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DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN AND AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDIES

THE BLACK AND WHITE BEHIND THE BLUE AND WHITE:  
A HISTORY OF BLACK STUDENT PROTESTS AT PENN STATE

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## **Abstract**

In April of 2001, members of Penn State's Black Caucus and their supporters occupied the student union building for ten days. The protest was initially caused by overt racism in the form of death threats to black student leaders, although the underlying reasons for protest were ongoing problems concerning racial tensions on campus as well as curriculum deficiencies at the university. Black student protests occur at Penn State on an approximate ten-year cycle that began as early as 1948, with major disturbances in 1960, 1968, 1979, 1988, and 2001. This study used document analysis to examine each set of protests with regards to the national context, the racial climate at the university, the initial cause, the chronology of events, and the results. This historical perspective reveals many similarities among the demonstrations, and establishes a pattern. Some possible causes for the protests are the demographic characteristics of Pennsylvania, the rural location of the university, and the failure of the majority white community to understand alienation felt by many black students. A photo-documentary of events from the 2000-01 academic year shows the personal struggles of the black students involved and emphasizes the need for university and community action.

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## Forward

I had heard about it through one of my friends, and skimmed the headline in The Daily Collegian: “Black Caucus, Authorities Confront Racist Mailings.” Here in the year 2000, Penn State’s Black Caucus had again received hate mail. Only one year earlier, during the fall of 1999, over 60 minority students had discovered similar hateful messages in their email inboxes. I vaguely remembered those headlines from my sophomore year.

In response to the October 2000 threats, students organized a march to show solidarity with the three students and one faculty member who were the targets of the most recent threat. At the time, I was taking a photojournalism course and decided to document the event for my class. What I saw and experienced opened my eyes to a side of Penn State that I had never seen before. I realized that something was terribly wrong.

It was Homecoming Day and the vibrant blue sky and plentiful sunshine contrasted greatly with the somberness of the nearly four hundred students dressed in black from head to toe preparing for the march. I was one of only a few dozen white students. Hand in hand, row by row, the mass of marchers departed in complete silence from the Hetzel Union Building at the center of campus. As we approached Beaver Stadium and its tens of thousands of football fans, I felt the two worlds clash as this silent black snake worked its way through a sea of white. I occasionally broke out of line to snap pictures. What I saw and heard I will never forget.

While a few applauding bystanders showed their support, others shouted “If you don’t like it here, then leave!” “Stop Whining!” “Get over it!” “Go back to Africa!” Because my hand was linked with that of an African- American man, I felt the pain from

the remark work its way through me as if by osmosis. As a white student, I have never been faced with such blatant and hurtful taunting. I had read about racism and heard stories about things that were said to black students in town or on campus, but I had never witnessed it with my own eyes and ears. Hearing the comments and seeing the angry expressions on people's faces, I could not believe that this was the year 2000.

Perhaps even more disturbing than these insults was that the vast majority of the bystanders chose to completely ignore the march. To them, the train of several hundred mostly black students and all of their signs didn't even exist. The crowd looked away. Although I knew the situation with the death threats was a serious one, I had never understood the racial tensions that existed at the university. Suddenly, on that Homecoming day, I realized the severity of racism at Penn State.

While it may be difficult to discuss, the issue of race and racism deserves much attention and contemplation.

The faces and the tactics of the leaders  
May change every four years, or two, or one,

But the people go on forever.  
The people-beaten down today,  
Yet rising tomorrow;  
Losing the road one minute  
But finding it the next;  
Their eyes always fixed on a star  
Of true brotherhood, equality, and dignity-  
*The people* are the real guardians  
Of our hopes and dreams.

-Paul Robeson, 1952

## **Introduction**

On Thursday, October 12, 2000, La Keisha Wolf , the President of the Black Caucus at Penn State's University Park campus, received a death threatening letter. It was not the first time racist letters had been sent to black students at this rural campus located in central Pennsylvania. Just one year earlier, an e-mail containing several racial slurs appeared in the inboxes of over sixty black students.

Naturally, the hateful language used in the letter sparked a campus and community outcry against such blatant acts of intolerance. Marches were held, the President of the University, Graham Spanier, released a statement condemning racism, and forums were held on campus to address student concerns. However, at these open discussions about race, it became evident that racism at Penn State goes beyond death threats and racist e-mails. Almost as a catharsis, other students came forward and revealed that they, too, had been the victims of racism, both on campus and in the surrounding town of State College. At a single meeting, the Black Caucus collected over 250 testimonies from students who felt that they had experienced some form of racism. It seemed that suddenly, Penn State had a racism problem.

Soon after these "community forums," the members of the Black Caucus began to ask questions. What kind of an environment are we living in that would allow people to feel comfortable shouting "nigger" at a Black woman outside the library in broad daylight? Why are professors and students making insensitive comments in class? What is the university doing to educate students, faculty and staff about racism and discrimination? Students began to research the university's diversity initiatives and believed many programs to be in need of change and improvement. Throughout the rest

of the year, these students appealed to the faculty senate, met with members of the state legislature in Harrisburg, protested through civil disobedience during the spring Blue and White football game, and staged a ten-day occupation of the Hetzel Union Building, earning them national media attention.

However, the events that unfolded during the academic year of 2000-01 were not a random occurrence or without precedent. Penn State has a long history of race-relations problems, going back to turn of the twentieth century, when the first black student enrolled. Behind the blue and white pageantry of the university lies a deeply rooted tension between black and white. Examining the archives reveals headlines of black student protests that have repeated nearly every ten years, with four major disturbances in 1968, 1979, 1988, and again in 2000. Even the historic photographs of student protests bear a remarkable likeness to those taken in 2000-01. Why do racial protests at Penn State seem to occur on a cyclical basis?

Unfortunately, this question does not have simple answers. The problems of racism are deeply entrenched in American society. This examination focuses on the events and environment that have sparked repeated racial protests at Penn State and how they fit into the national context. Studying the pattern and the similarities among protests in different time periods may offer new insight into their causes and provide possible solutions.

### **Statement of the Problem**

*“Racism is not easy to talk about in racially mixed company. It is often considered downright impolite to bring it up. Too many demons of guilt, resentment, and vulnerability are tied up in it. Unfortunately, it usually takes a racial eruption...to get Americans to acknowledge their racial differences in public and talk about them, at least for a while, before clamping the lid of denial back down.”*

Many reports document the student protests of the past four decades, but few note their repetitive nature. Each time black students resort to protests that raise the issue of racism to the surface, the media and the general public express surprise. The protests seem to occur every ten years, but the problem of racism certainly does not disappear during these intervals. Each wave of protests is sparked by an initial event, but exposes the underlying racial tensions that exist at the university.

Through a close examination of each of the four protests, similarities become apparent. Many of the demands presented by the Black Caucus in 2001 were similar to requests made by Black students in 1968 and 1988. Complaints about the racial climate also seem to repeat over time. Recognizing these similarities, among others, offers a better understanding as to why each new protest occurs. By studying Penn State's history, it is possible to document progress that has been made and to suggest action that might be taken to improve racial tensions on campus.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The focus of racial protests generally falls upon a vocal minority of the student body, but racial misunderstanding has implications for the entire community, in town as well as on campus. It is important then to educate the wider community about the nature of the protests, and about the issue of racism at Penn State in general. Confrontational events received plenty of press coverage, but the work and the emotions behind the public scenes too often have remained unseen and misunderstood. Having exposure to the details and the personal realities of the students involved may contribute to formulating a useful understanding of the situation.

The presence of racism on campus and in town hurts everyone in the community. Racism felt by minority students not only leaves emotional scars, but deprives them of the education that they deserve. In response to experiences with racism, students may retreat further into their own communities, and further polarizing the campus climate and affecting everyone.

Solutions need to be found. Having a familiarity with the Penn State's history of race relations and black student protests is necessary to understanding the current tensions and finding constructive solutions to the problem.

Finally, because similar situations occur at other universities, this study may prove helpful beyond the Penn State community.

### **Organization of the Study**

The study is divided into four parts. Part I displays a photo-documentary of the events that occurred during the 2000-2001 academic year. Part II explores the history of race relations at the Penn State, including detailed descriptions of the four main protests of 1968, 1979, 1988 and 2001. For each time period the study considers the national context of the protest, the racial climate at the time, the event that triggered student action, the students' demands, and the reaction to the events. Part III of the study presents a reflection of the information presented in Part II. The analysis seeks to highlight the similarities among the main protests to and show how the current situation relates to the history. This section also explores several possible reasons for the cyclical nature of the protests. Part IV, the conclusion, draws the several elements of the study together and proposes several problem solutions as well as suggestions for further research.

### **Methods**

This study serves as both a historical documentation of black protests at Penn State and a journalistic summary of the recent events at Penn State. The majority of the information comes from local media sources, mainly the Centre Daily Times of State College, and The Daily Collegian student newspaper. The letters to the editor section in these two newspapers provided insight into the racial climate and the general reactions to the black protests. Also, the Penn State Archives at Pattee Library provided several articles, documents, and photographs that helped piece together the racial history of Penn State. Because I witnessed the events as they unfolded in 2000-2001, I personally printed and developed all of the photographs of events that occurred during this time. However, newspapers were used to provide a neutral point of view when describing the chronology of events. Several books were used to provide information for the national context, as well as for the analysis.



## **PART I: PHOTODOCUMENTARY of BLACK CAUCUS 2000-2001**

The photographs on the following pages represent the driving force for this thesis. The emotions and passions that I witnessed profoundly affected me and inspired me to continue researching this delicate subject.

I began photographing the Black Caucus during the Solidarity March on October 21, 2000. The attitudes and comments that I heard shocked me as I realized that there was a great injustice going on at my own university. I could not turn my back on the situation. And so I continued to get involved, always with my camera in hand. I started attending Black Caucus and Sankofa meetings. I learned what these two groups were trying to accomplish. Throughout the rest of the year, I followed them through each major event and action that they planned, and some that they didn't: an appeal to the faculty senate, a sit-in in Old Main, a trip to the state legislature in Harrisburg, civil disobedience at the Blue and White football game, a rally on the steps of Old Main, and finally, a ten-day occupation of the HUB. Throughout all of these events, I tried my best to remain invisible, which was quite difficult for a white woman in a room of all black men and women, and record the moments as I saw them unfold. I was witness to a range of emotions including fear, anger, frustration, hunger, exhaustion, pride, strength, joy, and sorrow.

While captions accompany the photos, please focus on the faces in the pictures, for the expressions of the people involved tell the story in a way that words cannot accomplish.



October 21, 2000. Students march silently around Beaver Stadium in solidarity with the black students that received death threats. Black Caucus President La Keisha Wolf (second from left) was a target of the racist hate mail.





University police accompany the marchers as they move towards Beaver Stadium.



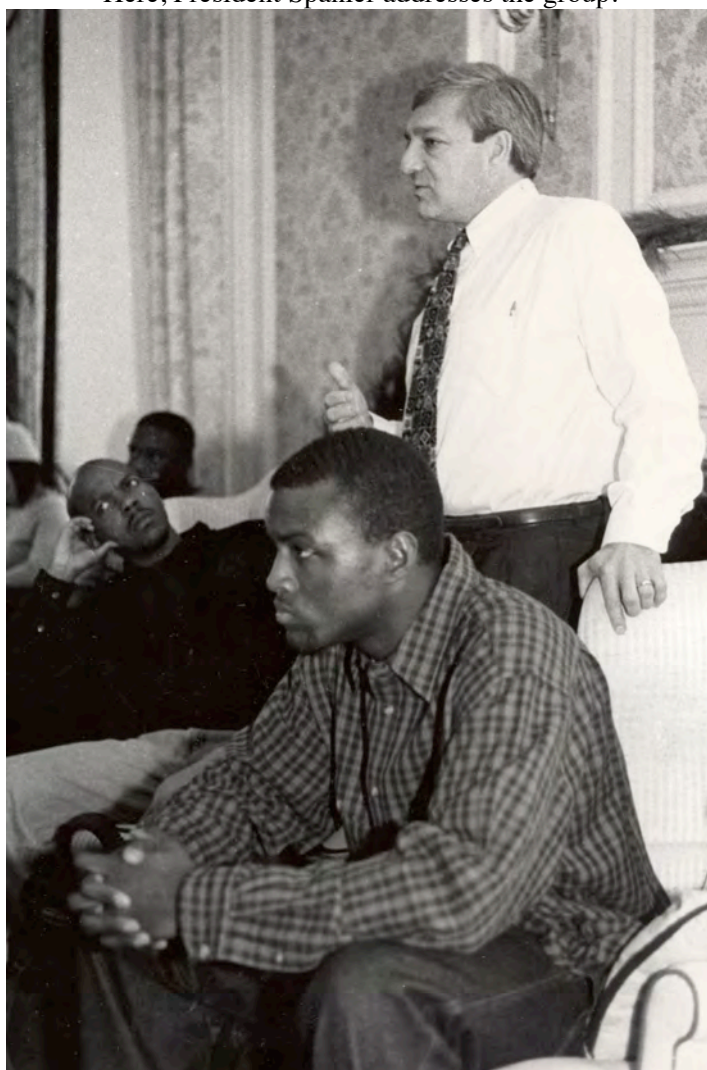


Black students speak before the Faculty Senate, December 5, 2001





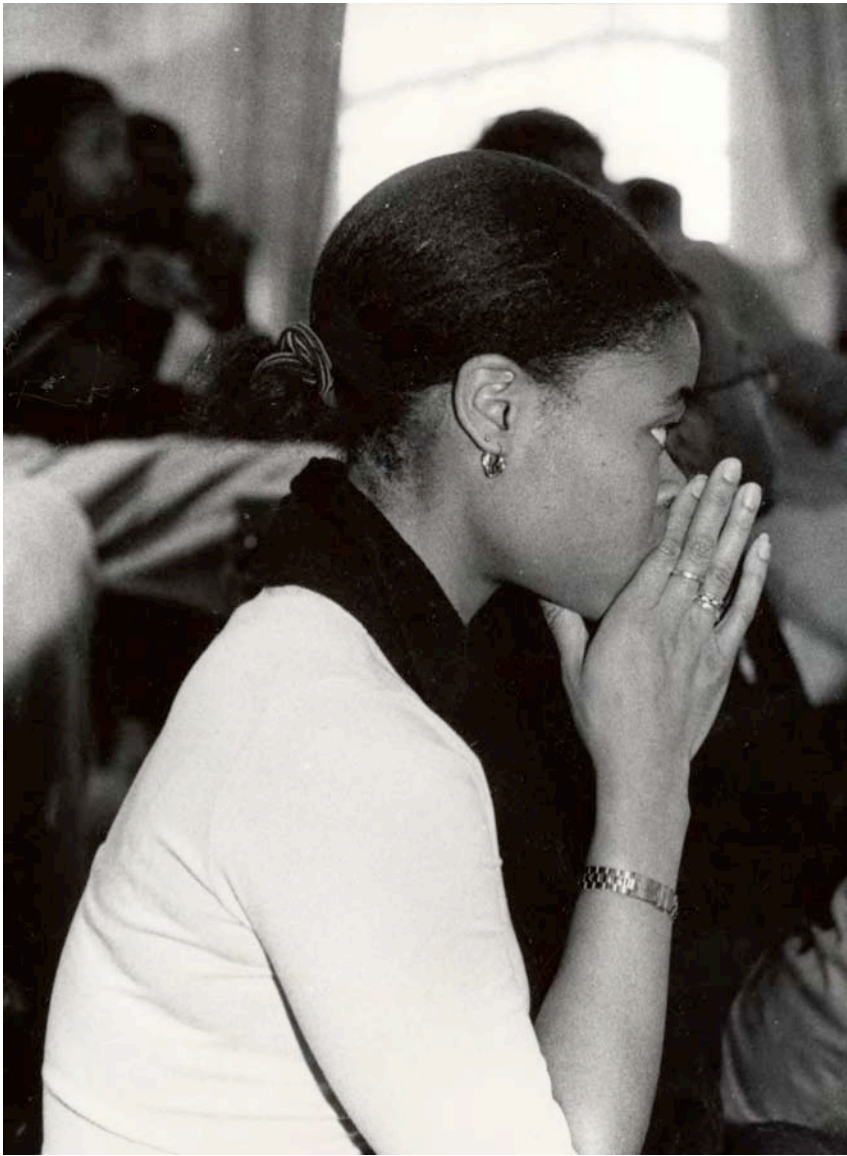
Students returned to Old Main after the Faculty Senate meeting,  
Here, President Spanier addresses the group.



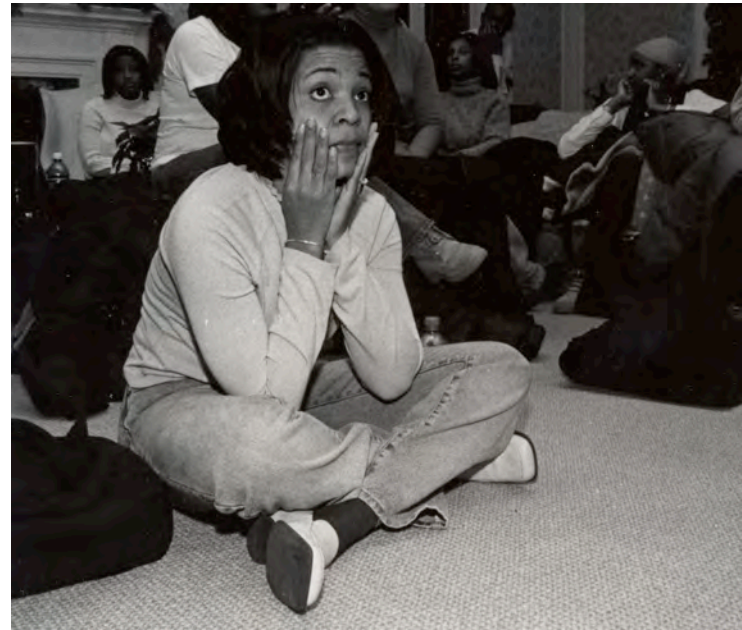




December 5, 2000. Students negotiate with members of the administration and Faculty Senate during the several hour-long sit-in in Old Main.



One student holds her breath as she watches the events of the sit-in unfold.







Students regroup during a break in negotiations during the Old Main sit-in.





John Nichols, left, Chair-elect of the Faculty Senate talks while former Black Caucus President Joe Dawkins listens during the sit-in.



Students and faculty work together on the GyeName Committee to investigate curriculum deficiencies and discuss possible solutions, Feb. 2001.





Members of the Black Caucus travel to Harrisburg to meet with state legislators.



April 20, 2001. *Daily Collegian* reporter Darryl Lang, left, receives two hate letters, one directed towards himself, one for La Keisha (next to him). The letter included more racist death threats, as well as claims that the life of a black man had already been taken. Here, students meet with police and administrators.



State College Police on the sidelines of the Blue and White football game, April 21, 2001





Students pray moments before rushing the field.



TAKEOFF—Lurie Daniels, an alumnus of Penn State, leads the group onto the field.





BIZARRE TEAMS—Officers go on the defensive as students rush the field at Beaver Stadium during the Blue and White football game. April 21, 2001.





La Keisha Wolf, along with 25 other students (21 black and 4 white) are arrested and led off the field.



Students in the stands react to the crowd's negative comments.



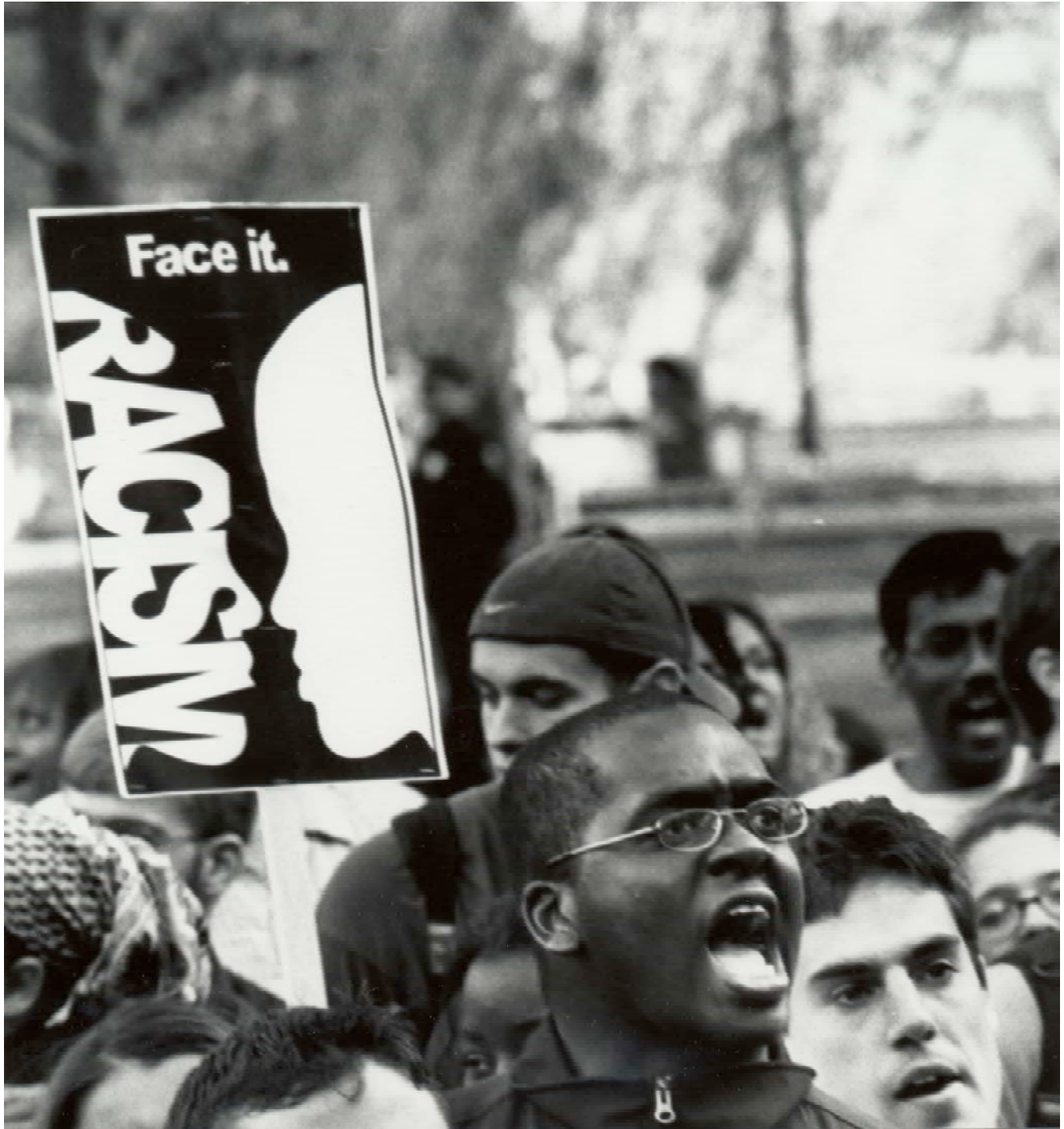


Tuesday, April 24, 2001. An estimated four thousand people attend the No Hate Rally at Old Main.

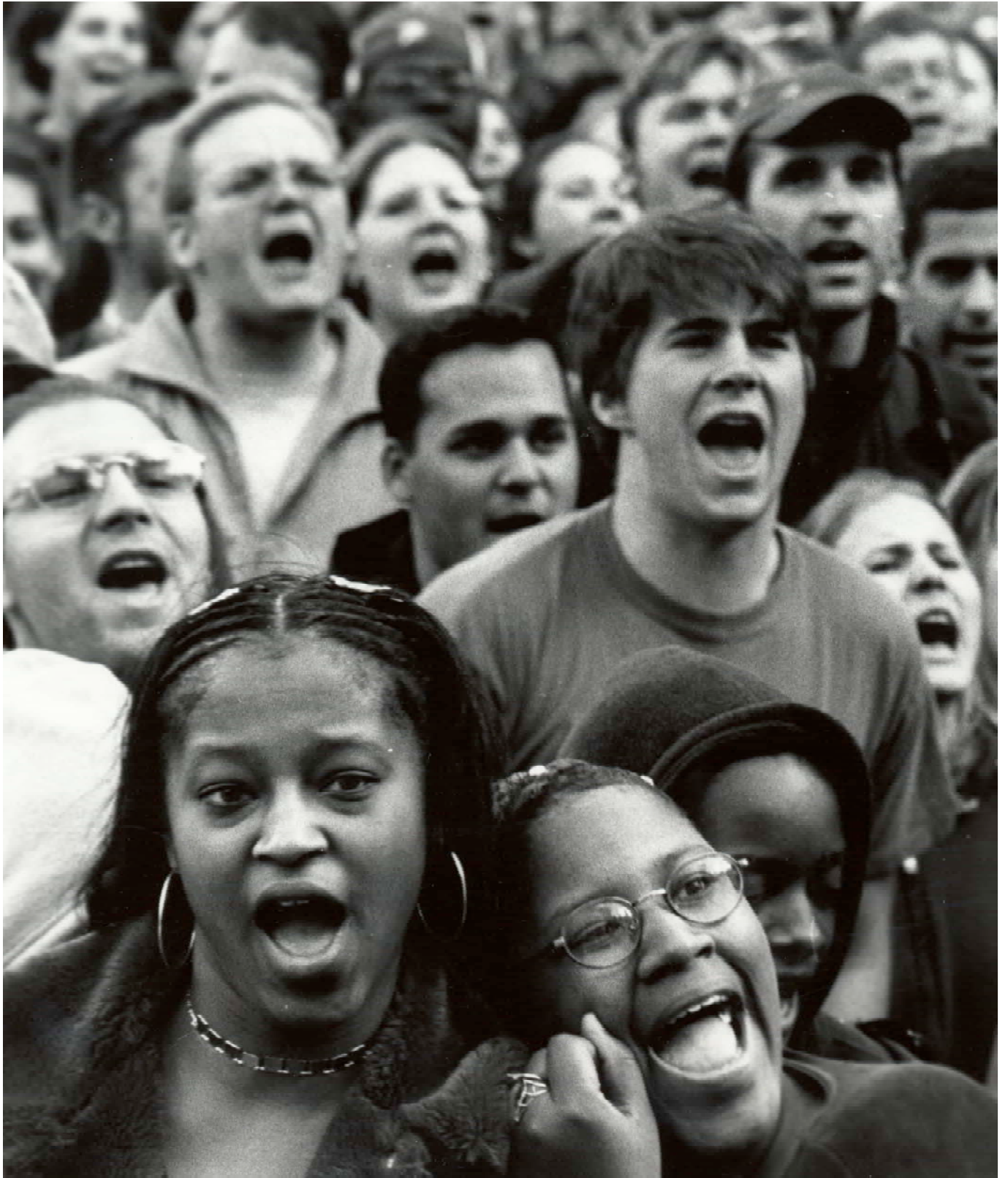


Accompanied by several bodyguards, La Keisha cries out at the No Hate Rally. A group of students interrupted the speech by university president Graham Spanier.



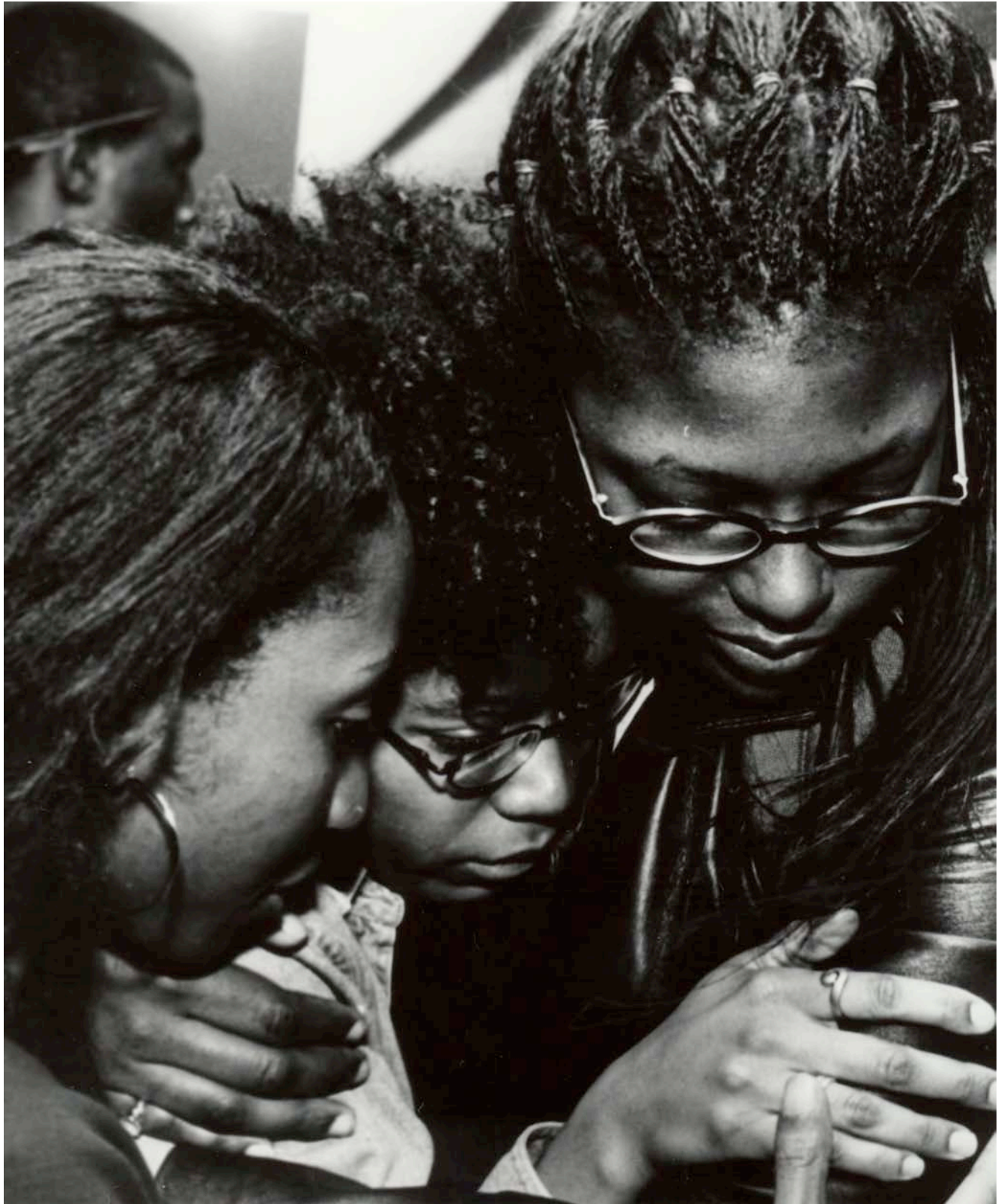


Students chant during the No Hate Rally.



