was under arrest. The sergeant said the charge was trespassing. “For knocking on the door?” I asked. The sergeant said, “I’m not making the arrest, he is,” indicating the white cop. I was then taken to the New Brunswick jail where I spent the night. The next afternoon was court. The white campus cop and the brother were there, but the white cop postponed the case.

So the case was postponed until the 24th of this month and now I, Thomas Elmore, need your support. So be in court Friday to support me or say, “What the hell. They will just take another brother.”

This incident is an example of the difficulty Black students faced in changing the campus culture. They sought to shape a campus to which they would have a claim equal to their white peers and professors, one that recognized their accomplishments, contributions, and value and did not simply tolerate their presence, or worse, view them with suspicion. But in 1971, even with the support of top University leaders and even after their numbers had grown, Black students still were surveilled and harassed by campus police at the behest of the institution itself, an institution that told them they were being closely watched for their own security and protection. The students did not see it that way. They saw it as coercive scrutiny.

The view of Black students as interlopers also persisted in the eyes of other white stakeholders. As noted above, white faculty continued to view the UUP with hostility. And M. Wilma Harris says she sensed more discrimination when she worked at Douglass College than when she had been a student there. She recalled one particular incident for the Rutgers Oral History Archive:

When Douglass had commencement outside and the weather was nice like this, everyone could come, the whole Milky Way galaxy could go to Antilles Field. But if the weather was rainy, each graduate got three tickets or four tickets, so it was limited. One year—1973—it rained. This white father had brought his mother for commencement knowing they didn’t have a ticket for her and hoping the weather would be nice. When I tried to explain in my deanly capacity that his mother was not going to have a seat, without a ticket, because there are only a finite number of seats, [he said],
“Then take it from some of those scholarship students.” So we know what he was saying. “The ones who didn’t pay the full freight, those minority type students,” is really what he meant. I didn’t sense that kind of overt discriminating communication when I was a student—it was more like, “Look, my best friend -- the black. Come meet this person,” which can be funny. I’m not saying it was all insincere because it wasn’t. There were some people who just generally liked the black person because they liked the person and they could have been green with polka dots, but for some it was like, “Okay. On my bucket list, I can now check off ‘have black friend.’ I’ve done that now.” That was the--I just thought it was sad, but funny--issue then. Now, I am sure that things were said and things were done, but not by people whom I knew well, because they wouldn’t even want to be bothered. Would I say that--no different than now.450

This case and the incident detailed in Black Voice lend support to the argument that the racial project of protesters, their transformational goal, was slower and more difficult to achieve than changes to admissions policies and curriculum. Derrick Bell’s principle of interest convergence helps to explain why. As cited in Chapter 2, Bell writes that the “interest of blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interests of whites,” and only so far as does not threaten the “superior social status of middle and upper class whites.”451

Insofar as EOF and curricular changes did not threaten the supremacy of white people, and, in fact, advantaged poor and less prepared white students as much as Black students, they were tolerated. But the goals of campus cultural transformation and community engagement toward racial justice were demands that would have required profound structural change – the very overthrow of systemic racism – that most definitely would have threatened the status quo that privileged whiteness.

The legitimacy of the Black Student Protest Movement as a social movement and not a loose collective of spontaneous disruptions cannot be disputed. Recall Charles Tilly’s definition of a social movement cited in Chapter 2:

movements depend intimately on the social networks in which their participants are already embedded, that the identities deployed in collective contention are contingent but crucial, that movements operate within frames set by historical accumulation of shared understanding, that political opportunity structure significantly constrains the histories of individual social
movements, but that movement struggles and outcomes also transform political opportunity structures.\textsuperscript{452}

The Black Student Protesters at Rutgers forged social networks out of necessity; they were so few in number in the 1960s that they sought one another out for social activities and, catalyzed by the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., for organized, strategic activism. The protesters came to Rutgers University with unique and divergent life experiences, including distinct experiences of racism, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Black Power movement, but all had a shared understanding of the historical impact of racism on the lives of Black people in the United States and all shared a commitment to the concept of racial justice. While constrained by the political structures within which they had grown up, they identified the racial justice struggle as their own and capitalized on the opportunity afforded by national events of the 1960s as a moment in which the dominant group – white people – were either willing or forced to concede that some change was inevitable and necessary. And their movement changed the narrative at Rutgers University forever, shifting the political structure so that the interests of Black and other historically marginalized groups of students had to be formally recognized by every subsequent administration.

\textit{CONCLUSIONS}

In his work on the history of Rutgers University, Paul Clemens discusses the Black Student Protest Movement at Rutgers from the perspective of the presidency of Mason Gross. Clemens offers a narrative that suggests a sympathetic institutional leader hamstrung by state legislators and public opinion. My research adds to this narrative by highlighting the voices of the Black Student Protesters themselves, people who formed social and political networks based on shared experiences of racism, and who were moved to action during a moment of political opportunity. This project shows that far from being spontaneous, ephemeral or even criminal
actions, the protesters at all three Rutgers campuses set forth a social movement based on knowledge, strategy, collaboration, and focus. My work also shows that the opposition to meeting the demands of the protesters was not universal. Yes, antipathy from white students, alumni, some faculty, political actors and the general public limited the response of the Gross administration, but the support of key external figures like Thomas Kean and others allowed for compromise that advanced some admissions demands. And support from the administration and some faculty combined with the Black students’ own savvy and strategic thinking ushered in significant curricular changes and increased hiring of Black faculty.

