

“Students Are [Not] Slaves”: 1960s Student Power Debates in Tennessee

This article examines 1960s student power debates at Tennessee universities. It makes three main arguments: First, student protests over in loco parentis restrictions fit into an emerging student demand for autonomy more broadly, even in a politically and culturally conservative state like Tennessee. Second, these student power debates complicate the 1960s movements declension narrative, since Tennessee student activism peaked in 1970. Third, though black and white students both demanded greater personal autonomy, continued racial inequities on and off Tennessee campuses rendered their experiences distinct.

A poster on a small university office wall declared, “Students Are Slaves!” where students gathered to organize for a campaign.¹ This pronouncement mirrored radical student declarations throughout the 1960s; the poster’s association of slaves and students held racial and power connotations regarding the university, defined as part of “the machine.” This university, however, was not in a hotspot region for student activism like the West Coast or the Northeast. Instead, the university office was located in Knoxville, Tennessee, at the University of Tennessee (UT) in 1969. Even in supposedly conservative regions, like the Southeast, radical students – black and white – engaged with issues surrounding race and power in the 1960s.

During the 1960s, students throughout the country sought a greater say in their lives while in college, which meant confronting the established practice of *in loco parentis*, the policy of universities and colleges to act as custodians for students in place of their parents or guardians during their time on campus. Following urban riots in the summer of 1967 and the anti-war movement’s escalation during this period, the likelihood of a campus erupting in unrest, even in the politically-conservative state of Tennessee, seemed highly probable to university administrators and student radicals alike. This article demonstrates that small,

¹ University of Tennessee Special Collections (UTSC), Office of the University Historian Collection, 1819-1997 (bulk 1870-1997), AR.0015, Series VI: Student Unrest (OUHCVI), Box 23, File 11- Anti-War Protests (1 of 2), “Moratorium – To War Or Not To War,” *The Daily Beacon*, 15 October 1969.

campus-based protests over student autonomy, when combined with continued concerns surrounding racial inequalities in higher education, polarization in the civil rights movement, and the developing anger towards the American military involvement in Vietnam, transformed those demonstrations into largescale attacks on the university establishment. As debates raged over the extent of student power and racial inequality on campuses, administrators were forced to contend with this changing environment.

This piece puts forward three major arguments. First, beyond seeking to end dormitory curfew and student attire regulations, *in loco parentis* protests manifested emerging conceptions of student power centered on personal autonomy, which matured by the late 1960s. Black and white students enrolled at public and private institutions demanding a greater voice in campus affairs, denouncing student apathy, and even using the term “student power” reveals the development of student consciousness in Tennessee and across the South. The fact that these debates occurred across Tennessee universities, from large public institutions in major cities like Vanderbilt University, UT, and Memphis State University, to small private religious colleges in rural areas like Sewanee: The University of the South and Maryville College reveals the importance of student power for understanding student activism.² After the sit-ins of the early 1960s and the Berkeley, California Free Speech Movement in 1964, black and white students had widely-recognized language for their frustrations over being helpless participants of “the machine.” Both of these movements emphasized student autonomy and free speech within the university system as a political strategy.³ Indeed, the Free Speech Movement leader, Mario Savio, declared that “the battlefields [college campuses and the South] may seem quite different to some observers,

² Memphis State University was renamed the University of Memphis in 1994.

³ For more on the association between the movements, see Robert Cohen, *Freedom's Orator: Mario Savio and the Radical Legacy of the 1960s* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 1.

[but] the same rights are at stake in both places.”⁴ Some three years later, in 1967, southern student radicals had seemingly cemented the equation of student rights with civil rights.

Lynn Wells, a member of the Southern Student Organizing Committee (SSOC), discussed the growing “intensity” of “student power protests” on campuses like Berkeley and “black campuses in the South.” She looked forward with hope to a time when college students nationally, “for the most part apathetic,” would rise up against their collegiate systems where they were “‘forced’ to consume facts like machines.”⁵ Meanwhile, in Tennessee, a protest at Sewanee against the administration’s “autocratic” behavior, some 150 or 200 students invoked the civil rights movement by singing “We Shall Overcome.”⁶

Secondly, the trajectory of student protest in Tennessee challenges the traditional 1960s declension narrative.⁷ In Tennessee, student protest developed and fractured more gradually than narratives centered on the era’s major student organizations—notably the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Students for a Democratic Society, and its southern counterpart, SSOC—have allowed.⁸ Other studies have identified moments

⁴ Peter B. Levy, *The New Left and Labor in the 1960s* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 117.

⁵ Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS), Social Action Vertical File (SAVF), Box 45-Southern Student Organizing Committee, Folder- Executive Committee Meetings, Lynn Wells, “Some Ideas On My Generation,” 8 June 1967.

⁶ The demonstration took place on 23 February 1967 in front of Sewanee Vice-Chancellor Dr. Edward McCrady’s house. “First Demonstration Erupts Over Bad Gailor Situation,” *The Sewanee Purple* LXXXV, no. 16, 2 March 1967. For more on this episode, see Samuel R. Williamson, Jr, *Sewanee Sesquicentennial History: The Making of the University of the South* (Sewanee: The University of the South, 2008), 320-321.