Students recite a non-denominational communal prayer during the No Hate Rally. The prayer ends with the Swahili word Ashe, meaning amen.





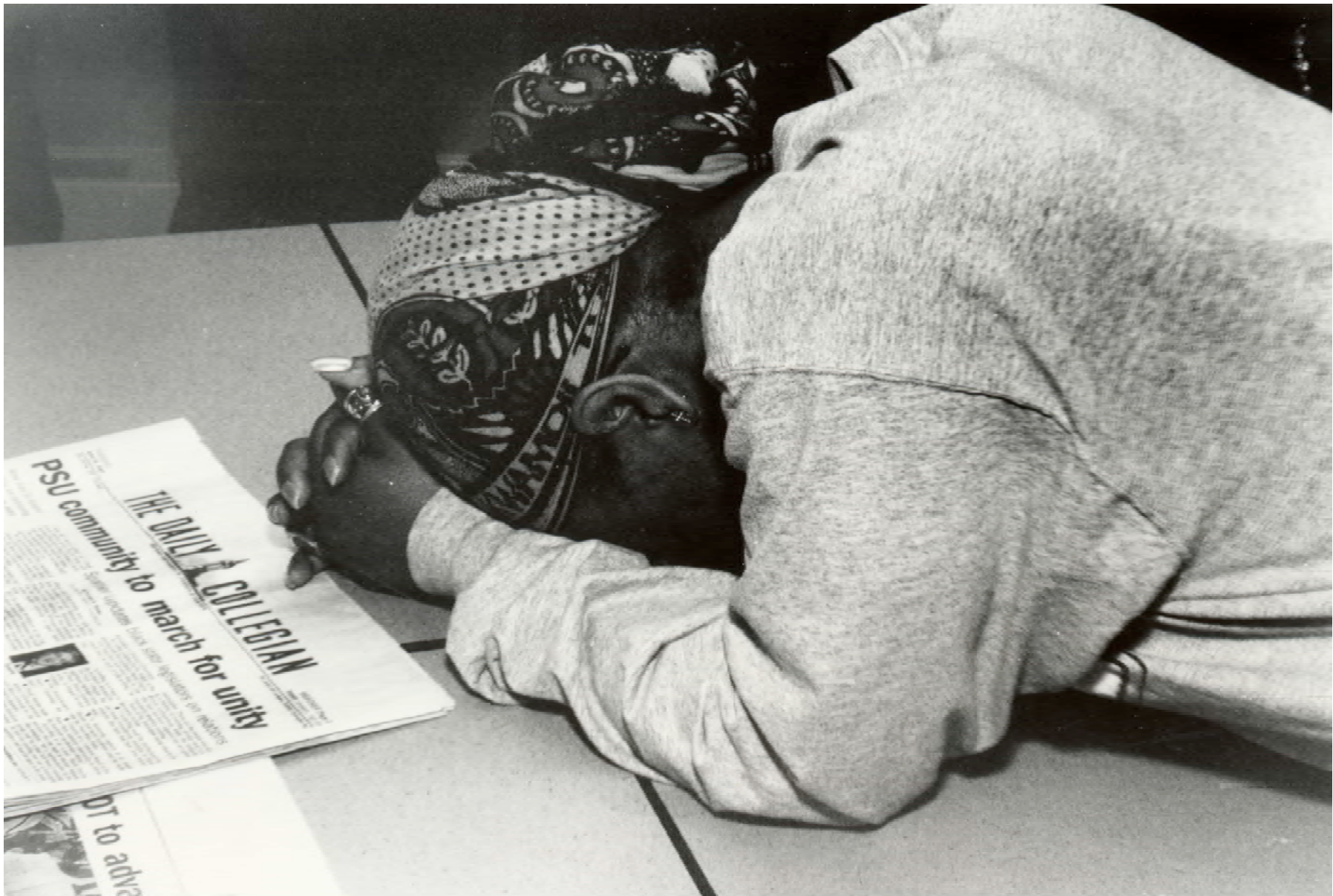
Several students pray before going into negotiations with administrators.



Administrators agree to meet with students and discuss their demands.  
Pictured here are the two sides of the negotiation table.







One student shows her exhaustion and rests her head on the day's headlines: "PSU community to march for unity."

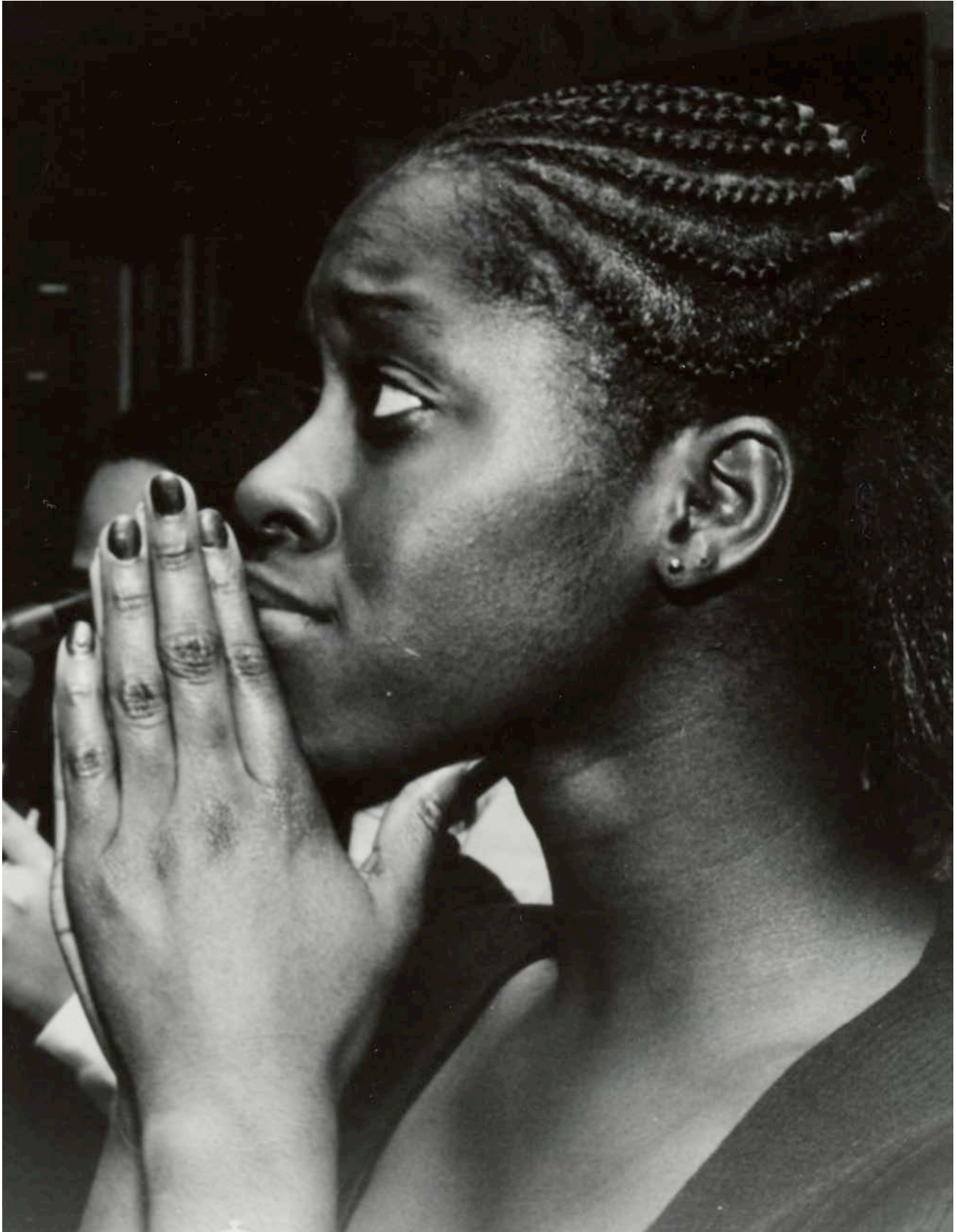


Students and administrators shake hands at the end of round one of negotiations.



A diverse group of student supporters pledge to stay in the HUB for “as long as it takes.”





One student listens to the speeches as various groups came to show their support.



We're staying! Students agree to sleep in the HUB "as long as it takes," April 24, 2001.





The center tile of the Hetzel Union Building shows start date of the students' occupation of the building.



Students of all races dance together during their first night in the HUB.





A “villager” gets cozy on the HUB floor. Hundreds of students occupied the building for ten days.





Villagers console each other after learning about a black male body found in the woods of Centre County, April 27, 2001.



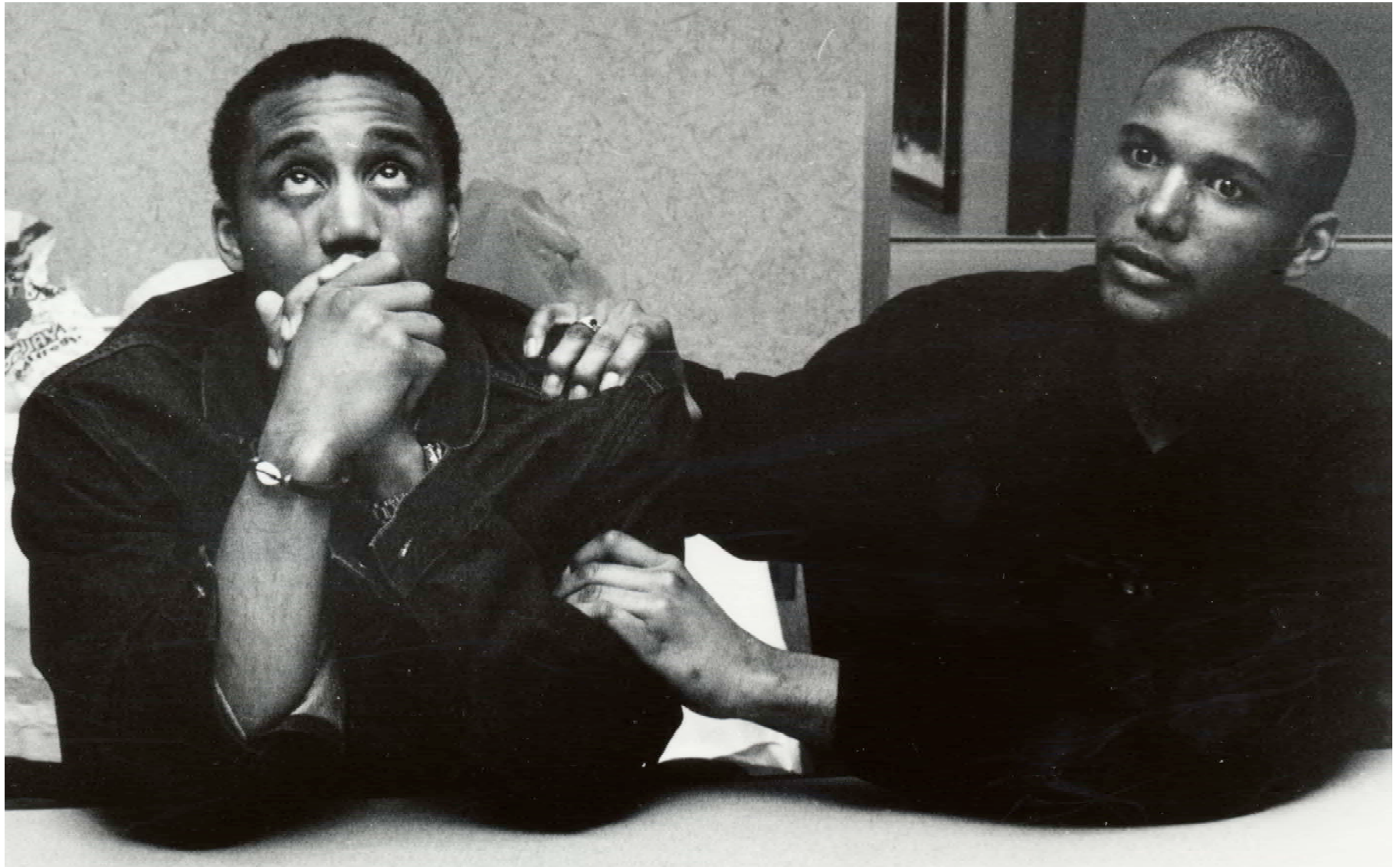
Members of a local church come to the HUB to support and comfort the students.







“Villagers” met regularly to address questions and receive updates on the dead body and the negotiation progress.



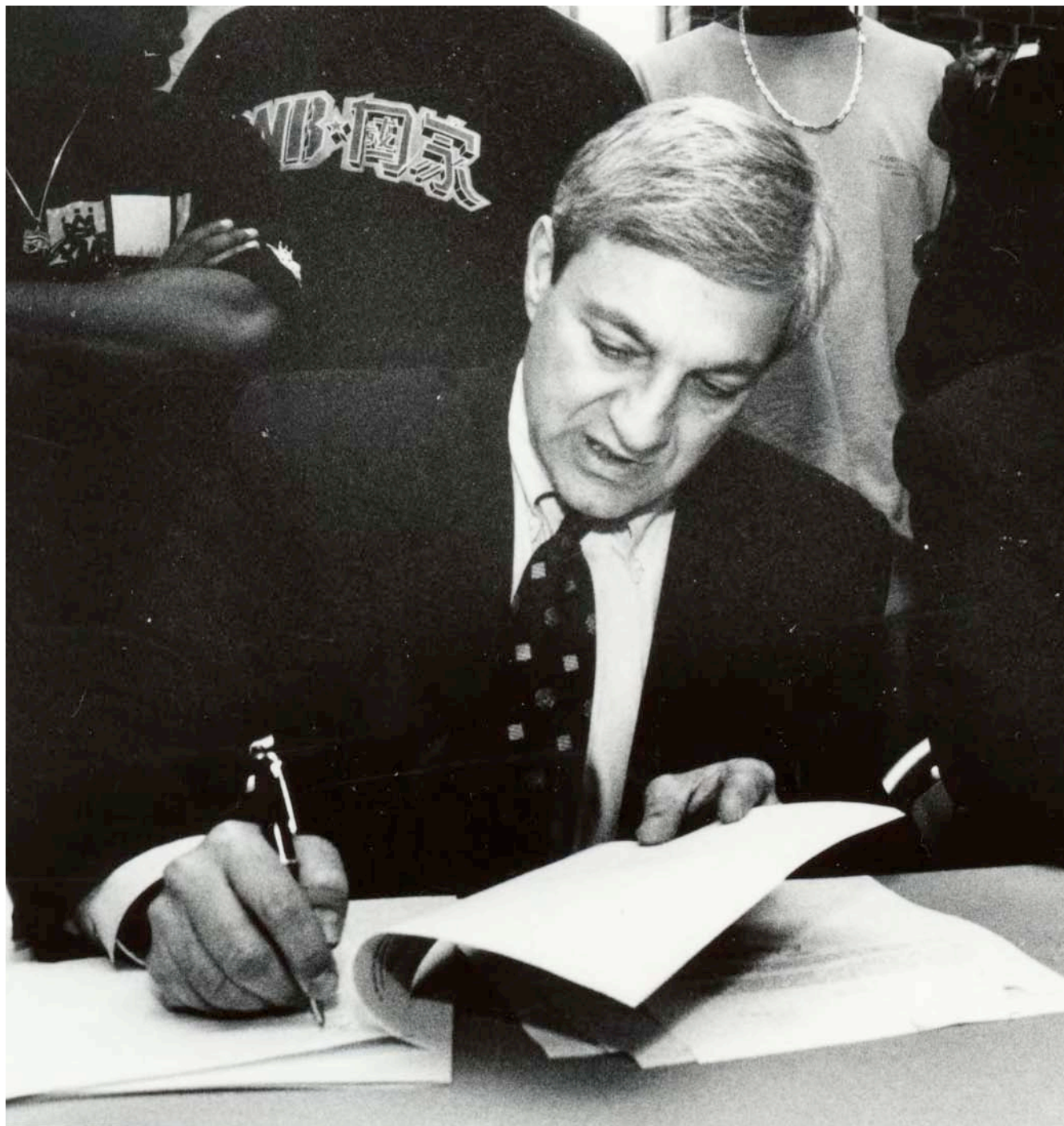
BEHIND CLOSED DOORS— Students vent their frustration after administrators leave the room. Negotiations continued throughout the week.





Lurie Daniel, a graduate of Penn State, questions State Attorney General, Mike Fisher about the black body found in the woods.





May 2, 2001. President Spanier signs the "Plan to Enhance Diversity at Penn State."



Students celebrate the signing of the document and prepare to leave the HUB.

## **PART II: The History of Race Relations at Penn State**

*“Progress, far from consisting of change, depends on retentiveness...  
Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to fulfill it.”*

*-- George Santayana(1863-1952)*

The photographs on the previous pages tell a powerful story acted out in a single academic year, a single chapter in a much longer history of race relations at Penn State. The faces and expressions show people who battled with the issue of racism this year. They also represent generations of others who have been through similar trials. Protests such as the ones that occurred in 2000-2001 did not sprout out of thin air. They arose from a deeply rooted past of tense race relations at Penn State, and in the country as a whole. Although Penn State may seem isolated in the hills of the Nittany Valley, it is part of a much larger community and cannot escape the influence of what is going on elsewhere. A close look at Penn State’s history reveals a strong relationship between the timing of disturbances at University Park and events taking place across the nation and around the globe.

This section focuses on history and seeks to uncover Penn State’s racial past, paying close attention to how events at the university fit into the history of the country. Particular attention is given to the court cases that arose from demands for civil rights and that required desegregation in schools and other public places across the nation (see appendix A).

Each section begins by introducing the most visible aspect of black student protests at Penn State during the time period. That is what the majority of the public saw and understood through the media. However, to provide a more comprehensive view of



the causes for protest, the study addresses both the national context, as well as the local racial climate. This background information should explain the underlying reasons for protest leading up to the spark, or immediate cause of the protests. Then, the chronology of events shows how the protests unfolded, and how they were eventually “resolved.” Results of the confrontations will be discussed, as well as the reaction of the community towards the events. By studying these aspects of each protest, we can establish a pattern and see how one protest leads into another.

## **The Foundation for Prejudice: 1862-1960**

*“To understand where you are, you must first know where you came from.”  
- Muslim Proverb*

The first major student protests against racism at the university did not occur until the late 1960's. However, racism on campus and in the town of State College has been an issue throughout the entire existence of the school.

In 1863, one year after the passage of the Morrill Act (see appendix A), Pennsylvania established the Agricultural College of Pennsylvania as the state's sole land grant-institution. The federal government had given land to each state “in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in all the pursuits and professions of life.” Education was no longer to be a privilege of the rich, but was to be extended to the working class as well. Despite the designation of “the industrial classes,” the benefits of the Morrill Act did not reach the majority of the black population (Raffel 1998, 172). A second Morrill Act passed in 1890 included a clause against racial discrimination. Nine years later, the first black student was admitted to Penn State.

Calvin Hoffman Walker, class of 1905, enrolled in the school of agriculture in 1899. He came from Macon, Georgia, where he had attended a prep school. In 1902, it is said that Walker almost did not return to Penn State due to loneliness and depression (The Penn Stater May/Jun 1989). While this was surely influenced by the death of his mother that year, his solitude may also have been influenced by his experiences at “lily white” Penn State. “The absence of any social life for Negroes and the isolation of the location” were major hardships, according to Joseph L. Johnson, who arrived at Penn State in 1914 (The Penn Stater May/Jun 1989).

The period of 1915-1925 marks the “Great Migration” of Southern Blacks to Northern cities (Verney 2000, 12). This urbanization was the result of several push-pull factors. The push resulted from the economic deprivation of black sharecroppers and the increased violence towards blacks in the south. “Between 1900 and 1909, at least 754 African Americans were lynched in the United States with 92% of the lynchings taking place in the South” (Verney 2000, 12). The pull came from Northern industry, which began to boom to support the war in Europe. As a result of this pull for cheap, manual labor, and the push of worsening racial tensions in the South, 1.25 million blacks left the South to look for jobs in the North (Verney 2000, 12). This urbanization strongly changed the face of northern cities such as Detroit, Cleveland, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.

With an increasing black population, Pennsylvania would also face this group’s increasing demands for public education. As a land-grant institution dedicated to “providing education to the industrial classes,” Penn State had a unique responsibility to this growing population. This would become a major source of tension and controversy for years to come.

The end of World War I and the new influx of blacks from the South led to stiff competition for jobs, and consequently, racial tensions. The “Red Summer” of 1919 saw over 25 race riots in cities across the country, the worst occurring in Chicago, where “38 people were killed, 520 people injured, and over 1,000 African American families left homeless as black houses were burnt by white mobs” (Verney 2000, 16). This time period also marked a sharp increase in hate-group memberships. The Ku Klux Klan



membership sky-rocketed, reaching 100,000 in 1921 and 4 million by 1924 (Verney 2000, 16).

Despite the changing demographics of Pennsylvania, Penn State's racial landscape was slow to evolve. By the early 20's, only "a handful" of black students existed on campus, along with several international students. Ko Wle Gbu Donma, from Liberia, had quite a difficult time at the university. At one point, he fell ill and required the attention of a doctor, who described Donma's condition as severe malnutrition. "For months, Donma had been attempting to prepare meals in his room in Old Main, as no eating establishment in town would serve him" (The Penn Stater May/Jun 1989). Although it affected some more so than others, discrimination in town and on campus was clearly a problem.

The numbers of black students at Penn State began to increase, albeit slowly. In 1929, Mildred Settle Bunton came to State College as the first black woman to attend the university. "When she arrived, she recalled the university bursar commenting, 'Huh, I haven't seen anything like *you* around here. I guess you're an experiment'" (The Penn Stater May/Jun 1989). Bunton also recalled the fact that several local children called her "the woman on the box," referring to Aunt Jemima, whose dark skinned face appeared on a brand of pancake mixes and syrups. "They had never seen a colored woman before," said Bunton.

The depression years of the 1930's, while difficult for most Americans to endure, particularly affected the black community, who faced racial discrimination on top of economic hardship, as blacks were often "last hired and first fired." By 1931, over 40% of the African American population in Pittsburgh found themselves out of a job (Verney

2000, 24). During this decade, students at Penn State reported that local restaurants, such as “The Corner Room” refused to serve blacks.

But, by the 40’s, things were beginning to change. America’s entrance into the Second World War served to boost the economy and create more jobs. As did the First World War, WWII had important social consequences. The creation of new industrial jobs led over one million blacks to leave the South for the North and West, mirroring the great urban migration of 1915-25 (Verney 2000, 33). The Second World War also created a sense of heightened awareness of racism and discrimination. Segregation in the military became a major issue- even the Red Cross separated blood by race (Zinn 1995, 406). Many blacks began to wonder why they were risking their own lives to fight racism abroad, when they had to come home to “colored” waiting rooms and could not get served in restaurants. Newspapers such as The Pittsburgh Courier encouraged blacks to engage in a ‘double “V”’ campaign against racism, one against Hitler abroad, and another at home (Verney 2000, 34).

“In a wider context, the extremes of Nazi racism and awareness of the Holocaust discredited scientific racism and perhaps made some white Americans feel less at ease with continued racial discrimination and segregation within the United States itself after 1945. Victories by the black athlete Jesse Owens at the Berlin Olympics in 1936 made a mockery of Nazi theories” (Verney 2000, 35). Blacks returning from Europe and the Pacific turned their attention to fighting racism on the home-front.

### **At Home in State College, Pennsylvania**

The return of soldiers from the war had its affect on the town of State College as well. For a short time in 1945, the interracial Fairmont Fellowship house

leased the house of Theta Xi, and thirteen whites and thirteen blacks lived together by request. However, “the spring of 1946 marked the return of more veterans and the reclamation of the house by Theta Xi” (Critique April 1947). Black students had very few living options to choose from at the time, for “only two rooming houses were registered with the college as accepting white and black students.”

In the fall of the same year Penn State took a stand against racism by canceling a football game against the University of Miami, scheduled for November 29, 1946. Miami officials had notified Penn State coaches that “it would be difficult to carry out arrangements for the game” if Penn State used its two black football players, Wallace Triplett and Dennie Hoggard. The Dean of Athletics at Penn State announced the decision to cancel the game stating that “it is the policy of the College to compete only under circumstances which will permit the playing of any or all members of the athletic teams” (Penn State Alumni News 11 Nov. 1946). Despite this noble stand against racism in the athletics department, problems persisted.

In 1947, black students found themselves driving to Tyrone, 28 miles from State College, to get haircuts, for no barber in State College would agree to cut their hair. “Not that I’ve got anything against them myself, mind you!” said one barber, “But it’s the trade you’ve got to be careful of. You know, a lot of people wouldn’t come in here if they saw a nigger in the chair” (Critique April 1947). (see illustration on following page).





Cartoon featured in *Critique*, a student magazine, April, 1947

In response to this blatant racial discrimination, students began to organize. On December 14, 1947, with the help of the NAACP, students declared a boycott of the barbershops, and picketed downtown State College for four consecutive days. On the fifth day, they held a rally on Old Main, with over three hundred students in attendance. The rally participants then marched down the length of the mall and through town, passing each of the discriminatory barbershops with signs and banners. “Our fight is not primarily with the barbers,” stated one protestor. “It is, however against the racial

discrimination, which in case of State College, is evident in the barbershops” (The Daily Collegian 10 Dec. 1948). By 1949, students and local citizens banded together to fundraise enough money (over \$1800) to put towards the startup of a non-discriminatory barbershop, which opened later that year (Focus Spring 1960). However, the issue of barbershop discrimination did not disappear, as evidenced by the “barbershop poster-walk” protests that would occur twelve years later.

### **Cold Campus Climate**

1947 marked the beginning of the Cold War, and by 1950 Senator Joe McCarthy had begun his campaign to eradicate the country of communism. That same year, Penn State was dealing with the controversial firing of Professor Lee Lorch. University officials had notified Lorch, assistant professor of mathematics, that his contract would not be renewed. Lorch claimed that this action was due to his involvement with an anti-discrimination committee in New York and his decision to allow a Negro family to sublet his apartment there. Lorch also said that a university official had told him that his renting to a black family was “extreme, illegal, and immoral, and damaging to the public relations of the College” (The Daily Collegian 11 Apr. 1950). The situation garnered national attention as articles appeared in The New York Times, and even physicist Albert Einstein sent letters of protest to the university. The issue of housing segregation would soon migrate to State College.

Increasing awareness of the damaging effects of segregation, particularly in education, led to the 1954 landmark case of *Brown vs. The Topeka Board of Education* (see appendix A). The Supreme Court ruled that under the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, the notion of ‘separate but equal’ was “inherently unequal,” reversing the

1896 ruling of *Plessy vs. Ferguson* (Raffel 1998, 33). Public schools would have to be integrated.

Two years after the Brown verdict, students and some townspeople began to draw attention to the housing segregation that existed in State College. In 1956, The Daily Collegian quoted Mr. W. E. Kenworthy, then director of student affairs, as saying “There is nothing that the university can do to eliminate any discrimination in town. It has no legal or moral right to enter into the private lives of the townspeople. However, the university does not practice discrimination in any form” (The Daily Collegian 18 Jan. 1956). Yet, for two more years after this statement was made, all incoming women students were placed together in residence halls according to “race, religion, or in the absence of any other category- similar academic interests” (Focus Spring 1960). The policy was changed only after a group of students, faculty, and townspeople under the name “The Council on Human Relations” presented the university with concrete evidence of housing segregation.

Another group, the Student Christian Association, became involved in exposing the levels of housing segregation on and off campus and published an extensive article in the Spring 1960 edition their self-published journal, Focus. The article showed two different surveys conducted by the University Christian Association that found that “only 38% of the landlords surveyed stated a willingness to accept students irrespective of race or national origin.” The group interviewed 450 homeowners and landlords in the area, many of whom refused to rent to students at all. The article goes on to say, “The university tacitly accepts these local discrimination practices of landlords by noting on its lists of available town housing the racial or religious categories which the landlord



wishes to exclude....Does the university have no responsibility for the living conditions of its students living in town?"

As controversy surrounding housing segregation continued, the issue of discrimination at the barbershops reappeared in the media spotlight. In 1960, a group under the name Direct Action for Racial Equality (DARE) took action to see if the barbers had changed their policies over the years. Over March 25-26, members of the group, two white students and one black, visited each of the town's barbershops, demanding haircuts. Only one barber refused to cut the black man's hair. Students sat waiting in his shop, as other protestors stood outside on the streets with signs and posters, handing out information to passers-by. The affair came to be known as the "barbershop poster-walk" (Focus Spring 1960). So, twelve years after the original NAACP boycott and the mass rally at old main, barbershop discrimination still existed. However, one must note that some progress must have been made, for the majority of the shops did agree to cut the black student's hair.

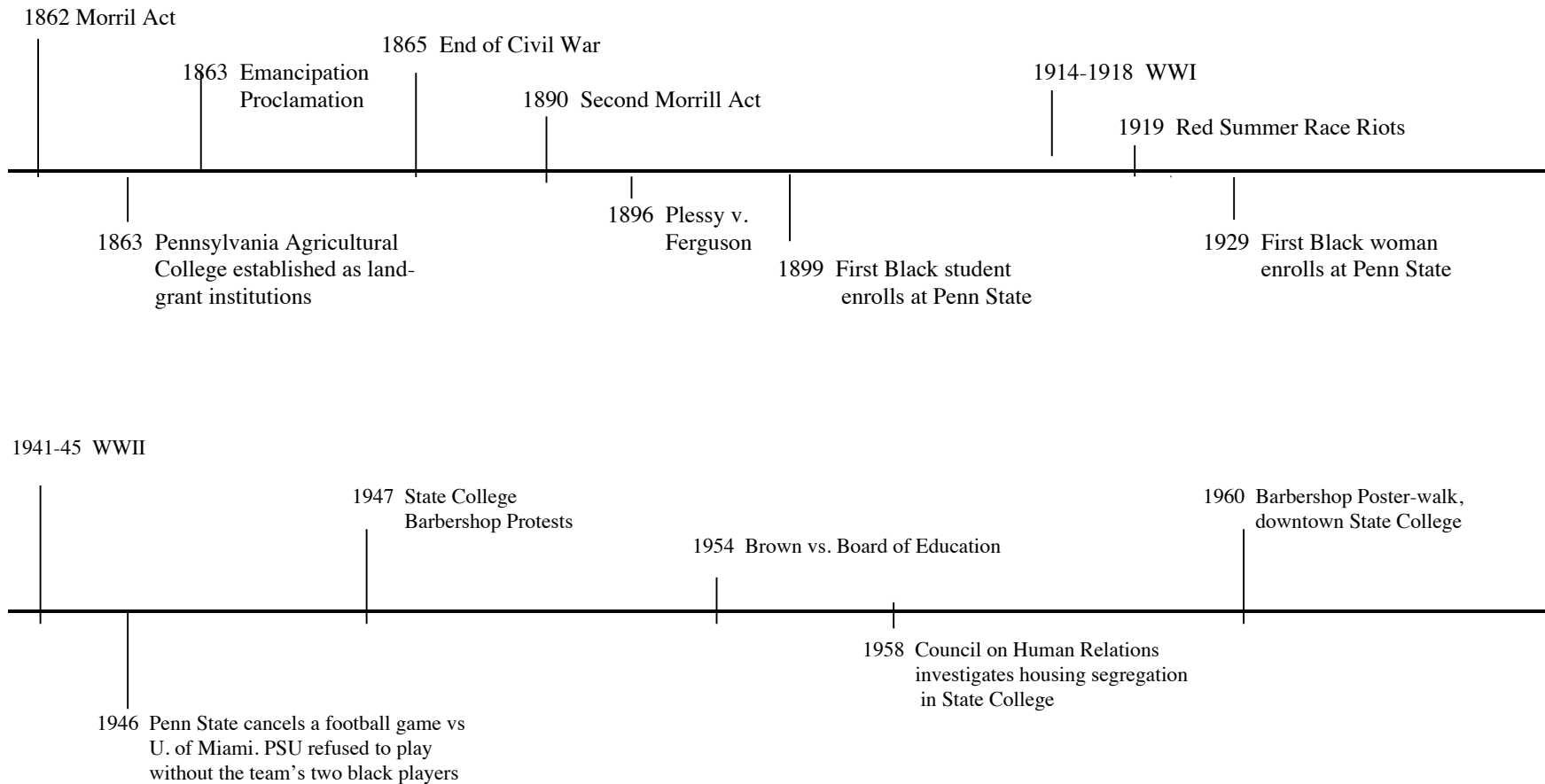


Barbershop Poster-walk against racial discrimination, downtown State College, 1960 (PSUArchives)

After the protests, the DARE continued to act, attending borough council meetings, advocating the formation of a permanent “bi-racial human relations commission...to investigate and report cases of discriminatory practices in the borough.” The group also circulated petitions and raised money “to encourage non-violent student protest movements in other parts of the country” (The Daily Collegian 26 Apr. 1960).