Clemens portrays Gross as generally supportive of the protesters’ goals, coolly impervious to charges leveled at him that he was “blackmailed” by protesters, and steadfast in resisting pressure to escalate a crackdown on protesters by calling in police to restore order.453 My archival and oral history research supports this characterization. Yet despite support from this institutional leader, external influences trumped the university’s autonomy, and Gross and the protesters were forced to compromise. Opposition led to the dilution of a key program, the Urban University Program (UUP) that was instituted by Rutgers to meet protesters’ demands and was eventually replaced by the state-advocated Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF).

There is no question that this was a blow to Gross, the students, and the countless individuals who had supported and worked for the UUP and the other programs set in motion in 1968 and 1969. However, there is also no question that programs at colleges and universities across the state funded by EOF have had a positive impact on participating students. Today EOF is widely viewed as New Jersey’s leading program to support low-income, first generation students with scholarships, counseling, and academic support. Historians laud this reform as one of the great achievements of the civil rights movement at Rutgers.454 And indeed, the program
has made a material difference in the lives of New Jersey students, primarily students of color. According to the Rutgers EOF website, the program has served more than 20,000 Rutgers graduates over the past five decades.\textsuperscript{455} Statewide, EOF serves more than 13,000 students each year with grants between $250 and $2,500 per year, and data shows EOF students graduate at higher rates than their low-income peers in New Jersey and 15 other states that report data on opportunity programs.\textsuperscript{456}

But this project seeks to re-center the story on the protesters, not the institution. It is clear that protesters’ explicit demands for racial justice were overwhelmed by an integrationist, race neutral approach embodied by EOF. This result, which was instigated by a backlash from white people, was sometimes expressed in the language of explicit racism, sometimes couched in colorblind arguments about merit and reverse racism, and sometimes hidden behind the practicalities of political compromise. But how did the protesters themselves feel about the outcomes of their movement? What are the implications of these outcomes? This analysis of the archival record and oral histories of student movement participants reveals complex responses to these questions.

As noted above and in the introduction to this project, Rutgers University is now one of the most diverse public universities in the United States.\textsuperscript{457} Conventional wisdom holds that significant gains were made at Rutgers in terms of the protesters’ demands about admissions. By the early 1970s, 10 percent of the undergraduates at Rutgers were black, black and Hispanic recruiters had been hired by admissions offices, financial aid offices were staffed by a greater diversity of people, new courses and majors were added to reflect cultural diversity, and Livingston College was created in 1969, recruiting non-traditional and minority students, and offering a curriculum that focused on issues like racism and urbanization.\textsuperscript{458} EOF is today a
highly regarded program that has unquestionably supported thousands of students over decades. Rutgers University is now host to a national conference on diversity and inclusion.\textsuperscript{459} In 2015, the University seated a Committee on Disenfranchised and Enslaved Populations in Rutgers History, which published a book documenting this history.\textsuperscript{460} In 2020, Dr. Jonathan Holloway, a distinguished scholar of African American history and himself a Black man, was named President of Rutgers University.\textsuperscript{461} By contemporary markers, Rutgers University is an institution vocal about its commitment to diversity and inclusion.

There has been evident progress in terms of curriculum change and the hiring of Black faculty members. Wendell Holbrook told the Conklin Hall liberators, “We salute you,” as he noted that there are now more faculty jointly or singly appointed to the African-American and African Studies department at Rutgers-Newark than there were Black faculty in the entire college of arts and sciences when he arrived.\textsuperscript{462} Yet in his closing remarks at the Black on the Banks conference, Douglas Greenberg, Distinguished Professor of History, School of Arts and Sciences, New Brunswick, introduced a list of both positive and negative data points on Rutgers’ progress toward racial equity. On one hand, he noted, “The EOF program, which was imagined by the people in this room in 1965, the EOF program is a permanent feature of this university and it isn’t going anywhere, and that’s a real commitment, and it’s a commitment matched by other programs that support Black students and other so-called minority students in a university where they are the majority. And that seems to me an incredible legacy that my contemporaries helped to create.”\textsuperscript{463} Greenberg was a student at Rutgers College in the 1960s and an ally to the Black Student Protesters, and he argues that today the project of equity must remain fixed on race as it was in the 1960s, not on economic class. On racial equity, Greenberg said, Rutgers still falls short, noting that despite its status as a diverse university, the percent enrollment of Black
undergraduates has never equaled the percent of African Americans who live in the state of New Jersey. He further points out that Rutgers University lags behind its peer institutions in the recruitment of Black faculty, noting that in 2015, there were only 55 Black faculty on the entire New Brunswick campus. He blames a “continued failure of will at the center of this university and from embedded institutional racism of this University” and “the deep roots and continuing power of precisely the institutional racism that the freedom movements of the 1960s uncovered” for the failure of the University to live up to its promises. “Too much of the work of securing racial justice remains undone,” Greenberg told the audience, “Beating Michigan in the number of Black faculty is a hell of a lot more important than beating them in football.”