⁷ For post-1960s studies, see, for instance, Simon Hall, “Protest Movements in the 1970s: The Long 1960s,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 43, no. 4 (2008): 655-672; Michael S. Foley, *Front Porch Politics: The Forgotten Heyday of American Activism in the 1970s and 1980s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2013); Martha Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2012).

⁸ See especially, Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam, 1987); Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1981); Gregg Michel, *Struggle For a Better South: The Southern Student Organizing Committee, 1964-1969* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004). On the declension thesis more generally, see Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970* (2nd ed., Chicago: University

of campus unrest in Tennessee well before the 1960s, supporting a reconsideration of the causes of 1960s student power. In 1924 there was a year-long student protest at historically-black college and university (HBCU) Fisk University in Nashville against the university president's perceived "restrictive" control, and during April and May 1930 at private Lincoln Memorial University in Harrogate, Tennessee, the firing of staff members led to a student strike.⁹ Studying the students, rather than major student organizations, reveals that, in Tennessee at least, student protest intensified beyond 1968 ("days of rage" in Todd Gitlin's influential telling), and crested in 1970. Indeed, campus activism was alive and well in this conservative state post-1968.

Lastly, black and white students declared similar frustrations with "the machine," but institutional racism on and off campus rendered their experiences distinct. Southern campuses, particularly those in Tennessee, demonstrate this distinction. Accommodation to student demands depended largely on the size of the campus, whether it received its funding from public or private sources, and the extent to which it was (or was not) integrated. As the decade wore on, the strategies white and black students took different forms, running parallel to the divisions in the national civil rights movement.

As the 1960s dawned, campuses faced the problem of building additional facilities to accommodate the Baby Boomer generation. With such a large increase in student enrolment, many colleges felt the strain on existing facilities, such as dormitories and cafeterias, which in turn encouraged student resentment of university administrations owing to overcrowding. For example, as enrolment at UT increased by sixty-one percent between 1964 and 1969 (and

of Chicago Press, 1999); James T. Patterson, *The Eve of Destruction: How 1965 Transformed America* (New York: Basic Books, 2012).

⁹ Jeffrey A. Turner, *Sitting In and Speaking Out: Student Movements in the American South 1960-1970* (Athens & London: The University of Georgia Press, 2010), 18; Earl J. Hess, *Lincoln Memorial University and the Shaping of Appalachia* (Knoxville, Tenn.: The University of Tennessee Press, 2011), chap. 7.

by seventy-five percent across the South between 1960 and 1965), students demanded improved facilities.¹⁰

At Sewanee, an increased student body size put pressure on the dining facilities during the 1960s, causing student disorder in February 1967. Following complaints from March 1963 of poor food quality at the campus cafeteria, Gailor, an editorial in October 1966 connected the “expanding student body” with the cramped situation in the dining hall and unappetizing food.¹¹ In an editorial, one student stated, “The riots in Gailor should cease, that goes without argument. But if a man is fed as if he were in a kindergarten class, he will probably use the manners of a pre-schooler [*sic*]. If he is fed like a gentleman, he will undoubtedly employ the manners of gentility.”¹² The student’s argument blamed the rioting squarely on the administration for not resolving the overcrowding in Gailor. The conflict led to the aforementioned campus protest when student demonstrators gathered and sang “We Shall Overcome” on 23 February 1967.¹³

Other types of policies which dictated students’ appearance and attendance to specific campus events fall within the traditional definition of *in loco parentis* and similarly caused friction among student populations. In particular, private institutions had stricter policies for students’ attire, making dissent from these codes easier to identify than at larger, public universities. Male students at Southwestern at Memphis, Sewanee, and Maryville College were expected to dress neatly around campus and to wear a coat, shirt, and tie for chapel

¹⁰ Joseph A. Fry, *The American South and the Vietnam War: Belligerence, Protest, and Agony in Dixie* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2015), 290.

¹¹ Letters to the Editor, *The Sewanee Purple* LXXX, no. 17, 14 March 1963; Bill Grimball, “A Continuation of the History Of Student-Faculty Relations,” *The Sewanee Purple* LXXXV, no. 6, 27 October 1966.

¹² “Gailor Behavior Two Sided Coin,” *The Sewanee Purple* LXXXV, no. 11, 8 December 1966.

¹³ “First Demonstration Erupts Over Bad Gailor Situation,” *The Sewanee Purple* LXXXV, no. 16, 2 March 1967. For more on this episode, see Williamson, Jr, *Sewanee Sesquicentennial History*, 320-321.

services, while it was mandatory for female students to dress smartly in skirts.¹⁴ The student newspaper, *The Sewanee Purple*, hosted debates over the relevancy of Sewanee's dress code as far back as March 1956, indicating the long pedigree of this particular disagreement between some students and administrators.¹⁵ Mandatory chapel attendance was a feature of life at many small colleges during the 1960s, and were an area of resistance from students at Southwestern, Maryville College, Sewanee, and Tennessee Wesleyan University in East Tennessee.¹⁶

