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## "Save our Black schools": Examining North Carolina A&T student activism and challenges towards progressivism in the New South

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**“Save our Black schools”: Examining North Carolina A&T student activism and challenges towards progressivism in the New South**

by

**Malika Butler**

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major: Education

Program of Study Committee:  
Erin Doran, Co-major Professor  
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The student author, whose presentation of the scholarship herein was approved by the program of study committee, is solely responsible for the content of this dissertation. The Graduate College will ensure this dissertation is globally accessible and will not permit alterations after a degree is conferred.

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2020

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**ABSTRACT**

This dissertation challenges the perception of North Carolina as a racially progressive state by focusing on the experiences of Black student activists at HBCUs from the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s. While scholars have interrogated and critiqued North Carolina's racial progressivism, this work rarely centers the perspective of the state's Black higher education institutions. Examining the student protest movement at North Carolina A&T illustrates that the racial politics of both Greensboro and North Carolina were invested in Black residents remaining a second-class citizenry. The dissertation is structured as three stand-alone papers. Each is a piece of historical inquiry, grounded in archival research and situated in the scholarly literature. The first paper offers a brief history of NC A&T student protest movements from 1955-1973. The second paper spotlights the NC A&T/Dudley High school uprising of 1969. The third paper tells the process of desegregating the University of North Carolina university system through the lens of the historically Black NC A&T.

## CHAPTER 1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Originally, this dissertation was going to investigate if the socio-political cultures of HBCUs impacted students' attitudes, perceptions and beliefs about activism, and more specifically, radical activism. Additionally, a smaller argument I hoped to introduce was the dichotomous position of HBCUs as spaces of liberation and incubators for the Black radical imagination while also being forced into a subservient role that doesn't threaten the infrastructures of racism and white supremacy.<sup>1</sup> My hope was to introduce a framework that illustrated how HBCUs existed as physical spaces that promoted Afrofuturism—that HBCUs are spaces that reject the erasure of Black people's existence in the future. I structured my original dissertation idea as a historical comparative analysis between two public North Carolina HBCUs: North Carolina Central University (NCCU) and North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University (NC A&T). NCCU is a liberal arts institution founded by James E. Shepard in 1910 and NC A&T was founded in 1891 through the 2<sup>nd</sup> Morrill Act. Both institutions are members of the University North Carolina university system. Though NC A&T and NCCU are not representative of all HBCUs, HBCUs share a common historical narrative, purpose, and culture. With that in mind, the use of these two HBCUs was meant to provide a snapshot of the dynamics that occur at HBCUs.

As I began my work in the archives at the F.D. Bluford Library at NC A&T, I was taken in a completely different direction when Ms. Gloria Pitts, who was the librarian and archivist at the time, introduced me to the story of the 1969 NC A&T/Dudley High School student uprising.

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<sup>1</sup> On the Black radical imagination, see Robin D. G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon, 2002). Also influential on my thinking have been Patricia Hill Collins, *On Intellectual Activism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013) and Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).



Throughout my time in the archives, Ms. Pitts was a significant help and extraordinary resource. Learning about this story shocked me. When examining student protest literature of the 1960s, Kent State is often highlighted when discussing over policing and state sanctioned violence on college campuses. While a significant moment, the hyper-focus on Kent State has led to an erasure of similar events that occurred on HBCU campuses, including Jackson State University, Southern University New Orleans, South Carolina State University (known as the Orangeburg Massacre), and NC A&T. State sanctioned violence against student protestors at HBCUs is rarely explored and investigated. What makes the absence of these events particularly perplexing is that HBCUs are included in the student protest literature. Yet, even in this literature, the discussion is often minimal and told through the lens of only three events, though significant ones, the sit-in protests at Woolworth's in Greensboro in 1960, the founding of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) at Shaw University in 1960, and the Freedom Rides in 1961. NC A&T is included with the famously known A&T (Greensboro) Four— Jibreel Khazan (Ezell Blair Jr.), Franklin McCain, Joseph McNeil, and David Richmond—who spearheaded the Greensboro Woolworth's lunch counter sit in.<sup>2</sup>

### **The Problem Space**

Unlike the 1969 Dudley High School/NC A&T student uprising that led to a militarized siege of the NC A&T campus, the lunch counter sit-ins, which are frequently told as a narrative of racially conscious Whites changing policy because of peaceful Black protest, have been used

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<sup>2</sup> Christopher Schmidt, *The Sit-ins: Protest and Legal Change in the Civil Rights Era* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press); Christopher Schmidt, "Why the 1960 lunch counter sit-ins worked: A cast study of law and social movement mobilization," *Indiana Journal of Law and Social Equality* 5, no. 2 (2017): 280-300; Robert Rhoads, "Student Activism, Diversity, and the Struggle for a Just Society," *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education* 9, no. 3 (2016): 189;; Terry Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties: Protest in America from Greensboro to Wounded Knee* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995)

as a point of pride for Greensboro to showcase the city's perceived liberal and democratic position on the issue of race. Highlighting this event in Greensboro also plays into a larger narrative of North Carolina as a beacon of southern racial progressivism.<sup>3</sup> For instance, significant histories of upwardly mobile Black communities in Greensboro, Durham, and Wilmington have been used as examples of how White North Carolinians are racially harmonious.<sup>4</sup> Though these communities are used as markers of racial progress, these remarkable examples of Black enterprise had less to do with the perceived benevolence of White North Carolinians and more to do with the ambitious spirits of Black North Carolinians. Most importantly, these communities were still always under the watchful eye of White supremacy.

Racism in North Carolina had a highly sophisticated infrastructure. Though the state has often escaped the heavy criticisms of other Southern states, North Carolina still championed the same perverse practices that limited and impeded the quality of life for its Black residents. Yet, because of its ability to successfully shroud the harm of its Black residents, North Carolina's racism was often far more insidious. The Jim Crow South in North Carolina, for instance, was not always seen by outsiders, both White and Black, as part of the national narrative captured in archetypes like Bull Connor and George Wallace, horrifying and brutal displays of White vigilante violence and police brutality as captured in the national imagination in Alabama and Mississippi, and extremely gross representations of Black rural life. This projected narrative

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<sup>3</sup> William Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980)

<sup>4</sup> Oscar Williams, "Memories of Hayti: African American Community in Durham, North Carolina, 1890-1970," in Gayle Tate & Lewis Randolph (eds.), *The Black Urban Community: From Dusk Till Dawn* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006): 41-48; Leslie Brown, *Upbuilding Black Durham: Gender, Class, and Black Community Development in the Jim Crow South* (Chapel Hill; University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Agricultural & Mechanical College for the Colored Race, *Eighth Annual Catalogue of the Agricultural and Mechanical College for the Colored Race* (Greensboro: J.M. Reece & Co., Power Book and Job Printers, 1902-1903).

assumed that racism was exclusively overt displays of violent and brutish acts. This designation often allowed North Carolina to be absolved of the ways they encroached and infringed upon Black residents' quality of life. Though there was certainly racial violence in North Carolina, it was the legal and public policy maneuvers of the state that anchored White supremacy. This was especially apparent in the state's treatment of NC A&T. In this context, it is not surprising that the Dudley/NC A&T student uprising is not as recognizable as the A&T Four lunch counter sit-ins—it is not something the state sought to make public and celebrate.

### **Guiding Question**

Learning about the Dudley/NC A&T student uprising led me to want to complicate the narrative of North Carolina as a racially progressive state. In what ways has student activism at North Carolina's HBCU's, and at NC A&T in particular, challenged the image of North Carolina as racially progressive?

While other scholars have interrogated and critiqued North Carolina's racial progressivism, previous work rarely incorporated, much less centered, the perspective of the state's Black higher education institutions.<sup>5</sup> Further, because part of North Carolina's progressive moniker is largely attributed to the recognition of its perceived progressive educational policy, especially for Black North Carolinians, studying student movements at North Carolina's HBCUs seems all the more important for exploring the state's perceived racial progressivism. Dating back to the 1940s, V.O. Key Jr. championed this idea by expressing that unlike their other Southern counterparts, North Carolina was a much better location for Blacks and part of this was

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<sup>5</sup> Larry E. Tise & Jeffrey Crow, *New Voyages to Carolina: Reinterpreting North Carolina History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017); John E. Batchelor, *Race and Education in North Carolina: From Segregation to Desegregation* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2015)

attributed to the state's ability to educate everyone properly.<sup>6</sup> Key's assessment was partially true. Educational opportunity for Black Americans was accessible in North Carolina, especially since the state had the largest number of 4-year public HBCUs in the country: Fayetteville State University (1867), Elizabeth City State University (1891), NC A&T (1891), Winston-Salem State University (1892), and NCCU (1910). With a significant number of public HBCUs, one could assert that North Carolina was dedicated to creating some sort of equity between their Black and White residents which would again reinforce the narrative of being racially progressive. But with further analysis North Carolina, like other Southern states, did little to invest in the expansion and growth of its Black colleges. Examining the student protest movement at NC A&T illustrates that the racial politics of both Greensboro and North Carolina were invested in Black residents remaining a second-class citizenry. This dissertation thus adds depth and nuance to an understanding of how North Carolina was as grounded in White supremacy as other Southern states but was perceived by many as being far more racially progressive.

### **North Carolina A&T**

NC A&T was founded in 1891 as the Agricultural & Mechanical College for the Colored Race in Greensboro, North Carolina. Though North Carolina established A&T as an institution under the 1<sup>st</sup> Morrill Act, it did not receive its designation until the creation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Morrill Act. Originally A&T was housed in the basement of Shaw University but after receiving its land grant designation the school moved to Greensboro. Regardless of its land grant status, similar to other Southern states, North Carolina often neglected to properly fund A&T. Additionally the courses implemented at A&T placed a heavy emphasis on teaching, trade professions for men,

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<sup>6</sup> V.O. Key Jr., *Southern Politics in State and Nation*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949).

and domestic appointments for women. This was vastly different than the collegiate level courses developed at White land grant institutions.<sup>7</sup> This paternalism also subjugated the very Black communities that were highlighted to demonstrate North Carolina's racially progressive politics. For example, Leslie Brown's analysis of Durham's Black leaders and accomplished professionals demonstrates how they would forego antagonizing the structural racist and classed oppression of poor and working-class Black residents to ensure they could maintain their personal agendas. This was especially disconcerting because while this buffer class of professionals and leaders got to enjoy certain privileges and freedoms, they were still limited in their powers and it was always at the expense of remaining complicit in the exploitation of poor and working-class Black people. Most importantly this precarious position left all Black residents at the mercy of White "benevolence".<sup>8</sup> The history of student activism at NC A&T sits in this precarious space.

### **Interpretive Frames**

North Carolina's elected officials were often attorneys. This proficiency in understanding the law allowed the state to manipulate and alter the law so as to further exclude and undermine Black residents' fight for equality. William Chafe argues that North Carolina's racial infrastructure is rooted in paternalism and the maintenance of law and order through violence.

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<sup>7</sup> Yoruba T. Mutakabbir, "Beneficial, Yet Bittersweet: Historically Black Land-Grant Institutions," *Making Connections: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Cultural Diversity* 12 (2011): 35-41; Ralph D. Christy & Lionel Williamson (Eds.), *A Century of Service: Land-Grant Colleges and Universities, 1890-1990* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Frederick Humphries, "1890 Land-Grant Institutions: Their Struggle for Survival and Equality," *Agricultural History* 65, no.2 (1991): 3-11; Leedell, Neyland, *Historically Black Land-Grant Institutions and the Development of Agriculture and Home Economics, 1890-1990* (Washington, DC: X, 1990). Accessed: June 2, 2020; John Davis, "The Participation of Negro Land-Grant Colleges in Permanent Federal Education Funds," *Journal of Negro Education* 7, no. 3 (1938): 282-291.

<sup>8</sup> Brown, *Upbuilding Black Durham*.

Chafe refers to this paternalism as the velvet glove.<sup>9</sup> The velvet glove signified the “polite” sensibilities of the racial exchanges between Black and White residents. It also narrated a White benevolent Southern culture that was invested in the affairs of the Black community as a disguise for the dark paternalistic practices that stifled, undermined, and suppressed Black North Carolinians ability to experience the fullness of their rights as citizens and human beings. The narrative of the velvet glove often insulated North Carolina from the darker and heavier criticisms of other Southern state’s race relations but it also allowed the state to escape the moniker of being a brutally and aggressively violent state.

Though North Carolina’s main expression of promoting and perpetuating a segregated and racist infrastructure was through policy and legislation the state also used violence to control the masses of Black residents, which Chafe referred to as the iron fist. One of the most horrifying examples of this was the Wilmington Massacre of 1898, a coupe that resulted in the overthrowing of the republican controlled government and the disenfranchisement of Black residents. November 11, 1898 was a horrific event that led to the destruction of prosperous Black segments of town, a number of wounded Black residents, and several deaths. This event enforced a racial hierarchy and contributed greatly to the inequity experienced by Black Wilmington residents. This event also set a precedent for how the events of the Wilmington Ten unfolded during the 1970s.<sup>10</sup> Not commonly known is that during the 1960s, North Carolina had the

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<sup>9</sup> Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights*.

<sup>10</sup> Kenneth Robert Janken, *The Wilmington Ten: Violence, Injustice, and the Rise of Black Politics in the 1970s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Timothy B. Tyson & David S. Cecelski (Eds.), *Democracy Betrayed: The Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 and its Legacy* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); H. Leon Prather, *We Have Taken a City: Wilmington Racial Massacre and Coup of 1898* (Teakneck, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1984); Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights*, 2, f. 2.

largest Klan membership in the United States, and a larger number of members than all the other Southern states combined.<sup>11</sup>

Although state sanctioned and White vigilante violence was used in North Carolina's racial arsenal, North Carolinians recognized the importance of optics and were very much vested in maintaining a sophisticated system of racial hierarchy in order to imbue the perception that they were the New South. This was closely linked to outside business interests and a desire to expand the economy. The velvet glove and iron fist approach was effective—it allowed North Carolina to continue to enforce second class citizenship on Black residents while simultaneously celebrating its self as an outlier of the racist South.<sup>12</sup> This moniker as an outlier of the racist South was because of the carefully constructed image that North Carolina had created and aggressively worked to maintain by being more subdued in their use of violence, “allowing” segments of the Black community to flourish independently, and making the outside world believe that the state was investing, with progressive intentions, in Black higher education. However, when reviewing media and resources that are less invested in maintaining this imagery, such as Black owned newspapers, HBCU student newspapers, yearbooks and other resources the racial progressive narrative of North Carolina no longer exists and instead you find a state that looked no different than other states that were deeply invested in the continued oppression of its Black residents.

### **Archival Work**

The materials in the archives at NC A&T presented elements of Black life in North Carolina in a very different context than the mainstream historical narrative. I was able to

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<sup>11</sup> *Klansville, USA: The Rise and Fall of the Civil Rights-era Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>12</sup> Van R. Newkirk II, The Battle for North Carolina, *Atlantic*, October 27, 2016. Retrieved from: <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/10/the-battle-for-north-carolina/501257/>

excavate stories that had been forgotten, erased, and ignored. Additionally, names and community members who were not placed in history books but made significant impact were again remembered. NC A&T's archives helped me inquire into my broad question about student movements at HBCUs and ultimately focus on specific narratives, grounded in primary source materials, that became the three papers in this dissertation. Ms. Gloria Pitts, the librarian and archivist was a substantial resource. While she is a graduate of Howard University, she was a wealth of information about NC A&T. Her expertise provided me with an even deeper understanding of the relationship between A&T students and the East Greensboro community, how the campus of NC A&T was perceived by Greensboro residents, and smaller incidents that were not recorded that led to the Dudley/NCA&T student uprising or the organization of Save Our Black Schools. Ms. Pitts stories helped me see how primary sources, such as the mainstream city newspapers, the *Greensboro Record* and *Greensboro Daily News*, often excluded voices from the individuals that the events I examined directly impacted. Most importantly, the stories from the *Record* and *Daily News* often described the student movement from a detached and sometimes-critical position; rarely was context offered to provide insight on why situations occurred. Using the archives from an HBCU thus became important to me because not only would it highlight voices that are often pushed to the fringes of the literature, but it would also showcase the necessity of using these institutions as information centers and spaces that are just as invaluable of telling history as other institutions.

By not utilizing HBCU archives, we miss stories such as the Dudley/NC A&T student uprising, the focus of the second paper in the dissertation, or how NC A&T students and other HBCU students organized the coalition of Save Our Black Schools to combat some of the inequity created by segregation, which is discussed in the third paper. The use of Black



institutions as archival spaces adds voices that either have been erased, forgotten, or unknown to history. My time at NC A&T was invaluable because it helped me to construct my dissertation in a way that used the very voices that were undermined and ignored during the events that are highlighted. By centering the stories on the fringes, it does more than implicate North Carolina's brutal history of its Black residents—it also demonstrates the fight and resiliency of those residents, including NC A&T students. While the larger narrative of the paper is about deconstructing North Carolina's racial progressivism, it is also about bringing attention to the ways in which HBCUs (in this case, NC A&T) were not simply spaces of degree attainment but were freeing and radical spaces for Black students to imagine a world and existence beyond their current circumstances.

### **Personal Meaning in this Research**

While my position as a Black North Carolina resident finds conversations exploring the racial dynamics of the state fascinating, this particular history on HBCUs is deeply personal. I come from a line of HBCU graduates: my paternal great grandmother, both paternal grandparents, my mother and father, and my younger brother. They form a community along with other relatives and friends that boast the HBCU experience. Although college is a lot more accessible to Black Americans now, even though there is still work that needs to be done, at the time of my great grandmother's and grandparents' college attendance there were few options. HBCUs provided the opportunity for Black people to become college educated. The significance of HBCUs is not exclusive to this narrative alone. Even with the introduction of desegregation, for countless Black students that had endured trauma, harassment, and violence in their K-12 schooling experiences the choice to attend a HBCU was about being a part of an affirming space that celebrated, supported, and reminded them that they were fully capable.

As a Black educator, I am committed to protecting Black educational spaces and other Black institutions that celebrate, protect, and provide joy for Black people. My dissertation has been a labor of love and sometimes a point of contention. Holding the stories of my ancestors and elders before me, replaying the suffering they endured, being reminded of their dedication and commitment to justice has been overwhelming but exciting at the same time. Writing this dissertation has been cathartic. It has allowed me to be proud of the extraordinary strides not only of my family but the people of my community. It has also reminded me of the continued work that must be done to ensure Black children, and by extension, all children, are provided with educations that nurture not only their minds but also their spirits. The story of NC A&T students' activism is central to me highlighting how HBCUs are these very spaces.

### **Overview of the Dissertation**

The dissertation is structured as three stand-alone papers. Each is a piece of historical inquiry, grounded in archival research and situated in the scholarly literature. The first paper offers a brief history of NC A&T student protest movements from 1955-1973. The second paper spotlights the NC A&T/Dudley High school uprising of 1969. The third paper tells the process of desegregating the University of North Carolina university system through the lens of the historically Black NC A&T.

Paper one is a general historiography of the student protest movement at NC A&T during the peak of the Civil Rights Movement and the introduction of the Black Power Movement, 1955-1973. Although NC A&T is present in the broader student protest literature, this literature only highlights one particular event, which is the A&T Four (Greensboro) lunch counter sit-ins. While significant, the activism of NC A&T expands beyond the scope of this one moment. This particular paper seeks to highlight other elements of organizing and activism that existed on the campus of NC A&T. Additionally, this paper attempts to complicate the racially progressive

narrative of the city of Greensboro by interrogating the attitudes and interactions of city residents and local leaders towards NC A&T student's participation in community organizing, protests, and civil disobedience. Providing a more expansive look into NC A&T's student protest movement also reveals the exaggeration in the narrative of racial harmony and White benevolence during the lunch counter sit-ins. Instead, Greensboro has an ugly history of using practices, such as over policing, criminalizing Black residents for exercising their political rights, and the use of White vigilante violence and state sanctioned violence to enforce a racial dominance and hierarchy within the city.

Paper two builds upon paper one by examining a specific event, the NC A&T/ Dudley student uprising of 1969, associated with the community activism and organizing that a number of NC A&T students were a part of. Dudley High School is the historically Black high school in the city of Greensboro. Similar to other historically Black high schools across the country, Dudley was a feeder school for NC A&T. Both institutions share a long and harmonious history with one another. As Black educational spaces they are points of pride for Black residents in the city. Interestingly enough, the events that led to the uprising caused these institutions to be perceived as a threat to the racial harmony of the city by many White residents. This particular paper provides a timeline of events that led to the student uprising as well as the events that occurred during. Exploring this particular incident also reveals the ways HBCUs were far more aggressively policed than their predominantly White institutional counterparts. Unfortunately, these incidents often went underreported and rarely received the same attention in the literature as the aggressive policing at White institutions.

The final paper investigates North Carolina's process of desegregating higher education and its impact on the state's five public HBCUs. While the process of desegregation occurred in

1955, when the UNC Consolidated system originally admitted its first Black students into the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Black students' access still remained elusive years after this decision. This paper examines the response of the state's governing higher education system, the University of North Carolina university system which was often resistant and at times adversarial to the expectations the federal government placed on it to desegregate. This is especially important to note since during the time of desegregation, William Friday presided over the university system. He has been considered someone who was an opponent of segregation and also thoughtful in providing accessible and quality education for the state's Black residents. This paper nuances this narrative and explores how many of the decisions made by Friday and his colleagues further disenfranchised Black college students' ability to access quality education by their ineffectiveness to properly support HBCUs. Additionally, this paper complicates the perceived achievements of desegregation. By centering NC A&T in this conversation, the paper highlights that a critical mass of Black students was still ignored and failed by the state. Regardless of the state's inability to perform their due diligence, NC A&T students, as well as other HBCU students, showed the resiliency and ability of the HBCU community to actively fight and antagonize against the continued inequity of Black educational spaces.

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## CHAPTER 2. NORTH CAROLINA A&T STUDENT PROTEST MOVEMENT, 1955-1973

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### Abstract

This paper is a general historiography of the student protest movement at NC A&T during the peak of the Civil Rights Movement and the introduction of the Black Power Movement, 1955-1973. Although NC A&T is present in the broader student protest literature, this literature only highlights one particular event, which is the A&T Four (Greensboro) lunch counter sit-ins. While significant, the activism of NC A&T expands beyond the scope of this one moment. This particular paper seeks to highlight other elements of organizing and activism that existed on the campus of NC A&T. Additionally, this paper attempts to problematize the racially progressive narrative of the city of Greensboro by interrogating the attitudes and interactions of city residents and local leaders towards NC A&T student's participation in community organizing, protests, and civil disobedience. Providing a more expansive look into NC A&T's student protest movement also reveals the exaggeration in the narrative of racial harmony and White benevolence during the lunch counter sit-ins. Instead, Greensboro has an ugly history of using practices, such as over policing, criminalizing Black residents for exercising their political rights, and the use of White vigilante violence and state sanctioned violence to enforce a racial dominance and hierarchy within the city.

There is nothing more powerful than a people, than a nation, steeped in its history. And there are few things as noble as honoring our ancestors by remembering.

- Lonnie G. Bunch III

If a race has no history, if it has no worthwhile tradition, it becomes a negligible factor in the thought of the world, and it stands in danger of being exterminated.

- Carter G. Woodson

### **Introduction**

Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) have a rich legacy of cultivating activists, change agents, and political figures that played remarkable roles in the freedom and liberation of Black Americans.<sup>13</sup> North Carolina Agriculture & Technical State University (NC A&T) is a part of this incredible history. Though NC A&T is most noted for its participation in the lunch counter sit-ins when four brave students—Jibrell Khazan (Ezell Blair Jr.), Franklin McCain, Joseph McNeil, and David Richmond—requested to be served at a local Woolworths, A&T’s history of activism and civic engagement precedes and extends beyond this infamous moment in time. Students on the campus of NC A&T were actively involved in both the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Power Movement.

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<sup>13</sup> Travis J. Albritton, “Educating Our Own: The Historical Legacy of HBCUs and Their Relevance for Educating a New Generation of Leaders,” *Urban Review* 44, no. 3 (2012): 311-31; Silvia Cristina Bettez & Vicki L. Suggs, “Centering the Educational and Social Significance of HBCUs: A Focus on the Educational Journeys and Thoughts of African American Scholars,” *Urban Review* 44, no. 3 (2012): 303-10; Walter Allen et al., “Historically Black Colleges and Universities: Honoring the Past, Engaging the Present, Touching the Future,” *Journal of Negro Education* 76 (2007): 263-80; Walter Allen & Joseph Jewell, “A Backward Glance Forward: Past, Present, and Future Perspectives on Historically Black Colleges and Universities,” *Review of Higher Education* 25 (2002): 241-61; Walter Allen, “The Color of Success: African-American College Student Outcomes at Predominately White and Historically Black Colleges and Universities,” *Harvard Educational Review* 62, no. 1 (1992): 26-44.



This paper examines the student protest movement at NC A&T from 1955-1973. Chronicling the student protest movement at NC A&T further elevates the narratives of HBCU student participation in the larger student activism and protest literature. Much of the student protest literature emphasizes and explores the participation of White college students or Black student resistance at predominantly White institutions. The literature that includes HBCU students is sparse and primarily focuses on student participation in the Civil Rights Movement. This essay joins recent scholarship by Joy Ann Williamson, Ibram X. Kendi, Martha Biondi, Jelani M. Favors, and others, that has begun to expand, nuance and center the narratives that have been historically overlooked about HBCU students' participation in protest activism and social justice movements.<sup>14</sup>

Additionally, this paper complicates the narrative of North Carolina and more specifically the city of Greensboro as a southern hub of progressive racial politics. Unlike its Deep South counterparts, North Carolina has been able to evade the vitriolic descriptions that are often associated with the brutal history of the Jim Crow South. This is largely attributed to what William Chafe explains as the *velvet glove, iron fist phenomenon*. The velvet glove allowed North Carolina to oscillate between being viewed as a benevolent and racially progressive southern state while cloaking the *iron fist*, the state's use of the courts, legislation, and policy to

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<sup>14</sup> Jelani Favors, *Shelter in a Time of Storm: How Black Colleges Fostered Generations of Leadership and Activism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019); Joy Ann Williamson, *Jim Crow Campus: Higher Education and the Struggle for a New Southern Social Order* (New York: Teacher's College Press, 2018). Martha Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012); Ibram Rogers, "The Black Campus Movement: The Case for a New Historiography," *Journal of History, Politics, and Culture* 4 (2012a), 171-86; Joy Ann Williamson, *Radicalizing the Ebony Tower: Black Colleges and the Black Freedom Struggle in Mississippi* (New York: Teacher's College Press, 2008); Jelani Favors, "Shaking Up the Word: NC A&T University and the Black Student Movement, 1960-1969" (Master's thesis, Ohio State University, 1999).

undermine and exploit Black residents.<sup>15</sup> This impersonation as a racially progressive state has allowed North Carolina to circumvent its history of brutal racial violence against Black North Carolinians, such as the horrific Wilmington Race Riots of 1898 that saw a number of prominent Black business owners flee from their homes and property never to return.<sup>16</sup>

### **Campus Protest Movement**

Although NC A&T and other Black colleges across the country faced a number of obstacles, these institutions did not deter from cultivating a spirit of activism and creating a space for students to engage in discourse about different philosophical ideas, objectives, and practical strategies around justice, liberation, and freedom. While the emphasis of this paper focuses on student activism during the height of the Civil Rights Movement and portions of the Black Power Movement, HBCU students forged pathways of resistance prior to these two movements. The participation of HBCU students in the Black resistance movement was consistent throughout

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<sup>15</sup> William Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Freedom Struggle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); N.A., “300 Protests Segregation Bill: Leaders From All Over N.C. Oppose Attempts to Circumvent Supreme Court,” *Carolina Times*, February 26, 1955, 1, 8; L.E., Austin, “Negro Girls Charge Apex Cop Attempted Rape: Two Teenagers Barely Escape Criminal Assault of Drunken Police Chief,” *Carolina Times*, May 5, 1954, 1, 8; N.A., “Dismissal of Asheville YMCA Official Stirs Controversy,” *Carolina Times*, April 4, 1953, 1, 8; N.A., “Martin County New Scene of School Jim Crow Battle,” *Carolina Times*, May 31, 1952, 1; N.A., “Equal Education in North Carolina and Virginia?,” *Carolina Times*, September 16, 1950; N.A., “Senator Clyde Hoey Attacks Civil Rights Program Again, Calls Dixie Solons True Liberals,” *Carolina Times*, December 3, 1949, 1; N.A., “Durham White Schools Get \$155,000 From County But Negro Schools Get \$21,000,” *Carolina Times*, May 8, 1937, 1, 8.