It seems clear that without the willingness of students to take on the work of implementing policies and programs for racial justice, at the most elemental level, not much would have been accomplished even with the good will and commitment of the Mason Gross administration. Michael Jackson, Rutgers College class of 1971, credited the University with meeting protesters’ admissions demands, but emphasized that it was the students themselves who did the work of instigating change and putting forward a vision to achieve it, while a well-intentioned administration was swept along with the political tide of the time:

I believe we got what we asked for. I think they saw the writing on the wall, the cat was out of the bag, and they had to move. They had to move forward, they had to move forward with some degree of equity, because there’d been neglect for so many years, and that’s what everybody else was doing. I mean, they went with the times and I think they did a good job, for the most part, and the "they" being all of us. I mean, they couldn't have done it without our assistance, obviously, because we drew up the Transitional Year Program. We gave them the outline, and then, they put the bones to it and the dollars and recruited the students. It is what it is now.

Maxene Vaughters Sumney, Douglass College class of 1970s, recalls students believing they could not rely on the University to meet their demands. In response, Douglass College students set up six different committees and gave the administration one-year and five-year plans to meet
goals such as hiring Black faculty and increasing admissions of Black students, working with department chairs to find Black faculty members, and working with admissions to recruit Black students. “We became the surrogate staff that made it happen because had we not engaged in that way, then we felt it would not have been achieved,” says Sumney. She notes that the students pursued their goals with great seriousness, which is very different from what critics of the Black Student Protesters thought of them. “They thought we were just burning and tearing stuff down,” she says, but this “was a long-term commitment for us.”

That commitment to racial justice extended beyond their years at Rutgers University. Many of the Black alumni built lives and careers that upheld the same goals of racial justice. Rosalind Carmichael, Douglass College class of 1972, became a public-school teacher in the city of Newark. She taught primarily children of color, and framed her teaching practice against low expectations and for a relevant curriculum:

I was into my revolutionary period and I just decided I’m going to teach these children, they’re going to learn something regardless of what anybody else does. I can’t be concerned with the other teachers. In this room they will learn something. That’s how I operated for thirty-two years …Every day for five minutes—well, the beginning of the week, I would give the children a picture of a Black author. Then every day I would give what I call author facts, just about three or four sentences. They had to copy it down in their notebook. Then we went on with our lesson. We talked about it. But that way, they got to know Black authors … The department chair came in one day and told me that my subject matter was inordinately Black and that just won’t do. “You’re just doing too much.” This is like in the ‘70s, early ‘80s. I was a writer. He wrote me up and I wrote him up. [laughter] We wrote each other up. In essence, what I said is when I’m doing Shakespeare and Blake and Milton, that’s not inordinately white. You didn’t say anything about that.”

Carmichael was not alone in her advocacy for young people. Michael Jackson, too, worked in youth development programs as a counselor and administrator, some of which were linked to supporting young people in the criminal justice system.
Betty Davis, Douglass College class of 1966, served young people through her work in the Peace Corp in Abuja, Nigeria where she worked as a secondary school teacher and also a teacher trainer. She remembers at first feeling unprepared and also a bit disheartened, but soon came to recognize that whatever formal training she and her colleagues lacked was made up for by their commitment to students:

I remember when I first got there, the principal said, “Welcome. We don’t have a teacher for ‘West African History,’ so that’s what you’re going to teach.” I knew squat about West African history, so I had to read these books to try to stay ahead of the students. It was crazy. Then, my afternoons were spent going out to various villages to meet with the primary school teachers, because by then they were finished. We would all meet at a school, and then I would give them lessons in English or history or geography or something …

When you first talked to them and got a sense of what kind of knowledge they had, it was sort of depressing to say, “Okay, there’s such limits there, and they’re limiting the kids that they’re trying to teach,” but they recognized that and they really, really wanted to do the best they could for their students. With these teachers, they had taught all day, and then they wound up coming to another primary school to have lessons with me for an hour and a half or two hours. Then, they had to go back home. You either had a bicycle or you walked, so it was a sacrifice for them to do what they were doing. I really admired them for that, and because of that, of course, I wanted to do the best job I could giving them additional knowledge that they could pass on to their students.468

The call to service was strong among the Black alumni of the 1960s and early 1970s as was the continued call to activism. Joy Stewart Williams left New Brunswick in 1968 to pursue a doctoral degree in African History, Diasporic Studies, and Comparative Education at UCLA. She participated in the Black Student Protest Movement there with people including Angela Davis. “I was primed right here on the Banks,” says Williams, referring to the nickname for the location of the New Brunswick campus along the Raritan River.469

A Guyanese-born professor hired in 1972 as a faculty member in what is now the Africana Studies Department in the School of Arts and Sciences at Rutgers-New Brunswick had a lifelong impact on one Douglass alumnae. Because of Professor Ivan Van Sertima, Barbara
Morrison-Rodriguez made a connection to the African country of Sierra Leone that shifted her entire self-identity, encouraging her to think about the pre-slavery history of her family.