In light of women's increased college attendance, dormitory curfews were a common flashpoint for renegotiation between students and campus administrations. White and black students felt similar tensions over dormitory curfew policies, although the administrative response at black campuses was often harsher. At Morristown College, an HBCU located in East Tennessee, the administration expelled students who had protested curfew policies, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Counter Intelligence Program noted the unrest. In May 1968, the college president, Elmer P. Gibson, expelled eleven co-ed students following a meeting with the college's Board of Trustees because they "rebelled" when they

¹⁴ Southwestern at Memphis was the official name for the university, renamed Rhodes College in 1984. Crossroads to Freedom, Oral History Archive, Rhodes College, Interview with Bill Short, 27 July 2007, <http://www.crossroadstofreedom.org/detail.collection?max=64&page=3&oid=16&order=oid&dir=asc>, last accessed 25 April 2017; Williamson, Jr, *Sewanee Sesquicentennial History*, 320; "Maryville Miss, WSGA Handbook For Resident Women, 1963-64," in possession of the author.

¹⁵ First mention appears in Ken Kinnett, "Our Fading Tradition," *The Sewanee Purple* LXIII, no. 16, 7 March 1956.

¹⁶ Stephen B. Haynes, *The Last Segregated Hour: The Memphis Kneel-Ins and the Campaign for Southern Church Desegregation* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 80; "Maryville Miss, WSGA Handbook For Resident Women, 1963-64"; John Friedel, "Comment," *The Sewanee Purple* LXXXV, no. 4, 13 October 1966; "Faculty Passes Amended Resolution," *The Sewanee Purple* LXXXV, no. 5, 20 October 1966; John Friedel, "Comment," *The Sewanee Purple* LXXXV, no. 6, 27 October 1966; Bill Akins and Genevieve Wiggins, *Keeping the Faith: A History of Tennessee Wesleyan College, 1857-2007* (Athens, Tenn.: Tennessee Wesleyan College, 2007), 121-122. One Southwestern student recalled that chapel attendance policies continued to be negotiated until 1971. See Short, interview, 27 July 2007.

were reminded to clean up their dormitory rooms and to follow the check-in and check-out procedures when going off campus.¹⁷ The Morristown College case—as with the later expulsion of the Lane College student body in March 1969 after arson attacks on campus buildings—showed how harshly some HBCU administrations reacted to campus-based protests.¹⁸

At some historically white universities, administrators chose conciliation over expulsion in the late 1960s. Notably, Memphis State University’s president Dr. Cecil C. Humphreys visited campus dormitories regularly from 1968 so students would consider him available to negotiate with and thereby prevent demonstrations from occurring. This tactic was conspicuously successful.¹⁹ Administrators at Tennessee Wesleyan avoided campus unrest by giving students representation on faculty committees through the 1960s and on the board of trustees from 1973. The college president, Charles C. Turner, Jr, also held what he called “rap sessions” with students to hear their concerns and answer questions.²⁰ Essential to this tactic’s success, however, were administrative flexibility and the accommodation to at least some student demands.

Dormitory curfew protests at Tennessee’s colleges progressed differently at private and public institutions. Private colleges and universities operated with more freedom than public institutions, largely because their financial support came from endowments built by alumni donations in larger proportions than state universities that relied more heavily on federal and state funding. The comparative autonomy many private institutions enjoyed

¹⁷ FBI Records: The Vault (FBI), Letter from SAC in Knoxville, to Director, FBI, COINTELPRO-New Left, Bureau File xx-100-3687, 13 June 1968.

¹⁸ The 1969 Lane College protests primarily concerned black student rights. See later in this piece.

¹⁹ University of Memphis Special Collections (UMSC), Dr. Cecil C. Humphreys Collection (PO-HUMP) (CCHC), Box 4, Folder 29, Letter to Dr. Cecil C. Humphreys from Associate Dean of Students Clarence Hampton, N.D.

²⁰ Akins and Wiggins, *Keeping the Faith*, 122.

compared with state-run colleges allowed for more flexibility in negotiating between administrators and students over student autonomy. Private Tennessee colleges which witnessed dormitory hour protests during this time included Southwestern, Maryville, Vanderbilt University, and Tusculum College in East Tennessee.²¹ As late as 1970, Sewanee students proposed an open dorm policy that the university's administration vetoed.²²

While university administrators state-wide were concerned about student unrest, students on campuses lacking substantial liberal or radical student activism routinely decried these apparently apathetic student bodies. These condemnations emerged in both private and public Tennessee universities as early as the mid-1950s, in line with this article's assertion that conceptions of student power were present well before the 1960s. In the context of dormitory regulations in 1958, one Sewanee student called on his fellow students to "reclaim our status as gentlemen in addition to our present scholarly pose" and to stand up to the university administration which he compared to an "authoritarian government."²³ Maryville, Vanderbilt, and Sewanee in particular saw student radicals on their campuses call for greater student participation in activism and articulate apathy specifically as an issue. These students' complaints revealed their awareness of, and disappointment at the general absence of like-minded students on their campuses. Denunciations of apathy, then, served as calls from more radical students for greater student involvement in dismantling the limitations university administrations placed on students' personal autonomy on campuses. Students drew connections between their political power on campus and their personal rights. Echoing

²¹ Short, 27 July 2007; "Maryville Miss, WSGA Handbook For Resident Women, 1963-64"; Rhodes College Archives and Special Collections (RCASC), "Dorm Board Considers Rules Revision," *The Sou'wester*, 18 October 1968; The Vanderbilt students opposed the rule banning women from men's dormitories. See Fry, *The American South and the Vietnam War*, 290-291; "Sit-in in Tennessee," *The New York Times*, 13 December 1969.