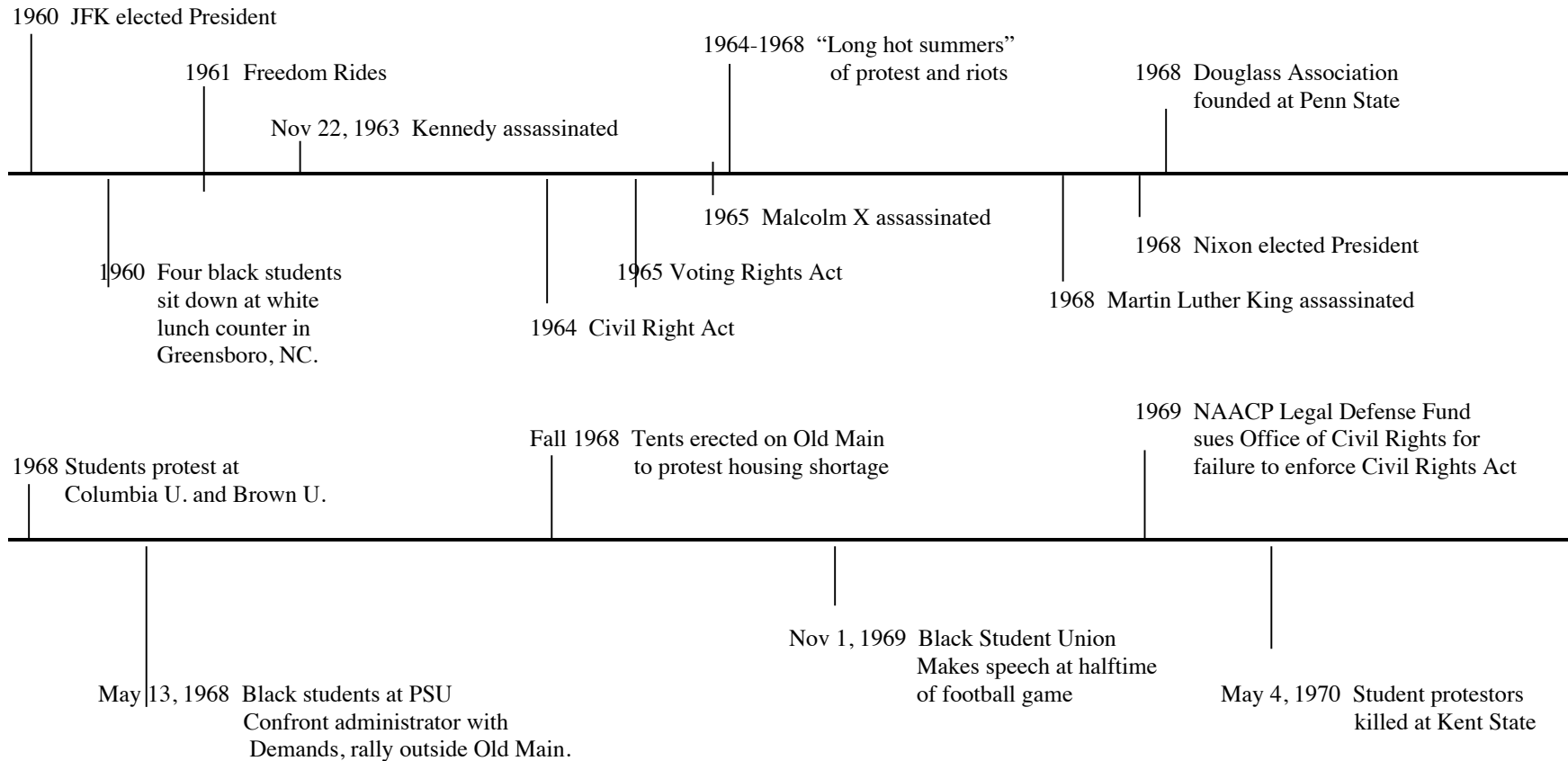
As America barreled into the turbulent decade of the 1960's, it was clear that Penn State and State College still had a long way to go to achieve racial equality. The University's history up to this point would strongly influence the course of student protests towards the end of the civil rights era, and for decades to come.

## Timeline: 1862-1960





## Timeline: 1960-1969



## **1960-1969: Building Tensions**

*“You may well ask: ‘why direct action? Why sit-ins, marches and so forth? Isn’t negotiation a better path?’ You are quite right in calling for negotiation. Indeed, this is the very purpose of direct action. Non-violent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored. My citing the creation of tension as part of the work of the nonviolent-resister may sound rather shocking. But, I confess that I am not afraid of the word “tension.” I have earnestly opposed violent tension, but there is a type of constructive, non-violent tension which is necessary for growth.”*

- Martin Luther King, Jr.  
“Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” 1963

Tensions continued to build momentum through the civil rights movement, leading up to black students taking direct action at Penn State in the spring of 1968. On Monday, May 13, at 4:30 pm, nearly one hundred black students under the name the Douglass Association, entered Old Main with a list of twelve demands of the university, seeking to speak with Vice President of Student Affairs, Charles Lewis. He agreed to hear their grievances, and three hours later, the students “quietly filed out of Old Main and dispersed” (The Daily Collegian 14 May 1968). Lewis signed a commitment concerning implementing the list of demands that very night.

The publicity of the event caused an uproar on campus, inspiring many letters to the editor, both in support and in firm opposition. The issue of racism at the university had once again come to the forefront of the public eye. However, 1968 marked a major turning point, for this protest was different from past demonstrations. This time, rather than simply protesting against discrimination, black students took the next step, and demanded university action.

The years of 1968-69 were active ones for black students as they participated in sit-ins, held forums, negotiated with the university, and even delivered a powerful speech at halftime of a football game at Beaver Stadium in 1969. While it appeared that black student activism had suddenly received a surge of energy, the feelings underlying the protest had been building for years. The timing of the onset of this burst of activism was affected by events taking place at Penn State, as well as across the country. Headlines in The Daily Collegian concerning the black protests had larger implications of the mood of the rest of the country (see photo on following page).



White observers surround black protesters on Old Main Lawn, 1968 (PSU Archives)



## **The National Context: Turmoil**

*“Sparks from the flames of Birmingham leaped from ghetto to ghetto, igniting inflammable material that had been gathering for years, welding Negroes together into a great black mass of livid indignation.”*

*- Lerone Bennett, Jr. 1964*

The 1960's are legendary in terms of the level of student and community activism across the country. The decade saw mass demonstrations revolving primarily around three issues: Civil Rights, the Vietnam War, and the Women's movement.

The decade started off on shaky ground with the 1960 election victory of John F. Kennedy over Richard Nixon by a margin of less than 110,000 popular votes, making it one of the closest elections in US history (Verney 2000, 49). Kennedy, who claimed to have a “strong personal commitment to civil rights,” gave hope to many involved in the civil rights movement which had been building momentum and gaining national attention ever since Rosa Parks refused to give up her Montgomery bus seat in 1955.

On February 1, 1960, four students in Greensboro, North Carolina sat down at “whites only” Woolworth's lunch counter, where they were refused service. This act of defiance inspired similar acts in cities across the country. “In the next twelve months, more than fifty thousand people, mostly black, some white, participated in demonstrations of one kind or another in a hundred cities, and over 3,600 people were put in jail” (Zinn 1995, 444).

To ensure enforcement of desegregation of interstate transport, black and white students in the Congress of Racial Equity (CORE) organized a “Freedom Ride” in 1961. On May 4, racially mixed students on two buses departed from Washington DC heading for New Orleans, Louisiana. Neither bus successfully reached the destination. “In South

Carolina, riders were beaten. In Alabama, a bus was set afire. Freedom Riders were attacked with fists and iron bars” (Zinn 1995, 445). The same year, another freedom ride was organized from Nashville to Birmingham. The second time around was just as violent as before.

In the span of three months in 1963, the Department of Justice recorded 1,412 demonstrations, with the most famous ones taking place in Birmingham, Alabama (Zinn 1995, 447). Images of the well-publicized protest were broadcast across the country, showing thousands of blacks facing police clubs, tear gas, dogs, and high power water hoses- just to ensure black voter registration.

On June 11, 1963, Kennedy announced his proposal for a civil rights bill. Five months later, on November 22, 1963, he was assassinated. Texan Lyndon B. Johnson became President and continued the civil rights effort and oversaw the 1964 passage of the civil rights act proposed by Kennedy. The Voting Rights Act was passed just one year later, in 1965.

The passage of the Voting Rights Act left much of the country in turmoil, as evidenced by the “long hot summers” of 1964-68, in which 239 outbreaks of racial violence occurred in over 200 US cities such as Los Angeles, Oakland, Chicago, Cleveland, Newark, and Detroit (Verney 2000, 61). “The first five months of 1968 saw 65 riots in 64 cities. Between 1964 and 1972, inner-city ghetto riots resulted in at least 250 deaths, 10,000 serious injuries, and 60,000 arrests” (Verney 2000, 61). In his book, Black Civil Rights in America, Kevern Verney gives one possible explanation for the unrest:

“Although the poor living conditions were not a new feature of ghetto life in the 1960’s, they existed in a climate of rising expectations.

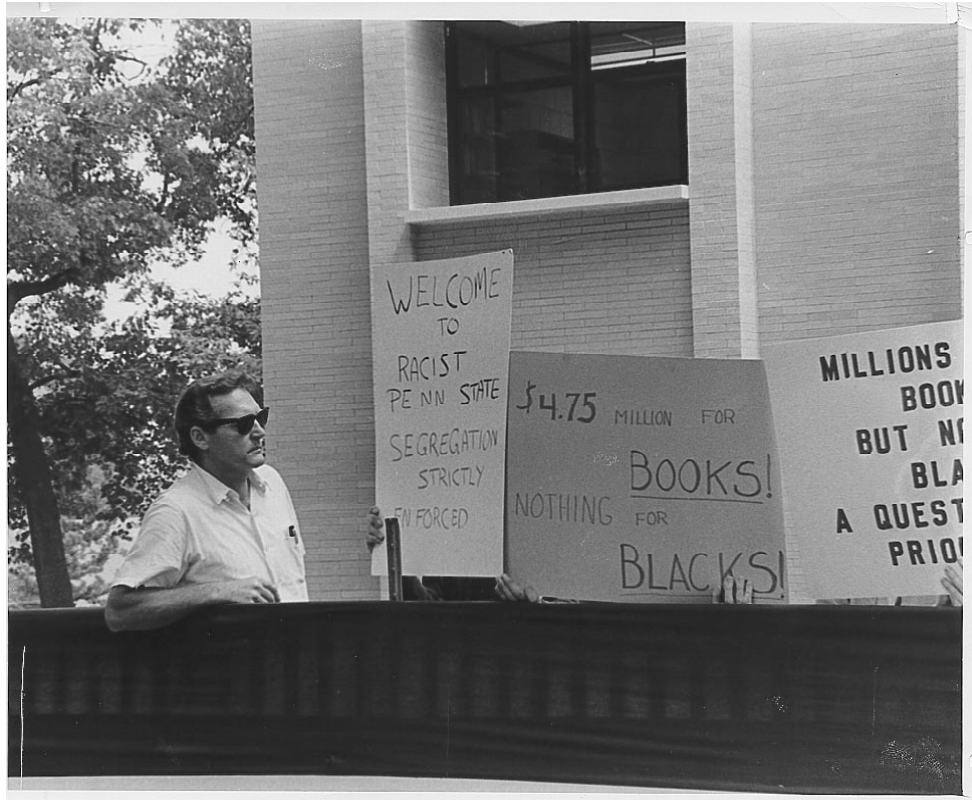
The highly publicized campaigns of the civil rights movement raised both the hopes and the race consciousness of urban blacks. When aspirations were not met with any tangible gains, pent-up anger, frustration and despair all too often found release in semi-spontaneous acts of violence directed against property and authority. In this sense rioting represented less a form of violent intimidation than a desperate call for help and recognition” (2000, 61).

The assassination of Malcolm X in 1965, and Martin Luther King in 1968 only added fuel to the fires of Black unrest.

While much of the action of the civil rights movement occurred in the streets, legal progress was made in the courtroom. Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act gave the federal government the power to withhold funds from institutions, including colleges and universities that practiced discrimination or segregation. In 1969, the NAACP Legal Defense fund sued the federal Office of Civil Rights for failing to enforce title VI. In 1968, students at universities such as Columbia University, and Brown staged protests that received national attention.

Student activism increased as students actively participated in the struggle for civil rights. Both CORE and SNCC (Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee), two powerful groups of the civil rights movement, were comprised of students. Many students from Northern universities (including several from Penn State) traveled to the South to help with voter registration campaigns. Students were making an impact. In addition to this, the war in Vietnam was also inspiring many anti-war demonstrations on campuses across the country. With the alliance of the civil rights movement, the anti-war movement, and the women’s movement, students were feeling vocal and empowered, and more and more, they began to take bold action.

## Racial Climate at Penn State: Black Students in Angry Mood



Black students protest outside of Pattee Library in the early 1960's (PSU archives)

While racial tensions across the country were escalating, Penn State was having its own problems with racial climate. The university did not collect official records of students' race, but estimates numbered the black student population at below 1%, less than 200 out of more than 20,000. Only a handful of black faculty members were teaching at University Park (The Daily Collegian 24 May 1968). In 1968, out of the 12,018 members of the total workforce (faculty, administration, and staff) at University Park, only 39 (0.3%) were minorities (Burke 1972, 31).

On March 7 and 8, The Daily Collegian published two articles focusing on the distressed racial climate at Penn State, one entitled "Black Students Dislike University:



White Racism Isn't Only Found in the Cities,” and the other headline read “Black Students in Angry Mood: Several Predict Riots Here.” Clearly, tensions were on the rise.

The first article begins, “Philadelphia high school counselors urge black students not to go to Penn State. White fraternities invite the Negro fraternities to mixers to provide a minstrel act, not to be friends. A black student was chased out of a town 30 miles from here and told to stay in State College. Murphy's, Woolworth's, and McLanahan's clerks follow black students around when they shop there. The Sword and Shield [a local restaurant] won't admit inter-racial couples.” These complaints and more came from seven black students who had been asked by a campus minister to speak to high school students about coming to Penn State. The students agreed to the proposition, but said that they would tell the truth about their experiences at Penn State, and would not encourage other black students to come to the university. Other testimonies included black students being turned away by landladies when inquiring about “for rent” signs (with white friends following and receiving offers), and problems with white roommates. One woman had had three roommates, “the first refused to room with her; the second was nice, but her parents demanded that housing switch her. The third seemed liberal but later invited the girl to visit her home, explaining, “you would really enjoy meeting my maid” (The Daily Collegian 7 Mar. 1968). Heated exchanges had taken place at the Sword and Shield restaurant after several white women were seen dancing with several members of a black fraternity. White brothers of another fraternity “gave the guys a hard time and called them niggers,” said one student. He concluded that “many small incidents in State College add up to a feeling of discrimination.”

The Douglass Association, was formed in 1968 to address some of these pressing issues. The group chose its name honoring Frederick Douglass, an educated ex-slave and well-known abolitionist of the antebellum 19th century.

### **The Spark: “Contaminated Harlem”**

Many factors, the national mood as well as climate problems at Penn State, contributed to the underlying reasons for protest. However, one specific comment made by a university official was enough to spark action from the Douglass Association. Vice President of student affairs, Charles L. Lewis was quoted in the Philadelphia Sunday Bulletin “as saying that student dissent at Penn State is not as ‘dangerous as at Columbia’ because Penn State ‘is not contaminated by Harlem’” (The Daily Collegian 14 May 1968).

Resenting the word “contaminated,” black students confronted Lewis on the issue during the meeting in Old Main on May 13, 1968. At one point during the three-hour meeting, he called the Bulletin and retracted the statement. A story was to be printed surrounding the issue the following day.

### **What Happened**

*“PSU and Its Blacks: Only a Beginning...They shall write that in May of 1968, a campus two miles this side of Shangri-la was awakened from its sleep, and dropped with a loud, hard thud into the middle of reality.”*

-Headline of The Daily Collegian editorial  
May 24, 1968

The comment by Lewis may have been a catalyst for action, but the list of demands presented by the students showed that their grievances existed on a much larger

scale. The twelve demands as they were listed in The Daily Collegian (14 May 1968) included:

1. More black undergraduates. There are presently only about 200 black students attending the University. The Douglass Association demanded that the undergraduate enrollment include 400 black students by the fall of 1998, 1,000 by the following fall, and 10% of the undergraduate population thereafter.
2. That a Building be named after and dedicated to Martin Luther King
3. That a Martin Luther King Scholarship fund be established.
4. That a course in Negro History be made a permanent part of the curriculum.
5. More black professors
6. More black graduate students
7. That a section of Pattee Library be devoted exclusively to black authors
8. Reevaluation of the athletic recruiting program with regard to black students
9. More black athletes
10. More black coaches
11. More black literature offered in the University's English section
12. The introduction of an African culture study program

A commitment to take positive steps to fulfill these demands was signed by Vice President for student affairs, Charles Lewis, that very night. Several days after the initial commitment was signed, three administration officials met with the executive board of the Douglass Association to further discuss the demands and their implementation.

Much controversy arose as the community learned of the events that had occurred in Old Main the day before. Despite the fact that tensions had been brewing over a long period of time, many, it seemed, were surprised by the demands. "White

students were certainly startled,” writes Collegian managing editor William Epstein, “and so were the people in Old Main. They were surprised because someone should think it wrong that The Pennsylvania State University’s black enrollment is a puny 200 out of more than 20,000. They were surprised that there were only three black faculty members here” (The Daily Collegian 24 May 1968). However, the community was split on whether to support the demands of the Douglass Association, or to oppose them. Some felt that an extra effort to recruit underrepresented black students would be “preferential treatment.” Others stated that “PSU as a land-grant institution has a very real responsibility to the underprivileged.” These sentiments represent the two opposing sides to this struggle, and would be repeated for years to come.

Although much of the tension subsided over the summer months, students and the administration were back in action when they returned in the fall. Students wanted the administration to know that they had not forgotten the demands of the previous spring and the administration wanted to demonstrate that it would not put up with any disruptive behavior. During his Fall 1968 encampment speech, President Walker emphasized that “Penn State offers no sanctuary to any person or group which advocates the initiation of physical force or intimidation, or the takeover of classrooms or office buildings. Such action is irresponsible, and to permit it would be equally irresponsible. We at Penn State will act immediately, firmly, and without hesitation to deal with any student or group guilty of such tactics” (The Daily Collegian 18 Sep. 1968). Surely he had been aware of the mass anti-war and civil rights protests that had been going in cities and at universities across the country.



Other student protests also began to take center stage. In the 1968-69 academic year, led by the Students for a Democratic Society, students unable to find housing set up tents on old main lawn and named the makeshift village “Walkertown,” in reference to University President Eric Walker. The protest was reminiscent of a tent town that was established by veterans across the street of the White House following WWII. Students encouraged free speech zones, where anyone could go speak about a number of issues, including the war in Vietnam, women’s rights, and the civil rights movement. Student activism was at its peak.



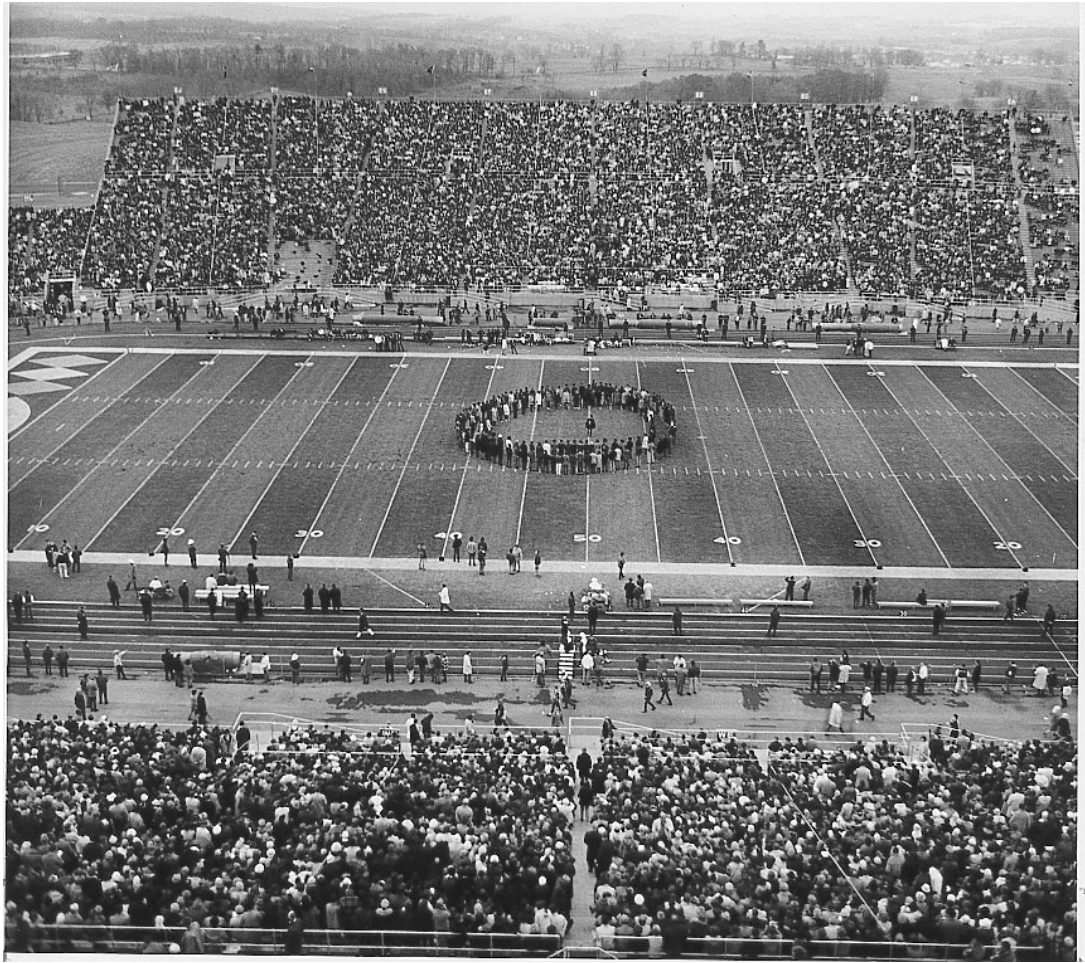
A black student speaks at a Peace Rally, 1969 (PSU Archives)

In September of 1968, students organized the White Liberation Front, whose goal was to educate students, particularly white students, about racism and discrimination. In addition to making speeches, the group prepared “anti-bigot kits”, which consisted of “a

collection of facts on welfare systems, education, and law and order...including a bibliography of current literature” (The Daily Collegian 25 Sep. 1968). One student described the kit as “a reference book for someone who has trouble in arguing with the bigot. We want to give him the facts to know why George Wallace is wrong.” Wallace, an avowed racist and former governor of Alabama, ran an unsuccessful presidential campaign in 1968.

The following fall (1969), black students continued to vocalize the demands that had been signed nearly two years before. At the president’s convocation to welcome incoming freshmen, members of the Students for a Democratic Society held up signs saying “WE SUPPORT THE BLACK STUDENT UNION. WHERE ARE THE 1,000 BLACKS?” The same slogan appeared as a full-page advertisement in The Daily Collegian on October 11, 1969, the day of the Homecoming football game. The ad also printed the entire list of demands, which the Black Student Union (BSU-formerly the Douglass Association) felt had gone unfulfilled. “The admissions office reserved spaces for disadvantaged students...but the college was unsuccessful.” The BSU also feared that the money earmarked for the recruitment program in the state allocation had been lost.

Several weeks later, on November 1, 1969, the BSU articulated their demands and their grievances at halftime of a football game. “Since we cannot reach you at any other place, we find it necessary to come to a football game to ask you to think as members of an academic community. We wish to express an analysis of our situation, and we ask you to join us in these thoughts.” The group then spoke for eight minutes, touching on several issues such as the university’s involvement in military research and the subsequent lack of attention given to researching other areas, like urban poverty.



The Black Student Union speaks at halftime of a football game, November 1969 (PSU Archives)

“While the group read their statement, parts of the sellout crowd of 48,000 booed, stomped their feet and catcalled until the blacks marched off the field at the end of their presentation, single file, fists held high” (The Daily Collegian 4 Nov. 1969). The audience had obviously not been receptive of their speech.





Members of the BSU march off the field after delivering their speech, 1969 (PSU archives)

That day, the BSU called for a meeting with the administration to be held the following Monday evening. President Walker refused to attend saying that the setting would be “too confrontational” (The Daily Collegian 8 Nov. 1969). None of the six invited administrators came to the meeting.

The administration finally did agree to meet with the black students. On the day of the scheduled meeting, white students held a “white solidarity” rally on the steps of Old Main to support the Black Student Union. The purpose of the meeting, according to a BSU press release, was “to make this a people’s university that will meet the needs of black, red, yellow, and white people” (The Daily Collegian 18 Nov. 1969). Similar slogans would repeat again in 1988 and 2001.



While negotiations with Black students continued, they receded from the public view, as more pressing issues came to the surface, such as the escalating war in Vietnam. On May 4, 1970, four students at Kent State University were killed when national guardsmen fired into a crowd of anti-war demonstrators. Students at four hundred colleges and universities across the country protested this action and many went on strike (Zinn 1995, 481). Classes at Penn State were cancelled for the remainder of the year.

### **Results**

The 1968-69 protests brought results. The University created a Black Studies Department and a Black Cultural Center. Also there was a significant increase in the black population among students and faculty. These changes mirrored the movement across the country to embrace black culture and to address the under-representation of minority groups in higher positions of power. But, were these changes due to a sincere belief in their importance, or due to the increasing pressure from the federal government to desegregate and provide opportunities for minority students? The end of the 1960's saw Black Studies departments introduced at many universities, as well as stronger efforts to recruit minority students to their campuses. However, other problems would arise as these new students arrived.

### **1970-1979: Small but Significant**

The protest activities of black students in 1979 were much smaller in comparison with those a decade earlier and the ones those still to come ten years later, yet they deserve attention. Despite their smaller size and impact, they help to illustrate the developing trend of black protests at Penn State.

On January 23, 1979, several racist want ads appeared in the classifieds section of The Daily Collegian. They had been taken from a South African newspaper and slipped into the student paper without any editor's notice. The following day, 20 black students were waiting outside of the Collegian office, demanding a front-page apology. Meanwhile black students waited on the steps outside chanting "We're black and proud!" and "Down with the Collegian!" Several copies of the student newspaper were burned. For a short time, the issue dominated the letters to the editor section. A meeting was scheduled with the member of the Black Caucus (formerly the Black Student Union), the administration, and several newspaper staff members. Once again, it became evident that the issues ran deeper than simply the six racist ads. Black students began to voice their grievances of racism in the media, at the university, and in society in general.

### **The National Context: Diffusing the Civil Rights Movement**

The decade of the 1970's saw a drop in momentum of the civil rights movement. Several of the key civil rights leaders, including Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, had been assassinated, and others were in prison. 1969 alone saw at least 27 members of the Black Panther Party killed by police, and over 750 arrested (Verney 2000, 86). The nation seemed tired of the violence and was ready to move on.

Throughout the late 1960's and early 1970's, courts began to rule in favor of desegregating primary schools in support of the Brown decision. This often included busing policies requiring that suburban (mostly white) pupils to be mixed with those from the inner city, who were mostly minority students. Court cases included *Swann v. Charlotte Mecklenberg Board of Education* in 1971 and *Milican v. Bradley* in 1974 (see appendix A). From 1969 to 1974 the proportion of black children attending segregated schools dropped from 68% to just 8% (Verney 2000, 86). The desegregation of primary schools was becoming an issue as many communities vocally opposed any busing policies. Parents were up in arms. In cities such as Boston, the busing policies caused much conflict, as angry white parents formed the anti-busing group ROAR, or Restore Our Alienated Rights. The changing climate of the national government, along with the recession following the 1973 oil crisis may have also influenced the anti-busing protestors. President Nixon himself publicly spoke out in support of the parents, and refused to take action to enforce busing programs (Verney 2000, 87).

Challenges arose in the desegregation of higher education as well. In 1972, the litigation began in the case of *Adams vs. Richardson* (see appendix A). The premise behind the *Adams* case was that the federal government must enforce Title VI of the 1964 Civil Right Act. This meant that the government should take action to enforce desegregation by withholding federal funding from institutions (including universities) that were operating segregated systems. Affirmative action policies were introduced in many universities as a result. Schools did not want to risk losing federal funding.