<sup>16</sup> Margaret M. Mulrooney, *Race, Place, and Memory: Deep Currents in Wilmington, North Carolina*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2018); Adrienne LaFrance & Vann R. Newkirk II, “The Lost History of an American Coup D’État: Republicans and Democrats in North Carolina are Locked in a Battle Over Which Party Inherits the Shame of Jim Crow,” *Atlantic*, August 12, 2017. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/08/wilmington-massacre/536457/>; Andrea Kirshenbaum, “The Vampire that Hovers over North Carolina”: Gender, White Supremacy, and the Wilmington Race Riot of 1898,” *Southern*, 3 no. 3, (1998): 6-30; H. Leon Prather, *We Have Taken A City: Wilmington Racial Massacre and Coup of 1898*, (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1984); N.A., “Slaves Today in North Carolina,” *Carolina Times*, November 5, 1955, 2.

the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s. Scholars have often suggested the primary interest of student protest during this time were issues solely associated with campus life.<sup>17</sup> However, this does an extreme disservice to the political activism and community work of HBCU students.<sup>18</sup>

For instance, students at Howard University mobilized around anti-lynching campaigns while students at Virginia Union University and North Carolina Central University helped organize labor unions for Black workers employed by tobacco/cigarette companies. Students at HBCUs were also involved in social organizations that rallied against job discrimination and unfair housing practices such as the Southern Negro Youth Conference (SNYC), an outgrowth of the first meeting of the National Negro Congress (NNC), which was founded on the campus of Howard University. The first NCC conference was held in Chicago in February 1936. While the young adult attendees shared a similar agenda to the NNC, they felt they would be more effective if they created their own separate organization. This tasked the students with creating their own organizational mission, programs, and most importantly, developing skills that would prepare them for future work around organizing, advocacy, and civic engagement. The leaders of the NNC agreed and fully supported SNYC being independent.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Raymond Wolters, *The New Negro On Campus: Black College Rebellions of the 1920s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975); Marcia L. Johnson, "Student Protest at Fisk University in the 1920s," *Negro History Bulletin* 33 no. 6 (1970): 137-40; N.A., "Appointment of Two At Howard Protested," *Carolina Times*, October 14, 1939, 6.

<sup>18</sup> Flora Brown, "NAACP Sponsored Sit-ins by Howard University Students in Washington, D.C., 1943-1944," *Journal of Negro History* 85 no.4, (2000): 274-78; Monroe H. Little, "The Extra-Curricular Activities of Black College Students 1868-1940," *Journal of Negro History* 65 no. 2 (1980): 135-48; N.A., "The Hastie Farce," *Campus Echo*, October 1, 1949, 2; N.A., "NAACP Youth Conference to be Held in St. Louis," *Bennett Banner*, October 1, 1948, 1; N.A., "What! When! Where!: The Southern Conference for Human Welfare," *Bennett Banner*, December 1, 1946, 2; N.A., Colleges Unite in Protest Campaign, *Bennett Banner*, December 1, 1945, 1; N.A., "N.C.C. Students Petition Anti-Lynch Bill Support," *Campus Echo*, January 31, 1940, 1, 4.

<sup>19</sup> C. Alvin Hughes, "We Demand Our Rights: The Southern Negro Youth Congress, 1937-1949," *Phylon* 48, no. 1 (1987): 38-50.

The first independent SNYC conference, “Dream, Organize, Build- For Freedom, Equality, Opportunity,” was held in Richmond, Virginia in 1937. Black youth from a variety of backgrounds were in attendance, including a representative from every HBCU.<sup>20</sup> Around the time of SYNC’s organization, Langston Hughes had written a scathing critique of Black colleges entitled, *Cowards from the College* that was published in *The Crisis*, the official magazine of the NAACP. Hughes lambasted the archaic atmosphere of campus life. He was especially frustrated with the ways HBCU administrators often silenced and obstructed student participation and engagement in activism.<sup>21</sup> Hughes’ words sent a wave through Black southern college students, who became even more involved in off campus activism.

While Hughes’ frustrations were warranted, his perspective ignored the cumbersome interjections of racism and White supremacy on HBCU campuses. The survival of these institutions was predicated on the approval of White Board of Trustee members, administrators, philanthropic donors, and southern states to ensure their maintenance and perpetuity. The racist and paternalistic attitudes of this constituency created a culture where HBCUs had to make significant concessions in order to exist. HBCUs’ existence was imperative because these institutions were almost exclusively the only locations where Black Americans could receive higher education. If these institutions closed, where would Black students go?

Notwithstanding, there were students, faculty and college administrators that refused to concede to these circumstances and represented what Hughes had hoped for in HBCU students. This included the young women at Greensboro's Bennett College who organized a boycott of the

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<sup>20</sup> N.A., “Head of Student Government Attends Congress: Miss Hattie Bailey Represents Bennett Student Group at National Negro Congress,” *Bennett Banner*, October 1937, 1.

<sup>21</sup> Langston Hughes, *Fight for Freedom and Other Writings on Civil Rights* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2001).

local movie theater in downtown Greensboro in 1937. Students at Bennett and Black members of the Greensboro community already held contempt for the theater due to its refusal to integrate the seating, but a recent resolution passed by North Carolina and South Carolina theater owners to exclude playing films with non-stereotypical Black American characters exacerbated the situation. The boycott lasted several months before the theater would be integrated. Bennett students received overwhelming support from the community.<sup>22</sup> The valiant effort of Bennett Belles led to positive change. It created a spark among Black college students in Greensboro and it would be the predecessor of the Woolworth lunch counter sit-ins.

Student activism not only extended outside of local Greensboro campuses, but students also used their agency to advocate for changes on their respective campuses. NC A&T student leaders led a charge to mobilize other co-eds to express their grievances against anachronistic and patronizing environments. College students' frustrations with university administration were not exclusive to HBCUs. The phenomenon of *in loco parentis* occurred on colleges and universities across the country but the practice at HBCUs was far more insidious because this policing of students was heavily influenced by racialized stereotypes and tropes of Black Americans.<sup>23</sup> Despite these circumstances, HBCU students were persistent in their fight to gain

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<sup>22</sup> Lorraine Ahearn, "'37 Boycott was Ahead of its Time," *News & Record*, N.D., pp. A1, A11. (Civil Rights Movement Collection, Box #1, 1.1).

<sup>23</sup> Philip Lee, "The Curious Life of *In Loco Parentis* at American Universities," *Higher Education in Review* 8 (2011): 65-90; James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); Paul David Phillips, "Education of Blacks in Tennessee During Reconstruction, 1865-1870," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 46, no. 2 (1987): 98-109; Lester C. Lamon, "The Black Community in Nashville and the Fisk University Student Strike of 1924-1925," *Journal of Southern History* 40, no. 2 (1974): 225-44; Herbert Aptheker, "The Negro College Student in the 1920s- Years of Preparation and Protest: An Introduction," *Science & Society* 33, no. 2 (1969): 150-67; Edward K. Graham & Margaret Mead, "The Hampton Institute Strike of 1927: A Case Study in Student Protest," *American Scholar* 38, no. 4 (1969): 668-83.

more freedom and personal autonomy.<sup>24</sup> This was especially true during the 1944-1945 school year. Students were embittered with the conditions on the NC A&T campus. Unfortunately, this came at the worst time for the institution because it was faced with tremendous financial woes. A number of campus buildings needed immediate repair and the school was unable to afford resources to invest in sports programs, other extracurricular activities, or resolve the issues with dining services. This further complicated the strained relationship between students and administrators.

With limited funding and support, NC A&T administration could do little to improve the campus infrastructure. Although financial matters were beyond the grasp of the college's administration there were other student concerns that could more easily have been rectified, including the issues surrounding the student strike of Spring 1945. The strike of Spring '45 was a result of the administration's less than receptive responses to student grievances. Although Dr. Bluford had agreed to meet with student council members much of the student body were unimpressed with the outcome of this meeting. This eventually led to the football team spearheading a strike that lasted for a week. Students did not attend class and a number of meetings were organized to develop a list of demands and strategies. By the end of the week President Bluford agreed to meet with the entire student body. During this meeting, students were assured improvements would be made, but instead a number of students identified as strike leaders received letters to not return to campus, and there were no changes to any of the

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<sup>24</sup> Ibram Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement: Black Students and the Racial Reconstruction of Higher Education, 1965-1972* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012b); Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker & the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); N.A., "Howard Univ. Campus Quiet," *Carolinian*, March 8, 1947, 1.

university rules.<sup>25</sup> Issues between the university administration and A&T students would persist, but later years would find school administrators much more willing to listen to student concerns and find some compromise.<sup>26</sup>

Though campus grievances remained an integral part of the NC A&T student protest movement students would eventually expand their concerns to issues that were pertinent to the historically Black East Greensboro community. This evolution can be seen in the work of the NC A&T Four and the Lunch Counter Sit-Ins, the organizing of student body president Jesse Jackson, and the forming of Students Organizing for Black Unity (S.O.B.U). A&T students were, and continue to be, remarkably intelligent, politically astute, and committed to their community. While many of these trailblazers were exposed to the spirit of activism and a commitment for justice prior to their attendance at NC A&T, the university became a space that encouraged students to wrestle with diverse concepts and ideologies, promoted pride in their Black culture and heritage and, most importantly, provided an opportunity to imagine an existence and future of Black liberation and freedom. Historian Joy Ann Williamson-Lott echoes this sentiment by stating, "... the Black campuses themselves became vital to the Black freedom struggle... whether in the 1960 sit-ins or the Black Power protests of the late 1960s and early 1970s."<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Albert Spruill, *Historic Tour: Annie Holland Hall*, n.d., (Willie Grimes Collection, Box #1, A&T Student Activism Folder).

<sup>26</sup> Hilliard Hines, "University Abolishes Compulsory ROTC Makes Other Changes," *A&T Register*, April 25, 1968, 1, 5; Prince Legree, "In Meeting with Students Dowdy Asks for Cooperation," *A&T Register*, April 18, 1968, 1, 3; Nancy Waddell, "Student Judiciary to be Enacted," *A&T Register*, April 18, 1968, 3, 6; N.A., "Committee Votes Unanimously on Voluntary ROTC," *A&T Register*, April 18, 1968, 5.

<sup>27</sup> Joy Ann Williamson, "Jim Crow Campus" (see page 2, footnote 2).

### 1955: The Staunch Segregationist

Founders' Day 1955 at NC A&T was filled with much fanfare and attention. This was the school's 64<sup>th</sup> Founders' Day and there would be a dedication of eight new buildings on the campus. Since Dr. Bluford's arrival, A&T had grown into the largest HBCU in the state and one of the most formidable HBCU land grants in the country.<sup>28</sup> Though the day was filled with many highlights, the invitation of Governor Luther Hodges as the speaker was met with significant criticism. Hodges was a staunch segregationist and used his power to push forward policy that would enforce and ensure the perpetuity of segregation.<sup>29</sup> Although A&T students, faculty and staff looked at Governor Hodges' attendance unfavorably, everyone maintained a level of decorum for the special guest. It wasn't until Hodges began to read his speech and used the term *negra* to refer to Black Americans that a noticeable disgust and agitation emerged among the students.

Despite *Negro* being the politically correct term to identify Black Americans, Hodges and other White southerners opted to use the term *negra*. Though white southerners expressed this was a term of endearment for Black Americans, the students sitting in the auditorium for Founders' Day characterized the word as insulting and denigrating. As Hodges continually referenced *negra* throughout his speech an explosion of booing occurred from students. This did

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<sup>28</sup> N.A., "Founders' Day Marks 64<sup>th</sup> Year: Governor to Deliver Address," *A&T Register*, October 25, 1955, 1; N.A., "Growth at A&T College Reflects Unusual Success Story," *Carolina Times*, April 12, 1952, 3; N.A., "A&T Asks State for Six Million," *Carolina Times*, August 19, 1950, 1; N.A., "To Dedicate Two New Buildings at A&T College," *Carolina Times*, January 20, 1940, 2.

<sup>29</sup> Victor Calverton, "Virginia Parents Ask: 'Will South Secede Because of Integration?'" *Carolinian*, September 6, 1958, 12; N.A., "Hodges Says Violence is Out," *Greensboro Daily News*, August 30, 1957, 1; N.A., "Pro-segregation Group: Patriot Work can be Good, Hodges says," *Greensboro Record*, December 15, 1955, A1, A8; N.A., "No Racial Integration in Duplin Schools when They Open Next Tuesday, Aug. 23," *Duplin Times*, August 18, 1955, 1; N.A., "Refuses to Sign Segregation Bill," *Carolina Times*, August 20, 1955, 3; N.A., "Would Let Parents Decide Issue," *Carolina Times*, August 20, 1955, 3.



not stop Hodges and he admonished the students for booing by stating, “Some of your leadership could very easily destroy the great progress made by the Negro race in this state.”<sup>30</sup> After this comment, the booing became so overpowering that Hodges could no longer be heard through the auditorium’s sound system and he was rushed out of the building. He refused to return and finish his remarks.<sup>31</sup>

A&T students’ response to Hodges demonstrated to the governor, other White residents in Greensboro and the larger NC community that no forms of racism or White supremacy would be tolerated. Additionally, the university newspaper, *A&T Register*, also expressed students’ objections to Hodges attendance and speech. However, while the article contained significant criticism of Hodges’ speech it also admonished students’ reactions.<sup>32</sup> The conservative position of the student newspaper would eventually become a point of contention as student activism progressed in the 1960s and 70s. Unfortunately, students’ courageous efforts were overshadowed when President Bluford made student council members and faculty write letters of apology to the governor. These letters, written under duress, were reprinted in local newspapers along with an apology written by Bluford.<sup>33</sup> The correspondences between Bluford and Hodges were quite telling. Bluford demonstrated his sincerest apologies for the actions of the students while Hodges acknowledgement was underwhelming:

I hereby acknowledge receipt of your communication of Nov. 5 regarding the unfortunate incident at A&T College.

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<sup>30</sup> N.A., “Apologies Follow L’Affair Hodges,” *Carolinian*, November 12, 1955, 1.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid*; Marvin Sykes, “A&T Group Boos Hodges’ Segregation Plea: Negroes will Continue to Have Own Colleges, Chief Executive Says,” *Greensboro Record*, November 5, 1955, A1, A3.

<sup>32</sup> William Mason, Jr., “A&T and Gov. Hodges,” *A&T Register*, November 15, 1955, 1.

<sup>33</sup> Lane Kerr, “A&T President Expresses Regrets Over Incidents During Hodges’ Speech,” *Greensboro Daily News*, November 5, 1955, 1-2.

Sincerely,

Luther Hodges<sup>34</sup>

This exchange illustrated the imbalanced and often skewed relationships between Black college presidents and state officials. Bluford's public actions undermined students' activism and further reinforced the racial caste system. Regrettably his position was the only response for Black college presidents. The zero-tolerance policy that Dr. Bluford enforced was similar to other Black college administrators, especially during the Civil Rights and Black Power movements. Throughout his tenure, Dr. Bluford's decisions had come under significant criticism from community members, leaders, and activists.<sup>35</sup>

While the actions of Dr. Bluford and other Black college presidents were indefensible, their responses to student and faculty activism were under dire circumstances, which was to ensure the preservation and perpetuity of HBCUs. Many Black college presidents recognized that publicly endorsing HBCU students' participation in any civic unrest or political activism could adversely impact HBCUs, even if they privately empathized with students. Recognizing this, they felt that they had to protect HBCUs at all cost because of the sparse accessibility to higher education for many African Americans living in the South.<sup>36</sup> Sadly, days after the event, President Bluford died of a heart attack. Dr. Bluford had invested a significant amount of time,

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<sup>34</sup> N.A., "Tale of Two Cities: Bluford to Hodges, Hodges to Bluford," *Carolinian*, November 12, 1955, 1. printed personal correspondence between Dr. Bluford (president of NC A&T) and North Carolina Governor, Luther Hodges.

<sup>35</sup> T.A. Hamme & J.W. Jeffries, "A&T Alumni Officials Doubt Bluford's Dependability: Hamme, Jeffries Attack A&T Prexy's Speech," May 28, 1938, 1; N.A., "Dr. Bluford Given Clean Sheet by Trustee Board," *Carolina Times*, May 21, 1938, 1, 8; N.A., "Times Representative Finds Deplorable Condition at Greensboro College," *Carolina Times*, July 17, 1937, 1, 8; N.A., "The A&T College Muddle," *Carolina Times*, July 24, 1937, 1.

<sup>36</sup> Joy Ann Williamson, "'This Has Been Quite a Year For Heads Falling': Institutional Autonomy In The Civil Rights Era," *History of Education Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (2004): 554-76; N.A., "Aid Growing For Ousted Sit-in Student Leaders," *Carolina Times*, July 9, 1960, 6

effort, and work into building N.C. A&T's reputation. Though their approaches occasionally diverged, both A&T students and Dr. Bluford were devoted to the perpetuity and maintenance of educational opportunities for Black Americans.

### **1960: A&T Four Lunch Counter Sit-in**

Five years after the booning of Governor Hodges a new group of students decided to continue in the tradition of agitation and resistance. On February 1, 1960, Jibreel Khazan (Ezell Blair Jr.), Franklin McCain, Joseph McNeil, and David Richmond, the A&T Four, embarked on a journey that would spark a movement across the South. Their decision to demand service at the local Woolworth's lunch counter would transform and increase the momentum of the Civil Rights Movement.<sup>37</sup> Though the practice of sit-ins predated Woolworth's,<sup>38</sup> the Lunch Counter sit-in set a precedent and breathed new life into the larger movement.<sup>39</sup>

Prior to that brave moment in February, Khazan (Blair), McCain, McNeil, and Richmond had arrived on A&T's campus as eager freshmen. The four young men quickly became friends because of their familiarity with one another; three of them attended and graduated from Dudley High School.<sup>40</sup> As they got to know one another better they realized they had similar interests

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<sup>37</sup> Joe Knox, "Doors to Rights Would Have to be Forced Open," *Greensboro Daily News*, February 1, 1970, A7.

<sup>38</sup> Kevin Walker, "City's Sit-In Past Will Be Revealed," *Winston-Salem Chronicle*, February 22, 2001, A1, A4; Flora Brown, "NAACP Sponsored Sit-ins" (see page 4, footnote 6); N.A., "Pre-Sit-in Involvement: Bennett Prof's Account Stirs Interest, Debate," *Carolina Peacemaker*, February 1-7, 1990; William C. Hine, "The 1867 Charleston Streetcar Sit-ins: A Case of Successful Black Protest," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 77 (1976): 110-114.

<sup>39</sup> John Newsom, "The One that Mattered: Greensboro's Sit-Ins Breathed New Life into the Civil Rights Movement," *News And Record*, January 30, 2005, A1, A12; Leslie Brown, "NC Sit-Ins Spawned Southern Movement," *News & Record*, March 4, 2001, C1; Aldon Morris, "Black Southern Student Sit-In Movement: An Analysis of Internal Organization," *American Sociological Review* 46 (1981): 744-67; N.A., "A sit-in that changed the nation," *Arizona Daily Star*, February 1, 1980, A10; Joe Knox, "Racial Barriers Fall: Greensboro: Home of the Sit-ins," *Greensboro Daily News*, May 29, 1971, E22.

<sup>40</sup> Hal Sieber, "G'boro Sit-ins Not the First but A&T Squad Made the Books," *Carolina Peacemaker*, February 5, 2003, n.p.

including their shared desire to combat racism and White supremacy. Khazan (Blair), McCain, McNeil, and Richmond noted that while they were fully aware of racism and the ways it limited the quality of life for Black people, A&T provided them a platform to think even more deeply about racism and how it connected to larger global issues.<sup>41</sup> In the space of their dorm room, the A&T Four shared, debated, and philosophized practical ways to push forward the fight for equal rights. During one of those nightly conversations, they decided that they would commit themselves to the Civil Rights Movement.<sup>42</sup>

That afternoon, around 4:30pm, Khazan (Blair), McCain, McNeil, and Richmond walked into the Woolworth's store. At first, they perused the store and purchased small items, eventually proceeding to the lunch counter where they all sat down and requested cups of coffee. They were refused service because the lunch counter was exclusively for White patrons, but they remained seated.<sup>43</sup> Franklin McCain recalled an exchange between them and the waitress who told the young men to leave or they would get in trouble. They refused to leave and eventually the police arrived after being called by store manager, C.L. Harris. The officers responding attempted to scare the four young men by kicking their seats and hitting their billy clubs in their palms. In spite of being frightened, the freshmen were not deterred and remained on the premises until closing.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> N.A., "Beginning of the End: February 1, 1960," *Greensboro Daily News*, February 1, 1970, A1, A7; Ross Chandler, "Civil Rights Leader Recalls Struggle for Integration," *Morning Star*, February 2, 1992, B1.

<sup>42</sup> Katie Mosher, "Four Took Seats for Social Justice: Lunch Time Protest in Greensboro Helped Launch Movement in 1960," *News & Observer*, January 29, 1990, 1A, 12A; Jo Spivey, "Decade of Protest Began Here: 4 Lonely Blacks Woke a Nation," *Greensboro Record*, January 30, 1970, A1-A2 A.

<sup>43</sup> Lewis Brandon & JoAnn Lynn, "Dudley has Historic Links to Civil Rights Movement," *Panther's Claw*, February 2, 1992, B1; Joe Knox, "The Day Four Freshmen Began a New Era," *Greensboro Daily News*, February 1, 1970, A1, A7.

<sup>44</sup> Timothy P. Barela, "Our Commitment was Stronger Than Our Fear," *U.S. Airforce News*,

Khazan (Blair), McCain, McNeil, and Richmond walked away from that moment fearing for their lives and possible retribution for their brave actions. Instead, they learned that their sit-in motivated a number of students, especially ones attending HBCUs, to follow suit. HBCUs across North Carolina organized similar sit-ins days after the original Woolworth's sit-in. In Greensboro, the day after the initial protest, 41 students participated, and the numbers increased significantly as the protest persisted.<sup>45</sup> Several days after the initial sit-in, students met with city officials and came to a consensus that they would halt the protests for two weeks with the expectation that city officials and management of the five-and-dime stores could reach an agreement of desegregating the lunch counters. Though students opted to halt the sit-ins, variety stores across the city closed their lunch counters indefinitely and opted to serve patrons at the snack bars. Unlike the lunch counters, the snack bar was an area that all patrons could congregate.<sup>46</sup> Other business responses were more aggressive in nature, including the closing of facilities, or in the case of a large cafeteria, announcing that they would distribute "trespassing warrants for any negroes who refused to leave the premises after being told they would not be served."<sup>47</sup>

The responses of the five and dime stores and eateries proved that the city of Greensboro was not as progressive as it claimed.<sup>48</sup> White residents of the city were very clear on their

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April 15, 2002, Retrieved from: <http://www.af.mil/news/airman/0296/our.htm>.

<sup>45</sup> Herbert White, "They Stood Up by Sitting In: Protests in Charlotte and Rock Hill Put Civil Rights on Fast Track," *Charlotte Post*, February 5, 2003, 1A, 3A; Noel Yancey, "As I Recall It," *The Pilot*, August 1, 1994, B1, B7.

<sup>46</sup> N.A., "Negro Pupils Crowd Store; It Closes," *Greensboro Daily News High Point Bureau*, February 14, 1960, 1; N.A., "41 Negroes Charged with Trespassing in Raleigh Area," *Greensboro Daily News*, February 13, 1960, 1-2; N.A., "N.C. Stores Close Down Counters: Action Follows Negro Protest," *Greensboro Daily News*, February 10, 1960, 1, 3.

<sup>47</sup> N.A., "Decisions made by 2 Stores to Remain Closed," *Greensboro Daily News*, February 1, 1960.

<sup>48</sup> N.A., "We Hope There'll Not Be Two Extremes," *Kinston Daily Free Press*, March 2, 1960,

position of maintaining segregation, racial discrimination, and other perversions of White supremacy, at all cost. Nevertheless, students remained steadfast and ambitious in their attempts to receive fair and equal treatment as patrons. Corporate and small business reactions were not the only issues faced by students. Students also experienced White vigilante violence, police harassment and brutality.<sup>49</sup> The racially harmonious identity that Greensboro had often promoted was at odds with the optics of the lunch counter sit-ins. How could a city that proclaimed itself racially harmonious and fair to Black people have segregated public facilities, restaurants, and utilize the police as a force to promote state sanctioned violence against Black Greensboro residents?

Though the majority of local news coverage attempted to diminish the work of the students and minimize the racial problems of Greensboro, several headlines and reports negated this narrative. One report stated,

Three white men were arrested yesterday at Woolworth's, one for setting fire to a Negro's coat as he sat with a group of students at the store's lunch counter in protest over not being served.... Several white men and women were escorted out of the Woolworth's store for using abusive language.... George Dorsett, the Klud (chaplin) of the Greensboro Chapter of the NC Ku Klux Klan was in the store most of the day. He said he was there, "to take care of my men and to keep violence to a minimum."<sup>50</sup>

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1; N.A., "How Much More Are They Going to Take," *Kinston Daily Free Press*, February 5, 1960, 1.

<sup>49</sup>United States National Student Association, "A Survey of The Southern Student Sit-Ins Movement and Nationwide Student Activity" (Student- Sit-in Folder 8), April 23, 1960, Herbert White, "They Stood Up" (see page 14, footnote 33).

<sup>50</sup> N.A., "White Men Arrested at Sitdown: Negroes Keep Up Protest Action," *Greensboro Daily News*, February 6, 1960.

Other reports documented instances such as, “Both stores were scenes of potentially explosive racial tensions Saturday until a fake bomb scare prompted the closing of the Woolworth store early in the afternoon” and “Gangs of white youths had heckled the Negroes during the latter part of the week.”<sup>51</sup> The culture of violence perpetuated during the sit-in movement highlighted that the moniker of the racially progressive and harmonious city that Greensboro often gave itself was untrue. It also demonstrated that White people always initiated the violence. This heightened violence was a testament that many White residents were resistant to a fair and equal system and also held the belief that Black Americans should remain second-class citizens. Despite the heightened violence and lack of safety, students remained steadfast in their commitment to equal rights.

The news of the A&T Four traveled quickly and within several weeks other college and high school students across the country, especially Black youth in the South, orchestrated similar protests at their local five-and-dime stores and eateries.<sup>52</sup> The efforts of Jibreel Khazan (Ezell Blair Jr.), Franklin McCain, Joseph McNeil, and David Richmond not only received national media attention but their work was also heralded as reigniting the Civil Rights Movement.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> N.A., “Negro Students Spread Protest to Kress Store,” *Greensboro Record*, February 4, 1960, 1.

<sup>52</sup> Steffanie Rivers, “NAACP Turns 58 Years Old: Black Leaders Remember Struggle for Civil Rights, Look to Future,” *News Argus*, March 29, 1992, 1D, 5D; Herbert White, “They Stood Up” (see page 14, footnote 33); N.A., “Pickets March in Durham: Protest Goes On As Backing Increasing,” *Carolina Times*, March 12, 1960, 1, 6; N.A., “First Victory in Sit-Downs Scored at Oklahoma as Students Served,” March 12, 1960, 5; N.A., “Student Protest ‘Inevitable’, Says Dr. Patterson,” *Carolina Times*, February 27, 1960, 7; N.A., “Shelby Hit by Shutdown Movement,” *Greensboro Daily News*, February 19, 1960; N.A., “Two More Arrested in Lunch Counter Protest,” *Greensboro Daily News*, February 14, 1960, 17; N.A., “Negroes Protests Still Spreading,” *Greensboro Record*, February 12, 1960.

<sup>53</sup> Nancy McLaughlin, “‘Stand up for Truth’: The Seeds of the March on Washington were Sown at Bennett College in 1958,” *News & Record*, January 15, 2018, [http://www.greensboro.com/news/local\\_news/the-seeds-of-the-march-on-washington-were-sown-at/article\\_e61bc9-ffc6-5ccf-a192-7c62622548ca.html](http://www.greensboro.com/news/local_news/the-seeds-of-the-march-on-washington-were-sown-at/article_e61bc9-ffc6-5ccf-a192-7c62622548ca.html); Kelvin Hart, “Mourners

Several months after the initial sit-in, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was founded on the campus of Shaw University, in Raleigh, North Carolina, just 80 miles east of Greensboro, with the help of Shaw University alum and integral figure in the Civil Rights Movement, Ella Baker. At this time, the image of the Civil Rights Movement largely comprised adults, and in particular Black men. The lunch counter sit-ins illustrated the importance of the youth and the necessity of working collaboratively across generations and gender. Black youth used this national platform to demonstrate their ability to organize, strategize, and, most importantly, engage in sophisticated and intellectual discourse and critique on issues of racism, discrimination, and White supremacy. While the original A&T student lunch counter sit-in had minimal planning, once the sit-ins grew in number, students from A&T along with other local youth created the Student Executive Committee for Justice (SECJ). This committee oversaw the organizing and logistical pieces of the lunch counter sit-ins. For instance, the SECJ wrote several letters to local city officials, upper level management, different food establishments, and community leaders about their grievances with unfair treatment at the local lunch counters.<sup>54</sup> One particular letter was sent to Mr. Curtis Harris, the manager of the local Woolworths. In this letter the student executive committee outlined their objectives as well as their position on the matter of desegregating the lunch counter.<sup>55</sup> Additionally, the SECJ distributed leaflets to students

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Remember Sit-in Hero,” *News & Record*, December 12, 1990, n.p; Herbert White, “They Stood Up” (see page 14, footnote 33); Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981).