²² Williamson, Jr, *Sewanee Sesquicentennial History*, 325.

²³ Bruce S. Keenan, "Gentlemen, (I hope)...," *The Sewanee Purple* LXXVI, no. 3, 22 October 1958.

comments that were made over the past decade, one Maryville student declared in 1969, “Paternalism is dead as a doctrine for decisions, and all have to acknowledge that. This includes not only faculty and administration who would like to paternalize, but also students who are willing to sit back and be paternalized.”²⁴ Moreover, complaints about student apathy became increasingly frequent in campus publications in the late 1960s, coinciding with the period of greatest organization over students’ personal and political autonomy on Tennessee campuses.²⁵

The intersections between racial justice and student power, which would continue to develop throughout the decade, were clear from the mid-1960s in Tennessee. At a student-organized conference at Fisk in May 1964, participants raised the “clarion call for the radical Black Student movement,” according to Black Power movement scholar Peniel Joseph.²⁶ The conference was organized by the Afro-American Student Movement which historian Ibram H. Rogers described as a “radical affiliation of SNCC.”²⁷ The event fostered discussions about developing black studies programs and curriculum reform nationally. According to one participant, the conference “was the ideological catalyst that eventually shifted the Civil Rights Movement into the Black Power Movement.”²⁸ Later on in 1968, some Fisk student activists even went as far as to call for the expulsion of white students.²⁹

²⁴ Jim Showalter, comment, *The Highland Echo* 54, no. 20, 15 May 1969.

²⁵ Vanderbilt University Special Collections and Archives, S.S.O.C. Reunion – 2002 – Box, Dave and Ronda Kotelchuck/Dec. 2000 Acquisition, *The Vanderbilt Hustler*, 28 February 1967; Maryville College Library and Archives, Box- Ledgers, File- Student-Faculty Senate Minutes 1960-1967, 18 February 1966; Maryville College Library and Archives, Board Minutes, 1951-1974, File- Board of Directors Minutes 1965-1974, Spring Meeting of the Directors of Maryville College, 29 April 1971.

²⁶ Peniel E. Joseph, “Black Studies, Student Activism, and the Black Power Movement,” *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era*, ed. Peniel E. Joseph (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), 263-64.

²⁷ Ibram H. Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement: Black Students and the Racial Reconstitution of Higher Education, 1965-1972* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 71.

²⁸ Joseph, “Black Studies, Student Activism, and the Black Power Movement,” 263-64.

²⁹ Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement*, 113.

The 1969 Student Government Association (SGA) President election at UT demonstrated the resonance of student power on a majority-white campus for white and black students. The three candidates for the SGA election were Jim Hager of the United for Progress party, John R. Long of Challenge '69, and James "Jimmie" Baxter of the Student Coalition party.³⁰ While promoting different platforms, each candidate's "party" representation revealed the general interest in increased student power; UP with its literal implication of moving upwards towards something better, the connotation of Challenge '69 as questioning the administrative system of the university, and Student Coalition representing a unified student body all signified elements of activism.

UT's 1969 SGA presidential election reflected ongoing changes on campuses across the country, particularly students' increased desire for greater personal autonomy. In the rescheduled election on 23 May 1969, Jimmie Baxter, the African American candidate, won.³¹ Formerly all-white universities occasionally elected black student body presidents in the late 1960s but it was rare, particularly in the South.³² Baxter was a twenty-five year old Air Force veteran, so perhaps had a leadership edge over his college peers.³³ In the run-off election that Baxter won, the vote tallies from the first election were reversed. With a larger number of votes tabulated than the first election, which itself was "a record-turnout," Baxter

³⁰ University of Tennessee Special Collections (UTSC), Office of the University Historian Collection, 1819-1997 (bulk 1870-1997), AR.0015, Series VI: Student Unrest (OUHCVI), Box 23, File 16- Election Controversy- 1969 (SGA), "Two Withdraw From SGA Race," *The Daily Beacon*, 22 May 1969.

³¹ The event was rescheduled from 7 May. UTSC, OUHCVI, Box 23, File 16- Election Controversy- 1969 (SGA), "Tribunal Rules SGA Elections 'Invalid'," *The Daily Beacon*, 10 May 1969.

³² Peter Wallenstein, "Black Southerners and Nonblack Universities: The Process of Desegregating Southern Higher Education, 1935-1965," in *Higher Education and the Civil Rights Movement: White Supremacy, Black Southerners, and College Campuses*, ed. Peter Wallenstein (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008), 51.