In 1971, the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of affirmative action in the case of *Giggs v. Duke Power Company*. However, challenges to the policy would

soon follow with cases such as *Regents of The University of California v. Bakke* in 1978. Allan Bakke, a white male, applied to twelve different medical schools and was rejected by all of them. Citing his numerous qualifications, Bakke sued the University of California claiming that unconstitutional racial preference had prevented his admission to the school. The Supreme Court upheld the “acceptability of taking race into account in admissions where past discrimination warrants a remedy and where the remedy is appropriate” but disapproved of the use of quotas. Bakke was ordered to be admitted to the school (Raffel 1998, 213).

Anti-affirmative action sentiment was simmering across the country. Meanwhile, with increasing economic hardships and inflation, the focus of student protests across the country had turned to rising tuition costs, such as the 1975 appropriations demonstrations at Penn State. At the same time, “campuses saw the beginning of a “backlash” as many white students- like their parents- found affirmative action programs an easy scapegoat for economic difficulties” (The Penn Stater July/August 1989).

### **Racial Climate at Penn State: Getting By**

*“The problem wasn’t so much getting in as  
it was getting out with a degree”  
- Pamela Blake Welmon, class of ‘75*

After the 1968-69 protests, and amidst federal desegregation orders, Penn State began to aggressively recruit black students. Programs, such as the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), were created to financially assist disadvantaged students. Thelma Price, former Assistant Vice Provost for Student Affairs, labeled the early 1970’s as the “Y’all come years.” In “The Black Experience” series printed in The Penn Stater Alumni Magazine in 1989, Anita Thomas ’79, herself an EOP student, recalls her



experience at Penn State. “The EOP was labeled as being for ‘dumb, poor’ kids,” she said. “In other words, if you were in EOP, you really didn’t belong at Penn State.” She then went on to explain that “whites assumed that all blacks were EOP.”

The same article goes on to say that “with an unfriendly environment on top of financial difficulty for many black students, attrition rates were extremely high from 1974-1980, running at 72% for blacks as opposed to 42% for whites after four years in the Penn State system” (The Penn Stater June/July 1989). To deal with the challenge of academics and living in a majority white community, and what many considered a harsh environment, many black students turned to each other for support. The 1970’s and 80’s saw a large increase in the number of primarily black organizations on campus.



Black student demonstration in front of Old Main, late 1970's (PSU Archives)

The late 1970’s also brought new attention to the issue of apartheid in South Africa, with students organizing small demonstrations and speaking about the issue at forums such as the Black Arts Festival. 1978 marked the first divestment protest in which

students asked Penn State officials to halt investments in companies doing business in segregated South Africa. The divestment issue would become a much more intense less than ten years later.

Race relations, seemed calmer than they had been a decade earlier, but beneath the surface, little had changed. When the controversy arose surrounding the racist ads in The Daily Collegian, one student (and Black Caucus member) said, “These questions [concerning racism] were bothering us before the collegian incident” (The Daily Collegian 29 Jan. 1979). Tensions had never ceased. It just took a conspicuous incident to bring them to the surface.

### **The Spark: “Colored Nannies”**

On January 23, 1979, several racist advertisements were published in the help wanted section of The Daily Collegian. It was discovered later that the ads had been taken directly from a South African newspaper, the Cape Times. The phone numbers listed were those of several members of the Board of Trustees (see following page).



GOLD NECKLACE-CHAIN with heart.  
Found by Burrowes on Tuesday.  
a 865-8754

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& 140. Cheapest rates in area. Bill  
234-4043 Anna 238-4616 info. ARE  
YOU COMMITTED to Israel, Zionism,  
and the strengthening of the Penn  
State Jewish Community? If so call  
Lonny 237-5221

DO YOU WORK hard and play hard?  
Then be an Orientation Chair-  
person. Applications 335 Boucke

ATTENTION OFF CAMPUS Students.  
We NEED YOUR HELP, be an  
Orientation Chairperson, Applications  
335 Boucke

THIS JUST IN: (by pigeon from  
Philadelphia) Even John & Jane  
wish you a happy birthday! You know  
it's gotta be good. Swab anyone from  
the Cowgirl, the Baker, and Franz  
Kafka to you: Happy 21st.

BRO COPE, 234 S. Allen, Apt. 3, 238-  
1235, 8:00-9:30 a.m., 9:30-  
11:00 p.m., counseling prayer. Q&A.  
Let Jesus help you

BLONDE IFS MAJOR whose 1st period  
was cancelled on Friday and ended  
up at Corner Room for tea. How about  
dinner? Winecellar. Call me. 238-0885

CONGRATULATIONS Bruce Maynard  
Hambrick Clark. We all love you!  
innie, Karen, Kim, Dawn and Bambi

WE GET OFF on suggestive phone  
calls from sexy females. Call day or  
night, 238-4341

KIM W I want to love you - mind body  
and soul. How 'bout a chance? 3  
percent

OUR HEART has been broken but  
we're still Truly Yours, a card shop.

\$40.00 REWARD for keys in blue  
down jacket taken from Beta Theta  
Pi Jan sixth no questions asked Call  
865-8156

PAULA AND Laura Since I hate to eat  
alone - would like to join you for  
dinner. Bob 234-7267 after 9:30 p.m.

CARDS CAN'T express ALL your  
unique thoughts. For specialized  
poetry call Personalized Poems: 238-  
6917

ENJOYMENT OF party spoiled by  
after-party mess? Have it cleaned  
up for you. 238-6917

DONNA's Gift: How about a motivated  
marine? The best ROTC stud there  
is. call 865-4496

JB - I think my man is a Pole, but then  
the Irish always did have the meat  
and potatoes! L.B. Peepet

STEAK DINNERS are soooooo good!  
Lyn, Sue, Craig special thanx for  
everything. Thanx for after dinner  
entertainment: Bob, Gary plus "Dog  
down hall." Also S.B. (you S.M.) and  
M.J. Mot and Meteo

I'M A pleaser not a teaser. Call 865-  
6286 Ask for Lisa

INQUISITIVE FEMALES IN search of  
ambitious males. Adventuresome?  
Call 865-6947. Ask for Mystical  
Melinda, Cuddly Karen, or Sensuous  
Sue

D.K. WAITED DESPERATELY for lunch  
... but ahh! such is life ... such are  
men! A toast for better days!

D. CALL ME about the CBA Dinner and  
your ad - (yesterday) - might take  
you? Toots

JEFF D. we never gave Tim a Personal  
Cheer up you're loved. Mom and  
kids

6th BEAVER -2, roses are red, violets  
are blue, dinner was great, you'll  
never know who! The Judges

REWARD FOR return of Navy (Marine)  
overcoat and cover taken from  
Willard Thursday Call 865-4496

SHERRIE WEINER - pitter-patter,  
pitter-patter, pitter-putter, ker-  
patter, pitter-thump, thump-putter,  
pitter-ker....Now see what you've  
done! Committee for the Adoration of  
Sherrie Weiner

## HELP WANTED



HOUSEMAID NANNY-COLOURED or  
Bantu with, pass, to sleep in.  
Recent reference essential. Phone  
237-1905

SENIOR HOUSE MISTRESS-Mature,  
balanced well educated white lady.  
Required to look after large school  
family. Pleasant congenial post with  
attractive flat and good living. Call 237-  
4325

LOADER/DRIVER-COLOURED. Driver  
required with heavy duty vehicle  
license. Must be willing to load and  
work overtime. Call 238-2090

PART-TIME LADY-HOURS by  
arrangement. European  
-experienced in general office work.  
Aptitude for figures essential. Call 237-  
4325

East Patee, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m., Monday  
through Friday. Please bring your  
award letter with you

COLOURED GIRL FRIDAY-urgently  
required, young coloured girl for  
Foreshore office. Typing and general  
office work essential. Call 237-1905

AFRICAN COOK GENERAL-aged 30  
to 40. Good English and very clean  
work required. Pass and contactable  
references essential. Sleep in. Two  
other servants kept. Good wages to  
suitable person. Call 238-2090

## STUDENT SERVICE DIRECTORY

EDITING FOR FOREIGNERS Mrs.  
Simon 234-7477 before 8  
p.m. \$6/hour

MAGIC FINGERS TYPING service,  
all types of work, located on  
campus, fast service, Don, 865-  
0037

## Custom-Assembled Plaques

and Many Other  
Engravables

at

## The Trophy Room

In the Parking Garage  
126 S. Pugh St.  
237-3067

Hours: Tues. & Thurs., 10 am  
to 1 pm and 2 to 5:15 pm;  
Wed. & Fri., 10 am to 1 pm;  
other times by appointment.



Happy Valley doesn't  
have to be in the middle  
of nowhere. Read the  
Collegian and bring the  
world here.

"Help wanted: colored nanny" and other ads were printed in the Collegian on January 23, 1979.

## **What Happened**

The following morning, twenty black students were waiting outside the Collegian office, demanding a front-page apology. “It was a slap in the face” and “a slur to the black community” the students said. The newspaper had already printed an apology in the classified section, according to Collegian policy. However, the black students felt that this incident required more than the typical correction and restated their demand for a front-page apology. They also filed a formal complaint with the paper’s Committee on Accuracy and Fair Play, which was responsible for handling such grievances with the publication. “Blacks are super-sensitive about certain issues,” said Virginius B. Thornton, Director of Black Studies at the time. “There might be intense feelings if there is no apology” (The Daily Collegian 25 Jan. 1979).

He was right. One day later, more than 75 students stood outside the Carnegie Building, then home to the Collegian office, shouting “We’re fired up and can’t take no more!” “We’re Black and Proud!” Then, several students lit fire to a copy of the student newspaper containing the racist ads, chanting “Down with the Collegian! Down with racism!” (The Daily Collegian 29 Jan. 1979). Protestors claimed that the newspaper had, in the past, been guilty of printing questionable articles and cartoons. According to them, this was not an isolated incident of racism, although it was certainly an extreme case.

Soon, the issue had changed from a specific ad in the newspaper, to racism in the media in general. Eventually, the attention turned to the university. What action would it take in response to the racist ads? Seeking answers and support, the students marched from the Carnegie Building to Old Main, where they met with University Provost,



Edward Eddy. They presented to him a list of grievances and scheduled a meeting with the administration and staff members from The Daily Collegian.

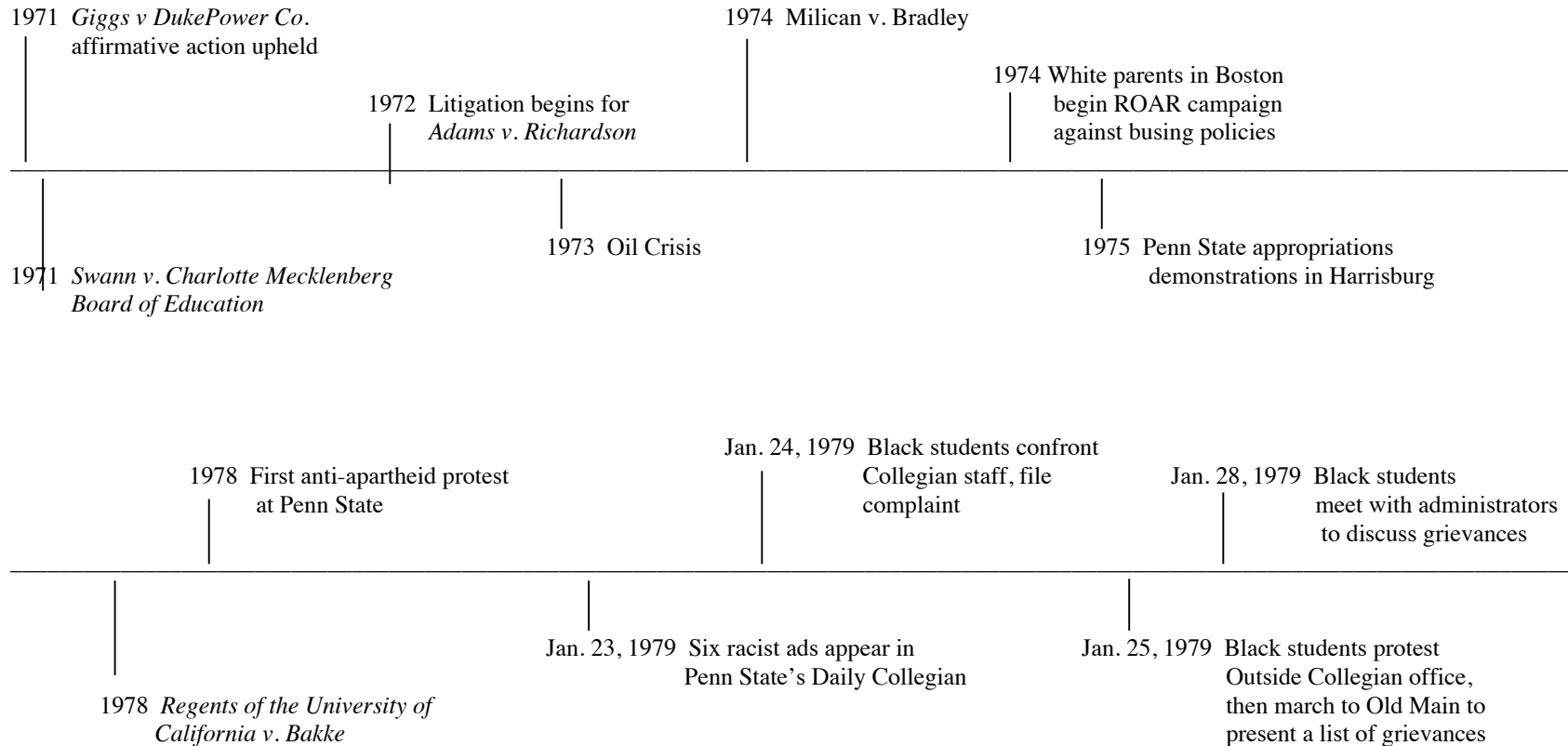
When the meeting was held several days later, the students requested three things: A formal front-page apology to the black community; the installation of a minority editor and sensitivity training for the Collegian staff; a formal position statement condemning the ads. During the meeting, the topic of discussion returned to disproportionate levels of black enrollment and black faculty at the university, as well as deficiencies in the Black Studies Department. Once again, a small incident ignited a debate on broader, more complicated issues.

### **Reaction/Results**

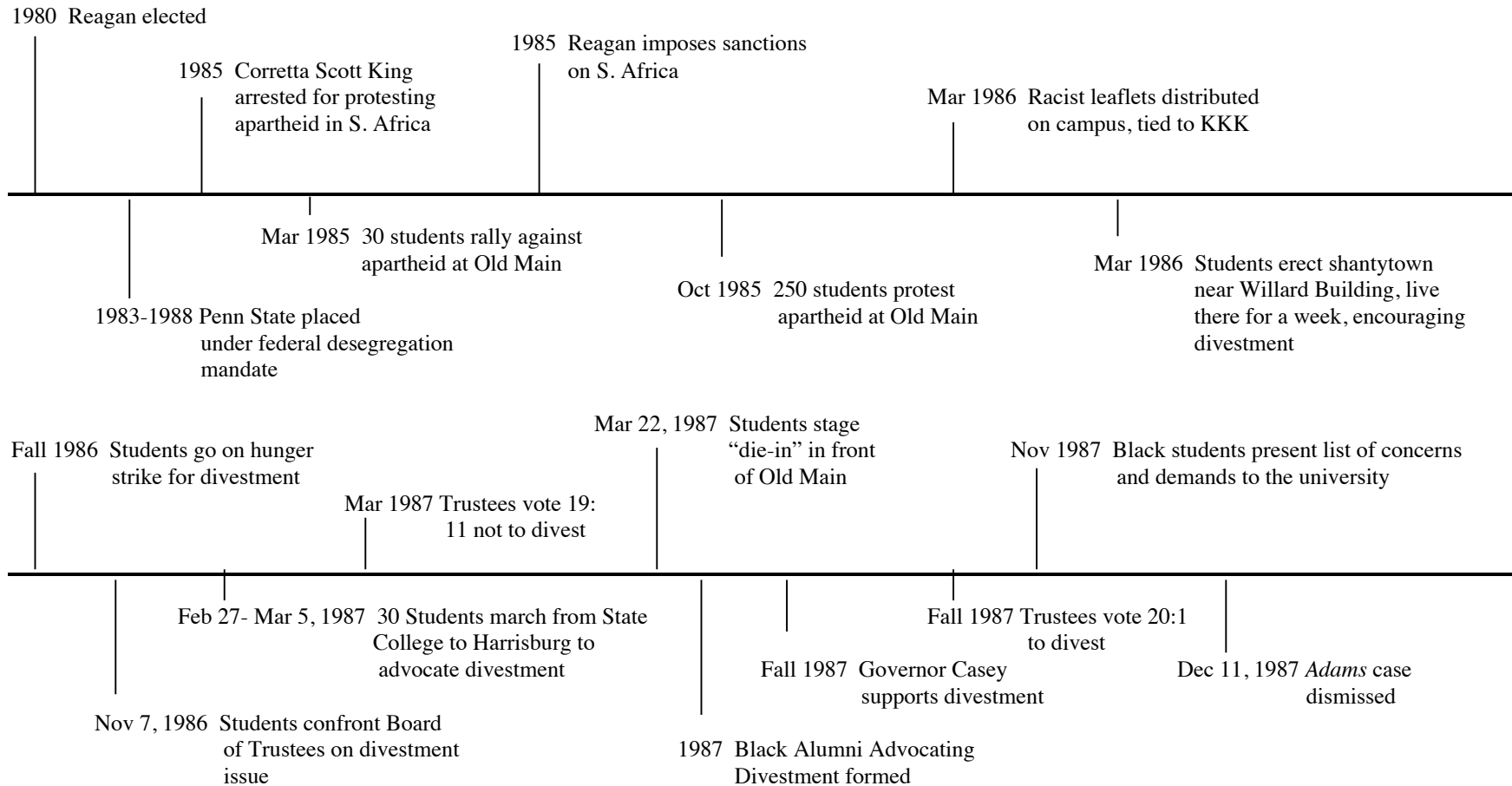
The community reaction to the protests was again mixed. Reading letters to the editor in The Daily Collegian reveals a clear divide. Some felt that the student protestors were overreacting, and that the issue should be dropped. Others believed the issue was important and had serious implications that should be addressed, and not ignored.

The issues of racial disparities at the University did make the front page for a few days, and fueled many letters to the editor for weeks, yet the incident became washed out with the publicity of THON, a dance marathon, which took place that very weekend. The topic seemed to disappear from coverage. But, as if on schedule, it would resurface nearly ten years later, in 1988. Without direct pressure from students, the university and the student body failed to continue dialogue on race issues.

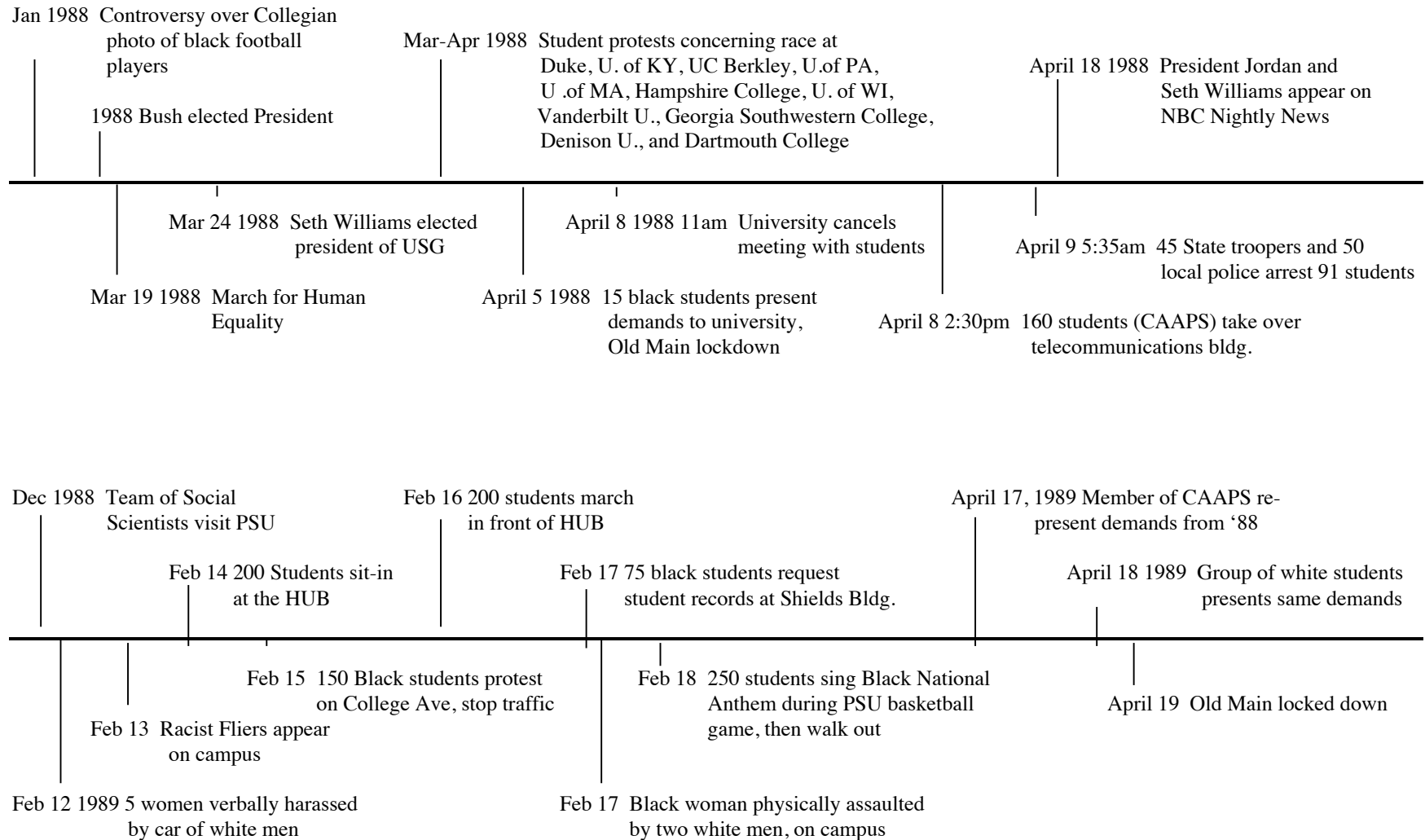
## Timeline 1970-1979



## Timeline 1980-1989



## Timeline 1980-1989 (cont.)





### **1980-1989: It's Back, and It's Ugly**

*“A lot of us thought we got beyond this 15 or 20 years ago, but we didn't. It's back, and it's ugly”*

*-Penn State Spokesman Roger Williams  
The Philadelphia Inquirer, Tuesday Feb 21, 1989*

At 5:25 am, Saturday April 9, 1988, forty-five University and State College Police and fifty state troopers, equipped with helmets and batons, marched into the Telecommunications Building at Penn State, where they met 170 mostly black students who had occupied the building in protest 15 hours earlier. The incident ended in 91 arrests, including that of Seth Williams, the newly elected president of the Undergraduate Student Government. Images of the students being led away by police in riot gear were broadcast across the country, making headlines in the national press. The action mirrored student frustration and anger on college campuses nationwide. Something was clearly happening.

### **National Context: The Reagan Years**

The year 1980 brought with it the election of President Ronald Reagan and a new wave of conservative politics. President Reagan was a vocal opponent of affirmative action, and other areas began to move in that direction as well. The 1980's brought additional setbacks to the court cases involving desegregation and affirmative action. The decade also showed a shift in government spending from social and welfare programs to increased defense spending, which hurt many American working class families and a large part of the African-American population. By the early 1990's, 31% of black American families were classified below the poverty line, in comparison with 10% of white families. “Black Americans were over twice as likely to be unemployed as Whites,

and unemployment of black youth in the major urban ghettos regularly exceeded fifty percent” (Verney 2000, 93).

The trend against affirmative action may have been due to the increasing visibility of several members of the emerging black middle class. Black minister and politician Jesse Jackson ran for President in 1984 and 1988, drawing attention to the fact that black faces were starting to appear in the political scene. Black mayors were elected in several major cities, such as David Dinkins in New York, Harold Washington in Chicago, Thomas Bradley in Los Angeles, and Wilson Good in Philadelphia. 1984 marked the beginning of the popular television series *The Cosby Show*, portraying an upper-middle class black family living the American Dream. However, the Huxtables rarely encountered racism or bigotry, and the issues of institutional racism and discrimination were largely ignored, earning sharp criticism from academics. “The affluent, idealized images of the Huxtables jarred uncomfortably with the real-life poverty and deprivation experienced by many African-Americans” (Verney 2000, 113). The final episode of *The Cosby Show* aired the same night as riots broke out in Los Angeles following the Rodney King verdict in 1992.

The rise of the black middle class led many to believe that the gains of the civil rights movement had worked and that equality had been achieved. There was no longer a need for policies such as affirmative action or desegregation mandates. In 1987, after nearly twenty years of litigation, the *Adams* case was finally dismissed, ending federal enforcement of desegregation mandates. This decision strongly influenced the wave of student protests that occurred across the country the following year, including the telecommunications building takeover at Penn State. An April 20, 1988 article in the

Atlanta Journal entitled “Racial Incidents Spark Protests on College Campuses Nationwide” described similar incidents at Duke, the University of Kentucky, the University of California at Berkley, the University of Pennsylvania, the University of Massachusetts, Hampshire College, the University of Wisconsin at Madison, Vanderbilt University, Georgia Southwestern College, Denison University, and Dartmouth College. All of these protests occurred within two months, March and April of 1988.

Another major issue of the 1980’s was the system of apartheid in South Africa, and America’s role in dismantling it. Many felt that the United States was supporting the segregation in South Africa by allowing companies to do business there. In June of 1985, Coretta Scott King, the widow of assassinated civil rights leader Martin Luther King, was arrested for protesting outside the South African Embassy in Washington, DC, bringing much national attention to the issue, and heightening public opinion. Several months later, President Reagan imposed economic sanctions against the country (The Penn Stater July/August 1989). Students across the country took up the same cause, encouraging their universities to divest from companies with ties to South Africa. Eventually, the focus of the protests would shift from apartheid across the Atlantic to inequality within America’s own borders.

### **Penn State’s Climate: Get out of South Africa!**

*“The prevailing mood was ‘Get out of South Africa’ and when the university fought that, it enraged people in the black community...it sent a message to the blacks here, including the ones they were trying to recruit. It still makes me angry.”*

*-Anita Thomas, class of 1979  
Black Alumni Advocating Divestment (BAAD)*

The first signs of protest against the university's investments in South African-related companies appeared in the late 1970's. However, large-scale demonstrations did not occur until 1985. In March of that year, over 30 members of the Committee for Justice in South Africa (CJSA) protested on the steps of Old Main, carrying signs and chanting. This activity would become quite common for many black students for the next four years. In October of 1985, over 250 people rallied in front of the landmark building, urging divestment (CDT 17 Oct. 1985). The group had also managed to collect over 7,000 signatures to support their cause. Without much response from the administration, demonstrators pressed on. In March 1986, protestors erected a miniature shantytown near the Willard Building on campus. The three tar-paper shacks were to symbolize the living conditions of blacks under apartheid rule. "Our tuition and tax money support this system of brutalization and exploitation," said the group's official statement (Pittsburgh Post Gazette 3 Mar. 1986). The protest was a joint effort between students in the CJSA and the Student Coalition Against Racism, who lived in the shacks for over a week.

Returning the following fall in 1986, students persisted with their efforts. In November, over ninety students participated in a fast to bring awareness to the issue of divestment and set up an information table outside Old Main. Five students went on hunger strike for seven days, while over ninety others agreed to show support by fasting for one to three days (CDT 7 Nov. 1986). One week later, the same students appeared at a Board of Trustees meeting. Fifteen protestors were allowed inside, but were soon asked to leave after exchanging heated words with the administration. In response to a comment made by university president Bryce Jordan, Stephanie Cooper, president of the CJSA



replied “We have been given no choice but to be obnoxious, and I don’t think that fighting against injustice will ever be obnoxious” (The Daily Collegian 10 Nov. 1986).

In the spring semester of 1987, protestors took their demonstrations to the street. On February 28, thirty demonstrators left State College on foot with the destination of the state capital, Harrisburg. Marchers walked 105 miles over six days, stopping in towns along the way and sleeping in local churches (The Daily Collegian 9 Mar. 1987). On March 5, demonstrators arrived at the capital on schedule, carrying a “PSU march for divestment” banner. They were just in time for the General Assembly at the State Legislature, where they spoke out in favor of legislation that would require divestment for state-funded institutions such as Penn State.

One week later, to the dismay of the marchers, Penn State’s Board of Trustees voted 19-11 to reject a proposal to prohibit further investments in South African related businesses (The Daily Collegian 30 Mar. 1987). The Board’s two black and four women trustees all voted in favor of the resolution. This point was well noted by protestors who quickly spoke out against the Board’s decision.

Also, the CJSA staged a die-in on the steps of old main in which protestors re-enacted a massacre that had taken place in segregated South Africa. For ten minutes, over 100 bodies lay limp, imitating corpses, in front of the administration’s headquarters. The group also outlined the bodies in chalk to remind observers of the deaths that had occurred in South Africa (The Daily Collegian 23 Mar. 1987).

By this time, a group of alumni taking the name Black Alumni Advocating Divestment (BAAD) involved themselves in the protests, and joined the efforts to lobby the legislature. The group also stated that they would not encourage potential black

students to come to Penn State. The publicity surrounding the divestment issue was hurting black enrollment. In 1985-1987, the numbers of black students enrolling at Penn State had leveled off at about 3.7% (The Penn Stater July/Aug 1989). The school was nearing the end of its 5-year desegregation mandate, which set a goal of 5% black enrollment by 1988. By the fall of 1987, it became clear that this was not going to happen. With the *Adams* case pending and Penn State's failure to meet its enrollment goals, there was a possibility that the school might lose some of its funding.

With this in mind, and the added pressure of Governor Robert Casey urging the university to divest, the Board of Trustees had a change of heart. In the fall of 1987, they voted 20:1 to divest all holdings in South Africa-involved companies (The Penn Stater Jul./Aug. 1989).

In 1987, Penn State was nearing the end of its five-year desegregation plan. The plan began in 1983 and was the result of federal enforcement of desegregation mandates associated with the *Adams* case. Some feared that the school would not continue its recruitment efforts after the end date. Even with the plan, the university had failed to reach its black enrollment goals for five consecutive years (The Penn Stater July/Aug 1989). In November 1987, black students at Penn State had presented a list of concerns and demands to the Board of Trustees. One month later, on December 11, 1987, the *Adams* case was dismissed, ending federal enforcement of desegregation and minority recruitment. Many wondered what would happen to Penn State's black enrollment without federal enforcement.

To address these concerns, president Jordan attempted to ease tensions by announcing that he planned to continue minority recruitment efforts even after the plan,

which would end on June 30, 1988. Yet many remained skeptical (The Penn Stater July/Aug 1989).