<sup>54</sup> N.A., “In Greensboro: Public Opinion on Trial,” *Greensboro Daily News*, February 22, 1960, A4.

<sup>55</sup> Student Executive Committee for Justice, *personal correspondence to Mr. Curtis Harris*, April 9, 1960. (Sit-in Box 3, 3.21).



participating in the sit-ins of appropriate attire when participating in the sit-ins as well as correct responses to give when asked about the sit-ins.<sup>56</sup>

Though many White residents were adamant in arguing that students were being pushed by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the youth and college students of Greensboro demonstrated their ability for personal agency and ability to coordinate and organize their own versions of activism without adult input.<sup>57</sup> This can be seen when investigating the sustainability of the lunch counter sit-ins. The lunch counter demonstrations lasted over the summer which meant that a number of the college students participating, primarily Bennett and NC A&T, and on a smaller scale, Women's College students (UNC Greensboro) and Guildford College, left for a break.<sup>58</sup> Instead of the demonstrations being paused, Dudley High School students continued the fight that led to the eventual integration of the lunch counters in July.<sup>59</sup>

Although, the lunch counter sit-ins demonstrated students' ability to work independently from adults, students still received an overwhelming amount of support from members inside and

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<sup>56</sup> Student Executive Committee for Justice, *Sit-down Demonstrations Instructions and Dialogue Format*, (n.d.), (Sit-in Box 2, 2.37).

<sup>57</sup> William Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights*, 3, f. 3; Almetta Cooke Brooks, "Lunch Counter Strikes Spread to High Point," *Greensboro Daily News*, February 12, 1960, 1, 6.

<sup>58</sup> Allen Johnson, "The Day Three Frightened Women Chose Sitting in to Sitting Idly by," *News & Record*, January 30, 2000; Jeri Rowe, "Three White Students had Role in Sit-ins, film shows," *News & Record*, January 27, 2000, 12; N.A., "Idea that Mushroomed: Sit-in Protests Spread Over Nation Like Shock Wave After Test Run Here," February 1, 1964.

<sup>59</sup> Jim Schlosser, "Sit-Ins," *News & Record*, February 1, 1998.

outside the Black community,<sup>60</sup> including NC A&T president Dr. Warmouth T. Gibbs.<sup>61</sup> While Gibbs never openly supported A&T students, he made no attempts to obstruct their protest or hinder them from using A&T facilities as a meeting place. Gibbs' position was in stark contrast from his predecessor, Dr. Bluford, as well as his contemporaries. At the start and throughout the sit-in demonstrations, Gibbs was inundated with calls and letters demanding that students be expelled and that he should use his power to end the boycott. Instead of succumbing to the attacks, Gibbs responded by stating, "we teach students how to think, not what to think."<sup>62</sup> This further exacerbated the situation. Gibbs' public comments led to the university receiving a number of threats, disparaging comments, and letters demanding for his removal.<sup>63</sup> Despite this, Dr. Gibbs remained steadfast in his position. With the school year coming to a close, he announced an early retirement. Dr. Samuel D. Proctor would succeed Dr. Gibbs. Proctor also supported students in their protest endeavors when asked about the official policy towards student protest, Proctor exclaimed, "The administration's position was to counsel the students to be sure that their activities were within legal limits, that our conduct was above reproach, and

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<sup>60</sup> Mrs. Barrington D. Parker, President American Council on Human Rights, *personal correspondence to Dr. Samuel D. Proctor*, December 6, 1960, (Student- Sit-in Folder 8); Warren D. Palmer, *personal correspondence to Dr. Samuel D. Proctor*, December 5, 1960, (Student-Sit-in Folder 8); Augustana College Student Body, *personal correspondence to NC A&T Student Body*, May 19, 1960, (Student- Sit-in Folder 8); Richard G. Gould, *personal correspondence to NC A&T Student Body*, April 6, 1960, (Student-Sit in Folder 8); N.A., "Wilkins to Visit Durham: NAACP Head to Speak in Durham Thurs.," *Carolina Times*, March 12, 1960, 1,6; N.A., "Regional NAACP Backs Protest," *Carolina Times*, March 12, 1960, 5; Oberlin College Student Council, *personal correspondence to NC A&T Student Body*, March 5, 1960, (Student Sit-in Folder 8).

<sup>61</sup> September 27, 1960, N.A., "The A&T Students' Sit-down Strike," *Carolina Times*, February 6, 1960, n.p.; Herbert White, "They Stood Up by Sitting In" (see page 14, footnote 33).

<sup>62</sup> Teresa Jo Styles & Valerie Nieman, *Mens Et Manus: A Pictorial History of North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University* (Virginia Beach, VA: Donning Company Publishers, 2015).

<sup>63</sup> Rev. James P. Dees, *personal correspondence to Warmouth T. Gibbs*, September 2, 1960, (Student- Sit-in Folder 8).

that they were not jeopardizing their progress in school through class absence, etc., as they participated in the protest.”<sup>64</sup>

Members of the clergy, both Black and White<sup>65</sup>, also extended their support to the student led lunch counter sit-ins.<sup>66</sup> Unlike Black clergy, who used their platforms to not only celebrate student mobilizing and activism but also admonish and criticize the ways in which Greensboro endorsed and normalized the Jim Crow system, White clergy often took a tone-deaf approach. Though White clergy members recognized and supported the student led sit-ins they also made it a point to praise local city officials, the police department, and the Woolworth’s store manager. Additionally, they failed to engage any discourse that implicated the racist Jim Crow system that thrived in Greensboro. The limited conversation around the racial caste system in Greensboro highlights that while there may have been an endorsement of the sit-ins by White Greensboro residents, many were still complicit with the racial hierarchy and second-class positions of Black residents. Regardless of the lax positions of White clergy, with the support of Black clergy and the Black church, students remained persistent in their fight for equal service at the lunch counter.

Six months after the initial February 1 sit-in, Woolworth’s management re-opened the lunch counter with no discrimination of service based upon race.<sup>67</sup> This was described as a major accomplishment that led to a number of facilities desegregating, including theaters and

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<sup>64</sup> Dr. Samuel D. Proctor, *personal correspondence to Jesse Boston*, March 15, 1961, (Student-Sit-in Folder 8).

<sup>65</sup> Social Action Committee of Grace Congregational Church, *personal correspondence to NC A&T Student Body*, July 1, 1960, (Student Sit-in Folder 8); Social Action Council of Congregational Church of Park Manor, *personal correspondence to NC A&T Student Body*, May 25, 1960, (Student- Sit-in Folder 8).

<sup>66</sup> Nancy McLaughlin, “A Changing Mission,” *News and Record*, May 18, 2003, A1, A9.

<sup>67</sup> Joe Knox, “Doors to Rights” (see page 12, footnote 25); Jim Schlosser, “Sit-Ins” (see page 18, footnote 47).

restaurants. This moment continues to be celebrated 58 years later in Greensboro and N.C A&T; however, this celebratory atmosphere surrounding the A&T Four and the sit-ins was not always the case for the city. Beginning in 1964, North Carolina, and especially the city of Greensboro, saw a surge in Klan activity and membership. Even with Greensboro lauding itself as progressive, White community members felt that the concessions they made as being one of the first southern cities to desegregate schools and supporting the inclusion of lunch counter sit-ins were enough and that any other demands and grievances that the Black community had should be ignored and suppressed.<sup>68</sup> Because of this, White Greensboro residents worked aggressively to obstruct any civil rights actions Black Greensboro residents took. Instead of utilizing state sanctioned violence, NC abused the court systems and government to limit and block Black activism for civil rights.<sup>69</sup>

It has been sixty years since the A&T Four decided to walk into Woolworth's and request to be served at the lunch counter. Since the sit-ins, city officials and private citizens have hindered the viability of the Black Greensboro community while using the imagery of the lunch counter sit-ins to perpetuate the moniker of a progressive southern city.<sup>70</sup> This has led to the narrative of the sit-in movement being heavily sanitized and Greensboro absolving itself of the ways it attempted to obstruct A&T students' activism.<sup>71</sup> Most importantly, the city has been able

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<sup>68</sup> Eliana Bennett, "The Civil Rights Movement and Greensboro," *News & Record*, February 2, 2000.

<sup>69</sup> William Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights*, 3, f. 3.

<sup>70</sup> Jordan Green, "Morehead Foundry Halts Operations Amid Allegations of Racism," *Triad City Beat*, July 17, 2018, Retrieved from: <https://triad-city-beat.com/morehead-foundry-halts-operations-amid-allegations-racism/>; Associated Press, "Racial Discrimination Suit Against Greensboro to Proceed", December 11, 2017, Retrieved from: <https://patch.com/north-carolina/across-nc/racial-discrimination-suit-against-greensboro-proceed>; Thom Patterson, "After 50 years of Racial Strife: Why is Greensboro Still so Tense?," *CNN News*, June 7, 2011. <http://www.cnn.com/2011/US/06/07/greensboro.race/index.html>.

<sup>71</sup> Mark Moss, "Freedom Day Honors Sit In Movement," *Carolina Peacemaker*, February 11,

to escape the criticisms of how it remained complicit within the system of White racism and maintained the racial hierarchy of Jim Crow. While the integration of the lunch counters was symbolic of positive change, the quality of life for many Black Greensboro residents remained substandard.

The city of Greensboro's recollection of the lunch counter sit-ins is indicative of a larger issue in the broader Civil Rights Movement narrative, which is the erasure and reinvention of White America's reactions and actions towards the movement. Owen Dwyer suggests this neutralizing of events occurs because of "...the desire on the part of local and state governments to rectify their public image...".<sup>72</sup> As Pierre Nora notes, "History's goal and ambition is not to exalt but to annihilate what has in reality taken place. A generalized critical history would no doubt preserve some museums, some medallions and monuments- that is to say, the materials necessary for its work..."<sup>73</sup> This disassembling and reconstruction allows for Greensboro and other locations of Civil Rights activism to ignore the brutality and violence of these instances. While the sit-ins became a significant moment in Civil Rights history and placed Greensboro on an international stage, demonstrations at A&T persisted throughout the 1960s. These protests continued to include agitating university administration's heavy use of draconian rules and policies and issues pertinent to the surrounding Black community in Greensboro. A&T students were significant participants in the local and national work of the Civil Rights Movement.

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2004, 1A, 4A; Hal Sieber, "Sit-in Tribute Comes into Own," *Carolina Peacemaker*, January 23, 2003, 1A, 4A; Kathryn Beach, "Sit Down and be Counted," *Observer Times*, February 27, 1994, 1, 6; N.A., "Historical Society to Feature Talk on Greensboro Sit-ins," *Yadkin Ripple*, February 10, 1994; Giles Lamberston, "Students made waves; city leaders jumped ship," *Greensboro News & Record*, February 1, 1985, A11, Jim Schlosser, "Sit-Ins" (see page 18, footnote 47).

<sup>72</sup> Owen Dwyer, "Interpreting the Civil Rights Movement: Place, Memory, and Conflict," *Professional Geographer* 52, no. 4 (2000): 660-71.

<sup>73</sup> Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux Mémoire," *Representations* 26 (1989): 7-24.

### 1960-1964: Peaceful Protests and Black Respectability Politics

While the lunch counter sit-ins have been cited as the pinnacle of the A&T student protest movement, NC A&T was a major hub of additional civil rights activism. For instance, between 1962 and 1963 the students of A&T had the longest sustained protest movement, which included organized boycotts and other mobilizations.<sup>74</sup> Unlike many centers of major civil rights protest of the period, the protest movement in Greensboro was almost exclusively organized and run by the students on campus. The work of A&T students did not go unnoticed and their protest movement played a significant role in the fight to make Greensboro more equitable for Black residents, but it also made the university a target. There were a number of arrests during this period, and President Dowdy was under tremendous pressure to curb student protests on campus and in the surrounding Greensboro area. While the students remained faithful to their position of nonviolence, many White Greensboro residents feared that the civil protest might implode into violent chaos, despite no evidence that alluded to this possibility.<sup>75</sup> A&T students refused to be deterred and placed a greater emphasis on their activism. NC A&T student leaders were actively

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<sup>74</sup> Teresa Jo Styles & Valerie Nieman, "Mens Et Manus" (see page 19, footnote 50).

<sup>75</sup> N.A., "A&T Head Pressured To Halt Students: Dowdy Posts Notice," *Carolina Times*, May 25, 1963, 1,6; N.A., "Anti-Segregation Demonstrations Race Through Tarheelia: Over 2,000 Involved In Demonstrations", May 25, 1963, 1; N.A., Gate City Chapter of the A&T College Alumni Association, "A Resolution of the Gate City Chapter of the A&T College Alumni Association," May 25, 1963, (Student Demonstrations in Downtown Greensboro 1963 Folder); V.T. Johnson *personal correspondence to David Schenck (Greensboro Mayor)*, May 24, 1963, (Student Demonstrations in Downtown Greensboro 1963 Folder); B.H. Thornton (For The Good of A&T Committee, Chairman) *personal correspondence to David Schenck*, May 24, 1963, (Student Demonstrations in Downtown Greensboro 1963 Folder); Dr. Lewis C. Dowdy, *personal correspondence to Dr. Glenn F. Rankin (Dean of Students)*, May 23, 1963 (Student Demonstrations in Downtown Greensboro 1963 Folder); N.A., "A Light in Greensboro", *Candle*, 1 no.1, May 23, 1963 (Student Demonstrations in Downtown Greensboro 1963 Folder); Mrs. Mae F. Bethel, *personal correspondence to Dr. Lewis C. Dowdy* May 22, 1963, (Student Demonstrations in Downtown Greensboro 1963 Folder); Dr. Lewis C. Dowdy, *office of the president Memo to A&T students*, May 22, 1963, (Student Demonstrations in Downtown Greensboro 1963 Folder).

involved in local and national civil rights' organizations including, William Thomas, president of the local chapter of Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and student body president (SBP) Jesse Jackson.<sup>76</sup> Jackson would later become Dr. King's protégé and a significant leader in the larger Black Liberation Movement. Massive protests led to a number of A&T and Bennett College students being arrested multiple times, including Jackson.<sup>77</sup> Undeterred, students remained steadfast in their commitment to justice and equal rights and continued to organize a number of demonstrations including boycotting and protesting S. & W. Cafeteria, which had an estimated 1500 protesters, the majority being NC A&T students.<sup>78</sup>

The work of A&T students did not go unnoticed, especially by the news media. For instance, *Greensboro Daily News* frequently reported on A&T's students' protests and boycotts.<sup>79</sup> Recognizing that the media placed them on a public platform, students were very strategic in how they presented themselves. Students adopted and mimicked the aesthetics of Black Respectability Politics (BRP) and tenets of non-violence, common features of the mainstream Civil Rights Movement. This included designating appropriate attire to wear,

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<sup>76</sup> N.A., "Under \$1,000 Bond: Integration Leader Arrested and Jailed," *Greensboro Daily News*, June 7, 1963; N.A., Jay Hensley, "Negro Leader Charged with Inciting Riot Here," *Greensboro Record*, June 6, 1963; N.A., "Conference", *Carolina Times*, June 1, 1963; N.A., "For Young Demonstration Leader Non-Violence is Way of Life," n.d.; N.A., "Excellence is Needed, Jesse Jackson Tells Students at Awards Day Fete," *News Argus*, May 1964, 1.

<sup>77</sup> Peter Harkness, "Downtown Protest Planned for Today," *Daily Tar Heel*, July 4, 1963, 1; N.A., "Demonstrations May Resume: Midtown Greensboro Quiet in Wake of Weekend Truce," *Greensboro Daily News*, May 26, 1963; N.A., "In Office of Mayor, CORE Group is Arrested," *Greensboro Daily News*, May 25, 1963; N.A., "Mass Protest is Conducted by Negroes," *Greensboro Daily News*, May 18, 1963.

<sup>78</sup> N.A., "Protest Mount: 240 Arrested in Greensboro," *Afro-American*, May 25, 1963, n.p.

<sup>79</sup> Joe Knox, "Doors to Rights", (see page 12, footnote 25), "Community Leaders are Called Together for Meeting Today," *Greensboro Daily News*, June 7, 1963; N.A., "Negroes Declare Demonstrations will Continue," *Greensboro Daily News*, June 5, 1963, 1; N.A., "Negroes Stage Another March Through Town," *Greensboro Daily News*, May 24, 1963, n.p.; N.A., "Negro Demonstrators on the March," *Future Outlook*, May 24, 1963, n.p; N.A., "Passive Resistance", *Washington Post*, February 24 1960, A12.

acceptable behavior when participating in protests and boycotts, and appropriate reactions to hecklers, racial epithets and physical violence. The intention behind using these tactics was not simply based on moral grounds but a political strategy that was vested in exposing the horrors of the everyday conditions of Jim Crow and more broadly White supremacy.<sup>80</sup> It is important to highlight that the use of Black Respectability Politics and non-violence were not exclusive to the Civil Rights Movement. These methods had been used in other movements that were a part of the more expansive Black Liberation Movement. Black Respectability Politics has a long history in the Black American community. Originating in the church, it is characterized as a set of prescribed appropriate behaviors, manners, values, and morals that members of the Black community should adhere to. Black Respectability Politics was largely used as a means to combat the vitriolic racist and sexist stereotypes perpetuated in society that promoted violence, oppression, and a racial hierarchy that forced Black Americans into a second-class position.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Jeanne Theoharris, ““A Life History of Being Rebellious”: The Radicalism of Rosa Parks,” in Dayo F. Gore, Jeanne Theoharis, & Komozi Woodard (eds.), *Want to Start A Revolution? Radical Black Women In The Black Freedom Struggle* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 115-38; Danielle L. McGuire, ““It Was Like All of Us Had Been Raped”: Sexual Violence, Community Mobilization, and the African American Struggle,” *Journal of American History* 91, no. 3 (2004): 906-31; Clive Webb, ““A Cheap Trafficking in Human Misery”: The Reverse Freedom Rides of 1962,” *Journal Of American Studies* 38, no. 2 (2004): 249-71; Lynne Olson, *Freedom’s Daughters: UnSung Heroines of the Civil Rights Movement From 1830-1970*, (New York: Scribner, 2001); Belinda Robnett, *How Long? How Long? African-American Women in the Struggle For Civil Rights* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); David L. Chappell, *Inside Agitators: White Southerners in the Civil Rights Movement* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); N.A., “NAACP Units Throughout Nation Stage ‘Sympathy Demonstrations,’” *Carolina Times*, May 18, 1963, 7; N.A., “Rev. Abernathy Urges Peaceful Demonstrations,” *Campus Echo*, January 27, 1961, 1, 3.

<sup>81</sup> Mary Elizabeth B. Murphy, *Jim Crow Capital: Women and Black Freedom Struggles in Washington, D.C., 1920-1945* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2018); Fredrick C. Harris, “The Rise of Respectability Politics,” *Dissent* 61, no. 1 (2014): 33-37; Glenda Gilmore, *Gender And Jim Crow: Women And The Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Evelyn Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women’s Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994); Darlene Clark Hine, “Rape And The



Though the use of Black Respectability Politics sometimes countered the negative lived experiences of Black Americans, it still was no match against White supremacy and racism. Further, while Black Respectability Politics was employed as a method to resist White supremacist, sexist, and classed stereotypes of Black Americans, sadly, this stance reinforced complicity with these ideologies. College presidents also reinforced the imagery of Black respectability when they spoke about the campus environment and student life.<sup>82</sup> For instance, in Dr. Gibbs' annual report for A&T's Board of Trustee members he provided a brief explanation about the lunch counter sit-ins. His response included rhetoric that expressed how well-behaved students were and focused more on their behavior than the actual reason for the protest. Gibbs comments,

...our students were well behaved, respectful and peaceful, both toward college authorities and store managers. Many influential people, some of whom did not agree with the demonstration, have complimented the students on their conduct in this difficult situation.... The students have cooperated well and all cooperating agencies are hopeful that something constructive will be worked out in the near future.<sup>83</sup>

Reviewing Gibbs' remarks, it is apparent that he recognized the need to handle this situation delicately. With many of the trustee members being White, Gibbs approach had to take into account the very paternalistic and often brutally racist attitudes of the members, so he placed a greater emphasis on students' behavior during the lunch counter sit-ins instead of highlighting the ways education helped assist students in their development and reasoning behind the sit-ins.

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Inner Lives of Black Women In The Middle West," *Signs* 14, no. 4 (1989): 912-20.

<sup>82</sup> N.A., "Howard President: "My Heart Leaps Up" at Student Demonstrations," *Carolina Times*, March 12, 1960, 1, 6.

<sup>83</sup> Warmoth Gibbs, *The Agricultural & Technical College of North Carolina Annual Report*, May 30, 1960, 5 (A&T (Greensboro) 4 Collection, Folder 1, 1.1).

It was better to highlight how respectful and well-behaved Black students were than to express the ways in which education led to students critiquing the system of Jim Crow or having debates on what equality and a democracy should look like.

The legacy of southern White vigilante terrorism had occupied spaces throughout North Carolina, and the city of Greensboro was no different.<sup>84</sup> As the resistance movement in Greensboro persisted the reactions of White residents were visceral. Much of White Greensboro felt that the concessions made rectified the “race problem” the city was experiencing. Further, Greensboro had always prided itself as a city of racial tolerance, so the continued criticisms made by Black residents were considered unjustified. This paternalistic attitude led to a wave of harassment and violent attacks against Black Greensboro residents.

The Klan had existed in North Carolina for a number of years but participation in certain portions of the state declined or remained stagnant. As Black Greensboro residents remained steadfast in their fight for equality the Klan grew in popularity around the city and across the state. What made matters worse is the Klan was a protected entity. Although Governor Dan K. Moore ran as a law and order candidate and spoke intently on keeping the peace, he rarely implicated the Klan and even permitted the organization to host a booth at the state fair where they yelled racial epithets and other racist insults over a loudspeaker. After 1964, the Klan in North Carolina grew in prominence<sup>85</sup>, which led to a number of instances of White vigilante violence and harassment.

This harassment included the picketing of a Black minister who had moved into a White neighborhood. Members of the local chapter of the Klan tormented Williams and his family for

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<sup>84</sup> David Cunningham, *Klansville, USA: The Rise and Fall of the Civil Rights-Era Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>85</sup> N.A., “KKK Plans Open Rally on Saturday,” *Daily Tar Heel*, July 30, 1964, 1.

weeks while parishioners of Williams' church and police officers monitored the home. It is important to note that while officers were tasked with keeping the home under surveillance, they refused to station anyone on the premises. This was extremely problematic because on July 15 members of the Klan burned two crosses and hung a Black effigy on a parked pick-up truck in front of Williams' home. Later that night, 300 people congregated to hear leaders of the local Klan chapter speak. Black residents in Greensboro remained under siege due to the growing aggressions of White residents and the refusal of the local government to address these matters.<sup>86</sup>

Because of the continued direct assault on Black life, HBCUs became one of the many spaces for engaging in discourses that no longer placed an emphasis on accommodating or assimilating in American Society. Instead, the scope of HBCU students' dreams of liberation and freedom saw their imaginations connecting the voices of the African Diaspora and other disenfranchised communities across the world. These dreams began to place an emphasis on their positions as world citizens and not just Americans. The ambitions and new direction of HBCU students and the larger Black community was not a new revelation. The late 60s was met with change and transformation. More HBCU students worked collaboratively with community and grassroots organizers, openly antagonized the global imperialism and racism of the U.S., and demanded better treatment for their respective institutions this complicated the relationships of HBCUs and the cities they existed in even more. This was very apparent at NC A&T, which became an even greater target in the eyes of White Greensboro.

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<sup>86</sup> William Chafe, *Civilities & Civil Rights*, 3, f. 3.

### 1965-1969: Changing tides and the Black Revolutionary

Black cultural aesthetics were present throughout campus events, student organizations, and students' personal style.<sup>87</sup> NC A&T even opened a cultural center on campus.<sup>88</sup> This Black cultural aesthetic was also present when reviewing homecoming pictures from "Ayantee 1970", the student yearbook. In previous homecoming courts, the queen and her royal court were dressed in evening gowns with pressed hair while their escorts were dressed in tuxedos with close cropped hair cuts, but the 1970 homecoming court wore African garb representative of countries such as Ghana and Nigeria. Women wore head wraps and both men and women wore their hair natural in Afros. Even for the yearbook photos, the homecoming court posed in African patterned dresses and most notably Ms. A&T was dark brown with a natural Afro. Further, the yearbook staff also included images of the NC A&T/Dudley student uprising to pay remembrance.<sup>89</sup> The 1970 yearbook was unlike previous yearbooks in that it displayed Black students' celebration of Pan Africanism and rejection of the historically conservative sensibilities associated with HBCUs.

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<sup>87</sup>N.A., "Amen" is Success," *Bennett Banner*, February 23, 1971, 1; N.A., "A&T Celebrates Africa Day," *Bennett Banner*, May 22, 1970, 4; N.A., "Black Experience Is Seen Through Soul Week," *Bennett Banner*, March 24, 1970, 1; Don L. Lee, "We'll Move Together ... We Are Going to do It," *Bennett Banner*, November 26, 1969, 5; George Stevens, "Color, em Black," (Poet's Corner), *Bennett Banner*, November 4, 1969, 3; N.A., "BSUL Meeting Is Held at A&T St.," *Bennett Banner*, November 4, 1969, 1; N.A., "Bennett Chosen Info-Center," *Bennett Banner*, November 4, 1969, 1; Charles Daye, "Two Types of Instructors in Negro Colleges," *Campus Echo*, May 18, 1966, 2,4; N.A., "Soul Magazine Organized at NCC," *Campus Echo*, March 28, 1966, 1.

<sup>88</sup> George D. Adams, Jr., "Afro House Opens with Work by Oscar Farrar," *A&T Register*, May 9, 1969, 1; Hilliard B. Hines, Jr., "House of Black Culture," *A&T Register*, May 9, 1969, 2; W. Mai Leach, "Aggies Observe Black Wall of Pride," *A&T Register*, May 9, 1969, 4.

<sup>89</sup> North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University at Greensboro, *Ayantee* (Greensboro, NC:1970). <https://lib.digitalnc.org/record/28879?ln=en>. Accessed October 19, 2019.

The Greensboro chapter of SOBU was very vocal in community matters including its support of Dudley students protesting the school administration's refusal to place senior Claude Barnes on the ballot to become student body president. SOBU also supported the relocation of Malcolm X Liberation University from Durham to Greensboro. Howard Fuller spearheaded the formulation of the university with the support of Black students at Duke University. The purpose for the university was to provide training and formal education to members in the community with an emphasis on engineering, nutrition, agricultural sciences, and health sciences, cultivate and strengthen communal ties, build an economic infrastructure in the Black community and promote Black Power, Pride, Independence, and Self Sufficiency.<sup>90</sup> The university eventually moved to Greensboro, which remained its permanent location. Members of the East Greensboro community and students at NC A&T played a significant role in its sustainability.<sup>91</sup>

The SOBU chapter of NC A&T stretched beyond East Greensboro. As an organization their solidarity comprised the support and advocacy of Black people across the state of NC. This included sharing the story of the Wilmington Ten in their self-published newspaper, *The African World*. This newspaper was shared globally and reported on issues pertinent to members of the African Diaspora. It also made a point to highlight the connectedness of African people's oppression across the globe. With this, SOBU became a driving force for the Black Nationalism and liberation frameworks of other Black organizations throughout the state of North Carolina.<sup>92</sup> While SOBU's outlet was useful for the community work that A&T students were doing, students also continued to battle with issues on campus as well. The functionality of HBCU

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<sup>90</sup> N.A., "Black Univ. Instituted," *Bennett Banner*, May 27, 1969, 1.

<sup>91</sup> Richard D. Benson, *Fighting for Our Place in the Sun: Malcolm X and the Radicalization of the Black Student Movement 1960-1973* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2015).

<sup>92</sup> Kenneth Janken, *The Wilmington Ten: Violence, Injustice, and the Rise of Black Politics in the 1970s* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

students' protest activism ranged from grievances on campus and criticizing the Vietnam War to the continued efforts of actualizing freedom and liberation for Black people in the U.S. and abroad.<sup>93</sup>

Campus issues still remained a central piece of A&T's students' protest. Similar to other campuses, SGA organized B\*\*\*\* Ins, which allowed students to lament about campus life.