³³ UTSC, OUHCVI, Box 23, File 16- Election Controversy- 1969 (SGA), "'Common Sense': Baxter Approach," *The Daily Beacon*, 27 May 1969.

came in first with Hager and Long claiming second and third place respectively.³⁴ Following the election, Baxter claimed that the large turnout “demonstrated the [students’] concern with their role in the University.”³⁵ Voters and candidates alike recognized that this election reflected growing student interest in the university and the desire for greater involvement in governance. Following the election, Baxter contended that “[UT] students should be concerned more about making sure they really have a voice here intellectually.”³⁶

In his post-election interview with *The Daily Beacon*, Baxter focused mainly on UT students redefining *in loco parentis* in the upcoming academic year. His “primary concern” was with “student power” and the student body’s ability to increase student involvement in campus decision-making through an expanded SGA role. UT’s student body, Baxter argued, needed to “demonstrate to the Administration that we are really not satisfied and won’t just step by and accept our role as children.”³⁷ In a later oral history he claimed “We needed to have a legitimate say in running the affairs of the University, particularly regarding the affairs of students... we had to be recognized by the University and given some authority.”³⁸

In winning the election, Baxter defied many of his fellow students who “assumed that I didn’t have a chance of being elected, because I was black. Their theory was ‘white students just won’t vote for you, because this is a racist campus’.”³⁹ In making student power his central campaign focus, Baxter sought to make race a nonissue.

³⁴ UTSC, OUHCVI, Box 23, File 16- Election Controversy- 1969 (SGA), “Long Wins Narrow Victory Over Hager,” *The Daily Beacon*, 8 May 1969; UTSC, OUHCVI, Box 23, File 16- Election Controversy- 1969 (SGA), “‘Common Sense’: Baxter Approach,” *The Daily Beacon*, 27 May 1969.

³⁵ UTSC, OUHCVI, Box 23, File 16- Election Controversy- 1969 (SGA), “‘Common Sense’: Baxter Approach,” *The Daily Beacon*, 27 May 1969.

³⁶ UTSC, OUHCVI, Box 23, File 16- Election Controversy- 1969 (SGA), “Baxter: ‘Reorganization, Practicality, Reason’,” *The Daily Beacon*, 30 May 1969.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Jimmie Baxter, interview by Jamie Roberts, 2 December 1993. Transcript held in UTSC, OUHCVI, Box 22, Folder 10: Blacks- Faculty at UT.

³⁹ Ibid.

While Baxter attempted to frame the election around student rights, the fact that he was black remained a concern for many voters; white UT student Barry Bozeman recalled that Baxter's election "[scared] the crap out of the fathers."⁴⁰ Campaigners for the other two students running for SGA president allegedly used Baxter's race as a strategy; Baxter's campaign posters were "slashed" in the run-up to the election and Hager's campaign showed Baxter's photograph to local business owners and managers and then solicited campaign donations, a staple political tactic of conservatives running against black candidates or white candidates who allegedly promoted black interests, particularly once explicitly racist or segregationist campaigning became politically unprofitable.⁴¹ Ultimately, Baxter's campaign platform of representation for all UT students successfully crossed racial lines, but black and white student activists across Tennessee continued to face issues of student power, next in invited speaker policies.

Looking towards the future, Baxter said in his post-election interview in May 1969 that if the university adopted an open speaker policy, he wanted speakers who "would at least make a contribution to the student body. I think it would be good if we could bring, [not] so much the has beens but the young activists."⁴² An open speaker policy would allow students to choose anyone to talk on campus, without university administrators having veto power. In the late 1960s, many universities and colleges in Tennessee and across the country were changing their speaker policies. As with other issues concerning student power in the late

⁴⁰ Correspondence between Barry Bozeman and the author, 19 June 2014.

⁴¹ UTSC, OUHCVI, Box 23, File 16- Election Controversy- 1969 (SGA), "Reinstating Baxter", *The Daily Beacon*, 23 May 1969.

⁴² UTSC, OUHCVI, Box 23, File 16- Election Controversy- 1969 (SGA), "Baxter: 'Reorganization, Practicality, Reason'," *The Daily Beacon*, 30 May 1969.

1960s, the behavior of university administration, students, and faculty shaped how these policies changed on individual campuses.⁴³

Controversies over speaker policies at Tennessee campuses began in 1967 with SNCC chairman Stokely Carmichael's proposed visit to Vanderbilt.⁴⁴ In Nashville, the issue soon involved the entire city and multiple campuses. The Vanderbilt University Impact Symposium invited Carmichael to speak, alongside the vocally segregationist South Carolina Republican Senator Strom Thurmond, and Southern Christian Leadership Conference head Martin Luther King, Jr., in April 1967. Carmichael scheduled speeches at HBCU Tennessee Agricultural & Industrial State University (commonly referred to as Tennessee A&I) and Fisk for his time in Nashville.⁴⁵ A few days before Carmichael's scheduled appearance, the Nashville-based newspapers *Banner* and *Tennessean* began to attack Carmichael as a radical activist. The day before the scheduled event, the typically more moderate *Tennessean* repeated a local businessman's slur that Carmichael was "more Red than black," alleging Carmichael held Communist sympathies.⁴⁶ Incidentally, Malcolm X was reportedly invited to the small, private Tennessee Wesleyan around 1964, so Vanderbilt's invitation to Carmichael was perhaps not as radical as many Nashvillians perceived it.⁴⁷

As the Tennessee General Assembly discussed whether to ban Carmichael's visit to Nashville, officials at Tennessee A&I and Fisk debated whether to prevent his presence on

⁴³ Similar conflicts over speaker policies also occurred at University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill, University of South Carolina, Louisiana State University, and Western Kentucky University. See Fry, *The American South and the Vietnam War*, 291.