That spring, several incidents showed the growing tensions in the racial climate. Another incident involving the Daily Collegian student newspaper brought racism back to the forefront, just as it had ten years earlier. A front-page photo of three black football players had some black students murmuring racism. Knowing tensions were high, the Jordan set up a Campus Environment Team, who then placed posters around campus stating “Racism has no place at Penn State We seek not only a diverse University community, but a caring one as well.” In February of that year, controversy arose over photos included in the Summer Session 1988 booklet. On Saturday, March 19, 1988, thirteen student and community groups came together under the name Coalition for Human Equality and sponsored a March for Human Equality. The group also presented to the Campus Environment Team a list of demands, including “Black Studies and Women’s Studies courses as degree requirements, transforming Black and Women’s Studies into full departments, permanent representation of minority concerns in administration decisions, and the creation of a full-time position for minority concerns” (Johnston 1990, 14). These demands would be repeated again as protests escalated.

On March 24, Seth Williams, a black student, was elected president of the undergraduate student government on a platform of “requiring Black and Women’s studies courses, opening the university budget, and electing students to the Board of Trustees” (Johnston 1990, 14). The events of the spring 1988 and the outcome of the USG election showed the escalating racial tensions and that many students felt it was time for a change.

### **The Spark: Cancelled Appointments**

At 10:30 am on Tuesday April 5, 1988, a group of 15 Black students led by Reverend Cecil Gray of the United Black Fellowship Community Church entered the President's office to present their list of demands to the university. When President Bryce Jordan was not available, the students refused to leave the office. Students from the Coalition for Human Equality, who were holding an unrelated press conference outside, soon found out about what was going on inside the building. Several students stayed to support those inside. At 1:25 pm, university police sealed off the entire building. A crowd began to form outside. After much drama, the sit-in ended at 9:30 pm after the students had secured an appointment to meet with President Jordan that Friday at 2 pm (The Daily Collegian 6 Apr. 1988).

However, there was controversy over whether or not the meeting would be private, or open to the larger group of supporters. At 11am on Friday, the University Department of Information officially cancelled the meeting, saying that the administration would only meet with a small group (The Daily Collegian 11 Apr. 1988).

### **What Happened**

At 2pm, over 250 students met at the original meeting location of the Paul Robeson Cultural Center. At 2:28pm, the group, now under the name Concerned African-Americans of Penn State (CAAPS) marched into the Telecommunications building, officially occupying the space. By 3:30, telephone communication was cut off from the building, while the crowd gathered outside chanted "we've had enough!" A banner reading "WE ARE HERE, WHERE IS BRYCE?" hung from the side of the building. Inside, students formed discussion groups focusing on "problems facing black students at




the university...the low graduation rate for black students, past assaults on two students, the university's failure to meet its federal desegregation mandate and a lack of black studies courses" (The Daily Collegian 11 Apr. 1988). Vice provost Carol Cartwright entered the building to negotiate with the students, but negotiations broke down at 8:30 pm after "senior officials" did not appear. At 5:35 am, 50 state troopers and 45 local and campus police, equipped with helmets, batons, and rubber gloves, entered the building as the crowd outside sang "We Shall Overcome" (The Daily Collegian 11 Apr. 1988). Among the 91 students arrested for trespassing were Seth Williams, president of USG, Darryl King, former president of Black Caucus, and Bob Bender, co-director of the Lesbian, Gay Student Alliance. Images of the arrests appeared in newspapers across the country, putting national attention and pressure on Penn State.


One week later, students met with the administration during a five-hour forum. Members of CAAPS presented their official demands including an 8% recruitment rate for African-American students, upgrading of the Black Studies Department and changing its name to African-American Studies, improvements to the Paul Robeson Cultural Center, and a team of social scientist to investigate the racial climate at Penn State ("Racism at Penn State" 2001). In actuality, the list of demands and the reasons for them were not so simple, but took up seven pages of single-spaced text. The students and administrators ended the semester with an agreement to continue the talks over the summer, and into the next academic year. That summer, members of CAAPS met with the administration three times, leading to the hiring of the team of social scientists, the increase in black incentive grants and Achievement Awards, and commitments to hire several new black faculty members (Johnston 1990, 17).

During the fall of 1988, talks continued, particularly over the creation of the vice provost position. CAAPS members wanted the position to deal exclusively with black affairs, while the administration proposed that it deal with women's and other minorities as well. On December 15 and 16, the team of social scientists came to investigate the racial climate, determining a need, among others, for "greater trust between minorities and the administration" (Johnston 1990, 19).

Unfortunately, the new year did not bring relief to the tense race relations in town and on campus. Early in the morning on February 12, 1989, five black women were verbally harassed by a group of white men, who tried to coax them into their car. The next morning, February 13, fliers containing racial slurs directed toward USG President Seth Williams appeared in three campus buildings (CDT 15 Feb. 1989). Here is a copy of the flier:



Application for  
**Seth "Whiner" Williams's Staff**



Phone: FO FO FI - FI FI FO FI

\*NOTE: It is not necessary to attach photo since you all look alike.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: (If living in auto, give make, model and license number)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Yo' Momma's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Yo' Papa's name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(No more than three guesses)

1. Make of Auto: CADILLAC \_\_\_\_\_ CONTINENTAL \_\_\_\_\_ LINCOLN \_\_\_\_\_ IMPERIAL \_\_\_\_\_  
FINANCED \_\_\_\_\_ STOLEN \_\_\_\_\_ OTHER \_\_\_\_\_
2. Marital Status: COMMON LAW \_\_\_\_\_ SHACKED UP \_\_\_\_\_ OTHER \_\_\_\_\_
3. Source(s) of income: THEFT \_\_\_\_\_ RELIEF \_\_\_\_\_ WELFARE \_\_\_\_\_  
UNEMPLOYMENT \_\_\_\_\_
4. Place of birth: CHARITY WARD \_\_\_\_\_ COTTON FIELD \_\_\_\_\_ BACK ALLEY \_\_\_\_\_  
FREE CLINIC \_\_\_\_\_ ZOO \_\_\_\_\_ OTHER \_\_\_\_\_
5. How many words can you JIVE per minute? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Check machines you can operate: CROWBAR \_\_\_\_\_ PINBALL \_\_\_\_\_  
STRAIGHT RAZOR \_\_\_\_\_
7. Favorite Foods: BAR-B-QUE \_\_\_\_\_ CARP \_\_\_\_\_ WATERMELON \_\_\_\_\_  
COON \_\_\_\_\_ CATFISH \_\_\_\_\_ ALL OF THE ABOVE \_\_\_\_\_
8. Prior experience: GOVT WORKER \_\_\_\_\_ BLACK PANTHER \_\_\_\_\_ PIMP \_\_\_\_\_  
EVANGELIST \_\_\_\_\_ RAPIST \_\_\_\_\_ DOPE DEALER \_\_\_\_\_
9. How many known children do you have? 1st WIFE \_\_\_\_\_ 2nd WIFE \_\_\_\_\_  
SHACK UP's \_\_\_\_\_  
NEIGHBOR'S WIFE \_\_\_\_\_
10. In 50 words or less, state your greatest desire in life:  
(Other than a white woman.)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Racist fliers were found in several campus buildings (CDT 19 Feb. 1989)

The following day, over 200 members of CAAPS held a four-hour sit-in in the Hetzel Union Building. They presented another list of demands, similar to the one presented in April, 1988 (Johnston 1990, 19). "Students are very afraid of this environment right now," said Williams. "We as a community don't feel safe walking the streets of this university or this borough," said another student (CDT 15 Feb. 1989). At 1:00 am, provost William C. Richardson signed a list demands.

The next day, Wednesday, Feb 15, 150 students demonstrated in the intersection of Garner and College Ave., tying up traffic for 30 minutes. They then returned to the Paul Robeson Cultural Center, where they held a closed meeting for “members of their own community” (The Daily Collegian 16 Feb. 1989). The same day, the university announced a \$1,000 reward for information regarding the racist fliers. On Thursday, the same number of students continued to protest outside the Hetzel Union Building for almost two hours. The group’s official statement read, “We will continue to protest in order to make Penn State students, borough residents, the rest of the state, and finally the nation aware of the ongoing racial injustice which is so much a part of our community’s collective Penn State Experience” (CDT 17 Feb. 1989).

And continue they did. On Friday, 75 black students symbolically filled the first floor of the Shields building to obtain their student records. The Shields building is also home to the financial aid office, which black students said was important for retaining African-American Students. “The purpose of us coming here today,” said one student, “was to let the administration know that things are not equal and that we won’t stop protesting until they are” (CDT 18 Feb. 1989). The same day, the administration unveiled a United Against Racism Banner on Old Main. Despite the outcry against intolerance, that Friday night, a black woman was struck in the face by a white man outside Hartranft Hall. The man, accompanied by two other white men, used “severe racial statements” during the attack (CDT 19 Feb. 1989).

On Saturday, February 18, marking the largest demonstration of five straight days of protests, 250 black students exercised their voices at a Penn State Basketball game in Rec. Hall. Ten minutes before the tip-off, the students, sitting together at mid-court, stood



up, joined hands, and sang the entire black national anthem “Lift Every Voice and Sing.” “Sing a song, full of the faith that the dark past has taught us,” says the anthem. “Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us.” Then, as the announcer introduced the teams, students shouted “Racism has no place at Penn State!” Members of the Penn State team, which was 75% black, wore black armbands “in support of the call to end racism” (Johnston 1989, 21). They continued the chanting as they left the building single file, still holding hands, and returned to the Paul Robeson Cultural Center.

University action to these events included sponsoring public service announcements in the local radio and news media, starting a ribbon campaign, holding open “speak out against racism” forums and continuing to consider the demands of the students. At this point, the students put their protesting on hold, “because we wish to allow the University time to act on the good intentions which they have expressed,” said one student (CDT 23 Feb. 1989). The university also established a hotline to answer questions about the racial problems on campus and held informational parents’ meetings in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Harrisburg. A “United Against Racism” rally was held in April, which drew 150 people (Johnston 1990, 22).

Despite these efforts to combat racism, students persisted with their demands. On Monday April 17, 1989, one year after CAAPS’ original demands were presented to the university, two dozen Black students held a press conference in the lobby of Old Main. After reading their statement, the group climbed the stairs to the president’s office, where they were met by campus police. The students were told that Jordan was not available, so they requested to meet with the Provost and Vice provost. They presented the eleven demands, requesting that they be filled by Wednesday, one year after they were originally

presented (CDT 18 Apr. 1989). The administration representatives said that they would give their response on Wednesday. The students then exited the building, where they found forty students waiting outside, who had been locked out for an hour and a half (Johnston 1990, 23).

The next day, thirty mostly white students also went to Jordan's office, presenting exactly the same list of demands as the Black students had presented the day before. "It is necessary" said Kendall Houk, former USG Senate President, "to show that White students are in solidarity with the agenda set forward by the African-American community and to constantly put pressure on the administration" (Johnston 1990, 23). In a repeat of the day before, the doors to the building were sealed off as soon as the group entered.

On Wednesday, the administration gave its response to the demands to Black Caucus president Tanya Burnett. She refused the document, saying that it should be received by the African-American community, and not by just her (CDT 21 Apr. 1989). The next day, a group of black students approached Old Main, and found the doors locked. Because they had not made an appointment, they were not allowed inside. The university feared the group would "disturb the normal activities of the building." The group outside refused to send a few delegates inside, but wanted to remain together.

Debates continued until the end of the school year, but the protest vigor died down when students returned in the fall. In the fall of 1989, the focus of discussion revolved around the implementation of the diversity requirements, a direct result of the demands presented in 1988 and 1989.

## **Results**

Despite allegations that the university had not responded to the demands, the 1988-89 protests did lead to many important changes at the university. First of all, increased recruitment efforts and scholarships led to additional black faculty and students. The second was the creation of the position of vice-provost for educational equity to oversee policies for minorities and women on campus. The third was the creation of a Commission of Racial and Ethnic Diversity to evaluate university programs and make suggestions for improvements. Fourth, the construction of a new Paul Robeson Cultural Center, fifth, the opening of the University Budget, and finally, the faculty senate passed the motion to add three credits of diversity coursework to the undergraduate degree requirements.

However, despite these gains, one major student complaint was that little student input went into the implementation of these new programs, and committees. In a press conference following the release of the university's response, the students cited the university's action as "paternalistic" and "ineffective" (CDT 28 Apr. 1989).

### **Reactions**

Once again, the student body seemed to be divided on the issue, as evidenced in the letters to the editor of the Daily Collegian. Some students backed the action of CAAPS, as evidenced by the multicultural Coalition for Human Equality, and the number of faculty and permanent residents who spoke out in favor of the students' position. Others agreed with the demands of the group, but did not agree with their confrontational tactics. Finally, there were those who completely disagreed with the black students' demands, as well as their action.

In a student opinion survey filed by Penn State's Affirmative Action office, the report showed a complete polarization of the attitudes of black men and white men. When asked "Do you think that Penn State has done an adequate job in combating the problem of racism?" all of the white men responded "yes," while all of the black men responded "no" (Mitchell 1989). In their explanations, the six white males gave the following reasons for their answers:

1. "Yes. All people have an equal access to the benefits of PSU regardless of race."
2. "Yes. They have done all they can. If the Black Caucus would let it die, it would all blow over."
3. "Yes. Four students are suspended for acts against the CIA while 80+ black students take the Telecommunications Building, yet are unpunished."
4. "Yes. I have not recognized any racism at Penn State."
5. "Yes, because Penn State is not overemphasizing racism by not allowing it to become a major issue."
6. "Yes." (no further response given)

These six responses only represent a handful of student opinions, but they illustrate the underlying backlash that many students felt after the publicity of CAAPS' actions. The reactions show resentment, anger, and ignorance, all of which would contribute to the continuation of the racial tensions on campus.

### **1990-2001 Repeat of the 1980's?**

*“Just as a few carefully placed dynamite charges can topple a building, a few strategic acts of racial hatred can shake an entire community.”*

*-The Daily Collegian October 18, 2000*

On Saturday, April 21, 2001, forty-two people rushed onto the football field in Beaver Stadium just before the kickoff of the annual blue and white game. Despite the heavy police presence, twenty-six students, twenty two blacks and four whites, made it to the fifty-yard-line, where they fell to the ground and linked arms. The tens of thousands of spectators booed and shouted at the protestors as they were arrested and led off the field. The ordeal delayed kickoff for twenty minutes. The press, who had been there to cover the football game, took scores of pictures that were displayed on the front page of several local and regional papers the next day. The students had been trying to increase awareness of several racist death threats sent to black students, as well as what they believed to be deficiencies in the university's diversity policies. “There's no sense of urgency,” said several of the student protestors.

Several days later, a university-sponsored march turned into a six-hour negotiation between black students and the administration, and a ten-day occupation of the Hetzel Union Building (HUB) by hundreds of supporters of all races. Penn State's racial issues appeared in the national media including CNN, The Washington Post, Newsweek, USA Today, and National Public Radio. Penn State students studying as far away as Spain and Singapore saw their Alma Mater in international news.

At one point during the HUB occupation, students from the University of Michigan came to speak with the student protesters. They were on their way across the



country, visiting other schools that had experienced similar protests and demonstrations. In addition to the Penn State and the University of Michigan, events at the University of California Berkely, Harvard University, Brown University, the University of Connecticut, Cornell University and Northeastern University underscored a national wave of student protest centered on race and class.

### **The National Context: Questioning the Justice System**

*“This past week’s events come in the context of bigger national events that range from the riots in Cincinnati after a series of shootings of African Americans by police, to the Mississippi confederate flag vote, to the tensions in Florida after the elections”*

*-The Daily Collegian April 27, 2001*

One major point of tension throughout the 1990’s was racism in the American criminal justice system. In March of 1991 Black motorist Rodney King was brutally beaten several members of the LAPD. Despite video evidence, all of the officers involved were acquitted of all criminal charges by an all-white jury. In April 1992, for days after the verdict was released, riots broke out in Los Angeles and in cities across the country. In Los Angeles alone, the riots left 52 people dead, 2,285 injured, and 16, 291 arrested. The national guard had to be brought in to quell the disturbance (Verney 2000, 105).

October 1995, the OJ Simpson verdict claimed that black football player was not guilty of murdering Nicole Brown Simpson and Ronald Goldman. The reaction to the case, which included debate over racism in the police force, highlighted the racial divide of the country. A CNN/Time survey showed that 62% of white Americans believed black ex-football player and actor OJ Simpson to be guilty of murder, and 21% thought him not guilty. In contrast, only 14% of black Americans saw Simpson as guilty and 66% thought

him not guilty (Verney 2000, 106). This difference in opinion was most likely based on the two groups' varying experiences with the legal system.

Between 1983 and 1996, the nation's prison population more than doubled from 650,000 to over 1.6 million. However, this growth showed the disproportionate incarceration rates of blacks and other minorities. By 1995-96, blacks represented over half of the nation's prison inmates, although they only measure 12.5 % of the general population. In 1995, nearly one third of all black men were somehow involved in the penal system, either in prison, on parole, on probation, or awaiting trial (Verney 2000, 104).

These staggering statistics led to an outcry from the black community, not only to investigate racism in the justice system, but also for renewing traditional values and ending black on black crime. These issues and others were raised as the Million Man March convened at Washington, DC on October 16, 1995.

The issue of racism in the justice system continued into the latter part of the decade, with increasing debate over racism and the death penalty, the practice of racial profiling, and more cases of police violence towards minorities. In 1997, Haitian immigrant Abner Louima was sexually assaulted with a toilet plunger as he waited in police custody in Brooklyn. Two NYPD officers were convicted in the attack.

In 1999, Amadou Diallo, a West African immigrant with no prior criminal record, was shot nineteen times in the chest by four white NYPD officers. One of the officers was the son of a former Penn State professor. The incident provoked widespread demonstrations in the city, leading to the arrest of over a thousand demonstrators, including prominent people such as David Dinkins, Jesse Jackson, Al Sharpton, and

Susan Sarandon (Verney 2000, 107). Similar cases occurred in other cities as well, such as the case of Johnny Gammage in Pittsburgh, and others in Cincinnati, Ohio. Problems of black suspects being killed by police in Cincinnati led to citywide protests and rioting in the spring of 2001.

June 7, 1998 marked the “death dragging” murder of James Byrd in Jasper, Texas. Three white men chained Byrd, a black man, to the back of their pickup truck and dragged him at high speed for over three miles. At least one of the three men had links with the white supremacist group the Confederate Knights of America (Verney 2000, 109).

Intolerance could be found on college campuses as well. Between 1993 and 1996 racist graffiti were reportedly scrawled on dorm doors, on bulletin boards, and in other public places at a number of colleges and universities across the nation, including Harvard University, Yale Law School, Swarthmore College, the University of Colorado Denver, the U. of Wisconsin River Falls, Antioch University, the University of West Virginia, Central Missouri State University, the Southern College of Technology, Miami University of Ohio, and Heidelberg College. Racist flyers were reportedly posted or handed out at Indiana University, the University of Northern Colorado, and the University of California Law School. Racist effigies were reported at Salisbury State University, the University of Pennsylvania, and Michigan State University (Feagin 1996, 60).

Indicators continue to show sizeable disparities between whites and blacks. A 2001 survey conducted by the Washington Post, the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, and Harvard University showed that poverty and unemployment rates for blacks were

more than double than among whites. In 1999, the median household income for blacks was \$27,910 as opposed to \$44,366 for whites. The 2000 census data revealed that blacks were twice as likely as whites to be without health insurance. Also, only one fifth of blacks hold professional or managerial jobs, compared with one third of whites. The report also showed that only 17% of blacks have completed college, compared with 28% of whites (The Washington Post 11 Jul. 2001).

Disparities exist in primary education as well. Ninety percent of the nation's schoolteachers are white, even though over 40% of the children are members of racial or ethnic minorities (Chronicle of Higher Education 27 Oct. 2000). A concentration of these minority students in under-funded inner-city schools often denies them equal educational resources and teaching staff. With disparities in primary education, naturally the inequalities persist at the level of higher education as well.

### **Racial Climate at Penn State: Feeling Unwelcome**

*"It was during the first week of CES orientation. At the time, I was attending PSU- McKeesport. We were all coming from Pollock and walking to the Thomas Building. Four other students and myself were just talking about what it would be like to be a student at University Park. Suddenly a car with about four white students drove by and the guy on the passenger side gave us the finger. (Yes, we were all black.) One of the guys that was walking with us asked if we just saw what happened, and we said yes. So he proceeded to give him the finger. That was the first time in my life that I could remember feeling unwelcome."*

- Danak, senior, Smeal College of Business
- Taken from the book of testimonies collected by theBlack Caucus in the Fall of 2000.

Once again, events at Penn State reflect the happenings of other areas across the country. In 1992, several days after the release of the Rodney King verdict, while riots

were taking place in cities across the country, minority students at Penn State voiced their dismay with their treatment by local police. A group of Black and Latino students pointed out what they saw as a “harassing police presence” at the local McDonalds, where a group of minority students had been congregating. At the same time, a disturbance was occurring a few blocks away on Beaver Avenue, where several thousand people gathered, causing damage to several vehicles and store windows (CDT 28 Apr. 1992). Claiming a singling out of minority students, the group organized a “blackout” boycott of the McDonalds, which had requested the police presence. “The Rodney King trial exacerbated an already intolerable local situation with the State College and University Police departments,” said Eric Bigelow, organizer of the blackout (CDT 1 May 1992). Several days later, over a hundred students from various organizations attended a rally at the Grange Building. “It’s not just McDonalds,” said deputy provost for education equity Terrell Jones. “It’s a bigger issue” (CDT 2 May 1992).

In the legal realm, the continuing pressure of the Office of Civil Rights after the *Fordice* decision in 1992, and President Bryce Jordan’s previous commitments to diversity led to the creation of Penn State’s Framework to Foster Diversity in 1996-97. The general purpose of the five-year strategic plan, to span 1998-2003, is to “promote equity for its faculty, staff, and students.” (“Framework to Foster Diversity” 1998). One of the seven goals listed in the document is “creating a welcoming campus climate,” which continues to be a challenge today. Several visible events that occurred towards the end of the decade showed that this “welcoming climate for all” is certainly difficult to achieve.



In 1993, racist fliers were found inserted into several copies of The Daily Collegian. In 1998, a black PSU student was attacked by five white men who yelled racial slurs at him. (Sunday Patriot News 8 Apr. 2001). The following year, the incidents continued.

### **The Spark: Death Threats**

*“Even though this letter was addressed to me, it wasn’t just me who was affected. It was to every single black person here.”*

*-La Keisha Wolf, Black Caucus President  
The Lion’s Roar, December 14, 2000*

In the fall of 1999, over sixty minority students received a racist hate message through email. The email was traced to a computer lab at Temple University, but officials could not find out who sent the electronic attack. The following year, on October 12, 2000, more letters came, this time through the mail. Four racist death threats were sent to a black member of the Board of Trustees as well as three students, including a black football player and Black Caucus President LaKeisha Wolf. Wolf had also received a separate letter containing similar language only six days earlier. On Wednesday, October 18, black student leaders held a press conference in the HUB where they publicly denounced the hate mail. Several hundred students turned out for the event. “This is not my problem. This is not just a Black problem,” Wolf said. “This is everybody’s problem” (The Daily Collegian 19 Oct. 2000). She went on to say that the letters were not isolated incidents, but represented a “persistent climate of racism” on campus and in State College.

On Saturday October 21, over four hundred students mobilized to march silently around Beaver stadium before the Homecoming football game. The long line of students,

dressed all in black, “was a stark contrast to the crowds of noisy fans dressed in blue and white pouring into the stadium” (The Daily Collegian 23 Oct. 2000). Students also passed out fliers and carried signs.

The following Thursday, October 26, the university sponsored a racism forum in Pollock Commons, a residential complex on campus. In addition to reading from the hate letters, other students were given the opportunity to come forward to talk about their experiences with racism at the university. Dozens of students came forward and spoke about racist comments they had heard in class, as well as subtle forms of racism. One woman said that two of her friends had dropped out of Penn State after they were targeted in the racist emails of the previous year. Another said she quit her job when she felt her manager discriminated against her.

The testimonies continued the following night at 10pm at a candlelight vigil that took place on Old Main Lawn. The “Take Back Our Campus” vigil was a collaboration of several student groups such as Womyn’s Concerns and the Lambda Student Alliance. Students lined up behind the microphone to speak about their experiences with oppression and intolerance. People opened up and revealed many stories that had never been told before, but were kept bottled inside. The testimonies continued for over three hours. As the clock on Old Main struck 1am, the candles slowly burned out, and people dwindled home, but concern over discrimination was far from extinguished.

### **What Happened**

*“The letter did not bring racism to Penn State. It was already here. It just seems when people write it down, people take notice.”*

*-La Keisha Wolf, October 26, 2000*

As more and more students came forward with their stories, it became apparent that many people on campus were suffering emotionally, psychologically, and even physically. Black student leaders collected some of the testimonies into a file that would later serve as a reference. Then, students began to ask important questions like “Why do students have to deal with this on a college campus of all places?” “What kind of environment has to exist so that people feel comfortable insulting others, or degrading them?” “Why are so many of these incidents occurring in the classroom, or in the dormitories?” “What is being done to make sure that students know how to treat each other with respect?”

Students began to investigate, talking with professors and administrators to find out what the university was doing to “foster diversity” and “create a welcoming campus climate.” The answer was the University’s “Framework to Foster Diversity,” a five-year strategic plan designed to “promote equity for its faculty, staff, and students” (“Framework to Foster Diversity,” 1998). The plan also receives state funding. After studying the document and investigating university policies, the students believed that many of the goals in the Framework were not being met.

The group of students, now calling themselves the Penn State Coalition of Students, said that the university does not do enough to address problems facing the black community within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Citing census statistics, the group showed that blacks in the state are the most “at-risk population in regards to poverty, health, incarceration, and self-governance....In spite of the fact that blacks are continually making significant strides in a variety of areas, the sad reality remains that our community is in a state of crisis” (“Racism at Penn State,” 2000). A major focus of

the students' concerns was that the university does not offer courses that address these problems. As a land-grant institution, the students said, the university has a special responsibility to address the social and economic problems within Pennsylvania. "If not Penn State, who's going to do it?" said La Keisha Wolf (The Daily Collegian 6 Dec. 2000). The students proposed solutions, including expanding the African and African-American Studies (AAAS) department's courses and faculty, creating a research institute to "combat the various issues that continue to plague our [black] communities," and scholarships that would require a student to teach for two years in a poor school district (Racism at Penn State 2000). They also proposed a mandatory course on race for all undergraduates in order to address what they said was "a contentious racial climate."

The Coalition compiled the information and presented their findings to the Faculty Senate on December 5, 2000. At the end of their presentation, they demanded that the senate chair sign a document that a) acknowledged the "failure to meet the initiatives listed in the Framework to Foster Diversity" and b) promised a commitment to work with the students to find solutions. The Faculty Senate would not sign on such short notice, and during the ensuing discussion, the meeting was abruptly adjourned. The students then filed out of the meeting and kept on walking until they reached Old Main. They marched up to President Spanier's office where they sat down until they could meet with him. Spanier had previously told the students to take their concerns to the Faculty Senate (The Daily Collegian 6 Dec. 2000). When students decided that the Senate route was ineffective, they returned to his office.

President Spanier agreed to call an impromptu meeting, bringing in several key administrators and members of the Faculty Senate. In a sequence of events similar to

those in 1968, the group was moved to a larger room where a five-hour negotiation took place, ending in the university signing the document presented by the Coalition. Here is an excerpt:

*“We, members of the Faculty Senate and the University President, have read the above statement and recognize that the overall Pennsylvania State University curriculum does not meet the initiatives as stated in the Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 1998-2003 commissioned by the Department of Educational Equity. We agree that the failure to meet these initiatives is unacceptable, damages the academic development of Penn State students, and contributes to the contentious racial climate at Penn State.”*

Signed,

Graham Spanier, University President

Susan Welch, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts

Cara-Lynne Schengrund Chair, Faculty Senate 2000-01

John Nichols, Chair -elect Faculty Senate 2001-02

John Moore, Chair-elect Faculty Senate 2002-03

One important outcome of the sit-in was the formation of a committee made up of students and administrators to investigate the diversity initiatives of each college. The committee was an important step towards continuing the process into the next semester. The group met once a week for months, and by sub-committee at other times during the week.

The students continued to use the information that they were collecting, and compiled it into a booklet entitled “Racism at Penn State.” The information included the group’s official statement, copies of the various hate letters, the agreements signed by the university, newspaper articles, the Framework to Foster Diversity, student testimonies, and photographs of events taking place at Penn State. These booklets then traveled with the students to Harrisburg as they met with representatives of the State Legislature and the Legislative Black Caucus.



Members of the Legislative Black Caucus later came to Penn State to investigate the students' complaints and grievances. Student's delivered a two-hour Power Point presentation covering their concerns and demands. The Coalition was repeatedly making headlines in the student newspaper, The Daily Collegian. The newspaper had also started running a series called "Racism at Penn State" in which one out of the hundreds of testimonies collected in the fall appeared in the newspaper each day. The series generated much debate among students, as evidenced by the plethora of letters to the editor concerning race and the university. The efforts of the Coalition were successful in placing diversity issues on the administrative, faculty, and public opinion agendas.

Having covered the events closely, the newspaper became involved in the issue. On Friday, April 20, 2001, Daily Collegian reporter Daryl Lang received two pieces of hate mail. Lang, a white reporter, had been covering the Black Caucus' activities. The first letter was addressed to Lang himself, referring to him as "Darryl-nigger-lover-Lang." The letter also instructed him to deliver a second letter to La Keisha Wolf. The letter, written in the same hateful language as previous notes, also included reference to a body that would allegedly be found in the woods, as well as a bomb threat for graduation.

Concerned about student safety, members of the Black Caucus held a press conference that night, warning students to be careful and to take precautions, such as not walking home alone late at night. Administrators agreed to send out an email notifying students of the situation.

For those who didn't check their email, awareness of the death threats and the alleged body would come from the front page of regional newspapers after forty-two students rushed the football field at Beaver Stadium the following day. Twenty-six

students, including four white students, were arrested for criminal trespassing and released the same day. President Spanier left the game soon after the protestors were arrested. When chased by Undergraduate Student Government President Matt Roan, Spanier said that he was late for an appointment in Washington, DC.

On Sunday, over four hundred people packed into Heritage Hall in the Paul Robeson Cultural Center to show their support for the Black Caucus and the students who had been arrested the day before. The Black Caucus presented their power-point presentation entitled “Nittany Lies, Failing the Black Community.” The students summarized their views on the death threats, the racial climate on campus, and the university’s diversity initiatives. They believed that the university did not take the threats seriously. Again, they mentioned some of their suggestions for research and curriculum changes that they believed would help address the racial climate by educating people about race. Many of the suggestions, such as the research institute and the mandatory race class, were ones that had been brought up during the Fall Semester (The Daily Collegian 23 Apr. 2001).