What I appreciated was Ivan Van Sertima at Rutgers was the one who got me thinking, “Who are your ancestors?” Slavery is not who you are. It’s something that happened in the history of your people. It was an event that happened in the history of your people. You have a whole history pre-slavery. That’s what he was saying. You need to find out for the thousands of years before the Atlantic slave trade. Who did you come from? … I decided to go [to Sierra Leone] in 2005 … I went. It was life changing for me … it was the first time that I had been to Africa in a space where I knew I had ancestral roots, and that was different. That was a very different kind of experience. But the way the people welcomed me--I’ll show you some pictures. So then when I came back, my identification was not an African American descended from slaves. It was an African American descended from enslaved Mende people and Temne people. It’s different. It’s a very different kind of conversation. I have a pre-slave history and I know what it is. Your whole sense of your self is just really, really changed. You just kind of walk with your back a little straighter.

Not only was this a moment of personal transformation for Morrison-Rodriguez, but also the manifestation of a key goal of the Black Student Protest Movement to increase numbers of Black faculty who would enrich students’ lives and also serve as mentors to them.

Many of the alumni cited in this paper remain deeply connected to Rutgers University, decades after graduation. Some had full careers at Rutgers University including Cheryl Clarke and Maxene Vaughters Sumney. Frank McClellan is married to the Rutgers-Camden Chancellor Emerita Phoebe Haddon, who is an esteemed constitutional scholar. Vickie Donaldson teaches a course at Rutgers-Newark called “Race, Poverty and Protest,” which, incidentally, met in Conklin Hall in the fall of 2019. M. Wilma Harris serves as a member of the Rutgers University Board of Trustees and is active in many alumni organizations including the Black Alumnae Network at Douglass. Bruce Hubbard is actively involved in fundraising efforts, particularly initiatives supporting Black students and commemorating distinguished Black alumni, and along with M. Wilma Harris, has been named a Loyal Son & Daughter by the Rutgers Alumni Association. Richard Roper currently serves on the Rutgers University Board of Governors. In
all these varied capacities, many alumni of the Black Student Protest Movement carry on the work begun in 1968, but there is no question in their minds that much work remains to be done to achieve racial equity.

Bruce Hubbard says that Black students and organizations need continued support to advance the goals he and his classmates called for when he was a student. He takes a different tack from alumni who have disconnected from Rutgers because of its unfulfilled promises and history of racism, and thinks that to benefit current African American students it is crucial for them to contribute financially and thus be in a position to pressure the University to do things like recruit and retain Black faculty members:

They say, "Oh, I'm angry with that place. They were bigoted when I was there," and I was telling them on the phone this week, "Look, you've got to get over yourself for stuff that happened fifty years ago. I certainly have and the students who are there now need you. If you want power to be able to move issues, unfortunately, if you don't give money, you don't get it."472

Hubbard agrees that the University is far from finished with the project of racial equity and believes it will never achieve equity around issues such as hiring Black faculty unless it fundamentally changes its practices and priorities and includes more Black leaders in the process. I quote below from his interview with the Rutgers Oral History Archive at length because of his clear articulation of current challenges and, in the University response to those challenges, the clear echo of arguments made 50 years ago:

The black constituents are addressing [the need to recruit more Black faculty] and we're in conversations with the University about it. I mean, their argument is, they get really good people and they get stolen away by Harvard and Yale … So, basically, you'll have a black professor who will get gravitas and fame and a Pulitzer, and then, they'll wave money and the Ivy League, with their endowment, will take them away. So, that's one of their issues, but the other thing is, "Who's in the pipeline? How many people do you have?" We have an issue because the faculty decides on appointments of faculty and they do not let alumni or other people lobby in that process. Like, I've sat on search committees for deans and the head of the Graduate School of Education, which is sort of administrative. So, you can be a non-academic and be on an administrative search, but
you cannot be, say, a non-physics person and be in the Physics Department on a search. Now, that's faculty controlled. So, what we're looking at is the control point where we can affect that and get them to agree to it … So, anyway, you've got to be at the table to play and what we're saying is, if we don't have people at the table, and then, they say, "Oh, we can't find people," if we're at the table, we're going, "Here's ten. Don't tell me you can't find black historians, black this, black that--I know twenty of them. Here are their résumés," I mean, and that's the answer. Then, even more importantly, when the people come up and they hem and haw, "Oh, well, we think this person ... " and, "We'd like them to have a little more of this and a little less ... " They play those games, too, and, like, we're going--you can cut through and cut up the people that they are favoring the same way they do our people. So, it's a game and we need to have access to play. 473

As was the case in 1968, the description Hubbard gives is of a University unable or unwilling to change its standard practices to meet the imperative of a racial project, and a Black student, in this case an alumnus, stepping in with a new vision, a plan to back it up, and a willingness to do the work alongside University staff and faculty. Hubbard’s narrative here echoes Richard Delgado’s scenario of the law firm applicant discussed in Chapter 2 by showing how unexamined standard practice reproduces the status quo.