⁴⁴ Carmichael had given numerous campus tours during the 1966-1967 academic year. See Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement*, 78.

⁴⁵ Tennessee A&I was renamed Tennessee State University in 1968.

⁴⁶ Bobby L. Lovett, *The Civil Rights Movement in Tennessee: A Narrative History* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2005), 205.

⁴⁷ WHS, Carl and Anne Braden Papers, 1928-2006 (MSS 6) (CABP), Part 1- Sub-series: Southern Conference Educational Files, 1954-1972, Box 56, Folder 8: Nashville, Tennessee, 1958-1964, document about the status of southern student activism written by Ed Hamlett, N.D. [c. 1964].

their campuses, but soon faced opposition from their student bodies. Despite the uproar at his scheduled visit, Carmichael arrived in Nashville two days earlier than planned and spoke at Fisk that day (6 April), as well as to Southern Conference Educational Fund board members the next morning and at Tennessee A&I that evening, much to the disgust of the *Banner*.⁴⁸ Despite Carmichael's speech being relatively tame compared with local white expectations, the North Nashville neighborhood around HBCU Meharry Medical College, Fisk, and Tennessee A&I witnessed violent incidents as police raided buildings claiming to search for marijuana. Bottles, bricks, and firecrackers were thrown at police and protestors alike. The commotion restarted the next evening. On Monday the *Banner* covered the disturbances and blamed Carmichael for inciting the violence, despite the fact that Carmichael had actually left Nashville prior to the violence occurring.⁴⁹ Following several days of discussions between civil rights leaders, organizers in the community, and municipal staff, the groups remained at odds.⁵⁰ African American community leader Avon Williams partially blamed Carmichael for the violence but also said, "part of the trouble was the result of the blindness of the white people who have refused for months to see trouble coming," a critique applicable to both the wider community and local university campuses.⁵¹

Within the UT system, administrators worried in the late 1960s that a lengthy debate on the rights of students and the university to invite speakers to campus would threaten the institution. If the administration took a firm stance on the issue, the university feared facing increased violence, public campus demonstrations, media coverage of protestors, and general

⁴⁸ Lovett, *The Civil Rights Movement*, 206.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 208-212.

⁵⁰ For more on the impact of the riots following Carmichael's speech in Nashville, see Benjamin Houston, *The Nashville Way: Racial Etiquette and the Struggle for Social Justice in a Southern City* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012), chap. 5.

⁵¹ Sonya Ramsey, "'We Will Be Ready Whenever They Are': African American Teachers' Responses to the *Brown* Decision and Public School Integration in Nashville, Tennessee, 1954-1966," *The Journal of African American History* 90 (2005), 46.

unrest on the campus. If they gave more control to the student body, however, issuing invitations to controversial individuals might create bad publicity for the university and threaten the funding it depended on from state and national-level politicians, and anger conservative alumni and private university donors. After controversy between students and the administration over a prospective visit from African American Democratic Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., the university administration created a joint faculty-student-administration body, the Student Rights and Responsibilities Committee, to review the incident and potential solutions for future disagreements. The committee was charged with considering speaker policies and making recommendations regarding student life on campus. This committee's existence (with the administration's approval) demonstrated the administration's intent at least to hear the reforms students wanted.⁵² In addition to Powell, UT students invited speakers such as lawyer William Kunstler, political scientist Hans Morgenthau, *New York Post* columnist Max Lerner, LSD researcher Timothy Leary, and southern civil rights leader and Vietnam War opponent Julian Bond during the late 1960s and early 1970s.⁵³

When the student-run lecture series *Issues* sought approval in the summer of 1968 for its upcoming autumn semester speakers through the administrative channels outlined in the university student handbook, Chancellor Charles Weaver told *Issues* executive committee members and SGA president Chris Whittle in a meeting that one of the invited speakers, comedian Dick Gregory, could not attend the series because "Gregory's appearance would upset the outside community, including the legislature, and could potentially result in a cut in

⁵² Powell was also the subject of a speaker controversy at Memphis State University in 1969. See UTSC, OUHCVI, Box 24, File 1- Open Speakers Controversy (1 of 2), "The Speaker Ban Controversy: A Statement of Fact and Principle by the Student Government Association."