Additionally, during the fall semester of '68, students boycotted classes until school administrators acknowledged a list of grievances such as the firing of six faculty members.<sup>94</sup>

While the work of A&T's SGA was heralded by some there was growing criticism surrounding the unconventional practices of the SGA, including boycotting classes.<sup>95</sup> This was most apparent

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<sup>93</sup> Blake Slonecker, "The Columbia Coalition: African Americans, New Leftists, and Counterculture at the Columbia University Protest of 1968," *Journal of Social History* 41 no. 4 (2008): 967-96; N.A., "A New Constitution for F.S.U.," *Voice*, December 1, 1971, 3; N.A., "Bennett's Academic Atmosphere is a Major Student Concern," *Bennett Banner*, May 22, 1970, 1,3; N.A., B.C. Joins National Vietnam Observance, *Bennett Banner*, November 4, 1969, 1; Allen Barton, "The Columbia Crisis: Campus, Vietnam, and the Ghetto," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 32 no. 3 (1968): 333-51; Mary F. Shanks, "Curfew Extension Or Bust," *Bennett Banner*, October 26, 1968, 2; Angelene Johnson, "An Effective Student Government," *Bennett Banner*, October 9, 1968, 2; N.A., "Bennett Students Work to Clean Up Neighborhood," *Bennett Banner*, May 28, 1968, 4; N.A., "Protests and the Masses," *Voice*, May 20, 1968, 5; Shirley Dendy, "F.S.C. Students Protest- Many Requests Granted," *Voice*, April 19, 1968, 1; N.A., "Student Protest," *Bennett Banner*, February 20, 1968, 1; Hilliard B. Hines, Jr., "At Grambling College: Sports Minded Prexy Suspends Twenty Five Students," *A&T Register*, November 9, 1967, 1; Laura Gilmore, "Noises: Joyful and Otherwise," *Voice*, November 1, 1967, 1; Laura Gilmore, "A Memorandum and Challenge To "Let's Get-It-Done-Nowers"," *Voice*, January 31, 1967, 2; N.A., "Mock Senate Against Escalation of War," *Campus Echo*, May 18, 1966, 1; Quentin D. Finch, "Can A Professor Be Found," *Campus Echo*, May 18, 1966, 3-4; William H. Cheeks, "War in Vietnam: Perplexing Enigma," *Campus Echo*, March 28, 1966, 2; N.A., "Dr. Massie: Inhibited President," *Campus Echo*, January 28, 1966, 2.

<sup>94</sup> Barbara M. Joyner, "Calvin Matthews: Disruptive Tactics May Not Be Used Again," *A&T Register*, March 7, 1969, 1; N.A., "Instructor Files Suit; Matthews, Drake Charged," *A&T Register*, February 21, 1969, 1; SGA, "Grievances Continue: Cafeteria, Bookstore, Infirmary, Newspaper....," *A&T Register*, February 21, 1969, 4; N.A., "Student Government Releases "Bitch-In" Grievances," *A&T Register*, February 7, 1969, 1; N.A., "Retreaters Stage Mini Mass," *A&T Register*, September 20, 1968, 1,6.

<sup>95</sup> N.A., "The Boycott: Was it Illogical?," *A&T Register*, December 19, 1968, 4; Willie M. Leach, "Obscene Newsletters," *A&T Register*, December 19, 1968, 4; Betsy Diann Kirby, "There

in the student newspaper, *A&T Register*. Members of the newspaper took a more conservative position; these two organizations would sometimes find themselves at odds.<sup>96</sup> Regardless of these instances, students on campus remained committed to improving campus and the surrounding East Greensboro community.

As college students across the country continued to use their respective campuses as their platform for protest, sensitivity among college and university administrators increased, especially at HBCUs. Though student protests on college campuses were not new, the dynamics of the late 60s created a different tone and atmosphere that made college administrators, state legislatures, and some U.S. officials fearful.<sup>97</sup> This led to the adoption of policies that would significantly curb or stifle students' protest and activism.<sup>98</sup> N.C. A&T was no different. In Fall 1969, the university expanded its student conduct to include regulations and guidelines for student protests

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Are Truly Black Souls," *A&T Register*, May 2, 1968, 1.

<sup>96</sup> Lillie Miller, "On Cafeteria Strike," *A&T Register*, March 28, 1969, 2; Cornelia Schoolfield, "Destructive Thinking," *A&T Register*, March 28, 1969, 2,5; Prince Legree, "Fire" On Campus Or Student Power Vs. "The System," *A&T Register*, September 20, 1968, 2.

<sup>97</sup> Sean Scalmer, "Translating Contention: Culture, History, and the Circulation of Collective Action," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 25, no. 4 (2000): 491-514; Christopher J. Lucas, *American Higher Education: A History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996); President's Commission on Campus Unrest, *Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest*, 1970, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

<sup>98</sup> Hugh Johnston, *Radical Campus: Making Simon Fraser University* (Vancouver, BC: Douglas & McIntyre Ltd., 2005); Philip G. Altbach, "American Student Activism: The Post-Sixties Transformation," *Journal of Higher Education* 61, no. 1 (1990): 32-49; Joseph R. Gusfield, "Student Protest and University Response," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 395 (1971): 26-38; Bruce R. Hopkins & John H. Myers, "Governmental Response to Campus Unrest," *Case Western Reserve Law Review* 22, no. 3 (1971), 408-74; N.A., "Student Unrest Causes Crackdown On Campuses," *A&T Register*, March 20, 1969, 1, 6; N.A., "Student Energy and Talent Must Be Channeled," *A&T Register*, February 21, 1969, 6; George Curry, "Knoxville College Students Plead For Help: Officials Under 'Pressure to Get a Scapegoat'," *Bennett Banner*, October 26, 1968, 6; Jannifer English, "The Rising Tide of Dissent," *Bennett Banner*, October 9, 1968, 2; N.A., "Though Small in Number, SDS Leads In Campus Disruption," *Bennett Banner*, October 9, 1968, 4; Laura Gilmore, "Students Who Protest," *Voice*, April 4, 1967, 2.

on campus, including the requirement to notify administration of any grievances or issues.<sup>99</sup>

Despite the administration's attempts to curb student activism, A&T students placed an even greater investment around community issues, including supporting the A&T cafeteria workers strike. Complaints about the dining hall services were a constant issue on A&T's campus.

Beginning in the 1920s and well into the 1950s, students at NC A&T held a number of strikes to express their grievances with the accommodations or lack thereof offered by the dining hall<sup>100</sup>, but this time those criticisms included the poor treatment of the cafeteria workers. They worked with local business owners in the community to purchase food and donate meals to students. The mistreatment of cafeteria workers was not exclusive to NC A&T. Black students at Duke University and UNC Chapel Hill also protested in solidarity with the dining services employees.<sup>101</sup> Students marched to Dr. Dowdy's house, but Dr. Dowdy was not home. Police arrived to disperse the group even though witnesses including Vincent McCullough shared that students were in the process of returning to the student union. Frustrated with officers being called, A&T students proceeded to march to East Market Street. Chaos broke. Windows were smashed, traffic halted. Officers were called. When they arrived, officers used tear gas canisters to disperse the crowd and clear out Market Street. At this time officers expressed that students had opened fire on them, but witness accounts suggested that the majority of students had already returned to campus. Three students were arrested, and several students had been injured

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<sup>99</sup> Russell Rickford, *We Are An African People: Independent Education, Black Power, and the Radical Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); Board of Trustees, North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University, June 6, 1969, Special Meeting: Recommendations, 8.

<sup>100</sup> Warmoth T. Gibbs, *History of the North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College* (Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown Book Company, 1966).

<sup>101</sup> Lillie Miller, "Students Aid Workers in Obtaining Demands," *The Register*, March 20, 1969, 1; N.A., "On Black Monday," *A&T Register*, December 18, 1969, 2; Cohen Greene, "Black Students Support Strikers," *A&T Register*, December 12, 1969, 1.



by shots fired by police. Tensions remained as police patrolled the area around the university on Friday. Eventually there was a settlement and cafeteria workers returned to Murphy Hall to serve students.<sup>102</sup> Unfortunately, this would not be the last time NC A&T's campus or students would be overwhelmed with a police presence.

### **1970s: Black Radicalism, HBCUs, and State Sanctioned Violence**

As A&T students continued to engage in activism critical of local Greensboro politics, state politics and U.S. politics in the late 1960s and 70s, the campus came under even greater scrutiny. With the emergence of Black Power, A&T's campus became under heavy surveillance.<sup>103</sup> While much attention has been given to the tragic events that occurred at Kent State University, Cornell University, and schools in the University of California system, this same recognition has not been given to South Carolina State University, Southern University, Jackson State University, Texas Southern University, or NC A&T. Matters at HBCUs were worse and poorly reported.<sup>104</sup> As the Black Power Movement permeated HBCU campuses across the country the local police and government became even more adversarial towards these institutions. Hysteria in Greensboro grew as White residents perceived A&T as a training ground

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<sup>102</sup> Cohen Greene, "Police Open Fire on Students in Wake of Campus Disturbance," *A&T Register*, March 20, 1969, 1.

<sup>103</sup> Horace Ferguson, "From Plantation to Hunting Ground," *A&T Register*, March 28, 1969

<sup>104</sup> Melandie McGee & Eric Platt, "The Forgotten Slayings: Memory, History, and Institutional Response to the Jackson State University Shootings of 1970," *American Educational History Journal* 42, no. 1&2 (2015), 15-32; Kellie C. Sorey & Dennis Gregory, "Protests in the Sixties," *College Student Affairs Journal* 28, no. 2 (2010): 184-206; Whitney Blair Wyckoff, "Jackson State: A Tragedy Widely Forgotten," *National Public Radio (NPR)*, May 3, 2010. <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=126426361>; Mark Giles, "Race, Social Justice, and the Jackson State University Shootings," in *Historically Black Colleges and Universities: Triumphs, Troubles, and Taboos*, ed. Marybeth Gasman and Christopher L. Tudico, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2008), 105-20; N.A., "The Shootings at Jackson State University: Thirty Years Later," *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* 28 (2000): 42-43; N.A., "Mississippi Blacks Ask Help," *Charlotte Post*, September 2, 1971, 10; N.A., "Says Negro Students In Nashville, Tennessee Rioting Were Victims of Police Frame-up", *Carolina Times*, April 22, 1967, 15.

for the “radical” Black Panther Party to influence students to become rogue members of society that were disorderly and promoted anarchy. This subversive view of A&T and its students led to irrational fears and most importantly a significant misrepresentation of the Black Power Movement and why the students at A&T, as well as other local HBCU students, connected so quickly to the ideologies of Black Power.<sup>105</sup> This could be seen in the media reporting of Black students responses to the assassination of Dr. King and the cities’ responses to students organizing protests or vigils.

For instance, when reviewing the *Daily Tar Heel* about Black students protesting the assassination of Dr. King, students in their righteous anger are characterized as radical, vigilante, and looking for trouble while the rest of the campus and community are victimized by the terror exhibited by the students. This narrative could also be seen in Raleigh with Shaw University students and Greensboro with NC A&T students. Although students in certain areas of downtown obstructed portions of traffic, the excessive force used to remove the students including the calling of the National Guard,<sup>106</sup> showcased the very racist fears of Black Power. It is important to note, especially with the Black students’ protest at UNC Chapel Hill, the crowd was significantly smaller, but police were still tasked to patrol the area. These actions demonstrated a larger fear of Black rage. The presence of officers on A&T’s campus preceded the rally for Dr. King.

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<sup>105</sup> William Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights*, 3, f. 3; Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle*, 16, f. 41.

<sup>106</sup> Prince Legree, “A Sequence to Violence”, *A&T Register*, April 18, 1968, p.1; N.A., “Negroes March Here; National Guard Called,” *Greensboro Daily News*, (n.d.); Terry Gingras, “Young Negroes Voice Despair,” *Daily Tar Heel*, April 6, 1968, 1; Rick Gray, “Chapel Hill Tensions Rise As Blacks Stage Protest,” *Daily Tar Heel*, April 6, 1968, 1; N.A., “Tear Gas Breaks Up Raleigh Demonstration: ‘Black, Black, We’re Going to Attack’ Shout Students,” *Daily Tar Heel*, April 6, 1968, p.1, 4.

Another incident indicating the over policing of Black students especially HBCU students was on March 13, 1969. Greensboro police stationed on the parameters of A&T, which included portions of East Greensboro and illegally searched cars that had Black passengers while White car riders were permitted to drive through the area without being searched. The worst scenario is that several individuals—three students and a guest on campus—were wounded by officer gunfire.<sup>107</sup> This event led to students becoming highly critical and distrusting of administration because they were unsure of their role in the Greensboro police arriving on campus. This concern was not unusual. Sadly, there were a number of instances where HBCU administrators had assisted local government officials and police to disassemble students' participation in community activism and campus protests.<sup>108</sup>

Working alongside cafeteria members, A&T students were still met with state sanctioned resistance. Although police had been called to Duke and Chapel Hill's campus to disarm protest, their engagement with the historically Black college looked significantly different. The brutalizing experiences of state sanctioned violence would appear again a year later when 600 National Guardsmen sieged the campus of NC A&T. NC A&T students found themselves in a battle between the city of Greensboro and Dudley High School students, who led a protest because of a student election. As the protest persisted, police officers patrolled all of East Greensboro and the city was placed under curfew. Students' persistence led to the call of National Guard to siege A&T's campus. Over several days there was significant property

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<sup>107</sup> North Carolina A&T State University, student public statement, n.d.

<sup>108</sup> Judy Bergeron, "Deadly 1972 Protest at Southern University Highlighted in New PBS Documentary on HBCUs," *Advocate*, February 18, 2018.

[https://www.theadvocate.com/baton\\_rouge/news/education/article\\_5f6edcd4-104f-11e8-8002-1327b8a7dabf.html](https://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/news/education/article_5f6edcd4-104f-11e8-8002-1327b8a7dabf.html); Malcolm McLaughlin, *The Long, Hot Summer of 1967: Urban Rebellion in America* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014).

damage on the campus, the wounding of several police officers and students, and sadly, the murder of one A&T student, Willie Grimes. His murder is still unsolved. The Dudley/A&T student uprising was unlike anything that had occurred on the college campuses in North Carolina.<sup>109</sup> Similar to other HBCUs that experienced state sanctioned violence, the story of Dudley/A&T was lost in memory.

As HBCUs struggled with the continued onset of police surveillance and state sanctioned violence, the media used this to discredit these institutions. This added another layer to the anti-Black sentiments that were pervasive in higher education about HBCUs. Despite the regularity of police harassment, NC A&T students and HBCUs across the country continued campaigns against the inequity they experienced on their campuses and within the larger Black community.

### **Conclusion**

NC A&T students' activism for the East Greensboro community and the greater Black community should not only hold space in historical and African American studies circles but it should also be elevated in the history of higher education. The work of students at NC A&T illustrates the ability of HBCUs to become spaces of resistance and liberation. Although these institutions were met with oppressive, undermining, and many times violent assaults, students at NC A&T and other HBCUs were able to cultivate movements, agitate oppressive systems, and collectively dream about the possibilities of a new society. Although all universities suffered at the hands of policing and state sanctioned violence, unlike their PWI counterparts, NC A&T and other HBCUs' experienced even greater opposition. Even during the CRM, NC A&T students

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<sup>109</sup> N.A., "A&T University Asks Federal Investigation," *Carolina Peacemaker*, June 7, 1969, 1; N.A., "A. & T. Closed for this Semester," *Carolina Times*, May 31, 1969, 7; N.A., "Greensboro Night of Violence," *Carolina Peacemaker*, May 24, 1969, 1.

were regularly arrested for peaceful protests and charges for their arrests ranged from inciting a riot to trespassing.<sup>110</sup>

Much like Black communities, the over-policing of NC A&T in comparison to its counterparts at NC State and UNC Chapel Hill demonstrated the ways in which matters of civil unrest were racialized. Most importantly, the State of North Carolina's retaliation against NC A&T was not a singular instance of state sanctioned violence and over-policing, it was also associated with the fiscal health of the institution. Many Black college presidents were afraid of the possible financial retribution of state and board of education leaders, which led them to making decisions that were grossly heavy hand including expulsions and suspensions of students who participated in protests. Though NC A&T presidents faced similar circumstances, Gibbs, Proctor, and Dudley's approach to NC A&T's students' activism was quite different. None of these presidents obstructed A&T students from remaining students and participating in and activism. While Gibbs' and Dudley's support was not as overt as Dr. Proctor's, both presidents were very vested in ensuring that students were able to complete their studies and receive the support and protection they needed as protestors. The story of the NC A&T student protest movement provides nuance to the larger protest literature—it highlights the experiences of HBCUs as institutions and of the Black students these institutions served. It also demonstrates and showcases that while these institutions are often described as ultra conservative there were spaces and individuals inside the HBCU infrastructure that did not inhibit students from a legacy of liberation and freedom work.

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<sup>110</sup> Langdon Ammen, "Defects in Warrants Slow Trespass Trial," *Greensboro Record*, N.D., n.p.; Dorothy Benjamin, "Colleges Ponder Student Problem," *Greensboro Record*, N.D., n.p.

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**CHAPTER 3. THE DUDLEY & NC A&T STUDENT UPRISING: BLACK EDUCATIVE SPACES, STUDENT RESISTANCE, & THE FIGHT FOR SELF DETERMINATION**

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**Abstract**

This paper examines a specific event that occurred during the NC A&T student protest movement, which is the NC A&T/ Dudley student uprising of 1969. Dudley High School is the historically Black high school in the city of Greensboro. Similar to other historically Black high schools across the country, Dudley was a feeder school for NC A&T. Both institutions share a long and harmonious history with one another. As Black educational spaces they are points of pride for Black residents in the city. Interestingly enough, the events that led to the uprising caused these institutions to be perceived as a threat to the racial harmony of the city by many White residents. This particular paper provides a timeline of events that led to the student uprising as well as the events that occurred during. Exploring this particular incident also reveals the ways HBCUs were far more aggressively policed than their PWI counterparts. Unfortunately, these incidents often went underreported and rarely received the same attention in the literature as the aggressive policing at White counterparts.

For, while the tale of how we suffer, and how we are delighted, and how we may triumph is never new, it always must be heard. There isn't any other tale to tell, it's the only light we've got in all this darkness.

- James Baldwin

### **Introduction**

In April of 1969, Claude Barnes and several of his classmates orchestrated a walkout to protest Dudley High School's administration refusing to place Barnes on the ballot for student body president. Though Barnes was a popular student and met all of the election requirements, his perceived affiliation with the Black Panther Party created apprehension, annoyance, and frustration among school administrators who felt it sullied the reputation of Dudley High School. Despite the administration's position, Barnes received an overwhelming amount of student support and won the election by over 400 votes as a write-in candidate. Disregarding the election results, administrators selected another student to become student body president, Connie Herbin.<sup>111</sup>

This situation further escalated the already tense relationship between Dudley students and administrators. Distrust of administration had been a long-standing issue, especially with Dudley's strict dress code policy, no inclusion of African and African American history in the curriculum, and the refusal of school administrators to allow off campus lunch for junior and senior students. Disgruntled, students proceeded to walk out of class, protest, and throw rocks at

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<sup>111</sup> Eric Ginsburg, "The Forgotten History of Greensboro's A&T/ Dudley Revolt," *Teen Vogue*, May 20, 2019, <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/the-history-of-greensboros-aandt-dudley-revolt>; Stan Swofford, "Dudley student sparks "Greensboro Rebellion"," *News & Record*, May 2, 1999, [https://www.greensboro.com/dudley-student-sparks-greensboro-rebellion/article\\_4a08ec4f-6a27-53a3-bafe-82ab64864dab.html](https://www.greensboro.com/dudley-student-sparks-greensboro-rebellion/article_4a08ec4f-6a27-53a3-bafe-82ab64864dab.html).

the Dudley High School administration building. The Greensboro police were called to maintain order. Many Dudley High School students were tear-gassed, arrested, and received restraining orders. Unable to protest on campus, these students asked for the support and use of resources from student leaders at North Carolina A&T State University (NC A&T), a public, historically Black university in the city. Several weeks prior, NC A&T leaders attempted to intercede and work towards finding a solution that suited all parties, but by many accounts the Greensboro School Board and Dudley's administration were resistant.<sup>112</sup>

With the protest extending to NC A&T, White vigilantes began harassing and terrorizing Black Greensboro residents. To curb student protests and the civil unrest, Greensboro Mayor Jack Elam announced a curfew and requested 600 national guardsmen to siege NC A&T's campus. The aftermath of these events included extensive property damage, five officers being injured, one NC A&T student injured, and one NC A&T student, Willie Grimes, being murdered. The shooting of Willie Grimes is the oldest unsolved murder in the city of Greensboro, North Carolina.<sup>113</sup>

This paper outlines the troubling events that led to the murder of Willie Grimes and highlights the racist and White supremacist attitudes of city and state officials when engaging with NC A&T. This paper also illustrates how NC A&T was a central hub for community building and activism. The significance of this paper is twofold. First, it highlights the inequity that has continually plagued Black formal educative spaces. Investigating the concerns of the

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<sup>112</sup> Kenneth Bernard, "The Dudley Scene," *Carolina Peacemaker*, May 3, 1969; N.A., Unity Division, Greensboro of Commerce Recommends Students Make Decision at Dudley, *Carolina Peacemaker*, May 3, 1969, 1.

<sup>113</sup> Kelso Gillenwater, "The 50 Hour Ordeal: Greensboro's March to Three Days of Virtual Warfare," *Greensboro Daily News*, May 25, 1969, B1, B6; N.A., "Greensboro's ordeal," *Greensboro Daily News*, May 25, 1969, B4.

Dudley students' protests and A&T's tumultuous relationship with the state illustrates how formal Black educative spaces have been continually marginalized and exploited by local city officials, state legislators, and the larger White community.<sup>114</sup> Second, this paper illustrates the contribution of HBCU students during the protest movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Though individual narratives of student activism at HBCUs exist, many times they are placed as a footnote in the larger Civil Rights and Black Power Movement narrative.<sup>115</sup> Additionally, there are few narratives of student protest at HBCUs in the history of student protest literature. This essay thus contributes to recent scholarship by scholars such as Joy Ann Williamson-Lott, Jelani Favors, Harry Lefever, and Ibram X. Kendi that seeks to highlight the history of student protest at HBCUs.<sup>116</sup>

### **The Dudley Scene: Student Resistance & Conservative Administration**

The summer before his junior year, Claude Barnes attended a summer enrichment program at Western Carolina University. This summer intensive program recruited high achieving students from across the state of North Carolina. During the program, he was able to interact with a variety of students and noticed that many of his White colleagues had access to resources and privileges that the all Black Dudley High School he attended in Greensboro, NC

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<sup>114</sup> Jelani Favors, "Shaking up the World: NC A&T University and the Black Student Movement, 1960-1969" (Master thesis, Ohio State University, 1999).

<sup>115</sup> Peniel E. Joseph, *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Taeku Lee, *Mobilizing Public Opinion: Black Insurgency and Racial Attitudes in the Civil Rights Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

<sup>116</sup> Jelani Favors, *Shelter in a Time of Storm: How Black Colleges Fostered Generations of Leadership and Activism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019); Joy Ann Williamson, *Jim Crow Campus: Higher Education and the Struggle for a New Southern Social Order* (New York: Teacher's College Press, 2018); Ibram, Kendi, *The Black Campus Movement: Black Students and the Racial Reconstitution of Higher Education, 1965-1972* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Joy Ann Williamson, *Radicalizing the Ebony Tower: Black Colleges and the Black Freedom Struggle in Mississippi* (New York: Teacher's College Press, 2008); Harry Lefever, *Undaunted By the Fight: Spelman College and the Civil Rights Movement, 1957-1967* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2005).

did not. Recognizing the inequity, Barnes and a group of classmates decided that he should run for student body president (SBP). If elected, Barnes hoped that the school's administrators would accept the list of demands him and his colleagues created. This list included the privilege of off campus lunch for upper class students, changes to the dress code so students could wear dashikis and style hair in afros, creation of curriculum and stand-alone courses of African and African American studies, and an expansion of course offerings that included advanced level courses such as calculus.<sup>117</sup> For many young African Americans, including Barnes, an awakening of a Black political consciousness raised many significant concerns around the living conditions of Black Americans, including in Greensboro.<sup>118</sup>

Similar transformational thinking led young people across the country to proactively engage in discourse that questioned their current status as American citizens, but most importantly critique the ways in which Black people engaged with gaining liberation and their civil rights. This discourse began to emerge with disenchantment of the Civil Rights Movement, the rise of the Black Power Movement, and the murders of Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.<sup>119</sup> For instance, A&T students worked collaboratively with cafeteria workers during a worker's strike to ensure better pay, working conditions, and better food choices being offered in the dining hall.<sup>120</sup> The commitment to community activism and social justice also led to the

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<sup>117</sup> John Newsom, "1969 Disturbance that Rocked a College Campus and a City," *News & Record*, May 19, 2019, [https://www.greensboro.com/news/education/three-days-in-may-a-look-back-at-the-disturbances/article\\_2651b346-a1be-532b-86ad-6c988444413d.html](https://www.greensboro.com/news/education/three-days-in-may-a-look-back-at-the-disturbances/article_2651b346-a1be-532b-86ad-6c988444413d.html); Stan Swofford, "Dudley Student Sparks" (see page 1, footnote 1).

<sup>118</sup> Ibram Rogers, "Remembering the Black Campus Movement: An Oral History Interview with James P. Garrett," *Journal of Pan African Studies* 2, no. 10 (2009): 30-41.

<sup>119</sup> Nikhil Singh, *Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2005).

<sup>120</sup> Lillie Miller, "Students Aid Workers in Obtaining Demands," *The A&T Register*, March 20, 1969, 1; Cohen Greene, "Police Open Fire on Students in Wake of Campus Disturbance," *The A&T Register*, March 20, 1969, 1.

creation of S.O.B.U (Students Organizing for Black Unity), in 1969, by A&T student leaders. This organization would later transition into Y.O.B.U (Youth Organizing for Black Unity). This community youth organization was especially concerned with the issues and concerns of the working class and poor Black communities of Greensboro. Their platforms included equitable pay, housing, and improvements of infrastructure such as roads and streetlights in East Greensboro. Along with other Dudley High School students, Claude Barnes Jr. was an active member of Y.O.B.U. His participation in Y.O.B.U and other community organizations would unfortunately be used to characterize him as an unsatisfactory candidate for student body president.

Spring semester arrived and Barnes completed the application to run for SBP. Weeks before the election was scheduled, he was asked to attend a meeting with Dudley's principal, Franklin Brown, dean of women, Mae Sue Henry, and vice principal, Chester Bradley. During this meeting, he was told that he would not be able to participate in the SBP election. Shocked, Barnes inquired about the decision. The administration explained that he lacked the qualifications needed to represent the student body as president for Dudley High School.<sup>121</sup> This reason was untrue. Barnes was an exceptional student at Dudley. He excelled in the classroom and maintained his position on the football team and running track during the spring.

Additionally, Barnes was well liked among his peers. He was the junior class president, vice president of the school's service club, a member of the student council, and a member of the Greensboro Youth Council. Barnes' qualifications made him an optimal candidate for the

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<sup>121</sup> North Carolina State Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, "Trouble in Greensboro," *Report of an Open Meeting Concerning the Disturbances at Dudley High School and North Carolina A&T State University*, (Raleigh, NC), March 1970, (Willie Grimes Collection, Box #1, 1.21).



position of SBP, which led many to question the real reason why the school's administration refused to allow him to be on the ballot. Eventually, Barnes learned that his assumed affiliation with the Black Panther Party (BPP) created apprehension, fear, and uneasiness among school administrators. They felt it sullied the reputation of Dudley High School. The school principal, Franklin Brown, described Barnes as a "militant coached by the Black Panthers."<sup>122</sup>

Barnes' engagement with certain community organizations is what led to the accusations. He was a founding member of the Youth for the Unity of a Black Society. He also had memberships in the Black Students United for Liberation and Greensboro's Association of Poor People, which he was the youth director for. Barnes and those affiliated with these organizations vehemently denied any affiliation with the Black Panther Party, but the school's administration along with the local Greensboro school board insisted upon this relationship.<sup>123</sup>

The perceived threat of the Black Panther Party infiltrating Dudley High School's student council was precipitated by fear. While Dudley's administration was comprised exclusively of Black people, the entrance of the Black Panther Party was viewed as a threat. This belief was deeply entrenched in the negotiation of Black respectability politics, which were predicated on the belief that if Black people behaved and conducted themselves in ways that aligned with Christian Protestant values and White Victorian gender roles, they would be able to combat racist and White supremacist perceptions of Blackness. More importantly, it was believed that engagement in such respectability politics would lead to the recognition of Black American's humanity and rights as full citizens.<sup>124</sup> Though the practice of Black respectability politics was

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<sup>122</sup> Stan Swofford, "Dudley Student Sparks" (see page 1, footnote 1)

<sup>123</sup> T. J. Moore, "Doer from the Get-Go," *Carolina Peacemaker*, March 20-26, 2003, 1A, 5A.

<sup>124</sup> Kevin Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Cultures in the Twentieth Century*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Dwight McBride, "Can the queen speak? Racial essentialism, sexuality, and the problem of authority," *Callaloo* 21, no. 2

largely adopted it did little to protect Black Americans from racist and sexist stereotypes. More importantly, these practices were often weaponized to debase and denigrate certain Black cultural aesthetics that were considered primitive and crude.<sup>125</sup> For certain Black residents, the Black Panther Party represented a threat to the progress that had been made and the attempts to make even more progress.<sup>126</sup> Additionally, the characterizations of the Panther's in the media led to hysterics in the White community.<sup>127</sup>

White Greensboro residents, similar to other White Americans, found the Civil Rights Movement palatable. This was largely due to the performance of Black respectability politics during protest and demonstrations, which included dressing in business attire, the use of non-violence, and professing a willingness to assimilate. Most importantly, unlike the Black Panther Party and the more expansive Black Power Movement, Civil Rights organizations still placed faith in the White power structure to remedy its wrongs.<sup>128</sup> It is important to recognize that not all individuals who participated in the Civil Rights Movement ascribed to these beliefs, however an overwhelming majority did. Exposing these fundamental differences is not meant to negate or deny the significance of the movement or its legacy of progress; rather, it is meant to highlight that while the Civil Rights Movement countered racism and racial discrimination it still worked under the confines of a White power structure.<sup>129</sup> In contrast, the Black Power Movement, which

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(1998): 363-379.