On Tuesday at 4pm, the university hosted a “March Against Hate” and over four thousand spectators attended. However, the march never took place. Students from the Coalition said that they had not been consulted about the event and were not involved in the planning. President Spanier began his speech with “Racism is a scourge on our society,” and was quickly interrupted by students shouting “We want a dialogue!” and “Continuance of the Disrespect!” Several students used a bullhorn. At one point, La Keisha Wolf shouted “I am sick and tired of waiting! I’ve been waiting all year and my life is in danger!” (The Daily Collegian 25 Apr. 2001). While she was speaking,

President Spanier and several assistants began walking towards the HUB. Spanier later said that he could not hear Miss Wolf and didn't realize that she was addressing him. He said and that a NAACP representative had suggested relocating.

Over four thousand spectators watched these events unfold, and the majority of them stayed as members of the Coalition continued to address the crowd. As time went on and temperatures dropped, the microphone was passed to anyone who wanted to speak about their experiences with hate and racism. With the help of cell phones, students interrupted the testimonies to give periodic updates on the administration's willingness to meet with a delegation of students. Eventually, it was agreed that fifteen students would go to the Paul Robeson Center to meet with the Administration. The crowd followed.

Negotiations dragged on until 10:30 that night, ending in a stalemate as students refused to back down on several key points. As the meeting ended, students said that they would not leave the building until the situation was resolved. Some vowed not to eat. Outside, hundreds of students had already begun to import pillows and sleeping bags. And so began the ten-day sit-in in the Robeson Center... A larger group camped out in the HUB outside of the Robeson Center. The ethnic, racial, gender, and age mix was varied. The gathering became known as "The Village."

That very night, a black male body was found in Bradford County, one hundred miles from the University Park Campus. The cause of death was multiple gunshot wounds. The next day, rumors circulated that the body might have been connected with the death threat that claimed that a black man had been killed.

Several days later, on Friday April 27, another black body was found in a wooded area, this time in Centre County, less than twenty miles from campus. Many feared the body to be the one referred to in the hate letter. Although the university said that there was no connection with the university, all residence halls were placed on twenty-four hour lockdown, the doors of the HUB were secured, and guards were placed at each door. As of August, 2001, no evidence has been released on the cause of the murder, and the case has yet to be solved. Students are quick to point out that the letter never said that the body would be a student.

One way to view the discovery of the bodies is that they were and are unrelated to anything at Penn State. There is logic to this approach. It may also be rational, however, for students already fearful for their personal safety to connect the events on campus with the grisly discoveries. Related or not by causal actions, the two phenomena- off campus crimes and campus environment- became closely tied for members of the Village and others. To some extent the important issue was not whether the deaths were physically connected to campus, but that those on campus perceived and therefore acted upon a belief that there might be a relationship. This state of affairs may say a great deal about the sense of fear and foreboding that gripped at least some of Penn State's black students in the spring of 2001.

## **Results**

As events escalated, and the students got more and more media attention, negotiations between the students and the university continued. After ten days, the administration agreed to sign an altered "Plan to Enhance Diversity at Penn State." The agreement included funding for an Africana Research institute, increased faculty for the

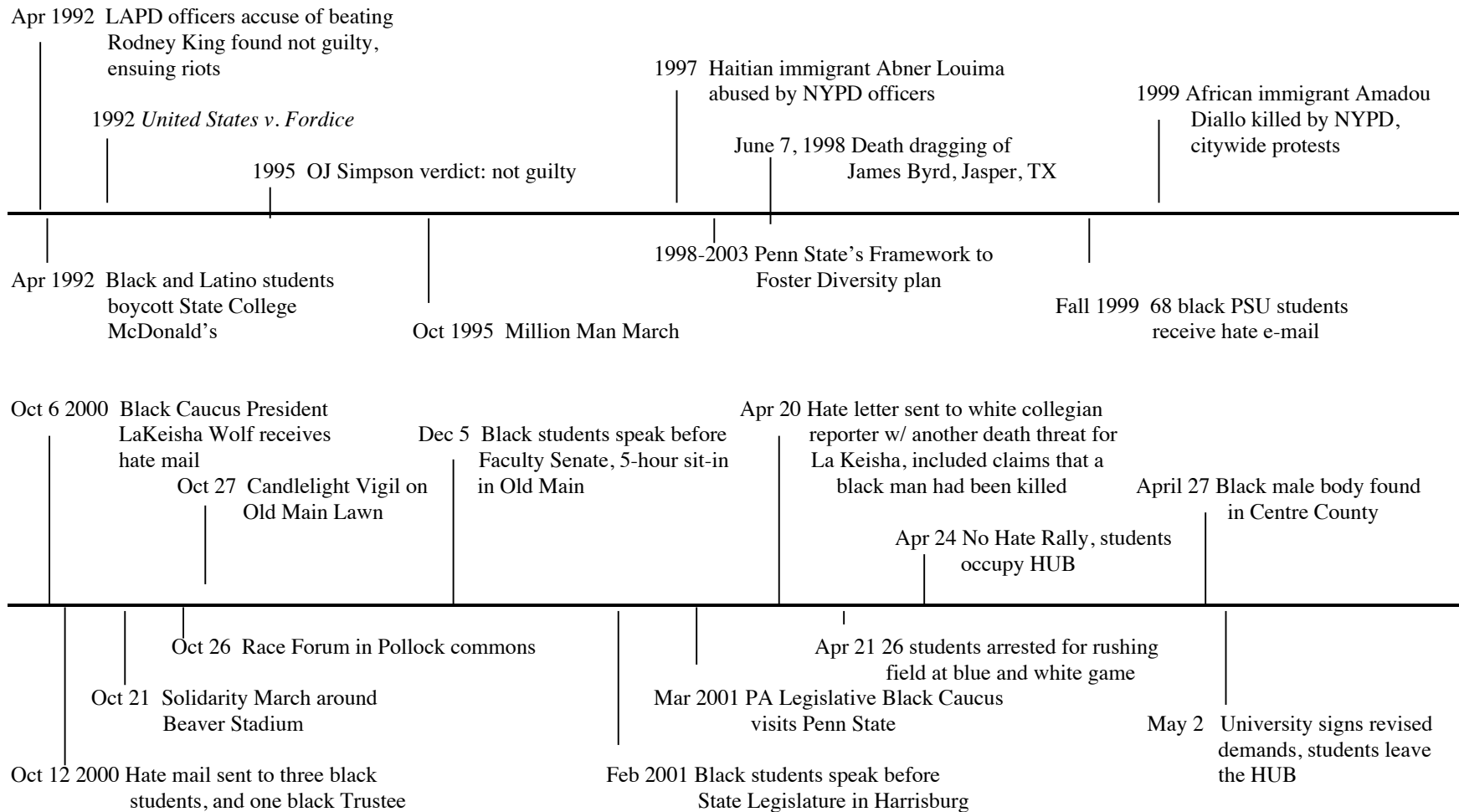
AAAS department, five new scholarships for students agreeing to serve in disadvantaged areas, increased power of the vice-provost for educational equity position, and a review of the university's diversity requirements.

### **Reactions**

As usual, the reaction to the events was mixed. Letters to the *Collegian* became more and more vigilant, either in support of or in opposition to the Black Caucus. As students rallied together in the HUB, others talked about reclaiming the building. The dialogues over *The Daily Jolt* chat rooms showed that many students were angry about the university's compliance with the demands, and felt that the agreement reached was unjustified. Although the summer brought some temporary relief from the issue, many believed that heightened tensions would resume when students return in the fall and that debates would continue over the implementation of the demands. If we look at 1988 as an example, it was the year *after* the takeover of the telecommunications building that the campus saw an increase in racial incidents that sparked five straight days of protest. A similar phenomenon occurred in 1968-69. If this year follows the same pattern, the campus will experience a polarization of views, including a backlash against affirmative action, diversity policies, and black students in general.



## Timeline 1990-2001



### **PART III: REFLECTION**

Part II explained the racial history of Penn State in a national context, concentrating on four main periods of black protest. Part III seeks to elaborate on these observations by comparing the four main waves of protest and suggesting possible causes for the disturbances and racial tensions, including Pennsylvania's demographics, Penn State's rural location, and misunderstandings concerning racial climate.

### **Similarities Among Protests**

*“The haircuts are different, but the soundtrack remains the same.”*

*- The Chronicle of Higher Education*

*August 3, 2001*

Many similarities exist among the racial protests that occurred at Penn State, particularly those in 1968, 1988, and 2000- including black student demands, complaints concerning racial climate, the presence of multi-cultural coalitions, the appearance of protests at athletic events, the symbolic importance of Old Main, the intervention of outside investigatory groups, and predecessor campout protests.

### **Similar Demands**

*“A persistent demand of black protest thought has been education. All understand that the future belongs to the young and that education is a necessity in the struggle for uplift and equality.”*

*-Watkins, William H et al. Race and Education. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2001, p 50.*

Of the student demands presented in 1968, 1988, and 2001, two main themes emerge: enrollment of black students and faculty, and curriculum changes concerning classes dealing with race and African-American Studies. The following is a table showing the black student demands Presented to the University in 1968, 1988, and 2001: (see following page)

1968	1988	2001
More black undergraduates. 400 blacks by the fall of 1969, 1000 by the following fall, and 10% for every year thereafter.	Re-commitment to the federally mandated 5% plan, plus an additional 3%, for a total of 8% black enrollment	
More black professors	8% Black Faculty, and black course instructors to match the proportions of black students	More tenure track faculty in the AAAS department. All departments to have black faculty proportionate to the black population of PA.
More black graduate students	More black administrators (to achieve 5%)	
More black athletes		
More black coaches	More black Trustees (From 2 to 4)	
Re-evaluation of the athletic program with regards to blacks	Independent team of social scientists to investigate PSU's racial climate	Creation of an Advisory Board (made of students and faculty) to monitor the implementation of the demands
MLK Jr. scholarship fund	Increase in financial aid to match increases in tuition	Scholarships for students agreeing to serve for three years in an disadvantaged neighborhood after graduation
A building named after MLK Jr.	Construction of a new Paul Robeson Cultural Center	
	New position: Director of Pan-African Affairs (became the vice-provost for educational equity)	Increased power of the vice-provost position
A section of Pattee Library devoted to black authors	Creation of an African Diaspora Studies Lounge in Pattee	
More black Literature in the university's English Classes	Black Studies and Women's Studies courses to be placed in the University's pool of General Education courses.	Re-examination of the diversity requirement, a required course on race for all students.
A permanent course in Negro history	An African and African-American Studies Major, upgrading of the existing department	Autonomy of the AAAS department
An African Culture Study Program		Creation of an Africana Research Center

Rows 1-5 show the demands concerning increased numbers of black students, faculty, and administrative posts. A frequent complaint of black students is the under-representation of blacks in relation to the proportion of blacks in the Commonwealth. When black students first presented a list of demands to the university in 1968, the black

population at Penn State University Park was less than 1%. Only 0.3% of the total workforce was comprised of minorities. In the 1980's, even under federal mandates, the University failed to reach the goal of 5% black enrollment, although the numbers of black students undeniably increased. Today, in 2001, the total black student enrollment at University Park is less than 4% (Penn State Factbook 2000).

Row six shows the request for evaluation of the university's policies. Discussions in 2001 concerning the Advisory Board seemed to suggest student distrust of the university concerning the implementation of the demands and university diversity policies.

Row seven includes three separate requests by black students for scholarships and other forms of financial aid. Black students have long argued that increased financial aid is the key to increasing black enrollment, and retaining black students. Vice Provost for Educational Equity Terrell Jones cites substantial financial aid packages as one of the biggest successes of the university, and one reason for Penn State's relatively high graduation rates of black students in comparison with other Big Ten Universities.

Row eight includes requests for buildings on campus, including the Paul Robeson Cultural Center. The Robeson Center, now located in the HUB, is described by some minority students as "a home away from home." It includes several student organization offices and cubicles, a study lounge, and information desk, several meeting rooms, and the large banquet-style Heritage Hall.

Row nine shows the desire to have an overall director of African-American affairs at the university. However, when the position was created in 1988, the title was "Vice Provost for Educational Equity" rather than the original "Director on Pan-African



Affairs.” The new position would oversee all diversity issues, including those of other minorities, women, and the disabled. In 2001, students fought to give this position more power in university affairs and decision- making bodies.

Row ten represent black students’ demands to increase the availability of “black” resources and works at the university library. Currently, there exist a diversity studies lounge on the first floor of the main building. The room includes posters of “The Black Experience” art exhibits, as well as rotating exhibits showcasing various groups throughout the year.

Row eleven is a major source of contention, even today. It represents the desire to infuse black issues and courses into the regular university curriculum. In the 60’s, students wanted more black authors to be used in English Classes. By the 1980’s, black students began advocating a mandatory course on race or gender. Instead, the university came up with the diversity requirement, mandating that all students take at least three credits dealing with some form of diversity. In 2001, students said that the diversity credits were not focused enough, but included too wide a variety of classes. Students could take a class that fulfilled the requirement, but didn’t deal with the challenge of race, class, or gender issues. In 2001, black students demanded that the diversity requirement be re-examined and narrowed in scope. They also requested a mandatory course on oppression for all students. The course was to focus on the experiences of several racial and ethnic groups throughout the country’s history. This demand has not yet been fulfilled, or agreed to.

Finally, row twelve represents black students’ desire for more courses and research concerning African and African- American issues. These demands arise when

black students do not feel that the existing curriculum is adequate enough to address such areas. In 2001, black students commonly brought up Penn State's slogan "Making Life Better," referring to Penn State's research programs. Black students were quick to point out how few of these research projects explored issues relating to the black communities within Pennsylvania, such as the over-representation of blacks in the prison system, or their high rates of poverty, AIDS, or unemployment. Students felt that the University, particularly as a land-grant institution, has a special responsibility to solve these pressing problems within the commonwealth. This was the main reason for demanding the Africana Research Center in 2001. Similar opinions were voiced in 1968, and 1988.

The similarities of the various demands show two things. The first is that progress is indeed being made, for the demands become more advanced and complex with each set of protests. The black enrollment is increasing, although slowly. Some argue that this increase in black enrollment is only due to the increasing black population in Pennsylvania. However, the university is making efforts. In addition to financial aid, other services for minority and women students have been created over the years, including the Multicultural Resource Center, the Center for Women Students, and various minority programs within each specific college. The second item brought up by demand similarities is the persistent racial climate. The demands proposed during each decade represent tensions in the racial climate at the university. Therefore to understand the demands, one must also understand the racial climate at the time.

### **Similarities of Racial Climate**

*"Black students are sick and tired of having to defend their reasons for attending the university and for simply being who they are."*

-La Keisha Wolf, October 2000

Each decade, when black protests erupt, minority students come forward to speak out about their problems with discrimination and exclusion that they feel at the university. Many of the testimonies collected by the Black Caucus in 2000 repeat complaints by black students in 1968. The following table compares concerns brought up in each decade. The quotes from 1968 come directly from The Daily Collegian series on March 7 and 8, 1968. The quotes for 2000 are those collected by the Black Caucus, taken from the “Racism at Penn State” packet.

1968	2000
“The Sword and Shield[a local restaurant] reportedly won’t serve interracial couples.”	“Off campus, downtown, I was walking with my friend (a black male) late at night, and we were approached by a small group of white males (3-4) who called us ‘Oreo.’”
	“Last semester, I worked at The Diner on College Ave...After my third week of working there, my manager said, ‘I didn’t think your kind would make it here.’...It bothers me that I didn’t respond, as well as the fact that I quit.”
“Black students have been told by local landladies that their rooms are full although for rent signs are displayed. Then their white friends go in to ask about rooms and find they are still for rent”	“I am concerned because of the lack of black faces working on College Ave. I know that I am very qualified for the positions, but I am always told that they are not hiring, but then I see an ad saying the opposite of that.”
“In a number of stores, it seems like the floor walkers are always behind you.”	“We were in the army surplus store. It was two black guys, one Puerto Rican guy, and me...My friend bought a hat as we waited for him outside. He came outside after purchasing the hat and told us that the guy who owns the store (a white man) said we were in there too long and he (my friend) should empty his pockets, implying that he stole something. We made our friend go in and return the hat. The owner reluctantly gave him his refund.”
	(table continued on next page)

1968	2000
"A girl had three white roommates- the first refused to room with her; another was nice, but her parents demanded that housing switch her. The third seemed liberal, but later invited the girl to visit her home, explaining, 'you would enjoy meeting my maid.'"	"My roommate wanted to live with another white girl...I believe that she wanted me to move out because it was a racial problem for her. I'm not sure if she is racist, but I do know that she would prefer a white girl to be her roommate. I believe that I have the rights to be in my room."
"In mixers, the members of the white fraternities dance by themselves...they don't accept us as people."	"My friends and I went to a fraternity and they wouldn't allow me in because. 'Black people aren't allowed at these parties. Don't they have something for y'all on campus?' and slammed the door in my face."
"In Beech Creek, 30 miles from the university, a black student was chased out of town this summer. Although he was working in the area, he couldn't get served in a restaurant. 'Then a carload of cats drove up and told me to get out of town' he said."	"We walked past an apartment...there seemed to be a party going on...Hanging on the door was a sign that read 'No niggers allowed.'"
	"I've been asked, 'Do you really go here?' and 'What sport do you play?'" I've been questioned on many occasions if I am a member of affirmative action."
	"...When the teacher got to me, he said 'Aronissa, could you give us some thoughts on The Cosby Show?' Basically, I was called up to speak for the entire Black community."

The first and second rows deal with two issues, the treatment of interracial couples, and discrimination in local restaurants and business. As the number of black students rise, so do the numbers of interracial couples. While they are more frequent, these couples do still tend to raise eyebrows, for mixed relationships are still rare in the context of a majority white school. Therefore, the raised eyebrows may be due to disapproval, or they may simply occur because of the couple's uniqueness. How these reactions are interpreted depends on the couple involved.

Row three shows black student complaints of discrimination in town when looking for an apartment, or a job. Many employers and landlords seem to discriminate against students in general, but some minority students also feel that they are discriminated against because of their race. Such discrimination is difficult to prove, but many black students say that they have felt discriminated against at one point or another.

When listening to student testimonies, it is useful to remember the statement made by the barbershop owner in 1947. “Now, I wouldn’t come right out and refuse to cut their hair if one came in. I’d just tell him I was too busy right now and to come back later. That way it keeps you out of trouble- no muss, no fuss” (Critique Apr. 1947). The comment may seem outdated. But attitudes such as this one may have a long half-life. It is plausible that such practices and attitudes have been handed down from generation to generation. This would certainly explain some of the current experiences of black students in town.

Row four illustrates problems with racial profiling in town. Both in the ‘60’s and today, a common complaint of black students is that they are singled out and followed in stores. Store owners and employees automatically assume that minorities are more likely to steal or cause trouble. Such attitudes may be the result of bad experiences with minority customers, from stereotypes in the media, or racist attitudes that have been passed down from previous generations. Again, such discrimination is difficult to prove, but is often felt by many minority students, adding to feelings of alienation.

In row five, we see minority students citing problems with white roommates, and vice versa. Many students arrive on move-in day never having considered that their new roommate might be of another race or religion. Such assumptions often lead to shock when students of different races meet each other for the first time. As we see in these examples, the parents are sometimes shocked as well, and may be influential in requesting a room switch.

Row six shows complaints of discrimination within the Greek system. An article in the Chronicle of Higher Education described modern day fraternities as “places to party, privileged societies with secret rituals, and bastions of the powerful, whose alumni



traditionally have shaped policy and fundraising at their respective institutions” (8 Jun. 2001). Agnes Lugo-Ortiz, an associate professor at Dartmouth, said that Greek system “promotes racist, sexist attitudes” and are “antiquated, a remnant of the past.” Many of the fraternities and sororities, including those at Penn State, remain mostly segregated, with “majority white” and “majority minority” groups.

The next row, number seven, shows examples of overt racism. In 1968, a black student was called a “nigger “ and physically chased out of a nearby town. While many believe that such behavior is a thing of the past, black students in 2001 continue to report similar occurrences. Some claim to have been called a nigger in broad daylight on campus. In 2001, a black woman reported that a swastika had been etched in her door off campus. Certainly the death threats and hate mail that were received in 1999, 2000, and 2001 are also examples of modern overt racism.

The last two rows show a more subtle form of racism, which is more difficult to pinpoint. Institutionalized racism includes assumptions that all black students are athletes and affirmative action recipients, or calling on black students to represent their race in class. These subtle occurrences do not seem as serious as the death threats, or “nigger” signs associated with overt racism, but they can still be destructive, for they can contribute to an overall feeling of alienation and an un-welcoming climate.

### **Multi-Cultural Support Coalitions**

The notion that the protests led by black students only deal with black issues fails to explain the presence of multi-cultural coalitions of students that have supported black protestors over the years. In every case of black protests at Penn State, white and other minority groups have followed in support of the actions of black students. The following

table shows several of these support coalitions that have been formed at Penn State over the years:

1958	Council on Human Relations
1960	DARE- Direct Action for Racial Equality
1968	White Liberation Front
1988	Human Rights Coalition
2001	The Village

Even as early as the 1948, whites supported black protests in the form of boycotting the towns six discriminatory barber shops and attending a rally on Old Main. In 1958, a diverse group of students, faculty, and townspeople met under the name of the Council on Human Relations to advocate housing desegregation in State College. The group's efforts led to the abolition of racial classification when placing students in dormitories in 1959. In 1960, another multi-racial group formed with the title DARE, or Direct Action for Racial Equality. The group was responsible for holding the barbershop poster-walk against barbershop discrimination in 1960. The group also attempted to establish a "bi-racial human relations commission" in State College, under the jurisdiction of the Borough Council. The purpose of the commission was "to be permanent in nature, acting by appropriate means to investigate reported cases of discriminatory practices in all areas of life within the Borough." DARE also raised money for a legal defense fund to help the legal costs of students arrested during the non-violent demonstration (The Daily Collegian 26 Apr. 1960).

In 1968, a group of primarily white students formed the White Liberation Front with a mission of educating white students about racism. The group was formed in the spring, soon after the Douglass association presented its list of demands to the University, and arose from a spontaneous discussion in the HUB. In the Fall of 1968, The White

Liberation Front created and distributed “anti-bigot kits” that provided information about race, including a bibliography of literature dealing with racism. In November of 1969, as the Black Student Union continued its negotiations with the administration, a “White Solidarity Rally” was held on the steps of Old Main. Represented were students from the Coalition for Peace, Students for a Democratic Society, New Democratic Coalition, Jazz Club, the Women’s Liberation Front, and the White Liberation Front (The Daily Collegian 9 Nov. 1969). USG also sent out an official statement supporting the Black Student Union.

During the black protests of 1988, the Coalition on Human Equality, comprised of 13 different student groups, supported the actions of CAAPS. The group held marches, and presented the university with similar demands as those given by black students, including mandatory black and women’s studies courses for all students. On Tuesday, April 18, 1989, a group of thirty white students presented an identical list of demands to the administration as black students had done the day before. “It is necessary” said Kendall Houk, former USG Senate President, “to show that White students are in solidarity with the agenda set forward by the African-American community and to constantly put pressure on the administration.”

Finally, in 2001, the multi-cultural Village studied, prayed, danced, reflected, ate, celebrated, and slept in the HUB for ten days in support of the Black Caucus and their demands. The Village formed spontaneously after the No-Hate Rally failed to unite students and administrators. Hundreds of students gathered and waited in the HUB during the negotiations. Villagers engaged in many deep discussions about race across racial and ethnic groups, ages, and occupations. The occurrence was similar to spontaneous

discussion groups that formed in the HUB in 1968 that eventually led to the creation of the White Liberation Front. Today, the Village boasts a similar mission, “to peacefully, yet actively champion equality of life, equity of education, and justice for people of all kinds” and includes plans to “educate the public” about diversity (The Village, 2001). Also, as it did in 1969 and 1988, the Undergraduate Student Government released a statement in support of the Black Caucus in 2001.

All of these multicultural coalition groups that have supported black protests over the years show that racism and discrimination is not simply a black issue.

### **Strong Ties to Athletics**

*“Since we cannot reach you at any other place, we find it necessary to come to a football game to ask you to think as members of an academic community. We wish to express an analysis of our situation, and we ask you to join us in these thoughts.”*

-Statement read by the Black Student Union during a halftime speech at a 1969 football game

Athletics obviously play a large part of the Penn State environment. It is said that when Beaver Stadium is filled, the State College becomes one of the largest cities in Pennsylvania. However, athletics have also traditionally played a role in black protests at the university. Some view athletics as an area where many black students excel, a road to success and opportunity. As a result, we see black students speaking on the field during halftime at a November 1969 football game. Student demands from the year before also included a review of the athletic department in regards to black athletes. In the spring of 1989, over 250 black students staged a protest at a basketball game in which they sang the black national anthem, then walked out of Recreation Hall. In 2000, over 400 students

marched silently around Beaver Stadium at the homecoming game in October. Seven months later, twenty-six students were arrested for rushing the field of the blue and white football game. Students in Black Caucus also met with representatives from the athletic department, including football coach Joe Paterno concerning death threats sent to black football players.

Clearly, athletic events provide an easy venue for a large audience, but black students have another reason to incorporate athletics into their protests. Some feel that athletics is one area where blacks have more of a voice, because of their strong representation, and the fact they bring in a substantial revenue for the university.

### **Location, Location, Location**

In addition to sporting events, the majority of black student demonstrations have occurred at Old Main, the geographical and administrative center of the university. The visibility of Old Main is certainly a logical place to hold any public event, but this building is also a symbol of the university, the Alma Mater. To some groups, it is also representative of the patriarchal, historically white power structure of the university.

For example, Old Main houses the office of the President. All nineteen of Penn State's presidents have been white males. The Board of Trustees, an extremely powerful university body, has also traditionally been made up primarily of white men. Here is a photo of the 2000-2001 Board of Trustees:



Penn State Board of Trustees, 2001. Eighteen other members are not present.

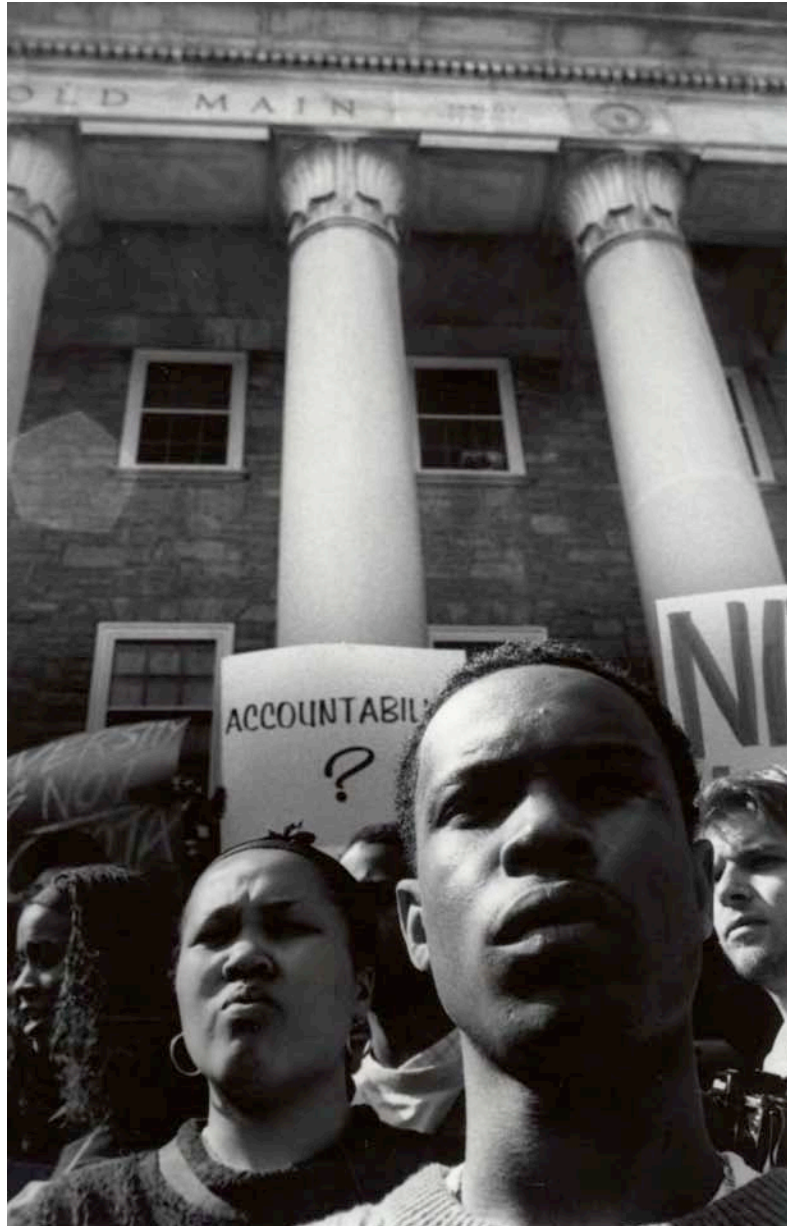
The history of the white, male power structure at the university is also reflected in the artwork that decorates the main lobby of Old Main. The walls on the first and second floor of the building display portraits of the most influential historical figures at the university. Out of the twenty-one portraits, nineteen are white men, with one white woman, Mimi Coppersmith, and one black man, Jesse Arnelle, present.

The second floor of the building's lobby is decorated with the "Old Main Frescoes," painted in the 1940's by Henry Varnum Poor. The various panels of the frescoes are "to depict the founding, the aspirations, the labors, and the people of a great



university” (Penn State Archives). There are 113 clearly distinguishable faces in the frescoes. 96 of these people are white men, and 16 represent white women. Only one person of color is present in the mural- a black man, wearing a blue and white track uniform. He is also placed in the corner of the very last panel of the mural.