⁵³ Ibid.

the University's state appropriated budget."⁵⁴ Governor Buford Ellington's recommendation of a lower financial appropriation for the UT system in 1969 seemed to validate Weaver's concern for the university's financial wellbeing.⁵⁵ The ensuing conflicts between students and the administration from Weaver's actions led the university president Andrew D. Holt to ask the Board of Trustees to review the speaker policies on other campuses in the region and to consider alternative policies the university could adopt. Ranging from not changing the current policy at all to giving administrative approval to university students for all future speakers, Holt's list of options demonstrated an effort to accommodate all interests and keep the university's policy transition private.⁵⁶ Contrasting with Holt's seeming encouragement for the Board of Trustees to adopt an open speaker policy (allowing students to invite outside speakers without prior administrative approval), Chancellor Weaver announced his opposition to the policy in September 1968 on the grounds that administrators should have the right to refuse speaker requests, given their need "to supply appropriate security and in effect, appropriate financial aid."⁵⁷ At its October 1968 meeting, rather than adopting an open speaker policy for the UT system, the Board of Trustees ordered Chancellors on each campus to devise a speaker policy, and then return general guidelines for later board consideration.⁵⁸

With the Board of Trustees making no decision on the speaker policy at its February 1969 meeting, impatient students filed suit in a US District Court three weeks later. The

⁵⁴ UTSC, OUHCVI, Box 24, File 1- Open Speakers Controversy (1 of 2), "The Speaker Ban Controversy: A Statement of Fact and Principle by the Student Government Association." Dick Gregory reportedly made the highest number of speeches in the Black Campus Movement, reportedly 500 in one account. See Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement*, 81.

⁵⁵ UTSC, OUHCVI, Box 24, File 1- Open Speakers Controversy (1 of 2), "Board Considers Speaker Policy," *The Daily Beacon*, 1 February 1969.

⁵⁶ UTSC, OUHCVI, Box 24, File 1- Open Speakers Controversy (1 of 2), "Speaker's Policy for the University of Tennessee," Board of Trustees, Executive Session, 18 October 1968.

⁵⁷ UTSC, OUHCVI, Box 24, File 1- Open Speakers Controversy (1 of 2), "1968-69: UT's Year of Changes," *The Daily Beacon*, 25 September 1969.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

students' suit, alongside Julian Bond's refusal to speak at Knoxville owing to UT's denial of an invitation to Dick Gregory, and the university's 1969 blocking of Dr. Timothy Leary's speaking, kept the dispute well-publicized through early 1969.⁵⁹ In the court case, the judge ruled that the university had violated the freedom of speech guaranteed to all citizens, but he refused to issue an injunction that the students and faculty who had sued the university had requested. A restraining order, the judge contended, was unnecessary.⁶⁰ The university developed a new speaker policy by June 1969, seemingly as a consequence of sustained student pressure. The new policy created a fifteen-person committee with final authority over the granting or denial of invitations from groups that requested funding aid to bring speakers to campus. Making up the committee (reappointed annually) were five faculty members, the SGA president, the senior class president, presidents of five other student organizations appointed by the chancellor, two chancellor-designated campus administrators, and a university system representative chosen by the president. The policy further specified that speakers would be held to standing local, state, and national laws and that it would be the sponsoring organization's responsibility to ensure the speakers' awareness of this condition.⁶¹

Issues of race and student power continued to intensify campus-based demonstrations, many of which concerned demands for the creation of educational and social programs for black students. As more attended formerly all-white universities throughout the country in the late 1960s and 1970s, African American students demanded a greater incorporation of black interests and culture into campus life. This increased interest in African American history as well as a nationwide Black Power-derived emphasis on black empowerment

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ "Judge Says U. of Tennessee Violates Freedom of Speech," *The New York Times*, 19 April 1969; UTSC, OUHCVI, Box 24, File 1- Open Speakers Controversy (1 of 2), "Speaker Policy 'Null and Void'," *The Daily Beacon*, 2 May 1969.

⁶¹ UTSC, OUHCVI, Box 24, File 1- Open Speakers Controversy (1 of 2), "New UT Speaker Policy Approved," *The Summer Beacon*, 20 June 1969.

brought the establishment of black studies programs across the country.⁶² In petitioning for these programs to exist, many students and faculty members had to argue against the established curricula at their respective institutions. Despite black student admissions to formerly all-white institutions, blacks encountered segregation in campus-based social groups like fraternities and sororities. Their feelings of isolation and desires to have social activities on campus resulted in some Greek organizations admitting black students. But most national Greek organizations remained uninterested in actively seeking black members, causing black students to form their own Greek organizations and black student unions.

Demands by black students for more inclusion and representation generated strife at Memphis State and UT, the two largest state-funded institutions at this time.⁶³ Giving black student groups recognition also required administrators to respond directly to student demands or demonstrations. Administrators were generally reluctant to appear too accommodating to student radicals, but the optics of black campus radicalism in Tennessee, particularly at Memphis State and UT, occasionally forced student radicals and administrators into conflict, mirroring trends nationwide.

At Memphis State, black students were a much larger percentage of the student body than at other historically-white Tennessee universities. Consequently, there were both stronger demands for black studies programs and black student groups, while the university administration held greater concerns over potential student unrest. In 1967, Memphis State's enrolment was 15,914, of which seven percent were African American students, while UT's respective figures were 20,111 and two percent.⁶⁴ In March 1968, a Memphis news reporter

⁶² See especially Cohen, *Freedom's Orator*.

⁶³ On this process at Memphis State, see UMSC, CCHC, Box 4, Folder 29, David Vincent, "Identity Is Hard For All At MSU," *The Commercial Appeal*, 8 March 1968; Shirletta J. Kinchen, *Black Power in the Bluff City: African American Youth and Student Activism in Memphis, 1965-1975* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2016), 149.