<sup>125</sup> Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

<sup>126</sup> N.A., "Dudley PTSA Leader Levels Charges," *Greensboro Record*, December 5, 1969, B1, B18.

<sup>127</sup> William L. Van DeBurg, *New day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and American culture, 1965-1975* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

<sup>128</sup> Richard D. Benson, *Fighting for Our Place in the Sun: Malcolm X and the Radicalization of the Black Student Movement, 1960-1973* (New York: Peter Lang, 2012).

<sup>129</sup> Daniel Perlstein, "Teaching Freedom: SNCC and the Creation of the Mississippi Freedom Schools," *History of Education Quarterly* 30, no. 3 (August 1990): 297-324.

also demanded civil rights and liberties, was concerned with developing an independent society outside of the White power structure.<sup>130</sup>

Upon learning that his name would not be on the ballot, Claude Barnes and several of his classmates decided to orchestrate a walk out. This was the first attempt students made to demonstrate against the decision of school officials. Another walk out was orchestrated on May 2, which included Barnes and nine other students. Although the earlier walkouts did not include a significant number of students, eventually more students became involved due to the mounting frustrations and distrust of school officials and the Greensboro School Board.<sup>131</sup> While Barnes being targeted was disconcerting to students, it was especially troubling that this occurred at a notable historically Black high school with a history of active engagement in resistance, especially during the Civil Rights Movement.<sup>132</sup> Additionally, the school administration was exclusively comprised of Black individuals, which made this circumstance all the more dispiriting. Environments of White supremacy are not always comprised of White bodies, unfortunately. Even in spaces where White people are absent, White supremacy is still pervasive.<sup>133</sup>

White supremacy, however, was not a deterrent for Barnes and his fellow classmates at Dudley. Barnes decision to run for student body president was not simply a matter of his

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<sup>130</sup> David Brown, "Howard Fuller Addresses Black Student Conference," *The A&T Register*, October 10, 1969, 1.

<sup>131</sup> N.A., "Friday's Hearing Reviewed: Present, Former Dudley Students Testify", *Greensboro Daily News*, October 5, 1969, C5.

<sup>132</sup> Lewis Brandon and Jo Ann E. Lynn, Dudley has historic links to the Civil Rights Movement, *Panther's Claw*, February 2002, 1.

<sup>133</sup> Leslie Brown, *Upbuilding Black Durham: Gender, Class, and Black Community in the Jim Crow South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Victoria Wolcott, *Remaking Respectability: African American Women in Interwar Detroit* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

popularity or an annotation to include in his college admission letters. His decision was deeply personal. Barnes shared that he experienced a transformation after his attendance at Western Carolina University's summer enrichment program as well as hearing Nelson Johnson and other A&T student leaders/community activists speak. Barnes noted that prior to these experiences he believed as long as you worked hard you could be successful no matter who you were.<sup>134</sup>

Because of this consciousness raising he began to work collaboratively with other like-minded Dudley students to create change. This consciousness raising was not exclusive to Dudley students. The Black Power era was grounded in an intense focus on the nature of Black identity, including pride in one's Black and African heritage. Although these changes are most notably associated with younger aged individuals, the transition of ideology was not lost on older people. The transition to Black Power became a growing philosophy among African Americans. This emergence of a radical Black consciousness permeated all sectors of Black life, and for many young people, including Barnes, led to critiques of their educational experiences. Black Power fostered an even more fervent appeal for students to organize and mobilize.<sup>135</sup>

Though Barnes was most adversely impacted by administrators' decision, he was not the only individual frustrated and disappointed with the outcome. Upon learning that their classmate and friend would no longer be able to participate in the election, Dudley students organized a write-in campaign.<sup>136</sup> Notably, the history of the write-in campaign and student pushback against the administrative decision was largely absent in local newspaper reporting in the *Greensboro Daily News* and *Greensboro Record*. It might have been a matter of reporters not receiving the

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<sup>134</sup> Stan Swofford, "Dudley Student Sparks" (see page 1, footnote 1).

<sup>135</sup> Lee House, Jr., "Black Power? A Slogan, A Threat, A Poor Choice of Words", *The A&T Register*, December 14, 1967, 6.

<sup>136</sup> *Walls that Bleed*, directed by Michael Anthony (Greensboro, NC: Canvas Studio Inc., 2012).

information or it could have been a means to skew readers' perceptions of the Black Dudley High School students. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight this particular event because it shows the ability of Dudley students to effectively organize and it displayed the ways in which Dudley students were not simply onlookers to the oppressive circumstances at their school. Dudley students actively engaging in resistance was nothing new; they had been active participants in the strategizing and leadership of both the local Greensboro and national Civil Rights Movements, most notably the Woolworth lunch counter sit-ins.

With ambitious parents, courageous faculty and staff, and passionate students, Dudley High School was a central hub of activism and protest against discriminatory practices and racism against the Black residents of Greensboro.<sup>137</sup> Highlighting the activism of Dudley High School students is particularly important to mention because many residents, especially White residents, perceived the students as incapable of understanding their own social world, including racism and White supremacy, lacking the agency to develop ideologies and perspectives that made them question the oppressive culture at Dudley High School, and being unskilled in conceptualizing and developing a mass movement to combat racial injustices.<sup>138</sup> Instead, the White gaze assumed their naivety led them to being pressured and indoctrinated by bad Black radical organizations such as the Black Panther Party. It also characterized Black students as individuals who lacked critical thinking and analytical skills that enabled them to articulate their frustrations about their personal and communal experiences with disenfranchisement and racial

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<sup>137</sup> Jo Ann E. Lynn, "The History of James Benson Dudley Senior High School", *The Panther's Claw*, February 2002, 8-10; N.A., "Dudley has been in the Midst of Greensboro Politics for over 73 years", *The Panther's Claw*, February 2002, 1.

<sup>138</sup> Robert Stephens, "Witnesses Swap Charges on Disorder," *Greensboro Daily News*, October 5, 1969, A1, A6.

discrimination. Most importantly, it presumed that the students were comfortable and content with their current positions as oppressed individuals.<sup>139</sup>

Despite the administration's position, the write-in campaign was effective and Barnes received an overwhelming amount of student support and won the election with over 400 write-in votes. Yet, the administration refused to acknowledge Barnes as the student body president (SBP), stating that the write-in ballots were against school election policy. On May 9<sup>th</sup>, Barnes' opponent, Connie Herbin, was announced as Dudley's SBP during a student council assembly. Upon hearing the results, Barnes and several of his close friends walked out of their classes to protest the decision. What began as a Dudley High School student protest would eventually include students from the local junior high school, Lincoln. At 9:30 am, 70 students picketed in front of the school's administration building, and around noon the students dispersed at the request of a respected faculty member. Around 1:30 pm, Dudley students returned with a larger number of students. Roughly 150 individuals carried signs that included, "return our president (Barnes) from exile" and "educate not dictate".<sup>140</sup> This overlap of protesting was further fueled by long-standing frustrations students had with administration. With the administration adamant about not recognizing Claude Barnes as the student body president, students' dissatisfaction grew because they felt as if the democratic process had been tarnished and school administrators had infringed upon their civil rights.<sup>141</sup>

Throughout the month of May, small groups of Dudley High School students demonstrated in front of the school. Eventually, Dudley High and Lincoln Junior High School

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<sup>139</sup> William Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

<sup>140</sup> N.A., "Trouble at Dudley High", *Carolina Peacemaker*, May 17, 1969, 1.

<sup>141</sup> "Walls that Bleed".

students began their protest chanting around Dudley High School's campus and throughout Lincoln Street. Students surrounded the high school administration building where Owen Lewis' office was located. Lewis worked for the city's school system as the public relations spokesman, and he had been placed at Dudley to offer his expertise on damage control with the matter of the Dudley election and eventual student protest. While the school board maintained that Lewis was solely there for issues related to the student election and protest it was later noted that Lewis had been given control of the school. During the protest, Dudley students demanded his removal from the school but also his dismissal as a Greensboro school system employee. Prior to Lewis' arrival on campus, the matter of the election could have been resolved and student protest could have been avoided. Dudley parents, community members, and student leaders from NC A&T attempted to collaborate and work towards a compromise with Dudley High School administration and the Greensboro School Board. But the school board refused to speak with or engage with anyone other than principal Franklin Brown, and by many accounts Principal Brown was told not to speak with parents on the matter.<sup>142</sup>

The lack of transparency from school administrators and school board members along with their refusal to speak with parents and community members became a charge to students to be persistent regardless of the actions of the school board or school administrators.<sup>143</sup> News reports documented the activity daily of the student protest at Dudley.

Pickets were on the front walk of the Dudley campus at 9:30am Wednesday to protest a recent student government election in which the name of one student, Claude Barnes, had

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<sup>142</sup> Robert Stephens, "Students: Concern was Lacking," *Greensboro Daily News*, October 4, 1969, A1, A5.

<sup>143</sup> Nat Walker, "Student Leaders Blame Police, School Officials", *Greensboro Daily News*, May 25, 1969, A1, A8.

been denied a place on the ballot. By late morning, the group had grown to 60 to 75, students, witnesses say. The group left shortly before noon. School officials say they left at the request of a faculty member. They returned at about 1:30pm, their number swelled to 125-150. Group had signs that said the school is supposed to “educate, not dictate” “return our president (Barnes) from exile”.<sup>144</sup>

Although Dudley had the ingredients to be a place of dissension, larger events created a perfect storm that caused tragedy at Dudley High School and NC A&T, including the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the revitalization of East Greensboro, and the continued disparities between the Black and White residents of the city. In the coming weeks, the protest intensified, and several witness accounts shared that the Greensboro police dressed in riot gear had been monitoring the students’ protest activities.

Student participation was limited during the earlier weeks of the protest with many students opting to attend class. The numbers of students participating would soon swell with each increasing week and by May 16 almost 400 students were boycotting classes.<sup>145</sup> On May 19, tensions between school administration and students increased and violence exploded across campus. Two days later on May 21<sup>st</sup>, the situation escalated further when students began throwing rocks at Dudley’s administration building. Police were called on campus to quell the picketing of students; nine arrests were made, and a significant amount of property damage occurred. This property damage was in response to the aggressive actions of police. Although there is no clear designation of when the police were called, police were instructed to restore order by removing students from the campus. The authorization of the Greensboro police force

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<sup>144</sup> North Carolina State Advisory Committee, “Trouble in Greensboro,” (see page 5, footnote 11)

<sup>145</sup> N.A., “Trouble at Dudley High,” *Carolina Peacemaker*, May 17, 1969, 1.



had come from Owen Lewis, the Greensboro school system's public relations official. The arrival of officers in riot gear was met with even greater resistance.<sup>146</sup>

Once Greensboro police arrived, students were defiant in their refusal to leave campus. Dudley students expressed that since the school was public property, the police had no authorization to remove them. With students refusing to leave, Principal Franklin Brown asked officers to withdraw from campus grounds as a form of mediation. Officers objected to this compromise and instead maintained a presence on campus with plainclothes officers. As uniformed officers proceeded to leave campus, Dudley students returned and converged on school grounds. At this time, the decision was made to shut down the school and send students home. The demonstrations continued and many of the students who were leaving classes decided to join the protest. With the number of students protesting swelling, uniformed officers returned to campus. The scene was complete chaos. The air on campus and throughout Lincoln Street and surrounding areas was filled with tear gas. Police threw canisters and used two mobile paper fog machines to disperse tear gas and smoke. Several officers were armed with rifles. Students were running in all directions covering their faces and coughing. Aside from the tear gas, officers used Billy clubs to beat and attack students as well as parents who had arrived to pick their children up from school.<sup>147</sup> Barnes was struck on the head with a nightstick as police riot squads continued to arrive on campus. Greensboro Daily reporters noted that during the incident:

Witnesses said officers pursued the group for at least two blocks, across Lee and up Lincoln streets. Tear gas was being employed the entire distance. Most of the students

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<sup>146</sup> N.A., "Charges Dropped Against Nine Dudley Students," *Carolina Peacemaker*, June 28, 1969, 1.

<sup>147</sup> North Carolina State Advisory Committee, "Trouble in Greensboro" (see page 5, footnote 11).

moved quickly but 50 students moved slower- they threw rocks at officers – two policemen were injured, several others were hit but uninjured. Witnesses expressed that the tear gas was deathly strong and many people including those in the neighborhood had to return inside their homes because the air was so thick with the gas.<sup>148</sup>

Multiple arrests were made, and many students received restraining orders, which barred them from campus and attending classes. Judge Robert M. Gambill of North Wilkesboro made a blanket order that, “...barred interference with the operation of Greensboro public schools.” The temporary order was issued Wednesday night and it included 40 names, though the wording of the order also included, “...other persons unknown to the plaintiff to whom this action may become known”.<sup>149</sup> Once students dispersed or were forcefully removed from campus, police remained on the premises. Officers were stationed atop school buildings with shotguns. With Dudley students restricted from using their campus, students headed to NC A&T.

### **NC A&T: The Black University and Community Engagement**

Dudley High School and NC A&T had a long-standing history. This relationship grew out of community ties and necessity. As one of the local historically Black high schools in Greensboro, after graduation, college bound students attended NC A&T. Because of segregation, NC A&T was one of the few options Black students had. This reality was not exclusive to Black students in Greensboro—Black students throughout the South had similar experiences of exclusively attending HBCUs. This relationship extended towards strategizing and organizing during the Civil Rights Movement. For instance, the lunch counter sit-ins are largely associated with NC A&T, but Dudley students also heavily participated in the sit-ins. During the summer, as Bennett College and NC A&T students returned home, Dudley High School students

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<sup>148</sup> Kelso Gillenwater, “The 50 Hour Ordeal” (see page 2, footnote 3).

<sup>149</sup> N.A., “Greensboro Night of Violence,” *Carolina Peacemaker*, May 24, 1969, 1.

continued to lead the charge of the sit-ins, which eventually led to the desegregation of the lunch counters in Greensboro.<sup>150</sup> These relationships had a significant impact on both student populations and it also represented the communal attitudes of the Black community. Dudley students escaping the disastrous reality on their own campus by looking for refuge at NC A&T should come as no surprise. Once Dudley students arrived on A&T's campus, they were met with open arms.

At the time of the Dudley protest, NC A&T students were hosting their first annual S.O.B.U. conference (Students Organizing for Black Unity). Attendance for the conference included Black college students from all over the country. Upon hearing what happened to the Dudley students, the S.O.B.U meeting was cancelled and students from the conference stood in solidarity with Dudley students by protesting on NC A&T's campus.<sup>151</sup> The support from NC A&T students was not out of the ordinary— several weeks prior to the tense build up between Dudley students and the school's administration, NC A&T leaders along with parents, community members and organizers attempted to intercede and work towards finding a solution that suited all parties.<sup>152</sup> What is interesting about NC A&T students working cohesively with community members, however, is that the larger cultures of many HBCUs valued conservatism. These cultures often created a level of gatekeeping between students and the local community. While HBCUs reconciled the idea of uplifting the Black community, HBCUs also focused on developing a buffer class of leaders that would socialize and assimilate the masses.<sup>153</sup> This

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<sup>150</sup> Katie Mosher, "Four Took Seats for Social Justice," *News & Observer*, January 28, 1990, 1A, 12A.

<sup>151</sup> Leander Forbes, "*Reflective notes on May 1969 at North Carolina A&T State University*, (n.d.), 6, (Willie Grimes Collection, Box #1, 1.51).

<sup>152</sup> North Carolina State Advisory Committee, "Trouble in Greensboro" (see page 5, footnote 11).

<sup>153</sup> Joy James, *Transcending the Talented Tenth: Black Leaders and American Intellectuals* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Joy Williamson, "'This has been Quite a Year for Heads Falling':

disconnect between HBCU students and the tenets of their institutions led to considerable friction during the Civil Rights and Black Power Eras as more students became increasingly frustrated with the ways in which their respective institutions restricted their attempts at community building, civil unrest, and political protests.<sup>154</sup>

Although a number of HBCU administrators attempted to deter students from certain forms of activism, the president of NC A&T, Dr. Dowdy, proceeded differently when engaging NC A&T students who were protest participants. Dr. Dowdy did not obstruct or prohibit students from their use of A&T's campus as a central hub for community activism. While he may not have openly supported students, he never thwarted what the students were doing. Dr. Dowdy had been a part of the university for a significant number of years. Additionally, he was placed as acting president for the 1962-63 school year. Because of Dr. Proctor's extensive traveling for his position in the Peace Corps, Dr. Dowdy had been placed as an interim until Proctor's return.<sup>155</sup> At this time, "the largest and most sustained series of student sit-in demonstrations occurred."<sup>156</sup> These actions of activism and protests persisted throughout Dr. Dowdy's tenure. Though the majority of students at NC A&T were not actively engaged in these protests, it was still a significant minority. Many of these students were engaged in student government and other student run organizations. Because of A&T's recognition as a center for community organizing

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Institutional Autonomy in the Civil Rights Era," *History of Education Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (2004): 554-576.

<sup>154</sup>Joy Ann Williamson, *Radicalizing the Ebony Tower: Black Colleges and the Black Freedom Struggle in Mississippi* (New York: Teacher's College Press, 2008).

<sup>155</sup> Carrye Hill Kelley, *Profiles of 5 Administrators: Bulletin of the Agricultural and Technical College* (Greensboro: The Agricultural and Technical College, 1964).

<sup>156</sup> Teresa Jo Styles & Valerie Nieman, *Mens Et Manus: A Pictorial History of North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University* (Virginia Beach: Donning Company Publishers, 2015).

and student activism<sup>157</sup>, the Dudley High School protest's transition to NC A&T further agitated White officials and community members. White vigilantes in the city traveled to east Greensboro and began harassing and terrorizing Black Greensboro residents. Although these individuals attempted to scare Black residents, as a collective the community had organized and prepared for these circumstances.

As the violence became increasingly worse in the eastern section of town, Mayor Jack Elam called a press conference the evening of the 21<sup>st</sup>. During his message, Elam stated that the rebellion occurred because there were people, "...who refuse to obey the law." Elam's comments minimized the grievances and concerns of the Dudley students, discounted the long-standing racial disparities and the racially charged history of the city, the paternalistic attitudes of White Greensboro residents and the subordinate positions of Black residents in the city. It allowed Mayor Elam to downplay the reactions to an unjust system instead of the ways in which the majority of Black residents had lived in conditions that were disproportionately worse than their White counterparts. His address also included calling a state of emergency and invoking a strict curfew (8pm-5am) on Greensboro residents. By nightfall, complete attention was turned to the campus of NC A&T with extensive police patrol surveillance of the campus. According to police reports, this is where the majority of the disturbances were occurring, either on campus or near campus. Along with the excessive police patrol, White vigilantes continued to terrorize and harass students and members of the community. To combat the vigilantes, students at NC A&T constructed traps throughout campus, including placing bottles of sulfuric acid and hydrochloric acid in trees. In conjunction, community members whose homes were near campus staked

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<sup>157</sup> Lori Riddick, "Students Informed by Lecture Honoring Slain Student," *The A&T Register*, March 2, 1995, 1.

lookouts and also protected the areas of campus near their homes. The city was in turmoil, county jails had overflowed with residents who missed the stringent curfew and gunfire could be heard throughout the night. Mayor Elam eventually requested National Guard troops. Though Elam felt there was no immediate danger, Governor Robert Scott had approved the use of 150 National Guardsmen, though that number would grow significantly to 650.<sup>158</sup>

The violence persisted throughout the night. Around 1:00 a.m. NC A&T student Clarence Counts was shot. Counts had been standing in his room's window on the third floor of a male dormitory. He was rushed to the hospital with a gunshot wound to his leg. The campus continued to be riddled with shooting throughout the night. According to news reports, there was continuous sniper fire on campus and officers decided to return fire.<sup>159</sup> Between the hours of 2:00 and 3:00 am, another student, Willie Grimes had been shot in the head while walking across campus.<sup>160</sup> A sophomore biology major and dedicated Army ROTC member from eastern North Carolina, Grimes had grown up on a farm with his parents and his siblings, a sister and brother. Upon completion of his degree at A&T, he planned to join the military. Grimes' promising future was taken away May 22<sup>nd</sup>. Frantic, his friends rushed him to the hospital hoping that they could save him. The police stopped them during their travel and when they arrived at the hospital Grimes was pronounced dead. Grimes' murder remains the oldest unsolved homicide in Greensboro.

Witness accounts are unsure of the circumstances surrounding why Grimes was walking across campus; several accounts suggested that Grimes was walking across campus with friends

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<sup>158</sup> Jasmine Hooks, "Uprising Timeline," *The A&T Register*, April 20, 2017, 3.

<sup>159</sup> Kelso Gillenwater, "Wounded Toll Rises in Violence at A&T," *Greensboro Daily News*, May 26, 1969, B1.

<sup>160</sup> Robert Stephens, "Witnesses Describe Grimes Death: Students Signed Statements Recall a Night of Violence," *Greensboro Daily News*, July 7, 1969, B1, B10.

after eating dinner off campus, some accounts indicated that he was a part of a group of male A&T students who were securing the campus against White vigilantes, while other accounts asserted that he was preparing to leave for home that evening.<sup>161</sup> Regardless of these varying responses, all accounts implicate the police for killing Willie Grimes.<sup>162</sup> Many witness accounts suggested that there was an unmarked police car driving through campus and individuals in the car had opened the door and began firing toward students.<sup>163</sup>

The murder of Willie Grimes was a chilling scene for his friends and an even more horrifying experience for his family. Grimes' family recollection of the ordeal included them sharing that they never received word of Grimes' death from the hospital or the Greensboro police. Instead friends and other A&T students alerted the family of Grimes' death. During this tragic experience, the family was appreciative of the overwhelming outpouring of love and support from the NC A&T student body, faculty, and administration. The campus of A&T was severely struck by the murder of Willie Grimes. Unfortunately, this wasn't the end of A&T's ordeal. May 23, Dr. Dowdy announced the closing of A&T's campus at 4pm, and that dining services and dorms would remain open until 6pm on Friday.<sup>164</sup> The school's closure occurred because of the ongoing violence happening in east Greensboro as well as Dr. Dowdy being instructed that the National Guard would be arriving to A&T's campus. Dr. Dowdy as well as other school administrators had prepared for this entry including providing building keys and

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<sup>161</sup> A. D. Hopkins, "Coroner Says Grimes Was Shot Only Once," *Greensboro Record*, May 26, 1969, B2.

<sup>162</sup> N.A., "Eye Witness Says he Saw Police Shoot Grimes," *Carolina Peacemaker*, June 28, 1969, 1.

<sup>163</sup> Robert Stephens, "Police Stay Silent on Student's Death," *Greensboro Daily News*, May 23, 1969, D1.

<sup>164</sup> N.A., "A&T President Closes University after Strife," *Greensboro Daily News*, May 23, 1969, D1; J. Brian Ewing, "A&T to Honor Student Killed During Race Riots," *News & Record*, May 1, 2008, A1, A7.

individual dorm room keys to the National Guard. Though the school prepared in advance for the entrance of the National Guard, they were told that their arrival would be at a later date.

### **The City's Response: Black Resistance & State Sanctioned Violence**

Without updating Dr. Dowdy or other NC A&T administrators, Mayor Elam permitted the siege of A&T while students still occupied space on campus.<sup>165</sup> While it was never disclosed why Mayor Elam or Governor Scott didn't share the amended changes with Dr. Dowdy, it is disconcerting that little concern was placed on ensuring the campus was cleared for the National Guard's entrance. Most importantly, this may also be a revelation in the ways Black college students were perceived. Even with A&T's students' proximity to privilege by way of a college education it still remained that they were Black. Throughout American history, Black bodies have been denoted as disposable or less valuable, and one could infer that the decision not to share the amended information with Dr. Dowdy was rooted in this belief. Aside from the negotiations around the projected value of Black bodies, it can also be assumed that this was used as a means to put A&T students in their place. Because of student activism, the campus received the moniker of the "difficult" and "Black radical" school. During the 60s, students had grown in their affinity to invite speakers and other guests who were often seen as militant or radical, including Dick Gregory, Howard Fuller, and Stokely Carmichael.<sup>166</sup> Additionally, the student government association at A&T was very proactive in community organizing against racist and classist practices that subjugated Black Greensboro residents.<sup>167</sup> This moniker of being

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<sup>165</sup> Vernice Wright, "Accusations and Denials Characterize Hearing," *The A&T Register*, October 10, 1969, 1,7.

<sup>166</sup> Paul Jones, "Role of Afro-American: Carmichael to Address Students," *The A&T Register*, December 6, 1968; Prince Legree, "Brother Fuller Comes out to Rap," *The A&T Register*, December 14, 1967; N.A., "Dick Gregory will Speak at Moore Gym Feb.13," *The A&T Register*, February 7, 1969.

<sup>167</sup> Cohen K. Greene, "Police Open Fire" (see page 4, footnote 10).



the radical school didn't always bode well for the university. With students continually agitating the system, the actions of Elam and Scott could be perceived as a form of retaliation because of NC A&T's history of activism.

Early Friday morning, May 23<sup>rd</sup>, two days after the murder of Willie Grimes, an ambush of five police officers occurred on Luther Street. One officer was severely wounded and A&T student, George Silva Lima had been shot.<sup>168</sup> Governor Scott placed a call to the National Guard and at 7am the campus of NC A&T was sieged with heavy gunfire. Students initially thought the entrance of the National Guard was a joke, but as tanks began to roll on campus and Guardsmen proceeded to attack students, they soon recognized that this situation was much more severe than they expected. One individual overheard one of the Guardsmen giving orders that, "If anyone moved in that crowd, level the whole group." Another officer gave orders, "If the Blacks shoot at us we will treat them as the enemy and shoot back." The scene was complete chaos as the National Guard ambushed A&T's campus, helicopters flew overhead and dispersed tear gas in the air and students were held at gunpoint and told to lie on the ground. Students thought the request was meant for them to be searched but instead the Guardsmen opened fire on the campus. No windows were intact and hundreds of shell holes were in Scott Hall's western wall. The perverse nature of the siege continued with Guardsmen ransacking dorm rooms, damaging other areas on campus, and assaulting students.<sup>169</sup>

Several accounts highlighted that there were injuries that were not reported including, "a student that got hit in the groin with a rifle butt." Apart from the destruction on campus, students

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<sup>168</sup> N.A., "George S. Lima Makes Statement," *Carolina Peacemaker*, June 6, 1969, 1; Kelso Gillenwater, "City Tense, Quiet with Curfew Lifted," *Greensboro Daily News*, May 25, 1969, A1, A8.

<sup>169</sup> Alan K. Whiteleather, "It'll Take Time to Clean," *Greensboro Daily News*, May 26, 1969, B1.

unable to leave campus because of the siege were arrested and transported to a prison camp in Gibsonville. After the siege, Greensboro police officers confiscated nine weapons from Scott and Cooper Halls. Only two weapons were found operable and the weapons that were found were not connected to Grimes' death or the injured officers.<sup>170</sup> This revelation reaffirmed that the reactions of the police department, Greensboro officials, and Governor Scott to the Dudley High School/ NC A&T student protest was overly exaggerated.

Though the National Guard maintained that they had followed correct procedures, this position was highly problematic.<sup>171</sup> The barbaric and hostile nature of the National Guard exposed the methodical and callous violence that is associated with the ways in which White supremacy seeks to eliminate all factions of Black resistance. The sweep lasted until early Saturday afternoon. Approximately 200 A&T students were taken into protective custody during the siege and 35 individuals were injured. Although there was an excessive amount of property damage, Dr. Dowdy emphasized the tremendous pain experienced by students during this horrific ordeal and that it would be hard to replace feelings of their humanity not being recognized.<sup>172</sup> The National Guard, Mayor Elam and Governor Scott never gave a public apology to NC A&T.

Over the course of three days, May 22-25, Greensboro had been overwhelmed with loss of life, destruction of property and significant violence. The Greensboro Rebellion received

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<sup>170</sup> Kelso Gillenwater, "A&T Campus is Cleared After Extended Violence," *Greensboro Daily News*, May 24, 1969, A1-A2.

<sup>171</sup> Ken Irons, "Police Evaluate What Did Happen in City," *Greensboro Daily News*, May 25, 1969, B1, B8.