Since the mural was created in 1946, the faces of the university have certainly changed to include more women and people of color. Progress has undeniably been made. However, this legacy of white, patriarchal power is still present at the university. Because Old Main represents the center of this power, it is symbolic that black student protestors would choose this building as a stage for their demonstrations. (see photo on following page)



Black student demonstration, Old Main April 24, 2001

### **Outside Investigation Groups**

Several times throughout Penn State's history, outside groups, or commissions have been brought in to investigate complaints of racism on campus and the university's diversity policies. The following table shows the various investigation groups that have come to Penn State over the years:

1948	NAACP
1970	Mattil Commission
1972	Compliance Review Team
1983	Pennsylvania Equal Rights Council
1989	Team of Three Social Scientists
2001	Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus

In 1948, the NAACP intervened in State College Affairs by investigating charges of racism among local barbers. The group then helped to organize picketing of the six barbershops for days. In 1970, the year following black students demands to the university, and the year that PA was placed under federal watch for running segregated institutions of higher education, Penn State's administration formed the Mattil Commission. This commission, or "presidential task force," was comprised of faculty, administrators, and students with a goal of "examining the basic principles and assumptions which guide the relationships among various segments of University life" (CDT 28 Feb. 1970). The probe lasted for seven months and ended in the release of a fifty-two-page report on the group's findings. The report concluded, "Penn State has not been a leader in providing higher education for blacks." Dr. Mattil, head of the commission added that "the University must recognize it is not dealing with a host of irrational black student protests aimed at getting 'whitey.' Their protests are concerned with economic oppression, loss of identity, poverty, hunger, and racism." Among other suggestions, the commission recommended the formation of an advisory body "representing all segments of university life" to act as a "watchdog committee of sorts- made up of students, faculty, and administrators- to insure clear cut lines of responsibility and open channels of communication" (CDT 18 Feb. 1970). This "watchdog" committee is almost identical in principle to the advisory board proposed by black students in 2001.

Overall, the suggestions made by the Mattil Commission mirror many of the demands presented by black students the year before.

In 1972, another investigation was completed, this time by the Office of Civil Rights and the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Region III, in Philadelphia. This Compliance Review Team was established to investigate Penn State's compliance with the desegregation mandate, particularly Penn State's affirmative action program. The report concludes that "The revised Affirmative Action Program as voluntarily developed by the Pennsylvania State University in March of 1971 is not considered totally adequate....The program does not adequately assign responsibility for proper monitoring, does not establish realistic goals and timetables in certain major academic departments as they relate to minority groups" (CDT 28 Feb. 1970). Similar comments concerning monitoring and "accountability" of the University's diversity initiatives would be brought up again by black students in 2001.

In 1979, in response to the controversy and protests surrounding the racist ads placed in *The Daily Collegian*, the Pennsylvania Equal Rights Council voted to investigate minority issues at Penn State. The Council was "a statewide organization representing about 100 organized labor, religious, and civil rights groups" (The Daily Collegian 6 May 1983). The group completed its probe several years later, in 1983. The recommendations to the university included the suggested resignations of two university officials, Mimi Coppersmith as Chairman of the University Board of Trustees Special Advisory Committee of Affirmative Action, and Bill Asbury, the University's Affirmative Action officer and special assistant to the provost. The group felt that Coppersmith "does not see her position...as a priority. She can use her talents in another

committee on the Board.” With regards to Asbury, the group suggested that he be replaced by “someone with new ideas and enthusiasm....We conclude that he is tired and needs a new position” (The Daily Collegian 6 May 1983). The university did not agree with the group’s conclusions, and chose not to follow through with the recommendations. Mr. Asbury is still present in the administration in 2001, now acting as the Vice President of Student Affairs.

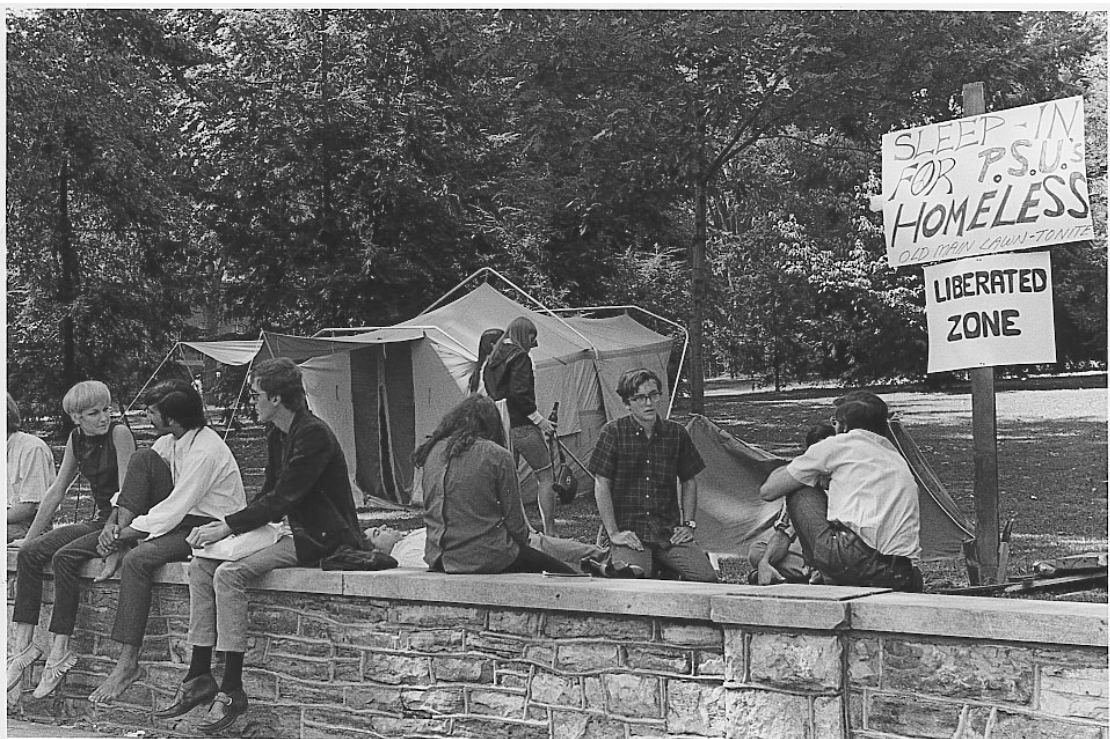
Following the black student protests of 1988 a group of three social scientists were brought in to investigate the racial climate at Penn State. The group, consisting of professors from the Indiana University, Temple University, and Arizona State University, came twice, in December 1988, and again in March of 1989. They made a number of recommendations similar to the demands presented by black students, including race and gender courses as degree requirements and expanding black studies courses to other campus locations. The group also suggested that the university take action “to promote academic diversity and pluralism as ‘major university issues’ and not minor special group issues” (CDT 22 Jun. 1989).

In 2001, several members of the Legislative Black Caucus from Harrisburg came to University Park to investigate black students’ allegations of a “contentious racial climate.” The group agreed with many of the solutions presented by the Penn State Black Caucus, and encouraged the university to implement several of the programs.

An important aspect of these “investigation” groups is that they almost always agreed with many of the principles set forth by the black protestors. These outside groups served to legitimize the demands of the black students in the eyes of the university, and most likely help to influence the university in implementing changes.

## Campout Precedents

Each of the three main waves of black protest at Penn State- '68, '88, and '00- was preceded by a campout of a seemingly un-related cause. In the Fall of 1968, members of Students for a Democratic Society set up tents on Old Main Lawn to protest the housing shortage on and off campus. They named the dwelling “Walkertown” after University President Eric Walker, and opened a free-speech platform to discuss pressing issues such as the war in Vietnam and civil rights. Several months later, black students led a demonstration at halftime of a football game, and held subsequent meetings with the administration to discuss their demands.



Students for a Democratic Society protest housing shortage, 1968 (PSU Archives)

In 1986, members of the Black Student Coalition Against Racism and the Committee for Justice in South Africa erected a shantytown on the mall to protest the University's investments in companies doing business in segregated South Africa.



Despite winter temperatures, students lived in the three shacks for over a week. Two years later black students presented a list of demands to the university, leading to the 15-hour takeover of the Telecommunications Building.

In the Spring of 1999, students used camping once again as mode of free speech, this time to protest the university's affiliation with sweatshops. Members of Students for Accountability and Reform (STAR) set up tents to encourage the university to join the Workers Rights Consortium, a sweatshop monitoring organization, hoping to prevent human rights abuses affiliated with manufacturing university merchandise. Several dozen campers lived in the tents for nearly three weeks, through rain, sleet and snow. Two years later, in the spring of 2001, hundreds of students occupied the HUB to support the Black Caucus in their negotiations with the University.



STAR, Students for Accountability and Reform, protests sweatshop labor, April 1999 (photo by Robin Hoecker)

One possible role of these campouts is a visible exercise of free speech, which in turn opens the door for future student protests. A campout may be what it takes to

energize student activists. If the campouts play not taken place, would the other protests have taken place? If black students hadn't protested in 1968, 1988, or 2001, what would the consequences have been for the black community at Penn State? What progress would have been made without the pressure of the Douglass Association, the Black Student Union, or the Black Caucus? We will never know, but it certainly is an interesting question.

After the Spring 2000 campout on Old Main lawn, camping was outlawed on university property, citing "safety violations," as justification for the new rule. Many feel that the new law is a violation of free speech. Without campouts, what will the consequences be for student activism in years to come, particularly for black student protests?

With all of these similarities among the different decades of black student protests, special attention must be given to studying these likenesses in order to find solutions to the problems that cause them in the first place.

## Why the Cycle?

*“It is sad and disheartening to hear about the ongoing situation facing African- American students in State College. It is now 2001 and students are still dealing with most, if not all, of the same trials and tribulations faced by the generations that came way before them.”*

- Joannna Fenton, Black Caucus Vice President 1997-98  
and Nyota Wright, Black Caucus Treasurer 1998-99  
(The Daily Collegian 27 Apr. 2001)

The similarities among black protests over several decades clearly establish the cyclical nature of racial protests at Penn State. Why do the racial protests occur? Why do they reemerge each decade? Some possible reasons for the outbursts of demonstrations include Pennsylvania’s demographics, the geographic location of the university, and misperceptions of racial climate, and the university’s intentions upon signing protest demands.

## Peculiar Pennsylvania

*“When I was growing up I lived in North Little Rock, Ark., and that (racial slurs) happened quite a bit..I’ve been called that before, but I didn’t think it would happen here.”*

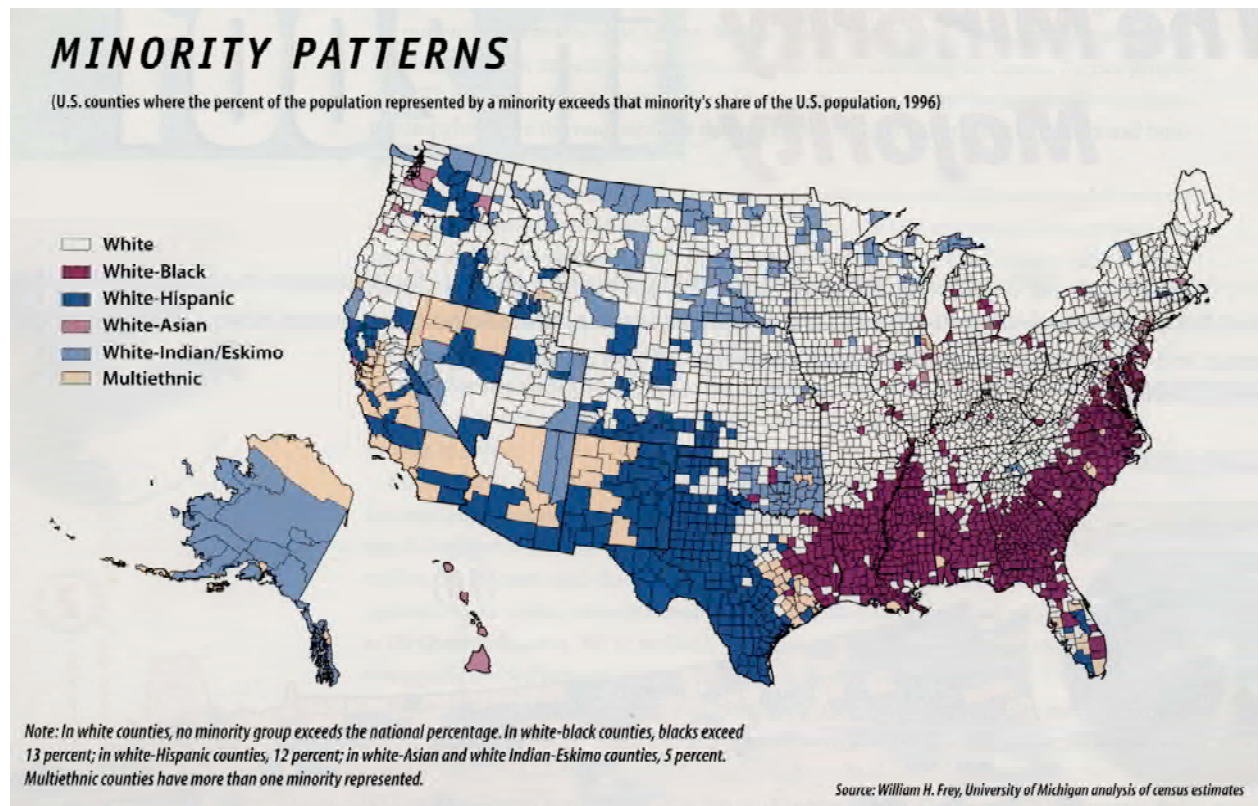
-Basketball Player Darrell Ricks (CDT 19 Feb. 1989)

Other universities in other regions of the country have experienced black protests similar to those at Penn State, yet the situation in Pennsylvania may be somewhat more extreme due to its peculiar demographics. An examination of Census 2000 ([www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov) and <http://pasdc.hbg.psu.edu>) shows statistics that distinguish Pennsylvania from other states. In comparison with other areas, Pennsylvania has an aged population and lacks diversity and integration of different ethnic groups. Consider the following statistics:

- Pennsylvania has the second highest elderly population in the country (by percentage, over 65 years of age) Only Florida has a higher proportion of elderly citizens (<http://pasdc.hbg.psu.edu>).
- 88.5 % of Pennsylvania's population is White, 9.2% is black, 2% Hispanic, and 1.4% represent all other groups. This statistic may also be misleading due to the fact that the majority of the blacks in the state come from three congressional districts in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, showing high levels of segregation in the state (<http://pasdc.hbg.psu.edu>).
- "Pennsylvania continues to rank among the most segregated for black students. In 1998-1999, nearly half the state's black students attended schools composed entirely or almost entirely of minorities. Pennsylvania ranked sixth among states on this measure of segregation (Pittsburgh Post Gazette 18 July 2001).
- Pennsylvania has more people living in rural areas than any other state, based on sheer numbers, and not percentage (<http://pasdc.hbg.psu.edu>).
- Pennsylvania ranks dead last of all fifty states in terms of enrollment rates of children in grades K-12 (<http://pasdc.hbg.psu.edu>).

This combination of statistics is alarming for the consequences they may have on race relations within the state. Pennsylvania also has more hate groups than any other state (Framework to Foster Diversity 1998, 4). This makes sense given the demographics listed above. The older population which suggests a lack of new ideas as a mediating social factor and may reinforce antiquated views about race. Vast rural areas and segregation within the state prevent groups from interacting with each other, continuing stereotypes that feed on ignorance. Education would be a most powerful weapon to combat ignorance, yet the low level of primary school enrollment is certainly an obstacle to changing people's attitudes. These demographics likely contribute to an overall unwelcoming climate for minorities in Pennsylvania. With this in mind, consider the fact

that nearly 80% of University Park students hail from within the borders of Pennsylvania (Penn State Factbook, 2000).



Even on a national level, minorities are not evenly distributed (American Demographics 1998)

### Geographic Location of Penn State: In the “Centre” of it All

*“Centre County, and Penn State particular, is a very white place-not just in a demographic makeup, but also in many other ways. For example, how many exclusively black hair salons in State College can you name? How many black radio stations? It’s examples like these that always made me feel like my needs were being ignored. And when that happens, you can’t help but feel like an outsider.”*

- Megan Carvallo, African-American alumnus ([CDT](#) 29 Apr. 2001)

Centre County, home to Penn State’s University Park campus, is located in the middle of the state, a three-hour drive from either Philadelphia or Pittsburgh. The campus

is nestled in “Happy Valley,” far from any urban area. This has at least three important consequences for minority students. The first is that the local community is ill-equipped to handle minority needs. For example, black students may have a harder time finding even the simplest of conveniences, such as black hair-care products, or darker shades of stockings. Many black students point out that the local music stores don’t carry many black artists, and that local radio does not reflect their culture or musical preferences. In fact, one of the smaller, but serious demands presented by CAAPS in 1988 was a concert by an African-American artist. While these may seem trivial issues, “little things” add up to and contribute to the feeling of alienation felt by many black students in State College.

Another problem generated by the rural location of University Park is that “urban problems” may not be seen as urgent. Several times during the demonstrations in 2000-01, black students referred to “the state of the black community,” referring to the higher rates of drug use, AIDS, crime, and poverty that are found in many inner-city black communities. The students voiced concern that Penn State’s rural isolation bred an out-of-sight, out-of-mind atmosphere.

Finally, and perhaps most obvious, the rural location and primarily white population of Centre County make many minority students stand out in ways that are discomfiting. The majority of the local shopkeepers and workers are white, representing the population of the county. The staff positions at the university, drawn from this same population, creates a predominantly white labor force of custodians, food service workers, and secretaries.

The community of Centre County has historically had little experience with members of other racial and ethnic groups. “They had never seen a colored woman



before,” said Mildred Bunton, about the children in State College when she arrived in 1929. They referred to her, she said, as “the woman on the box” after the image of Aunt Jemima on syrup labels (The Penn Stater 1989). In 2001, local residents certainly have more exposure to members of other racial and ethnic groups. However, this does not ensure personal relationships and friendships across racial lines. When people don’t have personal experience to draw from, they often form their opinions based on what others around them say, or from what they see in the media, on television, or in the movies, which often portray minorities in stereotypical roles.

Because the average black student comes from a high school where minorities are over-represented (Watkins 2001, 3), the shift to such a rural location, where only 4% of the student body, and even less of the permanent residential population, is black, is often overwhelming. While some black students are habituated to being in such a small minority, many find the transition quite shocking.

### **Failure to Understand Black Alienation**

*“I think that the real needs and desires of the students are perhaps not what are in those demands, anyway. What they really want is affirmation, encouragement, support, recognition, opportunities for achievement, upward mobility, hope and elimination of despair, credit for what they do and those kinds of things. The issue is that we still have discrimination. We have to look at the demands as symptomatic of something much deeper. If we’re only acting on those demands, we’re missing the real point.”*

-Suzanne Brooks, head of Penn State’s Affirmative Action Office (The Penn Stater July/Aug 1989)

Perhaps the most important cause of the recurring black protests is the community’s failure to understand the alienation felt by black students on a majority

white campus. Throughout the past four decades, many letters that have been exchanged through the venue of The Daily Collegian suggest deep misperceptions among white and black students concerning the racial climate on campus. The attitude of “it’s not that bad” frequently appeared in letters by white students, which were quickly countered by “you just don’t understand!” in letters by minority students. In fact, the latter may be correct. White students and administrators often fail to understand racism and alienation felt by students of color simply because they are not exposed to it. Consider the following national statistics:

- The average white student attends a school that is 81.2% white, the average black student attends a school that is 54.4% black and 32.6% white, and the average Latino student attends a school that is 52.5% Latino, and 29.9% white”(Watkins 2001, 3).
- Nationally, about one third of African American and Latino students attend schools that are 90-100% minority (Watkins 2001, 3).
- Black student enrollment in majority white [primary] schools peaked during the 1980’s but retreated to 1960’s levels during the 1990’s (Watkins 2001, 3).
- "Segregated minority schools are almost always impoverished schools, said Gary Orfield of the Harvard Civil Rights Project. “They're profoundly unequal in almost every dimension. ... That is a huge educational problem" (Pittsburgh Post Gazette 18 Jul. 2001).
- The National Assessment of Educational Progress...reveals that the average black seventeen-year-old is four years behind his white counterpart in math, reading, and science (The Economist 10 Mar. 2001).

Despite gains in made in the Civil Rights movement, our society continues to exist in racially segregated patterns of housing and education. The effects of such segregation on college students may be a failure to communicate across racial and ethnic lines. Fletcher A. Blanchard discusses this phenomenon in a May 13, 1992 article

published in the Chronicle of Higher Education entitled “Combating Intentional Bigotry and Inadvertently Racist Acts:”

“Few white college students have grown up in integrated neighborhoods, attended public schools with integrated classrooms, or observed their parents interact in a friendly manner with people of color. Even fewer white students entering college today have had the chance to learn from black teachers, work for black employers, or participate in voluntary activities and organizations where the adult leaders, coaches, or advisers were black. America’s campuses constitute the first multi-racial social setting encountered by many young people....As a result, few of the many whites who have reached an honest commitment to egalitarian values have had the opportunity to acquire the full range of interpersonal skills, sensibilities, and knowledge that might allow them to fulfill that commitment. Few, for example have vicariously experienced the pain felt by a friend who has suffered racial harassment. Few have discovered the ways that everyday language may communicate disrespect for a particular group.”

This lack of understanding based on lack of experience may lead to many small actions and comments that are perhaps often non-intentional, but may be interpreted by minority students as hurtful, discriminatory, or even purposeful.

### **It Goes Both Ways**

*“I often think for a white person to understand what it like for a minority to live in State College, he should live in Harlem.”*

-Jim Locker, Equal Employment Coordinator,  
College of Agriculture (CDT 22 Feb. 1989)

Another contributing factor to alienation felt by some black students is that the discrimination felt by minority students may not be understood by the larger white majority. Because of the fact that minority students are just that- the minority- they may be more likely to be on the receiving end of bigotry and insensitive comments. Even if

whites and people of color are equally prejudiced against each other, the distribution of insensitive and hurtful comments would fall disproportionately on the people of color.

Consider the following example, based loosely on one given in the Blanchard article:

Imagine a class composed of ten students, nine whites, and one black student, which is approximately the same ratio of whites to minority students that exists at University Park. All of the students consider themselves to be unprejudiced and committed to egalitarian values. However, due to subconscious discrimination, each person slips unknowingly and makes one racially insensitive comment per month. Because all of the comments made by white students fall on the single black person, that black person will end up receiving one of these insensitive comments every three days. In the reverse direction, the black student also makes one racially offensive remark each month. Assuming that the comments made by the black student are distributed evenly among the rest of the students in the class, each white person will receive an insensitive comment only once every nine months.

As this example illustrates, even if the two groups are equally prejudiced against each other, the magnitude of the effect of the comments is generally vastly different for whites than it is for minority students. If white people say “it’s not that bad,” they may not have a full understanding of the experiences of the minority students, for they may not experience it on the same level.

### **Cumulative Discrimination**

*“Being athletes, we don’t necessarily see racism the way they (the rest of the black students) do. ..Many of my friends who are black and not*

*athletes experienced it. One of my friends was called a racial name, and when that happens, I feel the exact same pain. If they call him nigger, they're calling me a nigger, too."*

- Chris Thorpe, PSU football player (CDT 19 Feb. 1989)

In addition to the pain and hurt caused by individual comments, each experience with racism and discrimination affects the larger African-American community as well. "The cumulative impact of these instances of discrimination is often very distressful and damaging," explains Joe Feagin in The Agony of Education: Black Students at White Colleges and Universities (1996). He goes on to say:

"Typically, a black victim of discrimination communicates the incident to family and friends, and the pain of the incidents is passed along to a larger social group. Moreover, the negative effects of present discriminatory incidents are enhanced because they are laden with individual and group memories of centuries of racial oppression, which include accounts of lynchings and other anti-black brutality and violence" (23).

Therefore, the pain of incidents that some black students at Penn State have experienced is communicated to the larger community. Because the African-American community at Penn State University Park is so small, less than 4% of the student body, these accounts of discrimination stay concentrated among this population, intensifying their effects. If this pain is not communicated to white students as well, then white students may downplay the importance of instances of discrimination, citing them as individual "isolated" events and stating that black students are "overreacting." To black students, these individual experiences add up, and the cumulative discrimination causes them to see a much larger problem.

The difference between black and white students' perspectives of the racism and its severity contribute to the alienation felt by many black students on campus. The level

of this alienation may be influenced by events happening at Penn State, and in the nation as a whole. Such feelings of marginalization, when coupled with several blatant acts of overt racism, such as death threats, are a major cause of the onset of black student protests.

### **Obstacle to Progress: Band-Aid Solutions**

*“As long as we do things in a band-aid way that doesn’t fundamentally retrain the mass of students who come through here, then we are not meeting our responsibilities as an institution of higher education looking toward the 21st Century”*

-Jim Stewart Professor of Industrial and Labor Relations  
(The Penn Stater July/August 1989)

*“If we tell ourselves that the only problem is hate, we avoid facing the reality that it is mostly nice, non-hating people who perpetuate racial inequality.”*

-Ellie Close, 1997

“Racist” has become a buzz-word in today’s society. Many consider it to be a high form of insult, and are quick to deny any accusations of racism. “When you say someone’s a racist,” said Terrell Jones, current Vice-Provost for Educational Equity, “most whites probably see crosses burning and white sheets, when that’s not what that term means” (CDT Feb 27, 1989). In her book, Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria, Beverly Tatum offers a definition of racism as “a system of advantage based on race.” She goes on to explain, “Whites defend their racial advantage- access to better schools, housing, jobs- even when they do not embrace overtly prejudicial thinking. Racism cannot be fully explained as an expression of prejudice alone” (1997, 7).

When blatant forms of racism occur, such as black students receiving hate mail, or swastikas carved into doors, many community members are anxious to speak out. It is



easy to condemn overt racism with buttons and bows, marches and speeches. In 1989, State College residents, students, and administrators wore yellow ribbons “to denounce racism” (CDT 24 Feb. 1989). In 2001, the University distributed “No Hate at Penn State” buttons on campus. Speaking out against the death threats and racially motivated violence is certainly important to support the victims and show solidarity, but such action might also be evading a larger issue- that of institutional, or subtle racism. When people put on that ribbon, or that button, the idea behind it is “I oppose racism. I will not tolerate racism.” This also implies the thought that “I am not racist.” However, many of us act in ways, often unintentionally, that carry race-based stereotypes and consequences. Racism, intentional or not, explicitly recognized or not, nonetheless is a common characteristic of the American Society.

“It doesn’t take a death threat or a nasty e-mail to get the feeling that you are you are unwelcome,” says Megan Carvalho, an African-American alumnus of Penn State. “Sometimes a single expression can make a person feel as if they don’t belong” (CDT 29 Apr. 2001). It isn’t always intentional. If this is true, than many of us may be perpetrators of racism without recognizing it. In fact, many people will quickly defend their actions to prove that they are not racist. “I have plenty of black friends,” or, “my cousins are half black” are common expressions that came up during several of the university sponsored race forums and meetings with the administration. “People say ‘I’m not prejudiced, but my parents are,’” noted Terrell Jones, the current Vice Provost for Educational Equity. “So I ask them, ‘Did you grow up in a jar, or did you grow up with your parents?’ What makes you think that you didn’t pick any of that up?” (CDT 27 Apr. 1989).

Few people have the self-awareness, much less the courage to admit that they may be guilty of having racist thoughts, which is the first and most important step towards curing “the disease of racism.” As long as we focus only on the overt racism, we dodge any possibility of guilt. Someone might think, “As long as I didn’t write that hate letter, then I did nothing wrong.” The ribbons then represent a condemnation of others’ action, and not our own. Wearing the “No Hate at Penn State” button may be seen as a convenient way of “taking action” against racism without critically reflecting on our own thoughts and behaviors.

When announcing the Yellow Ribbon Campaign in 1989, State College Mayor Arnold Addison proclaimed, “We must work hard to reject the labeling of State College as a racist community” (CDT 24 Feb. 1989). Unfortunately, denying that racism exists in this small town does not allow the problem to be solved. Racism is a wound that needs to be exposed in order to heal. To cure racism, we must learn to recognize it and talk about it. Wearing ribbons and actively promoting State College as a non-racist community is truly a band-aid solution, because it covers up the strong evidence that racism exists here. Many events involving discrimination occur every day, even if they do not make headlines.

The testimonies given by black students in 2001 show that many students feel discriminated against in this community, in stores, at their jobs, in the dorms and in the classrooms. Other instances of racism also suggest a pattern of intolerance. Even at the middle and elementary schools, minority children face harassment. “He has been called nigger by his classmates, who repeatedly tell him that he is inferior,” said Terrell Jones of his then eight-year-old son (CDT 18 Feb. 1989). In 1989, a “racially derogatory word”

was written on the locker of a black student at one of State College's public schools (CDT 24 Feb. 1989). In the mid 1970's, when African-American Richard Payton joined the State College Police Force, "There was some name-calling. There were even officers who told racial jokes, caught themselves, and apologized. It took them a while to make the adjustment" (CDT 18 Feb. 1989). Since then, progress has been made, but the attitudes have not completely disappeared.

As of August, 2001, there still exists a group at yahoo.com with the name "PSU Racists" with a description listed as "fighting diversity" (<http://clubs.yahoo.com/pennstateracists>). Only three people are registered for the group, which have links to white supremacy groups such as the World Church of the Creator, and the band "Angry Aryans." This is certainly a minority, extremist group, but it is a notable one. Extreme views often exist in milder forms as well.

When people are quick to claim that Penn State is not a racist community, they are ignoring the many cases of both extreme, overt racism, and subtler institutional racism that have occurred, and are occurring, here. Passing these examples off as "isolated incidents" perpetrated by a small minority ignores the symptoms of racist attitudes in other areas of the community. Failure to recognize racism in State College as a chronic problem may be a barrier to correcting these views and making progress.

### **Signed Documents: A False Relief**

*"Once the protesting stops, it will be forgotten again until the next incident"*

- Arlena Levy 1989 (The Daily Collegian 18 Feb. 1979)

*“Most of the history of diversity initiatives at Penn State, as at other colleges and universities, has been shaped by experiences with legal mandates prohibiting discrimination and policies promoting equal opportunity.”*

-Framework to Foster Diversity 1998, p.8

Each of the major black student protests at Penn State involved the University signing a list of demands. While the signed document is often seen as an accomplishment, or a resolution, it may act as a false sense of relief. The signing of an agreement to fulfill certain demands does not necessarily guarantee that the demands will be fulfilled, or at least in the way black students intended them to be. How the demands will be fulfilled depends on the administration's reasons for signing them in the first place. If the demands were signed as an attempt to put an end to a public relations nightmare, or simply to avoid the possibility of losing state funding, then the commitment to solving the problems put forth by black students is a weak one. If, however, the demands were signed out of a sincere belief that the demands are justified and should be fulfilled, then the results will be more effective.

The effectiveness of the university's agreements may also be related to how administrators and faculty view the black protestors. Are they a group of troublemakers to be grouped together with the State College rioters, or are they concerned students with legitimate concerns? If the answer is the former, then the demands will not be taken seriously. However, truly seeing the concerns of African-American students as legitimate requires a substantial background in history and/or sociology, which not all administrators have. According to the Framework to Foster Diversity,

“Information from the recent Faculty Staff Survey reveals gross misunderstandings about the thrust of Penn State's diversity initiatives. Specifically, the results suggest that many employees believe falsely that persons

belonging to the categories listed in the nondiscrimination statement are differentially rewarded simply for their demographic characteristics. Such misunderstandings clearly provide potential fuel for hostility and non-acceptance of individuals from nontraditional backgrounds in the workplace” (1998, 8).