In reflecting on the broad social changes in the United States since the liberation of Conklin Hall in Newark, Harrison Snell sees a mixture of success with a great deal of remaining injustice:

Looking back fifty years ago from now … our world was quite different than the world I see now. There were changes that were made, there were changes where more Black people went to college, got degrees, but a lot of things remain the same. The poverty, the hostility, the racism, it never ended. It never ended … I hear the same attitudes about Black people, that they’re poor, they’re lazy, that’s the reason that they’re disadvantaged. Things have changed, we’ve gotten education, we have a little bit of money, but our world hasn’t changed that much in fifty years. 474

Snell’s classmate and fellow Conklin Hall liberator, Claude Singleton, also views the accomplishments of the protests as mixed: “I really don’t know. I mean, I have heard earlier speakers say that pretty much what we were confronted with 50 years ago is being confronted today, so I wouldn’t venture to say. Hopefully, there have been some improvements,” Singleton
Yet in response to the narrow question of whether or not the purpose of the takeover was met, Thomas Roberts responds: “Want a brief answer? Yes.” The range of responses conveys the complexity of how the success of a movement is measured, and supports the argument that, like most social movements, the Black Student Protest Movements at Rutgers resulted in some success and some compromise, and that the alumni themselves view it in those terms.

Stakeholders in the predominantly white institution of Rutgers University could not imagine an alternative to the paradigm of colorblindness that had grown from the Civil Rights Movement. They linked newly imagined ways of thinking about selecting students for admission with reverse discrimination. And they were susceptible to this perspective because so much of the discourse of the time focused on changing standards to meet the needs of the “deprived” and “disadvantaged,” rather than a discourse that recognized the merits of people from historically excluded groups and the unique qualities and abilities they brought to the campuses of Rutgers University.

While certainly not the first historical study to address the Black Student Protest Movement, my project extends our understanding of how a movement can succeed in many important ways, but still fail to achieve its key foundational goals. The case of EOF at Rutgers illustrates this paradox. The Black Student Protesters at Rutgers University were advancing an explicit racial project, one that sought not only to even an economic playing field, but to achieve a racial reckoning with the history and effects of racism in the United States, in New Jersey, and at Rutgers. The students wanted the University to actively redress the injustices of the past and usher in a different kind of future by transforming the culture of the campus. This was to be achieved by renaming buildings, developing opportunities for cultural expression, expanding curriculum, and, of course, increasing the number of Black people on campus: students, staff,
and faculty. But while gains were made in curriculum development and increased access, the movement was forced to compromise because of intense backlash. The framing of initiatives as remedies for racism was dropped in favor of race-neutral terminology that sated the backlash from white stakeholders. This student-centered telling of the case at Rutgers, with its focus on analysis of the protesters’ conversations about the ideology of racial justice and the practice of administering programs to reach those ends, adds to our knowledge of the history of the era and our theoretical understanding of how race can work to operationalize a movement as well as how a movement can advance a racial project and be met by an opposing one. A better understanding of the culture and discourse surrounding the events that led to the creation of EOF helps to identify spaces in which there are unfulfilled opportunities to build a university where all students can honor their identity and feel the campus belongs to them as much as anyone else.
Notes

2 Ibid.
8 At the time of its creation it was called the Equal Opportunity Fund.
9 McCormick, The Black Student Protest Movement at Rutgers, 4.
10 Spring, Deculturalization and the Struggle for Equality.
12 Eaton and Orfield, “Rededication not Celebration: Brown at Fifty.”
13 Orfield, “Housing Segregation Produces Unequal Schools: Causes and Solutions.”
15 Bonilla-Silva, Racism Without Racists; Orfield, “Housing Segregation Produces Unequal Schools; Causes and Solutions”;
21 Tinto, Completing College.
31 For information about the creation of the Urban University Program (UUP) see McCormick, The Black Student Protest Movement at Rutgers, 67-70; for more on the Transitional Year Program (TYP) see McCormick, 53-55; for more on the Special Entrance Program see McCormick, 37, 43. These programs came out of negotiations between black students protestors and university leaders, and were dismantled by Rutgers University at the behest of the state legislature and replaced by the EOF program.
32 McCormick, The Black Student Protest Movement at Rutgers, 87-90.
34 Bonilla-Silva, Racism Without Racists; Spring, Deculturalization and the Struggle for Equality.
37 Biondi, The Black Revolution on Campus; Clemens, Rutgers Since 1945; Rogers, “The Black Campus Movement,” 2012a; Rogers, The Black Campus Movement, 2012b.
39 Ibid.
41 Special Collections and University Archives, Rutgers University Libraries, Rutgers University.
44 Derrida, Archive Fever, 17.
45 Hill, Archival Strategies and Techniques, 45.
46 Special Collections and University Archives of the Rutgers Libraries Library, Rutgers EAD Finding Aid, http://www2.scc.rutgers.edu/ead/.
48 Hill, Archival Strategies and Techniques, 64-68.
56 Shopes, “After the Interview Ends.”
57 Ibid.
58 Jessee, “The Limits of Oral History”.
60 Smith, “Oral History and Grounded Theory Procedures as Research Methodology for Studies in Race, Gender, and Class,” 129.
61 Omi and Winant, Racial Formation in the United States.
62 Ibid., 109, 110.
63 See Fine, “Witnessing Whiteness/Gathering Intelligence”; Spring, Deculturalization and the Struggle for Equality; and Tatum, “Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria for more on the material effects of racial categorization on the education of oppressed people.
64 Omi and Winant, 125.
65 Ibid., 125.
67 Bayard Rustin, Down the Line. (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971); Rustin, Strategies for Freedom.
68 Rustin, Down the Line, 71; Rustin, Strategies for Freedom.
70 Miles, Racism and Migrant Labour, 12.
71 Darder and Torres, After Race: Racism After Multiculturalism.
74 Kendi, Stamped from the Beginning, 9.
75 West, Race Matters, 2-3.
76 Bonilla-Silva, Racism Without Racists, 9.
78 Omi and Winant, Racial Formation in the United States, 66-70.
82 Bell, “‘Brown V. Board of Education’ and the Interest-Convergence Dilemma,” 522.
84 Ibid., .8, 14, 16, 18.
85 Peller, Critical Race Consciousness, 131.
86 Bonilla-Silva, Racism Without Racists; Orfield, “Housing Segregation Produces Unequal Schools: Causes and Solutions”; Orfield, Kuscera, Siegel-Hawley, and Los Angeles Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles, University of California, ““E Pluribus” … Separation: Deepening Double Segregation for More Students”; Tatum, “Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?”.
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Rutgers University honored Robeson’s legacy in 2019, the 100th anniversary of his graduation, by dedicating a campus plaza in his name and calling him “one of the university’s most esteemed alums.”
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Appendix A