<sup>172</sup> Jerry Adams, "Guards Unduly Violent in Campus Sweep, A&T's Dowdy Says," *Observer Raleigh Bureau*, October 5, 1969, 1C, 4C.

national attention and was highlighted all over the nightly news.<sup>173</sup> The *Oakland Post* chronicled the events in a brief synopsis:

A state of emergency dawn-to-dusk curfew and the closing of North Carolina A&T State University were ordered last Wednesday after the death of a university student, Willie Grimes. Grimes was shot in the back of the head by a small caliber bullet in his school dormitory. Students insist police shot Grimes. Five policemen were wounded on the campus as violence continued to plague the whole town last week. Police and National Guardsmen used tear gas from a helicopter and commando tactics Friday in an effort to rid the campus of students. The raid ended a week of violence that has rocked the predominately Negro school. The shootings of police were apparently in retaliation to the use of tear gas at nearby James B. Dudley High School, where Negro students were protesting the conduct of a recent class election.<sup>174</sup>

The local news was also inundated with press coverage that included the continued surveillance of NC A&T's campus, the surrounding residential area, and Mayor Elam's remarks and reactions. He maintained his position of ignoring the debilitating racism that persisted within Greensboro and opted to demonize and trivialize the frustrations and grievances of the Dudley and NC A&T students. The depiction of the Dudley High School and NC A&T student protest varied significantly between media accounts and the students, parents, and community members that experienced it. Much of the press largely accused and blamed the Black Panther Party and other radical Black militant groups for the students' protest. The press also omitted the ways in

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<sup>173</sup> N.A., "Guard, Rifle Fire, Gas Clear College Dorm," *Providence Evening Bulletin*, May 23, 1969, 1, 13.

<sup>174</sup> N.A., "N.C. A&T is Closed," *Oakland Post* 6 no.4, May 29, 1969, 12.

which a White city, school board, and public officials had implemented White supremacist and racist practices to silence, objectify, and debase Black agency and independence.<sup>175</sup>

The press also minimized the physical, emotional, and mental violence characterized by the retaliation of the city of Greensboro and the state of North Carolina. Although parents, Dudley students, community members and NC A&T students attempted to resolve the issue prior to the protests and walk out, they were met with resistance. The racist lens of the media significantly skewed the narrative of the Dudley High School/NC A&T student uprising. Although the media characterized the student protests as a radical insurgence that was masterminded by Black Panther radicals, it also showcased the extensive damage on A&T's campus and the residential area surrounding it. Reporters indicated personal belongings of students were found on the floor, a number of windows smashed, tables and chairs overturned, and on the third floor of Scott Hall almost every door had been shot from the outside and locks on the doors had been shot away. Besides the property damage inside the dorms, one of Scott Hall's walls was riddled with bullet holes; there were also several trees in the area that had been damaged by an intense amount of firepower. Residential areas surrounding NC A&T had been heavily impacted as well. The damage included dented and smashed automobiles, burned trucks, and a number of properties that had been set on fire. While these images sparked tremendous emotion, the murder of NC A&T sophomore, Willie Grimes left an even more somber tone in the aftermath.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> N.A., "Scott Raps Militants for Violence in City," *Greensboro Daily News*, May 24, 1969, B1, B5; Nat Walker, "A&T Spokesman Says: Outsiders seen in Dorm Before Shootings Began," *Greensboro Daily News*, May 24, 1969.

<sup>176</sup> John Newsom, "Hall of History: The 'Center of Everything' Served as a Backdrop to Many Residents' Life Defining Moments," *News & Record*, May 2, 2004, A8, A9.

The use of state sanctioned violence and White vigilante terrorism against Black residents of Greensboro was not new, but the response of the Dudley/NC A&T students to these attacks was strikingly different.<sup>177</sup> When the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. occurred on April 4, 1968, 300 Black residents marched peacefully downtown to recognize the martyrdom of Dr. King. The peaceful march eventually led to students smashing a few windows, but not a substantial amount of property damage. A local news reporter even noted there was no mob violence, even though Mayor Rain requested the National Guard along with extra police who were uniformed in riot gear to patrol the downtown area. That the demonstration included no violence, yet the response was hyper-policing of the city streets,<sup>178</sup> illustrates the visceral reaction of White supremacy and the ways it characterizes Black resistance as violent, inherently criminal, and enforces the belief that Black people must be policed and kept in line. While all modes of Black Power had been met with opposition, historian William Chafe illuminates a poignant detail in noting that as long as the demand for Black Power worked within the confines of what moderate and liberal White people felt was appropriate, it was supported.<sup>179</sup>

This characterization is highlighted when reviewing the lunch counter sit-ins. While a number of students were arrested by police and harassed by vigilante groups, there were still a significant number of White Greensboro residents who were empathetic to the sit-ins. These sentiments are largely associated with North Carolina being perceived as a progressive southern state. This assumed progressive attitude allowed North Carolina as well as its cities like Greensboro to be absolved of the much more abrasive and brutal descriptions that other southern

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<sup>177</sup> N.A., "Negroes Stage Another March Through Town: 14 Arrested in Attempts to Enter Restaurants, Hotels," *Greensboro Daily News*, May 24, 1963, B1.

<sup>178</sup> N.A., "Negroes March Here; National Guard Called," *Greensboro Daily News*, April 1968, 1,4

<sup>179</sup> William Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights*, 10, f. 28.

states received. While some may presume that North Carolina was an anomaly compared to other southern states, racism and White supremacy was still a significant part of everyday life, with the only difference being that the disposition included a racism that was sophisticated, cosmopolitan, “civilized” and enforced through policy and law. Greensboro is thus viewed as a progressive city, the first southern city to desegregate schools and "the best place to position a college (NC A&T) to educate the Negro in North Carolina.”<sup>180</sup>

Reviewing reports about housing practices, education, and health care, Black residents in North Carolina were in far worse predicaments than their counterparts in other southern states.<sup>181</sup> As long as White residents maintained their White privilege and were able to determine the trajectory of Black progress, White Greensboro residents applauded their civil attitudes on the matters of race while continually subjugating Black residents to discriminatory and racist practices. The approach to Black Power that Dudley High School and NC A&T students used disrupted this atmosphere and it outraged and infuriated White residents of Greensboro; no longer would Black residents patiently wait for slow progress, instead they would demand it.

### **The Aftermath: Where Do We Go from Here?**

Months after the Dudley High School and NC A&T student protest, many issues were still unresolved. The debilitating practices of racism were further echoed by the arrests one month after the protests of Vincent McCullough, SBP of NC A&T, Nelson Johnson, vice president of NC A&T student body, and Robert Evans. These young men were charged with

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<sup>180</sup> Agricultural & Mechanical College for the Colored Race, *Eighth Annual Catalogue of the Agricultural and Mechanical College for the Colored Race* (Greensboro: J.M. Reece & Co., Power Book and Job Printers, 1902-1903).

<sup>181</sup> North Carolina Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Equal Protection of the Laws in Housing in North Carolina Report* (May 10, 1962), (Civil Rights Collection, Box #1, 1.32), North Carolina Civil Rights Advisory Committee, *Restrictions on Negro Voting in North Carolina History*, (July 4, 1962), (Civil Rights Collection, Box #1, 1.35).

disrupting activities at a public high school. Charges were dropped against McCullough, but a jury trial was held for both Johnson and Evans in October.<sup>182</sup> During July, there was a State Senate investigation committee hearing. Unfortunately, this hearing fostered an atmosphere that again highlighted the tone deafness of state officials to the concerns of Black North Carolina residents. During the proceedings, there was an urgency to legitimize the student protest as a covert mission of the Black Panther Party. Moreover, during Dr. Dowdy's formal testimony, he highlighted the ways in which school administration and local officials refused to listen and work collaboratively with students. Though his testimony countered the dominant narrative it was discounted as a minor issue. Instead, the senate hearing absolved Greensboro of any wrongdoing by continuing to enlist descriptors that placed Black resistance in the light of anarchy, violence, and abrasive takeover. The justification to issue state sanctioned violence was rooted in the belief that Black people did not deserve to demand and define their justice, freedom, and civil liberties. While the State Senate hearing cast an account that excused the reactions of Greensboro city officials and White residents, the hearings led by the North Carolina State Advisory committee were very different.

October 3-4, 1969, the North Carolina State Advisory committee convened hearings for the Dudley High School and NC A&T students' protest. Opening remarks by advisory committee chairman, Dr. King V. Cheek Jr., included a description of why the hearings were occurring: "The committee will hear statements relating to the entire set of events surrounding the disturbances at Dudley High School and the North Carolina A&T State University. This meeting will serve as a response to the total Greensboro community and it is our intention that,

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<sup>182</sup> Charles Mathis, "A&T's McCulloch: Student Leader Freed by Judge," *Greensboro Daily News*, October 29, 1969, B1, B11.

as far as possible, an objective picture be presented.”<sup>183</sup> It had taken several months for these hearings to be organized. Community members attempted to work with local and state organizations to orchestrate a meeting to hear testimony, but these groups were either unwilling or unable to sponsor the event.<sup>184</sup> Eventually, the North Carolina State Advisory committee lent their support and endorsement for the meeting. The state advisory board committee was comprised of an interracial coalition of respected city residents. The advisory committee was established through the federal government to report on statewide issues of racial discrimination in North Carolina. This had led many to be hopeful of a federal investigation by the United States Civil Rights Commission, which was overseen by the U.S. Department of Justice. Unlike the advisory commission, the United States Civil Rights Commission had certain powers that would possibly lead to policy changes in the city of Greensboro.<sup>185</sup>

The optics of the advisory committee hearings seemed to offer some consolation as it gave space to testimony from multiple individuals that included Dudley and NC A&T students: Connie Herbin; Claude Barnes Jr.; Vincent McCullough; Nelson Johnson; Dr. Dowdy, NC A&T chancellor; law enforcement officers; Dudley principal, Franklin Brown; local school board officials; chief of Greensboro police; and the president of Dudley’s Parent-Teacher-Student Association (PTSA), J. Lafayette Morgan. And unlike the senate hearing, multiple accounts were given on the timeline of events.<sup>186</sup> Once the hearings were completed, the advisory committee provided a report outlining testimony and recommendations to improve the city of Greensboro.

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<sup>183</sup> N.A., “Open Hearing Scheduled Oct.3,” *The A&T Register*, September 26, 1969, 1.

<sup>184</sup> N.A., “Testimony Slated from 14 Persons in Hearing Today,” *Greensboro Daily News*, October 4, 1969.

<sup>185</sup> Kelso Gillenwater, “Attendance Slim at Hearing: Disorder Inquiry Attracts Only about 200,” *Greensboro Daily News*, October 4, 1969, A1, A4; N.A., “Faculty in Surprise Move”, *Carolina Peacemaker*, June 6, 1969, 1.

<sup>186</sup> Robert Stephens, “Witnesses Swap Charges” (see page 10, footnote 27).



The committee noted that the city had a severe racial problem, which systematically impacted the quality of Black residents' lives. The state advisory then released a report documenting ways to improve racial tensions within the city.

Though the hearings brought to light considerable racial issues and tensions, the outcomes were disappointing and dismal.<sup>187</sup> There was no investigation by the United States Civil Rights Commission and Greensboro city officials made no use of the recommendations offered by the advisory committee.<sup>188</sup> With the hearings completed, community members and students turned their concern to the trial of Nelson Johnson and Robert Evans. Over 200 students from Dudley High School and NC A&T attended the trial and a number of media outlets were in attendance. The judge presiding over the trial was Robert A. Collier Jr. and the jury was comprised of eight men (three were Black) and four women (one was Black). A significant number of plainclothes police and uniformed officers were also at the trial for fear of a riot, which did not occur. It took 45 minutes for the jury to deliberate and both young men were found guilty.<sup>189</sup>

The attorney representing Johnson and Evans, David Dansby, filed a number of motions after the verdict. Dansby argued that Johnson and Evans should not have been tried together. He also asserted that an article published in the *Greensboro Daily News* may have influenced the jury, that some of the testimony offered during the trial was prejudicial, and that there was

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<sup>187</sup> Jo Spivey, "Hearings Revealed Little New," *Greensboro Record*, October 4, 1969, C1, C4.

<sup>188</sup> Kelso Gillenwater, "Race Relations 'Inadequate': Panel Names Major Social Evils Here," *Greensboro Daily News*, October 5, 1969, A1, A6; Jo Spivey, "Deeper Probe of Disorders Asked," *Greensboro Record*, October 25, 1969, B1, B14.

<sup>189</sup> Cohen N. Greene, "Johnson Convicted of Dudley High Disruption," *A&T Register*, November 7, 1969, 1, 6.

insufficient evidence. Judge Collier denied the motions including the request for a mistrial.<sup>190</sup>

Both Johnson and Evans were sentenced to a 12-month jail term.

The environment during the court proceedings was filled with tension, and once the verdict was read it became somber.<sup>191</sup> While their convictions would eventually be overturned, Johnson and Evans, young men ages 20 and 19, were exclusively held responsible for the chaos that occurred at Dudley High School and NC A&T. No one questioned why school administration and school board officials refused to speak with concerned parents and community members. There was no critique of Franklin Brown's decision in not permitting Barnes to participate in the election, or the haphazard administrative performance of Owen Lewis. The reluctance to implicate the ways in which racism manifested the events that led to both the Dudley High School protests and the eventual uprising exposed how the White psyche is apathetic to Black pain and oppression.

Although Greensboro attempted to construct an identity that absolved them of any racist misdoings, the Dudley High School and NC A&T student protest was just one of many examples that negated this narrative. This disastrous event and the reactions that followed demonstrated the aggressive and violent nature of White supremacy and racism. These events also highlighted that White supremacy's violent response to Black resistance is not limited by age. Throughout American history, the innocence of Black children and young people is discounted in order to preserve and protect Whiteness. The terrible story of Emmett Till's murder illustrates the vicious and savage approach White supremacy takes in order to maintain a racial hierarchy that not only

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<sup>190</sup> Robert Stephens, "Two Convicted, Another Freed in School Cases," *Greensboro Daily News*, October 1969, C1, C14.

<sup>191</sup> Charles Mathis, "Dudley Disturbance: Evans, Johnson get 1 Year Term," *Greensboro Daily News*, October 30, 1969, D1, D3.

diminishes Black humanity, but also creates an environment of fear among Black Americans. Instead of implicating White supremacy and racism, the state and the media instigated a narrative that characterized Dudley and A&T students as troublemakers and criminals. These visuals further promoted White fear and grossly misrepresented Dudley and A&T students and their concerns.

While the Dudley/A&T student uprising signaled and highlighted the dissatisfaction of Black Greensboro residents, it was a notation of a much larger problem. Barnes vocalized that, for many, the uprising was a turn of events. No longer would Black people concede or compromise to White paternalistic opposition. For Barnes and others, the rebellion was a Black radical proclamation against White supremacy and racism. The debilitating conditions for many in the Black community, including police brutality, limited access to quality housing, healthcare, or wage earning jobs continued to be factors that significantly impeded the quality of life for Black residents.<sup>192</sup> According to Barnes, these things precipitated and heightened the frustrations when the school board refused to engage with parents about the circumstances surrounding the SBP elections and most importantly their unwillingness to compromise with Barnes and his fellow classmates. This dynamic sent a very clear message not only to young Black residents but older residents that polite sensibilities, tactics of Black respectability, and compromise would not circumvent the stifling and brutal racism experienced on a daily basis. Barnes echoed, what many of the older people felt which was if they didn't have a say in their children's schooling experience, they had no control over anything.<sup>193</sup> This lack of control led to reactions such as that

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<sup>192</sup> Cecil Bishop, "Search for Underlying Factors in City's Racial Climate," *Greensboro Record*, October 9, 1969; A.S. Webb, "Optimism Limited on Racial Issues," *Greensboro Record*, October 11, 1969, A4, A7.

<sup>193</sup> Angela Hornsby, "Remembering Black Main Streets," *Southern Oral History Program (14)*, September 27, 2002. (interview with Dr. Claude Barnes).

of the editor of the *Carolina Peacemaker*, John Marshall Severson, who stated, “We want to do things our way in our own community, and like it or not, this is a separate community.”<sup>194</sup> While not new, the positions of self-efficacy and self-reliance facilitated a reaction from community members that was a stark contrast from previous years.

Though the Dudley High School/ NC A&T protests and eventual uprising left a lasting impression on the city, little was resolved. This struggle for change persisted because Barnes was still not allowed to participate in the student body election. Even though this matter went unresolved, Barnes and the school administration reached a compromise and many of the students’ concerns and issues were met.

The story of Barnes and the Dudley/A&T uprising further illuminates the ways in which Black progress and power had to work in the confines of White supremacy. Though this was a disheartening experience, some still left the experience with a glimmer of hope. When interviewed about the occurrence of the ordeal, Dr. Dowdy explained:

Anytime there was any issue in the Black community of Greensboro you could always count on A&T students being there. If it was an issue of police brutality, A&T students were there. If it was an issue of the blind workers and their fight for high wages and just treatment, A&T students were there. When the cafeteria workers in the public school of Greensboro went on strike, A&T students were there. Any issue that came up in the Black community of Greensboro, any issue, you could always count on A&T students being right there.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Robert Stephens, “Residents Describe Scene of Trouble,” *Greensboro Daily News*, May 24, 1969, C1.

<sup>195</sup> Abe Jones, *Greensboro 27*, (Bassett, VA: Bassett Printing Corporation, 1976).

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## CHAPTER 4. WHAT ABOUT US?:THE PROBLEM WITH INTEGRATION AND NORTH CAROLINA'S RESPONSE TO HIGHER EDUCATION FOR ITS BLACK RESIDENTS

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Modified from a manuscript to be submitted to the *Review of Higher Education*

### Abstract

This paper investigates North Carolina's process of desegregating higher education and its impact on the state's five public HBCUs. While the process of desegregation occurred in 1955, when the UNC Consolidated system originally admitted its first Black students into the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Black students' access still remained elusive years after this decision. This paper examines the response of the state's governing higher education system, the University of North Carolina university system which was often resistant and at times adversarial to the expectations the federal government placed on it to desegregate. This is especially important to note since during the time of desegregation, William Friday presided over the university system. He has been considered someone who was an opponent of segregation and also thoughtful in providing accessible and quality education for the state's Black residents. This paper nuances this narrative and explores how many of the decisions made by Friday and his colleagues further disenfranchised Black college students' ability to access quality education by their ineffectiveness to properly support HBCUs. Additionally, this paper complicates the perceived achievements of desegregation. By centering NC A&T in this conversation, the paper highlights that a critical mass of Black students was still ignored and failed by the state. Regardless of the state's inability to perform their due diligence, NC A&T students, as well as

other HBCU students, showed the resiliency and ability of the HBCU community to actively fight and antagonize against the continued inequity of Black educational spaces.

We never lost hope despite the segregated world of this rural town because we had adults who gave us a sense of future –and Black folk had an extra lot of problems, and we were taught that we could struggle and change them

- Marian Wright Edelman

Integration must never mean the liquidation of Black colleges. Every good college and every college that is needed has a right to live.

- Benjamin E. Mays

### **Introduction**

Scholars of history, sociology, psychology, and education have studied extensively the desegregation of American higher education. These investigations have led to scholarship that highlighted the challenges of this process, including university responses to federal interference of their respective institutions, the experiences and treatment of faculty and students of color, and the reactions to the surge of cultural and sociological transformations on campuses. While this topic has been researched considerably its largely been from the context of predominately White institutions. Unfortunately, HBCUs have either been understudied or relegated to minor annotations in the larger desegregation scholarship. This is a huge disservice because it offers a limited perspective on the impacts of desegregation in relation to Black students, faculty and staff that didn't attend predominately White institutions. It also fails to illuminate how the issues of accessibility and equity in higher education were still unresolved for a number of Black



students. For instance, while desegregation led to the mass exodus of Black students attending HBCUs these institutions still remained responsible for educating a segment of Black college students. This is important to note because desegregation did little to rectify the gross underfunding and mismanagement by the state of these institutions.<sup>196</sup> This again points to the ways in which desegregation wasn't the answer to resolving the issues of Black educational inequity.

Desegregation did little to help this predicament because White educational spaces were still prioritized. By investigating the merger of NC A&T and the other public NC HBCUs into the UNC university system and the responses to this process by students, alumni and supporters of the 5 public HBCUs this paper will 1) further add to the literature that highlights the deficiencies of the desegregation process and 2) demonstrate the ways in which the state of NC continued to undermine the HBCUs in the state.

### **The Problem is North Carolina Doesn't Want Black Professionals: The Failure of the State to Support the Development of Graduate and Professional Education at Public HBCUs**

Though much of the narrative centering desegregating higher education emphasizes the experiences of Black undergraduate students some of the initial cases to combat segregation in

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<sup>196</sup> Krystal Williams, et al., "Stories Untold: Counter Narratives to Anti-Blackness and Deficit-Oriented Discourse Concerning HBCUs," *American Educational Research Journal* 56, no. 2 (2018): 556-99; Travis Albritton, "Educating Our Own: The Historical Legacy of HBCUs and Their Relevance for Educating a New Generation of Leaders," *Urban Review* 44, no. 3 (2012): 311-31; Noah Drezner & Anubha Gupta, "Busting the Myth: Understanding Endowment Management at Public Historically Black Colleges and Universities," *Journal of Negro Education* 81, no. 2 (2012): 107-20; Arthur Cohen & Carrie Kisker, *The Shaping of American Higher Education: Emergence and Growth of the Contemporary System, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010); Marybeth Gasman et al., "Historically Black Colleges and Universities: Recent Trends," *Academe* 93, no. 1 (2007): 69-78; Harold Hyman, *American Singularity: The 1787 Northwest Ordinance, the 1862 Homestead and Morrill Acts, and the 1944 G.I. Bill* (Athens: University of Georgia, 1986); James McPherson, "White Liberals and Black Power in Negro Education, 1865-1915," *American Historical Review* 75, no. 5 (1970): 1357-86.

colleges and universities was focused on the admittance of Black students into graduate and professional school programs. For many Black southern students, their ambitions to pursue graduate and professional school education was often stifled. With few HBCUs having the facilities and resources to sustain graduate education many Black southern students found themselves having to leave their homes to pursue aspirations of terminal degrees. North Carolina was no different. For instance, in 1939 state officials approved the General Statute 116 (Murphy Act) which granted NCCU the ability to establish graduate courses in the liberal arts and creating departments of law, pharmacy, and library science based upon demand of the programs and the decision of the state to provide funding. Aside from the creation of the Murphy Act, the general assembly also endorsed a program that would grant state funding to be used to send Black students pursuing graduate education to institutions out of the state. This program lasted up until the 1960s. Though a number of the schools that students were sent to were PWIs there were also HBCUs that were a part of this program, including Meharry and Howard (medical and dental schools), Clark Atlanta (social work), and Tuskegee (veterinary medicine). As more cases were brought to the courts to desegregate graduate education, North Carolina and other southern states tried to find ways to circumvent the process of admitting Black students. Eventually, consolidated system schools would admit Black graduate students in the 1950s. This included four Black students being admitted into UNC's law school in 1951. This was especially monumental because the case that led to this, *McKissick et al. v. Carmichael et al.* rejected the argument that UNC presented, which was the Black (NCCU) and White (UNC-CH) law schools were equal.

Reviewing the support of NCCU in comparison to UNC-CH's law school the inequity was severe, which demonstrated that separate but equal was truly ineffective because southern

states continually grossly underfunded HBCUs. This case led to a heightened fear among state legislators and the consolidated system governing board because this decision could impede upon their system of segregated education. With this in mind the state scrambled to create a Ph.D. in Education at NCCU. This decision was not well received by the Black community or members of the NCCU community, including Dr. Elder, the president of NCCU. For some time, Dr. Elder along with members of NCCU's Board of Trustees had requested funding to improve the current undergraduate and graduate programs offered at NCCU, expanding the physical space of the campus including building more classroom space, and repairing a number of campus buildings that needed to be renovated.

The state continually denied the request, Dr. Elder knew that if the program was placed at NCCU it would face the same fate as the current programs. He also knew the state's interest in giving the university a Ph.D. program was to ensure and maintain a segregated system of higher education, which Dr. Elder was adamantly opposed to. Regardless of Dr. Elder's concerns, he had limited power in the final decision- making. This led to NCCU becoming the first HBCU in the country with a Ph.D. program in 1952. The program conferred nine degrees in its ten years of operation, at which point, in 1961, Dr. Elder pushed for the termination of the program because he was invested in strengthening the undergraduate and masters level programs that were still in dire need of support. Though some believed the dissolving of the program was due to Dr. Elder's decision it had more to do with the Consolidated System deciding to transfer and reestablish the program at Women's College (UNC-G).<sup>197</sup> The Consolidated System never intended to dissolve

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<sup>197</sup> Tiffany Fountaine Boykin & Robert T. Palmer, "Examining the Paradox Between Dismantling De Jure Segregation and Affirmative Action: Implications from Contemporary Higher Education Case Law," *Journal of Negro Education* 85, no. 2, (2016): 114-28. Marybeth Gasman, et al., "Unearthing Promise and Potential," *ASHE Higher Education Report* 35, no. 5 (2010a): 1-134; Ramona Houston, "The NAACP State Conference in Texas: Intermediary and

the program once they decided the program would be “better” suited at Women’s College (UNC-G).

The termination of the PhD program at NCCU had a number of implications. First, it highlighted that North Carolina’s promise to provide equal educational opportunities to Black residents in a segregated higher education system was untrue. The state funded these institutions out of necessity and had no interest in ensuring the growth, development, or expansion of these institutions. The failure to strengthen graduate education, especially PhD programs at North Carolina HBCUs impacted the ability of these institutions to competitively access private and federal grants, recruit critical faculty, and further altered their ability to expand the physical infrastructure of the campus and the programmatic features of the various colleges and departments on campus. The history of this inequity has been long standing in North Carolina

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Catalyst for Change, 1937-1957,” *Journal of African American History* 94, no. 4 (2009): 508-28; Peter Wallenstein, ‘Black Southerners and Non Black Universities: The Process of Desegregating Southern Higher Education, 1935-1965,’ in Peter Wallenstein, (ed.), *Higher Education and the Civil Rights Movement: White Supremacy, Black Southerners, and College Campuses* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008): 17-60; Jerry Gershenhorn, “Stalling Integration: The Ruse, Rise, and Demise of North Carolina College’s Doctoral Program in Education, 1951-1962,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 82, no. 2 (2005):193-227; Jerry Gershenhorn, “Hocutt v. Wilson and Race Relations in Durham, North Carolina, during the 1930s,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 78, no. 3 (2001): 275-308; Edward Taylor & Steven Olswang, “Peril or Promise: The Effect of Desegregation Litigation on Historically Black Colleges,” *Western Journal of Black Studies* 23, no. 2 (1999): 73-82; Lawrence Bryant, “Graduate Training in Negro Colleges,” *Journal of Negro Education* 30, no.1 (1961): 69-71; N.A., “Legislator Offers Proposal: Would Close Down NCC Law School,” *Carolina Times*, September 22, 1956, 1; N.A., “Grad Schools Can’t Delay, Court Rules,” *Carolinian*, March 17, 1956, 1-2; N.A., “The High Cost of Segregation,” *Carolina Times*, June 18, 1955, 2; N.A., “State Moves to Join Grad School Fight,” *Carolina Times*, December 10, 1949, 1; N.A., “FAO Rejects Site at Maryland After Group Protests Bias,” *Carolina Times*, December 10, 1949, 1; Nelson Harris, “Negro Higher and Professional Education in North Carolina,” *Journal of Negro Education* 17 no. 3 (1948): 335-40; Nelson Harris, “The Education of Negroes in North Carolina,” *Journal of Negro Education* 16, no. 3 (1947): 387-96; N.A., “S.C. Rushes Law School,” *Carolinian*, March 8, 1947, 1; N.A., “Ask Abolition of Lincoln University, Mo.,” *Carolinian*, January 6, 1945, 1; N.A., “Six Negroes Barred from State University; Hearing Set for November 6<sup>th</sup>,” *Carolina Times*, October 28, 1939, 1.

and unfortunately impacts the current trajectory of these institutions. Understanding the ways in which North Carolina historically undermined the state's HBCUs provides considerable context into some of the current issues these institutions face today.

### **Higher Education in North Carolina**

#### **Always Separate but Never Equal**

While the histories of HBCUs are comprised of significant accomplishments and contributions many of those successes occurred despite the enormous adversity they faced. The endorsement of discriminatory funding practices, the withholding of federal monies, and the refusal to appropriately develop robust graduate programs all had a significant impact on HBCUs, even to this day.<sup>198</sup> Regardless of these circumstances HBCUs continue to remain a vital element in graduating Black students and other students that have been historically marginalized in higher education. This was especially apparent in the state of North Carolina which has the largest number of public four year HBCUs: Fayetteville State University (FSU, 1867), Elizabeth City State University (ECSU, 1891), North Carolina A&T (1891), Winston Salem State University (WSSU, 1892), and North Carolina Central University (NCCU, 1910). It was not until the federal government enforced desegregation that these states made a concerted effort to support HBCUs, and this was because they were invested in the perpetuity of segregated higher education. The first indication of this was the creation of the law school at NCCU in the

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<sup>198</sup> Earnest Bracey, "The Significance of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Will Such Institutions of Higher Learning Survive?," *Journal of Economics and Sociology* 76, no. 3 (2017): 670-96; Marybeth Gasman & Noah Drezner, "Fundraising for Black Colleges During the 1960s and 1970s: The Case of Hampton Institute," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 39 (2010b): 321-42; Larry Johnson, Deirdre Cobb-Roberts, Barbara Shircliffe, "African Americans and the Struggle for Opportunity in Florida Public Higher Education," *History of Education Quarterly* 47, no. 3 (2007): 328-58; Jean Preer, "Lawyers v. Educators: Changing Perceptions of Desegregation in Public Higher Education," *Journal of Higher Education* 53, no. 2 (1982): 119-44.