Many of these faculty members sit on the Faculty Senate, which is responsible for approving the changes to the curriculum, such as the diversity requirements. If the people in charge of such decisions do not have a clear understanding of the black students’ position, and reasons for their protest, then change will most likely be slow to occur, if it does at all.

### **Institutionalizing Change**

The formation of short term committees may help solve some problems in the short run. However, if these groups and programs are not institutionalized and made permanent, they will most likely dissolve when there is not such urgent pressure, or when tensions subside.

In the several years following the 1988-89 demonstrations, black students met regularly with administrators to discuss implementation of the student demands. These lines of communication were based on personal relationships rather than a formal process. As students graduated, some of those channels were lost. Continuous communication between students and the administrators is key to finding workable solutions to problems with the racial climate in the community. If younger students are not involved in the process, and if the committees are not made permanent, then the momentum for change may be lost.

### **The University: In a Tight Position?**

In terms of addressing these issues, the administration finds itself in a difficult position. While they do have responsibilities of “providing a welcoming campus climate”

and addressing problems of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the university must also consider fiscal responsibilities as well. The University is under pressure from the State Legislature, and civil rights groups, and a portion of the student body to increase diversity initiatives. On the other hand, there are other students and alumni that do not support such initiatives. The university also has responsibilities to its monetary donors. Penn State receives more research funding from private industry- \$68.5 million in fiscal 1999- than any other public university in the nation (“Penn State: Making the Grade” Fall 2000). Twenty percent of the university’s income budget comes from “restricted funds,” including alumni gifts, research grants and contracts from government and private sources. (“How Penn State Is Funded” 2000-01). Pressure from these groups, as well as other state legislators may not support diversity initiatives for a variety of reasons. Investing research dollars into investigating problems facing the African-American community may not be seen as a top priority for all groups, especially those who do not fully understand these issues. Pressure from such groups, many of whom make large financial contributions to the University, puts the administration in a tight position. In the end, to quote a picket sign from the 1960’s, “it’s a matter of priorities”. And, as it says in the Framework to Foster Diversity, “the values and goals found in the Framework should rest at the core of all future planning for the institution” (1998, 1).



## PART IV: SOLUTIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS

### What Can Be Done?

*“The University must recognize it is not dealing with a host of irrational black student protests aimed at ‘getting whitey.’ Their protests are concerned with economic oppression, loss of identity, poverty, hunger and racism. The goal of black students is not the physical destruction of a university building, but the construction of service and liberation to their Black Brothers and Sisters.”*

-Dr. Edward L. Mattill, Head of the Presidential Task Force to suggest solutions to the Black Protests of 1968-69 (CDT Feb 28, 1970)

No, this is not a misprint. This quote has been repeated because of its importance. One of the largest conflicts or misunderstandings that I perceived this past year was that some members of the administration and student body saw the black protestors as troublemakers who were simply trying to get attention. Hopefully, this paper has shown that this was not the case. The Black student protestors saw themselves as freedom fighters, defending the rights of, and liberating, a long-oppressed community. If administrators failed to see this, then any solutions proposed may be futile.

“We must never accept the notion that Afro-Americans are inferior,” says Dr. Julia Wells, the coordinator for South Carolina’s Higher Education Desegregation Plan (Myers ed. 1989, 37). This was the first of seven strategies she lists for combating racism in higher education. “The greatest obstacle to overcome race prejudice would be the acceptance of blacks of second class or inferior status...We must never “adjust” to racism or permit black youth to benignly tolerate racist treatment.” The other six strategies are summarized as follows:

- Identify activities and programs, including recruitment efforts that have worked in the past and take steps to “institutionalize” these practices.

- Continue efforts to recruit and retain black faculty.
- Continue financial aid programs to ensure support for students who need aid to continue their college studies.
- Desegregation activities and projects at other universities should be summarized, evaluated, and disseminated to other institutions so that successful projects may be replicated.
- Encourage and provide support for research projects that address educational problems affecting black racial progress in America. “The results might be expected to provide models for coping with new forms of racism (on-campus racial incidents, workplace racial harassment, deprivation of economic advantages based on race, etc) that face this generation of Americans.
- Establish effective networks and mentoring relationships among ourselves and others “to insure that the idealism envisioned in the concept of racial equality will prevail, and indeed, be implemented to the highest extent possible.”

While this list serves as a good starting point for action to be taken, there is no “bulleted list” that will cure racism, or prevent further black protest from occurring. The issue is deep-rooted and complex and cannot be resolved in the final section of an undergraduate thesis.

In general terms, there needs to be a long-term commitment to finding solutions, and not simply a short-term reaction to an emergency situation. Many of the “solutions” implemented in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s are identical to those being suggested in 2001. Movies, special videos, freshman orientation activities, statements sent out by the president “encouraging civility,” extra training for the RA’s, diversity workshops for the administration, faculty, and staff- each has been done before. Each of these efforts appears to dwindle after a few years. Once the pressure diminishes, and the memories of highly visible black protests fall from the forefront of our minds, the initiatives fade.

Efforts to fight racism must be continued and made a top priority, *even without pressure from minority groups.*

Clear, permanent lines of communication must be established between leaders of minority student groups and the administration and faculty if we are to make real progress. These channels should not be based solely on individual relationships, but must be made permanent in nature, to ensure involvement of future generations of student leaders.

With this point in mind, I am reminded of a play that I saw recently entitled “Spinning Into Butter,” at the Pittsburgh Public Theater. The plot of the play was, fittingly, how the administration of a majority white college in rural New England handled the situation of a black student who received a series of hate letters. Throughout the play, I noticed many similarities between the play and what I had seen during the 2001 negotiations and in my interviews with administrators at Penn State. Most poignantly, there were no black characters. All of the decisions that were made concerning action to be taken was done without the input of those most affected. The fictional administration was too concerned with public relations spin and image to focus on listening. The play ends when a white administrator picks up the phone, calls the black student, and asks, “Do you want to talk?” In short, it is critical for the university to include the input of minority students and faculty when searching for solutions and implementation plans.

In 1989, Jim Stewart, professor of Labor and Industrial Relations said that “As long as we do things in a band-aid way that doesn’t fundamentally retrain the mass of

students who come through here, then we are not meeting our responsibilities as an institution of higher education.”

How can the university “retrain the mass of students” without using courses to do so? Fletcher Blanchard reaffirms this by saying

“Until college students bring with them from high school more extensive experience with interracial interaction, massive commitments to remedial education and training will be required to reduce the rate of unintentional harm caused by these “interracially incompetent” people....One-shot ‘workshops’ presented during first-year orientation probably will not be sufficient” (The Chronicle of Higher Education 13 May 1992).

Even if a mandatory race class is not seen as a viable option, at the very least, the current diversity requirement (a direct result of the 1988 protests) should be narrowed in scope. Perhaps a single course is not the answer, but rather an infusion of diversity and social justice issues in all areas of study. Clearly, there is a need to educate Penn State students about civility and tolerance. “I don’t think that they come filled with hate,” says President Graham Spanier. “What they come filled with is a lack of exposure, a lack of sensitivity, a lack of sophistication in human interaction, and we need to build on that” (CDT 29 Apr. 2001).

The University does require English and Speech Communications courses for all students, regardless of major. If these areas are deemed necessary to having a quality education, then why not a course dealing with oppression? Is it not as useful? What does making such courses “optional” say about its importance and priority? Liz Geyer, Director of Students of Color Campus Diversity Project at the United States Student Association points out, “When a University does not consider diversity and inclusion integral to a quality education, and therefore make them high priorities, it sets an example for white students on campus” (The Chronicle of Higher Education 27 Jul. 2001)

These suggestions are primarily for administrators and faculty members, but we must remember that everyone has agency to promote change. Each one of us has a role in improving the campus environment, and ending racism and discrimination. We must each find ways to get involved, even if it just means reflecting on our own behaviors and thoughts. Simply wearing a “No Hate at Penn State” button is not enough.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

This paper focuses specifically on the experiences of black students at Penn State a majority white institution. It would be useful to have similar information on the attitudes and experiences of other minority groups on campus, such as Asian, Latino, Native American students, or members of the LGBT community. It would be useful to study exactly how dealing with racism affects minority students, academically, physically, socially, and emotionally. It is not only minority students who suffer at the hands of racism and discrimination. Majority students, and administrators for that matter, are personally affected as well. While this paper, particularly the photographs, focused on the experiences of the students, it would be instructive to see more how the administrators involved have struggled with the issue.

### **Conclusion**

Black student protests at Penn State are hardly a random, isolated occurrence. Protests have occurred at the university with a predictable cycle of once-a-decade regularity since 1948. The timing of such disturbances is closely related to tensions of racial climate in town and on campus, as well as events happening nationally. Almost always when there were black protests going on at Penn State, there were similar protests

going on at other colleges and universities. The protests themselves are not isolated events.

Although an immediate spark of overt racism generally causes the onset of visible protests, the underlying reason for these disturbances is more complex goes much deeper. Institutional racism and inequalities in education, health, poverty, incarceration, and crime are driving forces.

Unfortunately, the university and the general student body tend to focus on the cases of overt racism- the death threats and physical violence. “Solutions” of monetary rewards, speeches, marches, and ribbon campaigns only address blatantly racist acts. They do not address the institutional racism that continues to perpetuate inequalities in our society. The fact that blacks continue to be worse off than whites in areas such as health care coverage and access to higher education cannot be blamed on death threats and hate mail. Institutional racism and historical disadvantages are causes. As long as the university does not address these issues through research and education, the problems will persist.

The consequences of racism affect the entire community, regardless of race or ethnicity. Pain and suffering are occurring on many levels. Students should be focusing on their studies, and not worrying about the diversity initiatives at their own university. All of this talent, energy, and potential could be focused elsewhere.

By 2050, “minorities” will be the majority of America’s population (American Demographics 1998). We must learn to get along and make efforts to understand each other and our differences. If we do not address this problem now, things will only get worse. The consequences of not taking action are illustrated through John T. Bigger’s



1954 painted mural “Day of the Harvest, Night of the Poor,” which hangs in the main lobby of the Burrowes building on campus.



A small portion of “Day of the Harvest” by John T. Biggers

In one panel, “Day of the Harvest,” people are working together and their bags are full with crops. “The singing is indicative of the well being of people whose happiness has been founded on the education and care they received,” says a description painted along the side. Across from this panel lies the painting “Night of the Poor.” “In this

mural, as contrasted to the mural on the other wall, the effect which lack of education has on people is depicted. It is shown by their inability to get along, their lack of cooperation and knowledge, which results in empty bags as the symbol of poverty, lack of knowledge, and starvation.”

Penn State is now at a crossroads. It has choices to make. Will it opt for diversity initiatives and courses that help the different groups on campus to understand each other? Will it follow through with promises for researching urban issues and racism? Will we be seeing a plentiful harvest, or famine among students hungry for civility and understanding? It is time to decide.

### **Post Script**

Throughout my experiences with the Black Caucus and writing this thesis, I have really had to reflect personally about my own experiences and beliefs concerning race. For the first time in my life, I was the minority. I was often the only white person in a room. In the beginning, this was extremely difficult for me. I never would have thought that I would have felt so uncomfortable. After all, I consider myself to be a relatively socially aware, adaptable person. I had taken SOC 119, Race and Ethnic Relations, and courses in African and African American Studies. My cousins are bi-racial. It didn't matter. I was not as "aware" as I thought I was.

I don't know how many times I just wanted to go home, and forget about everything that I was seeing. I knew that I had the luxury of doing so. But, because I knew I could walk away from it, and I knew that the black students in that room could not, I felt that I could not leave.

At times, I really struggled with my whiteness. I did not know where my place was in this issue. I ended up just observing, particularly through the lens of my camera. That was my refuge. I often felt that when I looked through my viewfinder, I was seeing things from a black perspective, which could be the closest I'll ever get to understanding what it is like to be black. I witnessed so much emotion and personal struggle- I was really touched by what I saw, particularly behind closed doors. Now that I look back on the year, I finally understand what my purpose was- to share what I saw with the world.

As time went on, I didn't always notice that I was a different color than everyone else. I had formed personal relationships with many people in the group, and the shade of my skin didn't seem to matter as much. It was only when new people came in, say the members of the NAACP, or the local churches, who didn't know me, that I felt judged by my skin color. They were suspicious of me. Each new group of people who came in, I felt as if I had to "prove" that it

was ok that I was there. I still will never know what it is like to be black, but I feel as if I had a little tiny taste of what it is like to be in the minority. It was very taxing, physically and emotionally.

Even worse was that I relived it all the time. Taking the photos, then poring over the negatives, and printing them was like watching a movie. All of the emotions came back to me. I had plenty of time to reflect on what I saw and experienced. What do I, an upper middle class white woman from suburban Pittsburgh have to do with racism and the university's diversity policies? Now as I sit here, I realize the answer. *Everything*. I, as a white person have everything to do with fighting racism.

Why aren't more white students attending those forums on race? Because we are not taught that we have a place in such a movement. We don't see how racism affects us, too. When we study the civil rights movement, who do we talk about? Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Rosa Parks. When we talk about fighting slavery, we talk about Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, and Harriet Tubman. I can recite these names at the drop of a hat, but I really have to sit and think to come up with any names of white people involved in the black liberation movement. No one ever taught me the names of the white people involved in the underground railroad, or the abolitionist movement, or the white martyrs of the civil rights movement.

As I struggled with this, one member of the Black Caucus sent me a little poem that has stuck with me. He said:

The fam doesn't consist of people of color,  
But spirits that have one color,  
A melanin like no other,  
Which is struggle in the name of GOD.

While I do not practice any particular religion, the message is clear. We are all human, part of a larger family that is not divided by race. We all have to stand up for each other, even

when the issue does not directly affect us. Such is the role of an ally. Now that I have learned what I have, I see that everyone has a role to play. We all have agency-we just have to uncover it.

Robin Hoecker      August 28, 2001

## **APPENDIX A: HISTORY OF BLACKS IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

One major aspect of the events that have taken place at Penn State is that they have not occurred in isolation, but were influenced by incidents taking place across the country. The history of Blacks in higher education, particularly the history of federal intervention in desegregating education reveals how the national context strongly affected the timing of events as they occurred at Penn State.

The history of public policy concerning Blacks in higher education can be broken down into five stages: Prohibition, Development, Segregation, Desegregation, and Enhancement (Myers, 1989).

### **Prohibition**

The first stage, Prohibition, refers to the pre-Civil War period in which most blacks were denied any formal education. Some states even went as far as to implement “ignorance laws”, forbidding slaves or their children to learn to read or write (Brown, 1997, 10). A strong motivation for creating such laws stemmed from the general fear of riots and uprisings, particularly among southern slave states, in which slaves often represented the majority of the population. According to Dr. Samuel L. Myers, the president of the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education, “The obsession to deny education to slaves indirectly and implicitly indicated a recognition by the power structure of the contributions education could potentially make to the advancement of a people” (Myers 1989, 2). At this time, less than 5% of the 4.5 million Americans of African descent were literate. On the eve of the Civil War, only 28 Blacks



had received baccalaureate degrees from American colleges or universities (Brown 1997, 10).

### **Development (1865-1896)**

The end of the Civil War and the beginning of Reconstruction brought many new opportunities to Blacks, as well as poor Whites. “This was a period of active development and promotion of education for Blacks. The Freedman’s Bureau, religious organizations, philanthropists and even newly freed slaves themselves actively established schools for Blacks and promote education for Blacks” (Myers1989, 2). As a result, public schools were established across the country, an important step towards providing access to education for Blacks and poor Whites. It was during this period that many of the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU’s), such as Alcorn State University in Mississippi, or Lincoln University in Missouri. However, many of these new schools originally focused on providing rudimentary and industrial skills to Blacks. Also, the implementation of Jim Crow practices prevented many Blacks from receiving a quality education. “By 1915, five decades after the genesis of Black higher education, only 2,600 Black students in 33 Black institutions engaged in college level work” (Brown 1997, 11).

### **Segregation**

The period of segregation is most often associated with the court case of Plessy vs. Ferguson, which established the notion of “separate but equal” facilities for Whites and Blacks. From this point on, “...in every aspect of public life, from public utilities to public colleges, separation of the races was rigidly enforced but the requirement of equal

treatment was universally violated” (Myers 1989, 2). The Second Morrill Act of 1890 had also supported this notion of separate but equal with regards to public higher education. The First Morrill Act, passed by Congress in 1862, provided funding for public universities "where the leading object shall be, without excluding scientific and classical studies... to teach agriculture and the mechanic arts [engineering]... in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in all the pursuits and professions of life." These universities came to be known as land-grant institutions.

However the first Morrill Act failed to reach the black community, leading to the passage of the second act nearly thirty years later (Raffel 1998, 172). The Second Morrill Act included a clause that specifically prohibited funding public institutions that discriminated against blacks, or which did not provide equal facilities for blacks. This led to states creating a dualistic system of public land grant institutions, with separate facilities for whites and blacks. The following is a listing of parallel land-grant colleges and universities in those nineteen states (Brown 1997, 12).

Alabama:	Auburn University [white] Alabama A & M University [black]
Arkansas:	University of Arkansas-Fayetteville [w] University of Arkansas- Pine Bluff [b]
Delaware:	University of Delaware [w] Delaware State College [b]
Florida:	University of Florida [w] Florida A & M University [b]
Georgia:	University of Georgia [w] Fort Valley State College [b]
Kentucky:	University of Kentucky [w] Kentucky State University [b]
Louisiana:	Louisiana State A & M University [w] Southern University- Baton Rouge [b]
Maryland	University of Maryland- College Park [w] University of Maryland- Eastern Shore [b]
Mississippi:	Mississippi State University [w]

Missouri	Alcorn State University [b] University of Missouri [w] Lincoln University [b]
N. Carolina	North Carolina State University [w] North Carolina A &T University [b]
Ohio:	Ohio State University [w] NONE*
Oklahoma:	Oklahoma State University [w] Langston University [b]
PENNSYLVANIA	PENN STATE UNIVERSITY [w] NONE**
South Carolina	Clemson University [w] South Carolina State University [b]
Tennessee:	University of Tennessee- Knoxville [w] Tennessee State University [b]
Texas:	Texas A & M University [w] Prairie View A & M University [b]
Virginia:	Virginia Polytechnic Inst. [w] Virginia State University [b]
West Virginia:	West Virginia State University [w] West Virginia State College [b]

\* Originally, there was no designation for black students; however, land-grant funds would eventually be given to Central State University.

\*\*Originally there was no designation for black students; however, land-grant funds would eventually be given to Lincoln University (PA)

However, these “parallel” black institutions “lacked control of both their curriculum and administration. The majority of these institutions had white presidents, white institutional boards of trustees or regents, not to mention white legislatures who parsimoniously doled out their institutional funding” (Brown 1997, 14). A dual system of segregated education was formed with “Arts and Sciences for the Caucasians, and industrial and vocational training for African Americans” (Brown 1997, 12). The idea of separate but equal did not hold.

### **Desegregation**

The landmark decision in the 1954 case of *Brown vs. the Board of Education* officially overturned the *Plessy vs. Ferguson* verdict, declaring *de jure* (or enforced by law) school segregation unconstitutional (Raffel 1998, 30). According to the US Supreme Court, “in the field of public education, ‘separate but equal’ has no place” (Raffel 1998, 33). “The policy of separating the races,” the court stated, “is usually interpreted as denoting the inferiority of the Negro group. A sense of inferiority affects the motivation of a child to learn and...may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely to be undone.” This verdict led to the controversial policy of busing of public primary schools, but did not immediately affect higher education.

On July 2, 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act, aimed to eliminate discrimination against blacks and other ethnic minorities through ending Jim Crow practices and guaranteeing access to public accommodations such as hotels, motels, restaurants, and places of amusement (Raffel 1998, 49). Title VI of the act specifically stated, “No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, or be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance” (Brown 1997, 19). In other words, the federal government was granted the power to withhold funds from institutions that practiced discrimination and segregation. This clause covered most public schools and colleges as well as many private institutions of higher learning (Raffel 1998, 50).

However, “the meanings of discrimination, desegregation, or compliance were not even explored in the legislative evolution of Title VI. The lack of these definitions would lead to years of capricious policy enforcement” (Brown 1997, 19).

Out of the 1964 Civil Rights Act came the Office of Civil Rights (OCR), which was housed in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW). The purpose of the organization was to enforce the statutes given in the 1964 Civil Rights Act, as well as subsequent Civil Rights legislation. In 1969, Leon Panetta, director of the Office of Civil Rights sent out letters to ten states found to be “maintaining segregation of higher education,” which was a direct violation of 1964 Civil Rights Act. The ten states were Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, [Pennsylvania](#), and Virginia (Brown 1997, 3). However, the newly elected Nixon administration did not strictly enforce these desegregation mandates or the Civil Rights act of 1964, but favored “voluntary compliance” (Raffel 1998, 4).

Claiming that the federal government was “failing to properly enforce Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act,” the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) filed suit in 1970 against the Secretary of HEW, Elliot Richardson. In 1972, a Federal District Court Judge John H. Pratt ruled that the HEW was guilty of “benign neglect,” undermining the 1964 Civil Rights Act (Raffel 1998, 5). HEW appealed to the US court of Appeals, but the decision was upheld. Unfortunately, the decision failed to establish clear guidelines for acceptable desegregation, so the problem lingered on. In 1977, Judge Pratt found six states to be guilty of noncompliance with the desegregation mandates. The Adams case dragged on until 1987, when Judge Pratt dismissed the case. The ruling was overturned later that year, but was finally dismissed in 1990 (Raffel 1998, 5). The enforcement of Title VI would be left to individual states. “The Adams dismissal was a very big setback, because only in those states where there was a true commitment to find ways to desegregate and where the pressure at the local

level remained constant, did some semblance of a desegregation effort remain” (Brown 1997, 56).

### **Enhancement and Integration**

Despite the dismissal of the *Adams* case, the issue of desegregation reappeared in the Supreme Court again in 1992 in *The United States vs. Fordice*. This case dealt with continuing segregationist policies in Mississippi and the systematic under-funding of the state’s historically Black institutions. The outcome of the case was that the state must continue to make efforts to end all vestiges of de jure segregation policies. The court rejected the idea that race-neutral policies would be enough to accomplish this (Raffel 1998, 263). In 1994, the Department of Education indicated that the *Fordice* decision would be used to evaluate desegregation compliance in the remaining six states that had expired desegregation plans. The six states were Florida, Kentucky, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Virginia.

However, as desegregation policies continued, many began to worry about taking desegregation to the extreme by shutting down public historically black colleges and universities. Rather than close these schools, as many black primary schools were after the *Brown* decision, courts decided to increase their funding.

As we enter the new millennium, this long-debated topic will surely come up again. Should HBCU’s be enhanced? Or is doing so simply re-enforcing segregation of higher education? Should these schools be forced to heavily recruit white students so to eliminate any form of racial identity of the school? What effect would this have on Blacks in higher education? Is affirmative action still acceptable? These questions and more are currently being debated in cases such as *Grutter v. Bollinger* concerning the



admissions policies at the University of Michigan. As the case goes through appeals, it may end up going as far as the Supreme Court, where the decision would set a precedent for all other colleges and universities, as well as other public institutions. Depending on the political mood of the country, and the political balance of the Supreme Court, the decision could mean an end to affirmative action policies. Students at the University of Michigan have staged huge demonstrations in support of affirmative action, even starting a Defend Affirmative Action Party of the schools student government. As the case moves further up the hierarchy of courts, the issue will become more intense as other institutions become involved in the fight. The final decision will strongly influence how the country will proceed to integrate blacks and other minorities into higher education.

## APPENDIX B: 2000-2001 Black Caucus Position Statement

We, the Black students of The Pennsylvania State University, strongly believe that the institution is failing to truly meet our academic, social, and professional needs. For decades, the students of African decent at this University have incessantly worked to present these issues to administration, propose feasible solutions, and cooperatively implement these changes. However, appropriate and effective response. WE, AS TUITION PAYING, HARD WORKING STUDENTS, ARE TIRED OF FEELING UNCOMFORTABLE AND DISRESPECTED BY AN ENVIRONMENT THAT CONTINUALLY PRIDES ITSELF ON FOSTERING A GREATER “DIVERSITIY OF PERSPECTIVES AND BACKGROUNDS AMONG STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND STAFF.”

In The Pennsylvania State University’s Mission, Values, Vision, and Strategic Goals, it states, “We believe that education is the foundation of an enlightened and prosperous society.” This statement serves to totally support our view of the function and purpose of education and educational institutions. It goes on to say that “the single most important key to opening the doors wider to all people is to create an environment in which everyone feels welcome.” However, we can hardly begin to characterize an environment where students can receive degrading letters and emails, death threats, and must contend with personal attacks on their physical safety, simply because of the color of their skin, as a welcoming environment. In fact, an environment such as Penn State’s is not only un-welcoming, it is unsafe.

In addition to these feelings of discomfort, we also believe that this institution has continually failed to commit to its stated mission in its “Framework to Foster Diversity.” This document clearly states:

“Education within a pluralistic society should affirm and help students understand *their home and community cultures*. However, it should also help free them from their cultural boundaries. To create and maintain a civic community that works for the common good, education in a democratic society should help students acquire *the knowledge, attitudes, and skill they will need to participate in civic action to make society more equitable and just.*”

As our Black communities continue to be most affected by the issues of poverty, education, health, incarceration, and self-governance, it is apparent that The Pennsylvania State University is failing to provide us with the necessary education to effectively combat this crisis. We are distraught with the fact that the one department, African and African American Studies, that was designed to strategically address these problems, is slowly being dissolved before our eyes. According to your mission, a curriculum that speaks to the direct needs of the Black community should and must be a priority of the institution.

As a credible research institute, this university has the resources and capabilities to lead the nation in producing individuals who are prepared to face the various issues that plague the Black community. This will bring about systemic and long lasting solutions that will attack the root of racism. THE BLACK STUDENTS AT THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY WILL NOT REST UNTIL THE UNIVERSITY GIVES SUBSTANCE TO ITS EMPTY RHETORIC.

## **APPENDIX C: QUOTES**

“If we tell ourselves that the only problem is hate, we avoid facing the reality that it is mostly nice, non-hating people who perpetuate racial inequality.”

-Ellie Close, 1997

“Today, racism is far more camouflaged than it was earlier in the century. It is buried in institutional practices. It is hidden in coded language and subtle messages some people get when they shop, or look for a place to live, or for a taxi, or have dealings with the police.

-Project hip-hop, 1997

“Most of us came here in chains and most of you came here to escape your chains. Your freedom was our slavery, and therein lies the bitter difference in the way we look at life.”

-John Oliver Killens, 1964

“The sins of the fathers are visited upon the heads of the children- but only if the children continue in the evil deeds of the fathers.”

- Eldridge Cleaver, 1968

“Many, perhaps most, of our white students in the United States think that racism doesn’t affect them because they are not people of color; they do not see “whiteness” as a racial identity.”

- Peggy McIntosh, 1988

“If we were to take joint responsibility for cleaning up the racial mess, we could search for creative solutions that expand opportunities for everyone.... In a very real sense, Black liberation holds the promise of White liberation as well.”

-Harlon L. Dalton, 1995

“True integration, unlike assimilation, is a two-way street. It involves cultural sharing, a genuine respect and interest in difference, not cultural submergence by one party to please another.”

-Clarence Page, 1996

“A vigorous enforcement of civil rights will bring about an end to segregated public facilities, but it cannot bring an end to fears, prejudice, pride, and irrationality, which are the barriers to a truly integrated society.”

-Martin Luther King Jr., 1967

“There are two sets of reasons for self-segregation. One is to be with people who are like you. The other is to get away from people who are not like you.”

- Clarence Page, 1998

“Racism is not easy to talk about in racially mixed company. It is often considered downright impolite to bring it up. Too many demons of guilt, resentment, and vulnerability are tied up in it. Unfortunately, it usually takes a racial eruption...to get Americans to acknowledge their racial differences in public and talk about them, at least for a while, before clamping the lid of denial back down.”

-Clarence Page, 1996

“Only about one half of one percent of the Penn State student body are Negroes. Forty students- and yet upon the welfare of this group rests the decision as to whether the basic lessons for this college’s

existence- to educate, to humanize, are established on firm grounds. If these students are discriminated against or dealt with unfairly, then these reasons are made a mockery.”

- Critique April, 1947

“As in so many past experiences, our hopes had been blasted, and the shadow of deep disappointment settled upon us. We had no alternative except to prepare for direct action, whereby we would present our very bodies as a means of laying our case before the conscience of the local and the national community.”

-Martin Luther King Jr.

”Letter From a Birmingham Jail” 1963

“We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed.”

-Martin Luther King, Jr.

“Letter From a Birmingham Jail” 1963

“For years now I have heard the word “Wait!” It rings in the ear of every Negro with piercing familiarity. This wait has almost always meant ‘never.’ We must come to see with one of our distinguished jurists that ‘justice too long delayed is justice denied.’”

-Martin Luther King, Jr.

“Letter From a Birmingham Jail” 1963

“The letter did not bring racism to Penn State- it was already here. It just seems when someone writes it down, people take notice.”

- La Keisha Wolf, CDT October 27, 2000

“We who engage in non-violent direct action are not the creators of tension. We merely bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive. We bring it out in the open, where it can be seen and dealt with. Like a boil that can never be cured so long as it is covered up but must be opened with all its ugliness to the natural medicines of air and light, injustice must be exposed, with all the tension its exposure creates, to the light of human conscience and the air of national opinion before it can be cured.”

-Martin Luther King, Jr.

“Letter From a Birmingham Jail” 1963

“Men stumble over the truth from time to time, but most pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing happened.”

-Sir Winston Churchill

“If a university is a business, it has no reason to be. If morality has no place in a university, then it is not a university, it is a vocational school.”

-Todd May, leader of Committee for Justice in South Africa, 1987

“If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet depreciate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning....Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did, and it never will.”

- Frederick Douglass 1857

“Once the protesting stops, it will be forgotten again until the next incident”

- Arlena Levy 1989 Collegian 18 Feb.1979

“Sure, Thomas Edison invented the light bulb, but a black man invented the filament.”

-Jeff Ballou, Black Caucus member CDT 26 Feb.1989

“As educators, we would be remiss if we merely condemned these acts without examining the attitudes and values that led up to them....until we realize that and engage in a proactive campaign to rid our society, and our university of racism and all the forces that seek to divide us, we will be caught in an endless cycle of treating symptoms rather than fighting the disease.”

-Terrell Jones, Vice Provost for Educational Equity Lion's Roar 14 Dec. 2000

“This is not a political issue. This is a human issue. Please don't give up, no matter how long this takes.”

- La Keisha Wolf, Collegian 27 Apr. 2001

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