ADMISSIONS DEMANDS OF THE BLACK ORGANIZATION OF STUDENTS

It has been and is the position of the Black Organization of Students that there can be no substantial changes in the total enrollment of black students at Rutgers-Newark without substantial changes in the over-all structure of this institution. Specifically, this means changing Rutgers from the totally white, nationalistic, racist-oriented institution that it now is, through the structuring of policies, programs, curriculum, etc., expressly designed to meet the wants and needs of blacks in order that we might be more adequately prepared to undertake the task of improving the lot of our people in determining our own destiny.

In line with this position, it is the conclusion of B.O.S. that any changes in admissions policies MUST be accompanied by innovations in other areas. These must include:
ADMISSIONS DEMANDS OF THE BLACK ORGANIZATION OF STUDENTS

I. An immediate review of the entire admissions department to find out why admissions at R-N is 'university' low and as far as black students are concerned extremely low.

a. That B.O.S. members be included on the committee of review.

b. The immediate removal of admission director Robert Swab and his assistant C.T. Miller.

II. Black students on a work-study program to work with the admissions department in the recruitment of black students.

III. The hiring of two black administrators officers for the sole purpose of recruitment of black students for the Rutgers-Newark campus.

a. That a fund be set up for the black administrators and B.O.S. to use to set up programs for high school black students.

b. These black administrators must have the approval of the Black Organization of Students.

c. They will have a dual function:

1. Will be able to increase the black student enrollment at R-N.

2. They will improve R-N and community relationship.

IV. Consistent with previous positions taken by B.O.S. on admissions of Black Students the proportion of Black Students in full time enrollment over the next two to three years must become no less than and, preferably, greater than 30% of the total enrollment of full time students. Irrefutable evidence and significant indication that Rutgers Newark as moving to meet this goal must be shown in admission figures for 1969-'70 academic year.

a. Admission policies, procedures and progress should be reviewed periodically by black students, faculty and administrators to see that the spirit of the demand is adhered to.

V. That a black student be on the faculty admissions board.

a. With voting status.
VI. Funds for remedial tutorial and other special programs be impli-
mented during the 1968-'69 academic year can not be less in
succeeding years and in fact, must provide for expansion and broaden-
ing of this programs.

a. If such funds are not expressly allowed for in the present
budget proposals they must be incorporated or moneys can
be taken from other areas.

VII. A special scholarship be established for the use of black students
who are academically able to get into R&W but, financially unable.

VIII. A committee be set up to discuss and implement a new admission
criterion.

a. with black representation

IX. The hiring of a black officer in the dean of students office.

a. Must meet the approval of B.O.S.

X. University, work study and other funds be made available to the
Black Organization of Students for our specific use in planning
developing and implementing black community and campus programs
and projects.

XI. Active policy of recruiting and hiring of black academic and
advisory staff at least proportionate to the total number of
black students and consistent with and following in the outline
of the previous demands.

XII. The development of a comprehensive Black Studies Institute with
full time coordinator and degree granting status.
Appendix B

RUTGERS NEWS SERVICE—Newark Campus
Morris Roth, Director
Tel. (201) 621-1766, Ext. 4262

FOR RELEASE: After 10 a.m. Monday, March 3, 1969

NEWARK, March 3 -- Terms of the agreement reached between the administration of Rutgers University in Newark and the Black Organization of Students were made public today by Malcolm D. Talbott, vice president of the State University in charge of the Newark campus.