1940s. The Gaines' case played a significant role in this process.<sup>199</sup> NCCU President Dr. Shepard, recognizing that state officials were vested in the perpetuity of segregation, jumped at the chance to develop graduate education at NCCU, and with the Gaines case he recognized that he could get the state to support his efforts.

The system of higher education continued to be polarizing in the state of North Carolina. While Black graduate students were admitted into programs at UNC-CH and NC State in the early 1950s it would take several more years for the state to grant entrance to Black undergraduate students. With the Brown decision declaring separate but equal as illegal this panic led to the Consolidated system board of trustee members passing a resolution on May 23, 1955. This resolution expressed that,

The State of North Caroling having spent millions of dollars in providing adequate and equal educational facilities in the undergraduate departments of its institutions of higher learning for all races, it is hereby declared to be the policy of the Board of Trustees of the Consolidated University of North Carolina that applications of Negroes to the undergraduate schools at the three branches of the Consolidated University not be accepted.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> Larry Grothaus, "The Inevitable Mr. Gaines': The Long Struggle to Desegregate the University of Missouri 1936-1950," *Arizona and the West* 26, no. 1 (1984): 21-42; Bill Weaver & Oscar Page, "The Black Press and the Drive for Integrated Graduate and Professional Schools," *Phylon* 43, no. 1 (1982):15-28; Jessie Guzman, "Twenty Years of Court Decisions Affecting Higher Education in the South 1938-1958," *Journal of Educational Sociology* 32, no. 6 (1959): 247-53; Dorothy McAllister, "Library Resources for Graduate Study in Southern Universities for Negroes," *Journal of Negro Education* 23, no.1 (1954): 51-59; Leon Ransom, "Education and the Law: Gaines v. The University of Missouri," *Journal of Negro Education* 8, no. 1 (1939):111-17.

<sup>200</sup> Board of Trustees, "Resolution of the Board of Trustees of the University of North Carolina system, adopted May 23, 1955," *The State of History*, accessed December 4, 2018, <https://soh.omeka.chass.ncsu.edu/items/show/261>.

While the resolution was adopted it did little to curb the continued efforts of Black students attempting to gain entry into these institutions. The fall of 1956, NCSU admitted its first Black undergraduate students: Ed Carson, Manuel Crockett, Irwin Holmes, and Walter Holmes. Walter would later become the first African American undergraduate student to receive his degree from NCSU in electrical engineering in 1960.<sup>201</sup> A year prior, brothers Leroy and Ralph Frasier and their close friend Lewis Brandon were the first Black undergraduates to be admitted into UNC-Chapel Hill in 1955, when they won their lawsuit, *Leroy Benjamin Frasier, Jr., et al. v. Board of Trustees of the University of North Carolina et al.* Unfortunately, neither Brandon nor the Frasier brothers received degrees from Chapel Hill. The Frasier brothers expressed that the decision to leave was due to the horrible treatment they experienced as students on campus. They were not allowed to use certain campus facilities. For instance, they could not sit in the student section at the football game; instead they had to sit with the Black custodial staff. These indignities along with a number of uncomfortable interactions between professors and students led to their decision to leave after three years as students. Eventually the brothers would receive degrees from the historically Black, NCCU.<sup>202</sup> Though Black students had been admitted into

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<sup>201</sup> Ashley Clayton & Brian Peters, “The Desegregation of Land-Grant Institutions in the 1950s: The First African American Students at NC State and Virginia Tech,” *Journal of Negro Education* 88, no. 1 (2019): 75-92; N.A., “Durham Youth First Negro To Get Undergrad Degree At N.C. State,” *Carolina Times*, June 11, 1960, 1.

<sup>202</sup> Myah Ward, “One of the First African American Students at UNC Dies,” *Daily Tar Heel*, January 25, 2018, <https://www.dailytarheel.com/article/2018/01/brandon-death-0125>; Leah Asmelash, “LeRoy Frasier, One of the UNC’s First African American Undergraduates, Dies,” *Daily Tar Heel*, January 3, 2018, <https://www.dailytarheel.com/article/2018/01/leroy-frasier-0103>; Breanna Edwards, “LeRoy Frasier, Black Student who Helped Desegregate University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Dead at 80,” *Root*, January 3, 2018, <https://www.theroot.com/leroy-frasier-black-student-who-helped-desegregate-uni-1821733575>; Associated Press, “LeRoy Frasier, Integration Pioneer Who Was Among First Black Undergraduates at UNC Chapel Hill, Dead at 80,” *New York Daily News*, January 2, 2018, <https://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/unc-chapel-hill-integration-pioneer-leroy-frasier-dead-82-article-1.3734288>; N.A., “Applications of 4 Durham Youths and One Unknown Turned

UNC-Chapel Hill and NC State, state legislators and the consolidated system's governing board continued to block Black students from attending these schools. For many white North Carolinians, the incremental admission of Black students was satisfactory.<sup>203</sup>

### **Changes, Transitions, and Restructuring**

The trajectory of higher education in North Carolina was impacted significantly by the restructuring of the consolidated system, the protection of UNC CH, the grievances of the regional colleges, and the enforcement of the federal government to desegregate public higher education. These issues were compounded as higher education became an even more politicized matter in the state, which caught the consolidated system and UNC CH in the crosshairs of a political standoff. These matters created significant discord but it also led to the establishment of a school of veterinary medicine at North Carolina State University, a medical school at East Carolina University, and the eventual formation of the UNC multi-campus university system: the governing body for all of NC's public colleges, North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics, and North Carolina School of the Arts.

Restructuring of public higher education became a priority in the 1950s when the General Assembly endorsed the Bryant Commission to do an in-depth study on the landscape of NC higher education. The Bryant Commission's findings would support prioritizing the UNC consolidated system as NC's premiere higher education infrastructure and the location of its

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Down By State Univ.," *Carolina Times*, May 21, 1955, 1.

<sup>203</sup> Joy Ann Williamson, "In Defense of Themselves: The Black Student Struggle for Success and Recognition at Predominately White Colleges and Universities," *Journal of Negro Education* 68, no. 1, (1999): 92-105; Nelson Harris, "Desegregation in North Carolina Institutions of Higher Learning," *Journal of Negro Education* 27, no. 3 (1958): 295-99; Marvin Bressler, "White Colleges and Negro Higher Education," *Journal of Negro Education* 36, no. 3 (1967): 258-65; Nelson Harris, "The Implementation of the Desegregation Decision in North Carolina," *Journal of Negro Education* 24, no. 3 (1955): 310-17; N.A., "Throwing Money Down a Rat Hole," *Carolina Times*, July 16, 1955, 1.



“great university”. The commission also endorsed the formation of the Board of Higher Education (BHE), which would function as a Board of Trustees for the non-consolidated system colleges and have oversight and control of these institutions. Finally, the state’s teachers’ colleges would be limited to undergraduate education while the consolidated system institutions would confer graduate level degrees. This placed HBCUs in a very unique position since they were under the leadership of the Board of Higher Education, but because of the investment in maintaining segregated education, some of these institutions were afforded graduate programs. It is important to note that the formulation of the Board of Higher Education had less to do with creating a sustainable infrastructure for higher education in North Carolina and more to do with ensuring that the non-consolidated colleges would not impede upon the expansion of the consolidated institutions: UNC CH, NC State, and Women’s College (UNC-Greensboro). This included demanding more resources, greater course offerings, and more autonomy. Although the Board of Higher Education regulated and heavily monitored the expansion of the non-consolidated colleges, they also attempted to do the same for the UNC consolidated system schools. This led to an adversarial relationship with the UNC consolidated system’s Board of Governors (Trustees). With the Board of Higher Education overstepping its reach the UNC trustees would eventually endorse legislation to change the trajectory of the Board of Higher Education.

While the Board of Higher Education was a source of frustration for the consolidated system, the interference of this organization was a part of a longer list of issues faced by William Friday and the Board for the consolidated system. During the 1960s and early part of the 1970s, NC public higher education became a political wild west. One of these issues that caused major conflict was the growing frustration among the regional teachers’ colleges. These institutions had

spent years enduring a lack of financial and infrastructural support, which contrasted tremendously different from the consolidated system schools: UNC CH, NCSU, and UNC-G. Eventually the regional teachers' colleges were afforded the opportunity to develop graduate programs on the master's level, which greatly improved the status of these institutions. Though the regional colleges were granted this status the relationship between these institutions and the consolidated system remained adversarial because Asheville, Wilmington, and Charlotte, which were also regional colleges received senior college level designation and inclusion into the recently formed multi-campus university system as UNC designated institutions. Charlotte's and Wilmington's statuses were especially a point of contention because these institutions founding dates were fairly recent and for them to receive senior college status before the other regional teachers' colleges that had been founded during the earlier part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was not well received especially by East Carolina University. This fallout between the consolidated system and ECU would lead to a number of political battles shaped by autonomy, university status, and resources.

Another issue that impacted the decision was that there became a growing interference in the affairs of public higher education in North Carolina by local and state legislators as well as governors, Dan K. Moore and Robert Scott to promote their self-interest and personal political endeavors. This was increasingly apparent with ECU's proposal to receive university status independent of UNC from the General Assembly in 1967 and their eventual petition for a medical school and research center. Using its strong political ties and affiliations in Eastern North Carolina, ECU pushed an aggressive campaign. Though it took years for the medical school to exist it was one battle that the consolidated system was unable to win. And finally, the desegregation process and the merging of the 5 public HBCUs in the multi-campus university

system were wrought with a number of obstacles. This was not surprising since North Carolina has the largest number of public HBCUs than any other state.

These problems were exacerbated by the challenges of restructuring the higher education landscape in the state—during the decade North Carolina public higher education went through a dramatic transformation to become the UNC university multi-campus system. This system merged all public four-year higher education institutions under one governing body, including the state’s five public HBCUs. With the introduction of the multi-campus system, the State Board of Higher Education and the Consolidated University System were both dissolved.

This transformation was not a seamless process instead the reconfiguring of public higher education in North Carolina was riddled with a cast of players attempting to use their power to determine the final outcome. These players included William Friday and other consolidated system members, who were vested in ensuring that the consolidated institutions, especially UNC Chapel Hill remained protected and occupying the greatest amount of power. On the other end was Governor Scott, whose ambitions were tied to having a political win during his gubernatorial term and finally the regional colleges' plans to gain more authority, power and control in the state’s higher education landscape. While the issue of restructuring public higher education had been resolved NC higher education players would soon be faced with another challenge, desegregation.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Rob Christensen, “Running UNC has Long Been A Numbers Game,” *News & Observer*, March 18, 2017, <https://www.newsobserver.com/news/politics-government/politics-columns-blogs/rob-christensen/article139368828.html>; William Link, “William Friday”(see page 4, footnote 2); Hugh Graham, “Structure and Governance in American Higher Education: Historical and Comparative Analysis in State Policy,” *Journal of Policy History* 1, no. 1 (1989): 80-107.

## Desegregating the American Higher Education System

As the 1960s persisted, the push to desegregate colleges and universities remained a continued topic of conversation. North Carolina's decision of incremental admissions of Black students remained the position for many members of the Board of Governors of the university system. Similarly, other southern states remained ardent in their position to prolong the institution of segregation for as long as they could.<sup>205</sup> Interestingly enough, they found themselves in a difficult position. Unlike other parts of the country the development of higher education in the South had taken a snail's pace and ultimately placed the region far behind the rest of the U.S. Although it has been heavily documented how gross underfunding and other abuses of power impacted the quality of Black education, White schools in the segregated South also didn't fare as well as their counterparts in the North, the West coast, and Midwest. The assistance of federal dollars would greatly improve many of the public universities and colleges across the South because they would have the opportunity to competitively recruit renowned faculty and top performing students. It would also go to improving and expanding their respective campuses' infrastructures. This became a major point of contention especially since southern states hopes for improving their systems of higher education was heavily reliant of federal dollars. Many southern legislators supported the maintenance of segregated education this was partly due to their own personal convictions but the greatest appeal to segregation was

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<sup>205</sup> Robert T. Palmer, Ryan Davis, & Marybeth Gasman, "A Matter of Diversity, Equity, and Necessity: The Tension Between Maryland's Higher Education System and its Historically Black Colleges and Universities Over the Office of Civil Rights Agreement," *Journal of Negro Education* 80, no. 2 (2011): 121-33; John Michael Lee, Jr., "United States v. Fordice: Mississippi Higher Education Without Public Historically Black Colleges and Universities," *Journal of Negro Education* 79, no. 2 (2010): 166-81; James T. Minor, "A Contemporary Perspective on the Role of Public HBCUs: Perspicacity from Mississippi," *Journal of Negro Education* 77, no. 4 (2008a): 323-35; David G. Sansing, *Making Haste Slowly: The Troubled History of Higher Education in Mississippi* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1990).

to ensure that they remained loyal to the constituency that voted them in. Though many legislators fully embraced the concept of segregation, they also recognized that in order to have stronger and more competitive universities in the state they needed federal dollars to greatly improve the current infrastructure of the public institutions of higher education. Because of this they were willing to forgo the loyalty of their constituency. Although the ramifications for desegregating southern colleges and universities were often cataclysmic, the investment of federal dollars into southern universities was very needed.<sup>206</sup>

The federal government's interest in higher education led to the investment of millions of dollars. This was largely due to the belief that higher education would be seen as the new frontier for innovation. Additionally, investing in American post-secondary education would ensure the position of the U.S. as world power in the global market. While major capital improvements were made at a number of southern White colleges and universities, the federal government attempted to rectify the historic inequities experienced by HBCUs. For instance, from 1963-1966, President Lyndon B. Johnson authorized the dispersing of federal aid for HBCUs and junior colleges for student assistance research, and infrastructural improvements. This included Title III funding, which focused on rectifying the historical underfunding and unfair practices that created inequity among the country's HBCUs. Several programs were created out of this venture including cooperative arrangements between HBCUs and PWIs.

The program resembled the Foreign Exchange programs that had been established for American university college students to travel abroad and attend international universities. Instead of attending an international institution, students from PWIs would attend HBCUs and

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<sup>206</sup> Joy Ann Williamson, *Jim Crow Campus: Higher Education and the New Struggle for a New Southern Social Order* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2018).

students from HBCUs would attend PWIs.<sup>207</sup> Many hoped that the exchange program would improve the academic quality of the colleges and universities affiliated with the program along with strengthening race relations. Though the intent of the program was to facilitate a cultural exchange and promote partnerships between HBCUs and PWIs, Black college administrators and faculty contended that the cooperative agreements benefitted the White institutions substantially more while continuing to place HBCUs at a deficit. This included PWI faculty neglecting their professional responsibilities and refusing to engage with the academic community at their designated HBCU. Much of this contempt was rooted in the belief that HBCUs were inherently deficient and lacked the academic rigor of PWIs. Additionally, a number of White colleges and universities used the program as a means to aggressively recruit the brightest and most accomplished students and faculty from HBCUs. This was another reminder that a hierarchy still remained between PWIs and HBCUs.<sup>208</sup>

### **Desegregating NC Higher Education**

While Black students had been permitted to attend PWIs in the state with the case *Frasier v. Board of Trustees of the University of North Carolina*, the status of desegregation in public

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<sup>207</sup> Shaun Harper, Lori Patton, & Ontario Wooden, "Access and Equity For African American Students in Higher Education: A Critical Race Historical Analysis of Policy Efforts," *Journal of Higher Education* 80, no. 4 (2009): 389-414; Charmaine Mercer, *Title III and Title V of the Higher Education Act: Background and Reauthorization Issues*, (January 30, 2008), <http://congressionalresearch.com/RL31647/document.php?study=Title+III+and+Title+V+of+the+Higher+Education+Act+Background+and+Reauthorization> (accessed September 18, 2019); Angelica Cervantes et al., *Opening the Doors To Higher Education: Perspectives on the Higher Education Act 40 Years Later*, (Round Rock: Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation, 2005); N.A., "Aid To Black Colleges Increased 124 Percent," *Charlotte Post*, September 13, 1973, 1; Theresa Williams, "My Year at Dartmouth," *Bennett Banner*, November 18, 1971, 6; N.A., "Exchange Student," *Bennett Banner*, February 27, 1969, 2; N.A., "Exchange Shows," *Bennett Banner*, February 20, 1968, 4; N.A., "Exchange Student Reports to Campus: 3 W-S State Coeds are Enrolled at SIU," *News Argus*, October 1965, 3.

<sup>208</sup> Christopher P. Loss, *Between Citizens and the State: The Politics of American Higher Education in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2012).

higher education in the state remained dismal. The Black student population at the 11 public White colleges in the state totaled 1.7% of the entire student population which meant the majority of Black college attending students were still being educated by the state's HBCUs. Further, the state's Black colleges were perpetually ignored and remained underfunded.<sup>209</sup> So little had been done to improve the status of HBCUs that many of the funding requests were similar at all the state's HBCUs and mirrored what had been asked in previous years including increasing faculty salaries, lowering the student-teacher ratio, expanding campus infrastructure and improving facilities. More notably, the failure to fund HBCUs properly also significantly impacted the status of these institutions including their ability to receive full accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). This would slightly change when the Board of Higher Education decided to hire an outside consulting organization to evaluate the status of the public HBCUs in 1963 and 1964.

The study found that the HBCUs needed major improvements and a conference was organized to further investigate the status of HBCUs by another team of consultants in 1965. Once the information was collected the Board of Higher Education met with administrators of the HBCUs to discuss improving the standards and the facilities of the institutions. This would eventually lead to a report published in May 1967 that suggested raising the admission standards at the state's public HBCUs and improving the facilities would greatly benefit these institutions. Many HBCU administrators took issue with the report because raising the admission standards

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<sup>209</sup> David Lee Brown, "Commission Fails to Grant Fund; A&T Approaches Financial Crisis," *A&T Register*, April 25, 1969, 1; N.A., "Dowdy Requests More Money for College," *A&T Register*, October 10, 1962, 1,5; N.A., President Gibbs Asks for \$1,434,125.00 for Improvement Before Advisory Budget Commission, *A&T Register*, July 16, 1958, 1; N.A., "Dr. Elder Asks for \$2Million More," *Campus Echo*, February 24, 1955, 1,12; N.A., Officials, Students Alarmed Over Proposed Hike in Fees, *Campus Echo*, January 29, 1955, 1, 10; N.A., "Budget Cut Adds Insult to Injury," *Campus Echo*, January 29, 1955, 2.

would exclude a number of Black students from access to higher education.<sup>210</sup> While the Board of Higher Education might have perceived their actions in good faith this did little to resolve the issues faced by the public HBCUs in NC. Further, HBCU administrators, students, and faculty were rarely involved in the initial meetings or decision-making process of how to effectively support their schools. This scenario was not unlike other instances of school desegregation. While African Americans did the heavy lifting of fighting for equitable and fair education the individuals who ultimately determined the trajectory of Black education were White.

As more Southern colleges and universities began to facilitate the process of desegregation, the department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) provided oversight to these proceedings. In 1969, HEW's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) began investigating 10 states including North Carolina for its failure to comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. February 1970 HEW's Office of Civil Rights found that the University of North Carolina system (UNC) (formerly the consolidated system) was maintaining a segregated system of higher education, which made them non-compliant. Though HEW's investigation exposed the continued enforcement of a segregated system of higher education, the NAACP Legal Defense Fund filed a lawsuit in 1972 against the federal department of HEW, *Adams v. Richardson*.<sup>211</sup> The lawsuit argued that HEW continued to provide federal funds to states that were in violation of Title VI including the state of NC. Most importantly, this case led to HEW creating compliance procedures and standards that states had to adhere to when submitting desegregation

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<sup>210</sup> Nelson Harris, "Publicly-Supported Negro Higher Institutions of Learning in North Carolina," *Journal of Negro Education* 31, no. 3 (1962): 284-92; N.A., "President Addresses Appropriations Committee," *A&T Register*, March 23, 1957, 4-5.

<sup>211</sup> [D.D.C. 1972] 351 F. Supp. 636.



plans. Prior to the court's decision, HEW had no criteria documenting how states should proceed with desegregating higher education.<sup>212</sup> This created a number of issues since many southern states' higher education systems were functioning under the paradigm "separate but equal". With the new standards in place 10 states resubmitted plans and all except two states were accepted, one of those states was North Carolina.

During the duration of the Adams' case, the process of desegregating higher education in North Carolina seemed to be an extremely arduous task with the UNC multi-campus system and HEW in a constant tug of war for control and power. Similar to other southern states, NC had admitted Black students into White universities on a marginal basis. Further, their support of the state's public HBCUs continued to be dismal. These instances highlighted that providing equitable opportunities of education for Black residents had long been considered less than a priority. Recognizing that desegregation was inevitable the UNC university system proceeded hesitantly. One of the biggest markers of desegregation was the merging of the public HBCUs: NC A&T, ECSU, FSU, NCCU and WSSU into the UNC multi-campus university system on July 1, 1972. Prior to the merger, NC A&T had received university status through the regional universities' bill introduced by the General Assembly and passed in 1967.<sup>213</sup> With this merger a

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<sup>212</sup> Robert Palmer, J. Luke Wood, & Dorsey Spencer, "Diverging Interests: Balancing Racial Diversity and Race-Sensitive Policies Across State Higher Education Systems," *Journal of Black Studies* 44, no. 4 (2013): 406-25; M. Christopher Brown, "Collegiate Desegregation as Progenitor and Progeny of Brown v. Board of Education: The Forgotten Role of Postsecondary Litigation, 1908-1990," *Journal of Negro Education* 73, no. 3 (2004): 341-49; Janell Byrd-Chichester, "The Federal Courts and Claims of Racial Discrimination in Higher Education," *Journal of Negro Education* 69, no. 1/2 (2000): 12-26; M. Christopher Brown, *The Quest to Define Collegiate Desegregation: Black Colleges, Title VI Compliance, and Post-Adams Litigation*, (Westport CT: Bergin & Garvey, 1999); John Egerton, "Adams v. Richardson: Can Separate Be Equal?," *Change* 6, no. 10 (1974/1975): 29-36.

<sup>213</sup> William Link, "William Friday" (see page 4, footnote 2); N.A., "A&T College Becomes N.C. A&T State University," *Future Outlook*, July 7, 1967, 1.

number of concerns arose. Those issues included years of gross underfunding which left the NC HBCUs in significant need of infrastructural improvements, greater amenities and more resources.<sup>214</sup>

Many Black North Carolinians speculated that similar to the Board of Higher Education the newly created UNC university system would fail to prioritize and remedy the history of poor funding experienced by the state's public HBCUs. Issues of funding also tied into another challenge, program duplication. The issue of program duplication was not a point of contention with undergraduate education but instead graduate and professional school education. With segregation being a common practice in the South, southern states were forced to create programs at HBCUs similar to the ones established at PWIs. The existence of these programs allowed HBCUs to have a monopoly on the Black student population. Although these programs were expected to be of equal caliber, HBCU academic programs, while rigorous often struggled to best serve their students because of scant resources and limited funds. Because of this there was an extreme fear that desegregation would lead to the dismantling of HBCUs because they would be unable to compete with the academic programs at PWIs or they would dissolve the programs at the HBCUs arguing they were unsustainable. Those advocating for the continuation of similar programs such as nursing suggested that each program have a specialized mission or

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<sup>214</sup> Walter A. Brown & Daarel Burnette, "Public HBCUs' Financial Resources Distribution Disparities in Capital Spending," *Journal of Negro Education* 83, no. 2 (2014): 173-182; Walter Allen & Joseph Jewell, "A Backward Glance Forward: Past Present and Future," *Review of Higher Education* 25, no. 3 (2002): 241-61; James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); N.A., "Chancellor Thorpe Talks About ECSU's Future," *Compass*, October 1, 1976, 1; N.A., "Bond Issue to be Voted On," *News Argus*, March 5, 1976, 1; N.A., "FSU Provided Documents In Support of Dormitory Needs," *Voice*, May 31, 1973, 1; N.A., "FSC May Get "Catch Up" Funds," *Voice*, May 20, 1969, 1; N.A., "NCC Law School's Future Questioned," *Campus Echo*, December 16, 1966, 1; N.A., "A Painful Rule," *Register*, December 3, 1965, 2; N.A., "NCC May Get 3 ½ Million Dollars," *Campus Echo*, February 28, 1957, 3.

emphasis, which would allow HBCUs to maintain a level of competitiveness that would ensure the continued recruitment of Black students and improve efforts to recruit more White students.<sup>215</sup> Additionally, this conversation of program rigor and competitiveness of HBCUs would find itself as a central piece to the argument for why the school of veterinary medicine should be placed at NC A&T instead of NC State University. For the duration of the 70s and early 80s, the issue of desegregation remained a constant part of the higher education agenda in the South, including in North Carolina. As negotiations persisted, the department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW)'s Office of Civil Rights (OCR) and the UNC Board of Governors would find themselves at odds about the placement of the school of veterinary medicine (SVM). Originally, there had been very little consideration for a school of veterinary medicine because 1) the state of North Carolina had consortium agreements with Tuskegee University, Oklahoma State University, and University of Georgia for students interested in becoming veterinarians and 2) the UNC system Board of Governors felt it would be too costly especially since legislation had been passed to provide funding towards the establishment of a medical school at East Carolina University. Eventually, state legislators were persuaded to provide expenditures to fund the building of a school of veterinary medicine. This was largely due to the endorsement of Harris, a member of the Governor's Advisory committee that studied the feasibility of establishing a school of veterinary medicine. Harris noted that the consortium agreements were costing North Carolina an excessive amount of money and had failed to garner any return. Many of the veterinary medicine students opted to stay in the locations where they

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<sup>215</sup> Tony Mace, "Desegregation Plan to Face HEW Review," *Daily Tar Heel*, November 30, 1978, 1; John Templeton, "Alumni and Friends Eyes UNC Report," *Winston-Salem Chronicle*, September 9, 1978, 1,3; David McKinnon, "Program Duplication Furor Looms Again," *Daily Tar Heel*, August 3, 1978, 9; N.A., "Rowan Raps Desegregation and Cause of Civil Rights Limbo," *Carolina Times*, April 23, 1977, 1.

graduated instead of returning back to North Carolina to work. This impacted North Carolina tremendously because it was losing a number of veterinary professionals that were desperately needed for the quickly growing farming industry in the state.<sup>216</sup>

Though the UNC system Board of Governors was reluctant to endorse a school of veterinary medicine they recognized the establishment of one was inevitable. Initially, the board decided to place the school at NC State but with the merger of the public HBCUs and the state's failure to provide an adequate and sufficient desegregation plan, HEW's OCR leadership suggested placing the school of veterinary medicine at NC A&T. This suggestion was endorsed by a number of people including North Carolina Alumni & Friends Coalition, NC A&T administration, and other Black educational leaders and HBCU administrators. One of the biggest champions of NC A&T being the site of the school of veterinary medicine was Julius Chambers, who was a member of the UNC Board of Governors. These individuals argued that placing the school at A&T would be an action of good faith demonstrating that the state was sincere about desegregation and providing Black students equal accessibility and opportunity in higher education. Further, it would greatly improve the facilities and infrastructure of A&T. Similar to other 1890 institutions the ratio of A&T's funding in comparison to NCSU's was 13:1. That difference in funding was particularly apparent when comparing the infrastructure and availability of resources at each campus.

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<sup>216</sup> William Link, *William Friday: Power, Purpose, and American Higher Education*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Tony Mace, "Graham Disagrees with Hill: Vet School at State Brings Support, Heavy Fire," *Daily Tar Heel*, April 25, 1978, 1, 3; N.A., "Chancellor States Need For Veterinary School," *News Journal*, February 20, 1975, 12; Steve Adams, "UNC Board approves vet school for NCSU," *News & Observer*, December 19, 1974; N.A., "Harris Says State Needs Vet School," *News Journal*, July 16, 1970, 1.