The pact -- which leaves unsettled two areas of the demands -- is the culmination of extensive negotiations started February 6 with the presentation of 12 demands by BOS to Rutgers-Newark officials for increasing the number of black students at the Newark campus.

University officials reported that issues still unresolved with BOS involve admissions and scholastic standards -- areas that fall within the jurisdiction of the faculty of the Newark College of Arts and Sciences -- and a request for a Black Studies Institute. Response by the administration in the area of scholastic standing was submitted to the faculty this morning at a meeting in Conklin Hall.

Demands by the black students' organization and the responses by Rutgers officials are as follows:

I. BOS Demand:

The Black Organization of Students demands the immediate, unqualified dismissal of Admissions Director, Robert Swab, and his assistant, C.T. Miller.

Whether or not these two men are to be transferred elsewhere within the university is of little consequence to BOS. We will settle for no less than their dismissal from Newark-Rutgers immediately.
BOS understands the need to facilitate change in the overall structure and policy of Newark-Rutgers admissions department and does not lose sight of this fact of an archaic structure, the structure cannot be changed without the removal of those who symbolize that structure, for that is inconsistent with the entire concept of change.

I. University Response:

The University repeats its commitment to its previous statement that the transfer of these men will be made when the present work load has abated and further that every effort will be made to speed this operation.

Mr. Lincoln Lawrence, a member of the admissions staff, will handle the reviewing and assessment of applications filed by Black applicants. He will present these applications to the admissions committee for their action. Mr. Lawrence will conduct the interviews held with Black students.

The demand of the immediate, unqualified dismissal of Mr. Swab and Mr. Miller is one of denial of their rights and can be accomplished only by an open impartial hearing on specific charges. The University can take no other position in this matter.

Mr. Robert Swab and Mr. C.T. Miller will leave 53 Washington Street and move their office to 18 Washington Place. Mr. Swab and Mr. Miller will then take responsibility for the admissions applications for the professional schools, Pharmacy, Nursing, and Business. Mr. Swab and Mr. Miller will not be responsible for the admission to the College of Arts and Sciences.

A title describing Mr. Swab's new duties in the University Office of Admissions in New Brunswick will be assumed by Mr. Swab immediately in place of his present title.

A search will be instituted immediately for a new director of admissions in Newark.
II. **BOS Demand:**

Black students be employed on a work-study basis in the admissions office to implement the recruitment of Black students.

a. Recent policies have encouraged off-campus work-study jobs in the community.

II. **University Response:**

The request by BOS that Black students be employed on a work-study basis in the admissions office to implement the recruitment of Black students is one that should cause no problem. This can and will be done.

III. **BOS Demand:**

BOS demands that two new positions (lines) be established in the Admissions Department. These positions must be filled by Blacks who will concentrate solely upon the recruitment of Black students; and, that BOS participate in the selection process for these positions; and that the appointments be contingent upon the approval of BOS.

The above-mentioned lines must be established regardless of the eventual status of Mr. Lincoln Lawrence. Mr. Lawrence has at no time stated his desire to remain at Rutgers, to any University official and, therefore, to state that he will be held by the University seems rather presumptuous.

III. **University Response:**

Two additional recruiters who shall be Black will be appointed by the University to recruit Black students. These two recruiters will be assigned to the Newark admissions office. The University has already provided one line and the State Department of Higher Education, through Chancellor Ralph A. Dungan, has guaranteed the second position.

The University will not hire any Black recruiters for the Newark admissions office unless it is agreed that the Black individuals will meet the needs and expectations of Black students who are to be recruited for attendance at Rutgers Newark.
The University agrees that without these qualifications they could not be effective, therefore, if the Black Organization of Students indicates that in its opinion the individual is insensitive to the needs of Black applicants, that individual will not be hired.

IV. BOS Demand:

Recognizing that because of admission action as it relates to Black students has to this point been particularly unsatisfactory, the task of complying with our demand concerning the admission of Black students will be immense. Therefore, BOS can accept no less than the following as meaning substantial compliance:

a. The admission deadline must remain open until September 12, 1969.

b. No black applicant holding a diploma from a Newark high school accredited by the New Jersey State Department of Education can be rejected during the period between now and September 1, 1969.

c. No Black student can be dismissed for academic reasons before completing AT LEAST three full semesters of work.

d. The first year's academic record for any Black student cannot be a determinant in the dismissal of Black students for academic reasons.

e. Black students reserve the right to erase the first year's academic record and start anew the following semester with a clean slate.

IV. University Response:

There is disagreement on this demand.

V. BOS Demand:

The assignment of a Black student to the faculty admissions board.

a. With the student having voting status.
V. University Response:

A Black student, Miss Marlene Peacock, who is a member of BOS, is already a member of the Newark College of Arts and Sciences' Faculty Committee on Admissions, along with two other students and a number of faculty members.

The faculty of the Newark College of Arts and Sciences, in its report from the Faculty Committee on Structure (Committee 1) has already recommended to the faculty that all student members of committees should have voting status. This recommendation will be considered at a Special Faculty Meeting of the Newark College of Arts and Sciences to deal with the recommendations of the Faculty Committee on Structure (Committee 1).