Recognizing the possibility that the school of veterinary medicine could be placed at A&T, the school placed a bid and put together an aggressive campaign highlighting the benefits of this type of program at a Black college. During the duration of this process several studies were conducted to investigate the best placement for the school including racial impact on admissions and the increased production of Black veterinarians if the school was placed at NC A&T.<sup>217</sup> Prior to the completion of the racial studies and upon the initial interest of A&T, the BOGs hired two consultants, affiliates of The Ohio State University's SVM, to investigate the feasibility of the SVM at both schools. The consultants used a point system to determine which institution would be the better placement. Unsurprisingly, NC State outperformed NC A&T with a total of 1,051 points compared to A&T's 499 points. The findings did not surprise advocates of NC A&T, recognizing that this particular study would ignore the inherently racist funding practices that occurred for years between the schools it was more of a reminder of how the system inadvertently disadvantaged Black educational spaces. Even with this study suggesting that the veterinary school be placed at NC State, NC A&T President Dr. Dowdy and the university's supporters were not deterred. Instead, Dr. Dowdy suggested incorporating a racial impact study, which would also play a factor in where the college of veterinary science should be placed. The building of the school was suspended until the results of these studies were presented.<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> N.A., "Civil Rights Action over Vet School Site to Begin," *Durham Sun*, May 8, 1975, 4C; N.A., "Colston Gives Views on Veterinary School," *A&T Register*, December 3, 1974, 1, 4; N.A., "A&T Chancellor Pleased By Delay," *Carolina Times*, November 30, 1974, 7A

<sup>218</sup> William Link, "William Friday" (see page 4, footnote 2); N.A., "A&F Coalition Takes Board to Task," *Carolina Times*, April 10, 1976, 1-2; Bruce Henderson, "HEW Calls for Suspension of Veterinary School Plans," *Daily Tar Heel*, April 2, 1975, 1.

Unfortunately, these racial studies did little to change the minds of the Board of Governors, and on September 23, 1978 the UNC Board of Governors Committee on Educational Planning, Policies, and Programs gave the final approval to place a School of Veterinary Medicine at NC State University. The decision was a significant blow to members in the Black educational community. As a last resort, former UNC Board of Governors' member, Julius Chambers suggested that a role be created for A&T associated with the SVM and while the suggestion was accepted the determination of A&T's role remained unspecified. The investment of a School of Veterinary Medicine would have greatly improved the infrastructure of NC A&T, which had been grossly underfunded since its inception, it would have made the institution more competitive with recruitment of White students and white faculty by being the only school of veterinary medicine in the state. Additionally, it would have increased the number of Black doctors of veterinary medicine and raised the prestige of NC A&T, which again would allow the school to compete for students both Black and White.<sup>219</sup> Even more notable, the placement of the School of Veterinary Medicine at NC A&T would have meant that two HBCUs in the U.S. would occupy the status of graduating veterinarians. Out of the 30 established School of Veterinary Medicine in the U.S., only one HBCU is represented, Tuskegee University.

Though Friday and the other members of the UNC Board of Governors argued that the decision of the placement was simply an issue of pragmatism, many of their reasons for not building the school of veterinary medicine at A&T were due to the racist system of segregation. Friday and his counterparts argued that establishing the school of veterinary medicine at NC

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<sup>219</sup> Tony Mace, "Assembly Backing of State Vet School Likely," *Daily Tar Heel*, September 26, 1979, 1; David Squires & Eddie Marks, "Black Coalition Fails in Attempt to Halt Vet School," *Black Ink*, November 6, 1978, 4; Jim Hummel, "Green Light Flashes for NC Vet School," *Daily Tar Heel*, September 25, 1978, 1; Tony Mace, "Board May Take Another Look at Vet School," *Daily Tar Heel*, September 19, 1978, 3.

A&T would cause program duplication. He noted that the infrastructure, courses, and labs were already established at NC State and that committing to place the school at NC A&T would cause the state to duplicate those same items on top of paying for the actual school of veterinary medicine.<sup>220</sup>

Friday and the UNC Board of Governors line of reasoning ignored the ways in which NC A&T and other HBCUs had been grossly underfunded and marginalized over decades of racial segregation. NC State's growth and expansion was largely due to state investment, investment that never occurred at NC A&T. The era of separate but equal left HBCUs in a predicament where they were unfairly penalized.

With the question of the School of Veterinary Medicine out of the way, the public HBCUs in the state became increasingly nervous about the survival of their programs and the perpetuity of their institutions.<sup>221</sup> This fear was not out of the ordinary. The survival of NC A&T and by extension all HBCUs was always a matter of concern because so many of these institutions' financial sustainability was determined by the attitudes of White citizens. Whether it was private philanthropy, state, or federal funds, Black colleges were at the mercy of their White benefactors' dispositions on race. Regardless of the uneasiness felt by NC's public HBCUs and their supporters, the process of desegregation was underway. During the negotiations of desegregating NC's public higher education system, HBCU students were a visible presence. Students aggressively campaigned for the continued existence of HBCUs as well as much needed capital improvements, increased funding for scholarships, research, and faculty hiring,

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<sup>220</sup> William Link, "William Friday", (see page 4, footnote 2); Grant Hamill, "Desegregation plan questioned: HEW probes vet school," *Daily Tar Heel*, June 5, 1975, 3.

<sup>221</sup> Diane Bellamy-Small, "Problems of Black Institutions of Higher Education," *Charlotte Post*, October 20, 1977; Don Baer, "Governors Approve \$1 Billion Budget," *Daily Tar Heel*, October 29, 1974, 1.

and more visibility as universities within the system. North Carolina HBCU students were adamant in reminding the UNC university system along with NC residents the necessity and importance of the state's Black colleges and universities. Most importantly, HBCU students also criticized the continued inequity between the Black college and their peer White institutions.

Students Organizing for Black Unity (SOBU) and NCCU SGA led this charge organizing a conference that invited more than 100 Black student leaders from across the state. Other attendees include Rep. Henry Frye and Rep. George Johnson. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the reorganization and desegregation of the UNC university system and the impacts of these processes on the state's public HBCUs. Students were briefed on the five proposals submitted for review and unfortunately none of the submitted reorganization plans prioritized the needs, concerns, and grievances of the HBCUs. Additionally, the state's public HBCUs would have little autonomy over the decisions made for their school. Though the circumstances seemed dismal, student leaders used this time to form the Committee on Higher Education. This group would meet in early March to come up with alternative plans for Black public higher education in the state. Also, it was decided during the week of February 15-20, attendants of the meeting would disseminate this information to their respective institutions. This would eventually lead to the formation of "Save our Black Schools".<sup>222</sup>

The first campaign for Save Our Black Schools: Day of Solidarity to Save Black Schools/Black Monday occurred on October 25, 1971. Five thousand Black students including local high school groups, HBCU student government associations, and other Black student

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<sup>222</sup> N.A., "Effects of Reorganization on Black Schools Discussed," *Compass*, March/April 1971, 1,4; N.A., "Reorganization may Phase Out Black Schools," *Compass*, March /April 1971, 5; William Hubbard, Jr., "Aggies Attend Conference at NCCU to Help 'Save the Black Schools'," *A&T Register*, February 19, 1971, 1, 6; N.A., "SOBU Opposes Integration", *A&T Register*, May 2, 1970, 4A.



organizations rallied at the state's capital to protest the treatment of the state's HBCUs and the inequity of the state's plan to reorganize NC public higher education.<sup>223</sup> HBCU students in the state would not be ignored or dismissed. The Save Our Black Schools' campaign would persist. Though the efforts of the HBCU students were admirable it did little to change the minds of the Board of Governors and the UNC multi-campus system continued to delay and belabor discussions about desegregation. In the summer of 1973, the UNC multi-campus system submitted a desegregation plan. November of that same year HEW's Office of Civil Rights rejected the plan because it lacked measureable and quantifiable metrics that detailed how racial diversity would be executed.<sup>224</sup> The UNC multi-campus system was disappointed and frustrated with the response of the Office for Civil Rights especially since they felt that the organization provided no definitive guidelines or expectations of what the desegregation plan should look like. With the issue being unresolved the multi-campus system worked to create another plan. As the UNC system attempted to reconstruct their desegregation plan to adhere to federal guidelines members of the community were organizing to ensure the preservation and perpetuity of the state's public HBCUs. With the assistance of the Legal Defense Fund (LDF) of the NAACP, a local lobbying group, the North Carolina Alumni and Friends' Coalition (NCAFC), was organized. NCAFC was created in Greensboro, NC December 15, 1973. The organization included students, educators, community leaders, and the alumni associations of the five public

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<sup>223</sup> N.A., "SGA Takes a Stand: The Image of the Black University," *Compass*, December 15, 1971, 1, 3; N.A., "Wide Turnout Supports "Black Monday" March," *Bennett Banner*, November 18, 1971, 1; John Myers, "Rally Held Monday in Protest of Higher Education Merger," *Carolina Times*, October 30, 1971, 1, 12; N.A., "Speakers at Black Monday Rally," *Register*, October 29, 1971, 1,3; Patrice Dunn, "Thousands Attend Black Monday in Raleigh," *Register*, October 29, 1971, 1; Delois Brown, "Oct. 25, Black Monday in North Carolina," *Register*, October 22, 1971, 1, 3.

<sup>224</sup> William Link, "William Friday" (see page 4, footnote 2).

HBCUs in the state. Its mission was to, "...strengthen the historically black universities and colleges in North Carolina, broaden African Americans access to higher education in the state, and eliminate vestiges of the segregated system of public higher education that left predominately African American universities underfunded."<sup>225</sup>

Members of the NCAFC quickly began working and submitted a proposal to the UNC multi-campus system Board of Governors outlining a plan to desegregate the system. This plan allocated over \$15 million in capital funds for HBCUs to improve their respective universities' infrastructures. The plan also emphasized quantifiable metrics including the UNC multi-campus system Board of Governors and the State Board of Education having 25% of their membership be African American. Additionally, the plan, wanted to ensure the protection of the state's public HBCUs and the protection of Black faculty. The proposal specifically requested Black faculty having opportunities for advancement and professional development.<sup>226</sup> This was especially important when reviewing the experiences of Black teachers during the desegregation process of K-12 education, which fractured Black educative spaces by condemning and eliminating a number of Black elementary, junior high and high schools, and firing or demoting many Black teachers, staff, and school administrators.<sup>227</sup> Supporters, advocates, HBCU administrators,

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<sup>225</sup> North Carolina Alumni and Friends Coalition, "N.C. Alumni and Friends Coalition (Black Perspective) to Board of Trustees, February 1974," *The State of History*, accessed December 18, 2018, <https://soh.omeka.chass.ncsu.edu/items/show/278>.

<sup>226</sup> North Carolina Alumni and Friends Coalition, "A Statement on Dismantling of Higher Education (Black Perspective) to Board of Trustees," *The State of History*, February 1, 1974, Retrieved from: <https://soh.omeka.chass.ncsu.edu/items/show/278>.

<sup>227</sup> George W. Noblit, *School Desegregation: Oral Histories Toward Understanding the Effects of White Domination* (Boston: Sense Publishers, 2015); Michael Fultz, "The Displacement of Black Educators Post-Brown: An Overview and Analysis," *History of Education Quarterly* 44, no.1, (2004): 11-45; H. Richard Milner & Tyrone C. Howard, "Black Teachers, Black Students, Black Communities, and Brown: Perspectives and Insights from Experts," *Journal of Negro Education* 73, no.3 (2004): 285-97; Michelle Foster, *Black Teachers on Teaching* (New York: The New Press, 1997); Frank Brown, "Brown and Educational Policy Making at 40," *Journal of*

faculty and students saw how K-12 Black schools were handled during desegregation and wanted to ensure this would not be the same fate for HBCUs. Further, this plan met many of the provisions suggested by the federal department of HEW's Office of Civil Rights. Though the plan was a viable alternative to the plan produced by the UNC system it yielded very little support outside of the Black community.

The dismissal of the NCAFC's proposal highlights the ways in which processes that are meant to create equality or equity are often facilitated through a paradigm of Whiteness, and more specifically White supremacy. Even though the UNC Board of Governors used the argument that the department of HEW failed to provide a tangible outline of what the state's desegregation plans should look like, when the NCAFC provided a plan with quantifiable and tangible benchmarks they refused to even use this plan as a possible template for a viable desegregation plan. Further, since the UNC system Board of Governors had failed at its attempts to provide a satisfactory plan why not work collaboratively with the NCAFC, HBCU administrators, staff and students to produce a desegregation plan that prioritized Black students and Black educative spaces.

Passing on the proposal offered by the NCAFC, the UNC system Board of Governors attempted to submit another plan to the department of HEW's Office of Civil Rights, which was rejected in June 1973. They were given a deadline of April 8, 1974 to revise and resubmit another desegregation plan. On May 31, 1974, the UNC system Board of Governors introduced

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*Negro Education* 63, no. 3 (1994): 336-48; Sabrina King, "The Limited Presence of African-American Teachers," *Review of Educational Research* 63, no. 2 (1993): 115-49; N.A., "Displacement Problems, State Education Leaders To Curb Student Crisis: Student, Teachers Rights Task Force To Be Organized," February 15, 1973, 1; N.A., "Task Force Reports: Teacher Displacement Is a Serious Problem," *Campus Echo*, July 11, 1966, 8; N.A., "Court Orders Negro Teacher Reinstated," *Carolina Times*, November 27, 1954, 1.

the revised North Carolina State Plan for the Further Elimination of Racial Duality in Public Higher Education System. Three years later, the UNC system's Board of Governors and HEW were still at an impasse on how to resolve the issues of desegregating the university system. Because of these circumstances, NAACP's Legal Defense Fund sought further action in the courts, which led to the *Adams v. Califano* decision in 1977 and the rejection of the Board of Governors plan. The court ordered HEW to provide and enforce even more specific standards and guidelines for states' desegregation plans. The case also prioritized the protection of HBCUs. North Carolina's plan did little in providing a definitive plan for improving and expanding HBCUs and its mandate placed a heavier emphasis on the state's public HBCUs to desegregate than the public PWIs.<sup>228</sup> This eventually led to HEW threatening to withhold federal funding.

In 1977, the UNC system Board of Governors would submit yet another plan that HEW would also reject. Sadly, North Carolina remained the last state in the Adam's case. The biggest point of contention for this plan would be the issue of program duplication. With the negotiations at a standstill, HEW announced that they would begin proceedings to terminate federal funding to the UNC system. Friday and other members of the UNC Board of Governors felt that HEW was overstepping and that the matter at hand should be resolved by the state instead of the

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<sup>228</sup> Janell Byrd-Chichester, "The Federal Courts", (see page 23, footnote 23); William Link, "William Friday", (see page 4, footnote 2); N.A., "Ruffin Says UNC \$20 Million Inadequate for Black Colleges," *Carolina Times*, April 21, 1979, 1, 10; Jerry Mobley, "Meetings Numerous With Approaching 1979 Assembly," *Chowan Herald*, December 14, 1978; N.A., "HEW Desegregation Guidelines, UNC Responds," *Carolina Times*, November 19, 1977, 1, 14; Nancy Hartis, "HEW Demands Could Result in Court Battle," *Daily Tar Heel*, November 14, 1977, 1-2; Nancy Hartis, "UNC Officials Have 60 Days to Draft Acceptable Plan Federal Guidelines Aim Toward Desegregation," *Daily Tar Heel*, July 7, 1977, 8; Howard Troxler, "UNC Negotiates Desegregation with HEW; Will Submit New Plan By Fall Deadline," *Tar Heel*, July 14, 1977, 3, 7; N.A., "5 Year Plan Excludes 5 Black Universities: Preferences Given to the White Campus," *Carolina Times*, April 10, 1976, 1, 15.

federal government. In April 1979 in the United State District Court for the Eastern District of North Carolina, the UNC system Board of Governors challenged HEW's ability to terminate federal funding. Judge Franklin Dupree, Jr. presided over the case and ruled in favor of UNC system Board of Governors. Finally, in July 1981, an agreement was reached where a consent decree set enrollment goals instead of quotas. These enrollment goals differed between PWIs and HBCUs with PWIs having a goal of at least 10.6% of their enrollment be Black students and HBCUs' being responsible for at least 15% of their enrollment being White students. Other concessions included increasing the number of undergraduate and graduate programs at the state's five public HBCUs. Despite the mandates, there were no definitive deadlines of when these things would be improved.<sup>229</sup>

The matter of desegregating higher education was plagued by a number of issues and did little to resolve the ways in which racism and the practice of segregation undermined Black higher education. Similar to the desegregation process of K-12 education, there was little to no

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<sup>229</sup> James T. Minor, "Segregation Residual in Higher Education: A Tale of Two States," *American Educational Research Journal* 45, no.4 (2008b): 861-85; Regina Gaskins, "UNC Desegregation Battle Wages for 12 Years," *Black Ink*, February 11, 1982, 3; Laurence Marcus, "The Adams Case: A Hollow Victory?," *Peabody Journal of Education* 59, no.1 (1981): 37-42; Jac Versteeg, "Desegregation Controversy Reopens Tuesday," *Tar Heel*, July 17, 1980, 3; Elliott Warnock, "Decade of Conflict," *Summer Tar Heel*, May 31, 1979, 4; N.A., "Dupree's Extension Forbids HEW Funds Cut-Off to June 11," *Carolina Times*, May 26, 1979, 2, 14; N.A., "Califano Takes Bid; Negotiations Go On," *Daily Tar Heel*, April 20, 1979, 1; N.A., "Hunt Urged to Change Support to Black Colleges," *Carolina Times*, April 14, 1979, 2; N.A., "HEW Rejects UNC Plan: Funds to be Cut Off Case By Case," *Carolina Times*, March 31, 1979, 1, 11; Amy McRary, "Black Schools Remain Issue: HEW Changes Toughest for N.C.," *Daily Tar Heel*, March 29, 1978, 3; Howard Troxler, "Califano Takes Action to Cut Funding for UNC System," *Daily Tar Heel*, March 23, 1978, 1; Howard Troxler, "HEW Cutoff of Funds May Start Today; UNC Requests More Time," *Daily Tar Heel*, March 20, 1978, 1; Amy McRary, "Desegregation Controversy Still Unsolved After Meeting," *Daily Tar Heel*, February 21, 1978, 1; Amy McRary, Board Refusal to Comply with HEW May Bring Suit," *Daily Tar Heel*, February 2, 1978, 1; Amy McRary, "Hew Adds New Requirement: Halt Duplication to Mix Races," *Daily Tar Heel*, February 1, 1978, 1.

inclusion of Black community members or the HBCUs. This was visibly apparent when reviewing the response of the UNC system Board of Governors towards the NCAFC's proposal and the placement of the school of veterinary medicine.

### **Conclusion**

The process of desegregation in higher education in NC looked very similar to the desegregation of primary and secondary schools. This was very apparent, especially when reviewing the lack of inclusion of Black educators and administrators in the decision-making process. Though Black Americans led the charge and fought tirelessly for access to equal and fair education, rarely if ever was this community involved in determining the trajectory of the process. The failure of William Friday, other members of the UNC system Board of Governors, HEW, and other legislators to engage fairly and justly with members of the community further perpetuated the attitude that the only way to properly serve and support Black students was by White decision makers. The desegregation of education further disintegrated the Black educational space leaving Black faculty, staff, administrators and students at a crossroads. Regardless of these circumstances the spirit of HBCUs lies within these individuals and no matter how insidious the institutions of White supremacy and racism are HBCUs will continue to be devoted to the challenge of justice, fairness, and equity.

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## **CHAPTER 5. GENERAL CONCLUSION**

### **Argument**

Using NC A&T's student protest movement to examine and critique the narrative of Greensboro and North Carolina as racially progressive highlights the necessity of incorporating voices on the fringes. Though North Carolina was considered a model for the New South, examining the treatment of A&T as well as its students throughout several decades indicates and suggests that the state was indeed a member of the Old South. Even with North Carolina boasting the largest number of 4-year public HBCUs in the country it failed to provide the resources, support, and infrastructure for both the students of A&T and the university to evolve and grow. It also attempted to prevent the institution from being used as a space to develop critical thought and engage in community organizing. Though not the focus of the dissertation, a counter-narrative demonstrates how NC A&T was a think tank for civic engagement, activism and most importantly a central hub of radical imaginative activism. Regardless of the over policing and the threats made by local and state officials, NC A&T students remained persistent in their devotion for Black liberation locally, nationally, and globally.

### **Significance of the Dissertation**

The significance of this dissertation is two-fold. First, it illustrates the need to investigate the stories of HBCUs through the lens of a single institution. While there are studies that study individual HBCUs, many times these institutions are discussed through a collective lens. Although HBCUs share a collective history, traditions, and values, these institutions are still characterized by specific experiences that are unique to a particular college or university. For instance, by investigating NC A&T student protest movements, I was able to understand the

subtle differences experienced by this particular school in comparison to its institutional counterparts in other states.

Though North Carolina was still deeply invested in the systems of White supremacy and racism, there were five public four-year HBCUs in the state, with one of these institutions, North Carolina Central University, being founded by Dr. James E. Shepherd, an African American pharmacist and Shaw University graduate in Durham. At the time Durham, was the home of North Carolina Mutual Insurance (the wealthiest Black owned business in the world), Mechanics and Farmers (Black owned bank), and the city boasted its own Black Wall Street—Pettigrew Street and Hayti. This environment looked strikingly different from other Black communities in the South. Referencing these specific differences can enhance our understanding of how HBCUs had to navigate relationships with the local community and state. It also allows us a better understanding of how certain institutions were able to experience certain freedoms as opposed to others. Joy Williamson-Lott highlights this phenomenon when she explores the participation of Tougaloo students in the Civil Rights Movement. She noted that because Tougaloo was a small, Black private college, unlike Jackson State University and Mississippi Valley State University, they had a certain level of autonomy that allowed the students to protest without repercussions.<sup>230</sup>

The second reason the dissertation study is significant is that the current political and racial climate is a time when conversations about the importance of knowing and understanding history have taken a precedent. The incidents of the present have a collective past that many in America do not know, understand, have been hidden from, or refuse to engage with. This work

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<sup>230</sup> Joy Ann Williamson, “This Has Been Quite a Year for Heads Falling”: Institutional Autonomy in the Civil Rights Era,” *History of Education Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (2004): 554-576.

highlights the necessity and importance of including historical conversations in understanding the complexities of current circumstances. Documenting the student protest movement, especially students' fight to protect and support HBCUs during the era of desegregation, can be useful in ways to better improve HBCUs, including ensuring they are receiving equitable financial support and the state rectifying its historical abuse of these institutions. Engaging in historical discourse not only provides context to current events but it can also assist in developing solutions. Although the UNC university system Board of Governors rejected the desegregation plan of the North Carolina Alumni and Friends Coalition (NCAFC), it was the most equitable and inclusive plan that responded to the needs of providing access and quality education to Black students throughout North Carolina. Most importantly, it ensured that Black faculty, staff, and administrators would also have the same access to resources, opportunities, and protections as their White counterparts who worked for the UNC university system. How could we build upon the NCAFC's plan so that it meets the current needs of HBCUs in the state and is supportive and inclusive of faculty, staff, students, and administrators of color who work for the public colleges and universities in North Carolina.

### **Implications for Future Research and Practice**

In the case of higher education, when we discuss educational equity and opportunity for Black students, I hope that my dissertation reminds people of also being inclusive of HBCUs in these conversations. Too often the discourse on providing equity and access to higher education for Black students primarily focuses on the improvement of PWIs whether that is through diversity initiatives of recruiting more Black faculty and students, providing more need based scholarships for Black students, or creating a more inclusive environment, these things operate under the guise that PWIs are the only places Black students attend college. Though the majority

of Black students are enrolled in PWIs there is still a critical mass of Black students that attend HBCUs. Many of these students are often first generation, low income, or students from other marginalized backgrounds. While the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) continues to be a major proponent in disseminating knowledge about HBCUs, as well as scholars such as James T. Minor, there still is a dearth in the literature. If college access and equity within that educational experience for Black students is important it is imperative that we center how to better support HBCUs in their work of educating Black students as well. Further, when HBCUs are discussed in the context of higher education it is often explored from the context of STEM. HBCUs have been recognized for producing a critical number of Black STEM professionals. While this is a major feat it does a disservice to only focus on the aspects of HBCUs that benefit the systems of capitalism and White supremacy. This new found interest in HBCUs is reminiscent of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when money was poured into these schools' vocational programs to ensure a steady workforce. Though improving the number of Black Americans in STEM is needed, how do we ensure that we don't pigeonhole HBCUs, and most importantly, how do we create a system of equity to ensure that these institutions are receiving financial and infrastructural support needed to continue their work in STEM?

When thinking through implications for practice, examining the current racial climate of this country highlights how a number of companies have moved with urgency to support Black organizations and institutions including HBCUs. Much of this support is through partnerships and financial gifts. For example, Netflix announced their donation of \$120 million to HBCUs. While this will be very helpful, it is important to note that this only benefits United Negro College Fund Schools, which is 37 of the 107 HBCUs that exist, and the lion's share of the \$120

million will go to two specific institutions, Spelman and Morehouse.<sup>231</sup> Further when these partnerships or collaborations are announced it is usually the same consortium of HBCUs, which are Spelman College, Morehouse College, and Howard University. Some may argue that because these institutions are recognizable and have larger brands, that this is why they are always called, but if we are invested in promoting access and equity we have to begin and interrogate how we reinforce the ways other HBCUs are penalized because they may not have similar resources to build a larger profile or have a bigger brand.

Finally, my work will continue to examine the histories of HBCUs in the state of North Carolina in hopes of contributing to the perpetuity and sustainability of these institutions. North Carolina currently has the most Black HBCU undergraduate students enrolled and it also has the second larger number of HBCUs in the country, Alabama ranks number one.<sup>232</sup> Reviewing these numbers sustaining the HBCUs in the state are of great importance. Further, I hope my work can be used in broader conversations around policy reform in higher education for the state. Even though North Carolina boasts a significant number of HBCUs these institutions still struggle for resources, infrastructural improvements, and opportunities.

Though there are certain matters that can be improved upon internally at these institutions, many of the problems faced by North Carolina HBCUs are largely due to the refusal of the state to properly develop and cultivate these institutions in the same ways they did for the smaller, regional, White teachers' colleges across the state. My final paper on the desegregation of higher education in North Carolina is something that I will continue to expand upon especially

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<sup>231</sup> Leah Asmelash, (2020, June 17). "Netflix CEO donates \$120 million to black colleges in an effort to 'reverse generations of inequity,'" *CNN*. Accessed: <https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/17/business/netflix-ceo-hbcus-donate-trnd/index.html>

<sup>232</sup> United Negro College Fund, *By the Numbers: How HBCUs Stack Up*. <https://uncf.org/the-latest/by-the-numbers-how-hbcus-stack-up>. (2020).



in relation to NC A&T as an 1890 land grant. Unfortunately, 1890 land grants, which were created through the 2nd Morrill Act in response to Southern states not permitting Black students to attend institutions created by the 1st Morrill Act, have experienced years of underfunding. Not until 1977 when the Evans-Allen Act was established did HBCUs receive similar appropriations to develop extension programs and research facilities. This was a ninety-year gap between policies that assisted 1862 land grant institutions to do the same thing.<sup>233</sup> Using archival data can further highlight how historical inequity shapes the current status of HBCUs.

Additionally, many of the HBCUs in North Carolina have significant histories that have rarely received the attention they deserve. For instance, during my work in the archives I learned about the Bennett Belles organizing a boycott against the local theater in Greensboro in 1937, which predates the NC A&T Four. Further, much of the success attributed exclusively to NC A&T for the lunch counter sit-ins should also be extended to Bennett College and Dudley High School. Although the A&T Four were the first to participate, much of the work was still a communal effort between the three schools. Excluding the work of Bennett and Dudley High School is not only erasure but it does a disservice to exploring the full picture of how massive movements are not simply created by a few high-profile moments, but it takes a collective of people working to organize, build, and strategize.

### **Final Thoughts**

In the words of Prince, “Just like books and Black Lives,” HBCUs matter. While this project has been quite taxing because of having to learn how to properly use the archives and write a historical dissertation that includes footnotes, it has been a very enjoyable experience.

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<sup>233</sup> John Lee & Samaad Keys, “Land-Grant but Unequal: State One-to-One Match Funding For 1890 Land-Grant Universities,” *Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities Office for Access and Success* (Policy Brief, Report 3000-PB1, 2013).

During my time at NC A&T's archives I was reminded of the necessity and continued importance of these institutions. HBCUs have existed as locations that supported and promoted their students' ability to dream, dream beyond their current circumstances. This ability to dream led students to participating in the lunch counter sit-ins and Freedom Rides of the 1950s and 1960s, those dreams also led to HBCU students reimagining their respective institutions could be when they decentered Whiteness and promoted Blackness. The dreams of HBCU students speak to the alternative and possibilities for a new future, a radical, equitable, and liberating future. With the popularity of Black Panther, Afrofuturism has taken center stage in many conversations. When thinking through the concept of Afrofuturism, HBCUs are in fact spaces that are deeply committed to the concept of Black people existing and thriving in the future. This dedication has spurred movements, cultivated great thinkers, and established a legacy of freedom fighters. While work is always needed to improve these institutions, they continue to be spaces of liberation and freedom.

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North Carolina A&T State University, F.D. Bluford Library

Willie Grimes Collection

Sit-in Collection

Student Demonstrations in Downtown Greensboro 1963 (Folder)

A&T (Greensboro) Four Collection

Civil Rights Collection

### Newspapers

*A&T Register* (North Carolina A&T State student newspaper)

*Bennett Banner* (Bennett College student newspaper)

*Black Ink* (UNC Chapel Hill's Black Student Movement newspaper)

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