VI. BOS Demand:

Funds for remedial, tutorial and other special programs being implemented during the 1968-69 academic year cannot be less in succeeding years, and in fact, must provide for expansion and broadening of this program.

a. If such funds are not expressly allowed for in the present budget proposals, they must be incorporated, or monies can be taken from other areas.

VI. University Response:

We agree that remedial, tutorial and other special programs for disadvantaged students be expanded and we have planned for just such expansion before BOS presented its demands. We are requesting $99,000 for the coming academic year for these programs -- many times the amount of $15,000 we received for the current year -- from the State Equal Opportunity Program and other sources.

VII. BOS Demand:

That a special scholarship be established for the use of Black students who fulfill the academic requirements of Rutgers-Newark, but lack the financial resources:

a. It is the opinion of the BOS that if the University is sincere in its efforts to bring qualified Blacks into this institution, Rutgers-Newark will act to establish funds for academically qualified applicants.
b. Although funds are available for so-called risk students, there are no funds allocated specifically for non-risk students.

VII. University Response:

It would be unlawful to establish scholarships with public monies for any racial or ethnic group. The University will continue to raise scholarships for Black students specifically from private sources.

Rutgers Vice President, Malcolm Talbott, will undertake to raise scholarships for Black students from private sources. We will also seek to secure scholarship funds that already exist outside of the University for the use of Black students who fulfill the academic requirements of Rutgers-Newark but lack the financial resources.

VIII. BOS Demand:

That a committee including black representatives be created to formulate new admissions criteria.

VIII. University Response:

Establishment of Admissions criteria is in the province of the faculty.

With regard to the demand that a committee with Black representatives be created to formulate new admissions criteria, the Faculty Admissions Committee -- which formulates admissions policies with the approval of the faculty -- reviews continuously criteria for student admissions. The committee, with minority group representation, will consider the criteria for this fall's enrollment.

IX. BOS Demand:

That there will be a Black officer hired in the Dean of Students Office and that BOS participate in the selection of this officer; and that the appointment of this officer be contingent upon the approval of BOS.
The verbal acceptance of this demand previously given by Dean McGuire on Thursday, February 20th, is agreeable to BOS provided that it is reduced to writing and incorporated as part of the total response from the Administration.

IX. University Response:

The University will hire a Black officer in the Dean of Students Office. Moreover, the University will not hire any Black officer for the Dean of Students office unless the Black Organization of Students indicates that the Black individual being considered will meet the needs and expectations of Black students at Rutgers Newark. The University agrees that without these qualifications he could not be effective, therefore, if the Black Organization of Students indicates that in their opinion the individual is insensitive to the needs of Rutgers Newark Black students, that individual will not be hired.

X. BOS Demand:

That monies be made available to the Black Organization of Students for the specific purpose of planning and developing community and campus projects.

a. A precedent for such action has already been established within the University in the form of allocations to RSVP. Although RSVP has been instituted to bring about student-community involvement, the Black Organization of Students feels that we can better serve our community as residents of this community by formulating self-help projects that can project the ideal of Black esteem.

X. University Response:

The University will fund, to the limit of available money, and endeavor to raise additional monies for projects prepared by any student organizations after the usual student source of fundings is exhausted.
XI. BOS Demand:

That an active policy of recruitment and hiring of Black academic and advisory staff be at least proportionate to the total number of Black students and consistent with the demand outlined in section IV.

a. It is the consensus of the Black Organization of Students that this demand is justified by the realization that people of similar backgrounds and attitudes identify more readily.

b. Black students would be able to relate to Black advisors with greater ease and because of the similarity of interests and backgrounds, the advisors could more realistically comprehend Black student needs and desires.

XI. University Response:

A demand that the university actively recruit Black academic and advisory staff members proportionate to the number of Black students on campus is one with which the administration concurs. It has been and will continue to be the policy of the administration to seek qualified faculty and advisory personnel from all sources.

We solicit resumes and names of individuals who may be considered by the various departments and staff offices for appointment to University positions.

Progress reports will be given to BOS at its request.

XII. BOS Demand:

That there will be developed a comprehensive Black Studies Institute WITH degree granting status and a full-time coordinator.

a. One reason for the lack of interest in R·N as a primary college choice is the lack of identification materials for Blacks on this campus.
b. This Black Studies Institute will provide a needed element of Black identification on campus.

c. This institute, located in Newark, would serve to attract Blacks interested in pursuing the field of Black studies as a possible career choice.

XII. University Response:

With regard to the establishment of a degree granting Black Studies Institute or Department, the Newark College of Arts and Sciences, through a special committee is considering the creation of an Afro-American Studies Department or Black Studies Institute that will develop courses in Black studies. Two members of the Black Organization of Students, Mr. Harrison Snell and Miss Vicki Donaldson, are presently serving on a committee with faculty members which will recommend a program for consideration and approval by the faculty. If this approval is given, it would be possible to major in Black Studies and, thus, receive a degree with a specialization in that area. Faculty positions will be available to staff this Institute or Department when it is approved. Note: The University and BOS are presently not in agreement. It will be discussed later.
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