⁶⁴ UMSC, CCHC, Box 4, Folder 29, David Vincent, "Huge Negro Enrollment At MSU Has Produced Few Real Problems," *The Commercial Appeal*, 6 March 1968.

claimed Memphis State authorities maintained social segregation once black students had desegregated the university. One African American Memphis State law student Isaac Taylor lamented black students' inability to participate in social organizations on campus. Instead, one section of the university's student center was "the ghetto" where black students could socialize with each other. Unable to join other university social activities, another black student stated: "You go to class, you sit in the Student Center, you go home – that's it."⁶⁵ Despite the formation of a Memphis State Black Student Association (BSA) in 1963, many black Memphis State students still felt isolated.⁶⁶ Memphis State's BSA issued a 23 March 1969 statement with several demands. It called for starting a black studies program, hiring more black instructors and administrators, creating a budget for black student events (including a proposed "Black Extravaganza"), recruiting black student athletes, and ending anti-black discrimination in campus fraternities and sororities.⁶⁷

In April 1969, Memphis State BSA members occupied university president Cecil C. Humphreys' office to demand funding to invite Congressman Powell to speak at Memphis State for the Black Extravaganza program, scheduled for 16-17 May.⁶⁸ (UT students had invited Powell to speak in 1967, but university administrators refused to let him talk on campus.)⁶⁹ In a morning meeting on 23 April, Humphreys told two BSA representatives that the university had no additional funding in its student speakers' budget to pay for Powell's attendance; the students had earlier unsuccessfully requested the necessary \$1,750 from the

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ University of Memphis, Office of Multicultural Affairs, <http://www.memphis.edu/multiculturalaffairs/organizations/index.php>, last accessed 21 July 2016.

⁶⁷ UMSC, CCHC, Box 4, Folder 29, "Statement of Dr. C. C. Humphreys [to] Students, Faculty and Friends of Memphis State University," 29 April 1969.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ UTSC, OUHCVI, Box 24, File 1- Open Speakers Controversy (1 of 2), "1968-69: UT's Year of Changes," *Daily Beacon*, 25 September 1969.

Dean of Students' office.⁷⁰ Shortly after noon, over seventy-five African American students arrived at Humphreys's office, again requesting funding for Powell to speak on campus. In a thirty-minute meeting, BSA members also raised the same issues cited in their 23 March statement, before Humphreys asked them to leave to allow him to meet subsequent appointments that day. The students refused, even after Humphreys told them of the university and state's policy to call the Memphis Police Department to end university building occupations.⁷¹ Police soon removed the students without arresting them, and law enforcement remained on the campus as a precaution at Humphreys's request.⁷²

Following their sit-in, the BSA students went to the Memphis State University Center where Dr. H. Ralph Jackson, the vice chairman of Memphis's Committee on the Move for Equality and Maxine Smith, executive secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Memphis chapter, assured them that both organizations supported the students' efforts.⁷³ The following morning, four BSA members delivered a list of issues they wished to discuss with Humphreys, and arranged a meeting with two representatives from the Dean of Students' office for the next day.⁷⁴ During this session, the BSA students requested the removal of police from campus. The administration refused to do this, and in fact kept them on campus over the next two days (during the weekend). "Because of additional threats to University property, the attempt to recruit people from other cities to come to Memphis, and newspaper statements attributed to certain student leaders," Humphreys claimed in a subsequent public announcement, "Memphis Police Department assistance was continued over the weekend."⁷⁵

⁷⁰ UMSC, CCHC, Box 4, Folder 29, "Statement of Dr. C. C. Humphreys," 29 April 1969.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Sorrels, *The Exciting Years*, 174.

⁷⁴ UMSC, CCHC, Box 4, Folder 29, "Statement of Dr. C. C. Humphreys," 29 April 1969.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

Perceiving the threat from BSA students to be low, that Monday, 28 April, the university decreased the police presence on campus. After a BSA meeting that day, 115 students occupied Humphreys's office shortly after noon while he was not present. They intended to occupy the office, according to Humphreys, "until police were removed or they were arrested."⁷⁶ The administration notified the students that they were in violation of Memphis State's Student Conduct and Disciplinary Proceedings; those who remained would be suspended from Memphis State. Most of the students stayed, and were subsequently driven to jail.⁷⁷ A total of 109 students were arrested and charged with trespassing on university property; of that group, 103 were black, and 104 were Memphis State students. The "BSA 109," as the group became known, were suspended from Memphis State as a result of their arrests, but were given the chance to appeal this decision.⁷⁸ In his statement on the situation, Humphreys cited his compliance with three "directives": Section 39-1214 of the Tennessee Code Annotated which stated "any person who trespasses in the building of any public school and who there engages in any disorderly conduct is guilty of a misdemeanor"; the State Board of Education's 9 August 1968 directive that each institution it governed, including Memphis State, create policies against campus unrest including "unauthorized occupancy of University facilities"; and Memphis State's own Student Conduct and Disciplinary Proceedings which forbade "any interference with functions or activities of the University."⁷⁹

There was considerable local support for the university appearing strong against black student unrest, a common event in the late 1960s. More than 250 black student-led demonstrations occurred on campuses across the country during the 1968-1969 academic

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Sorrels, *The Exciting Years*, 176; Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement*, 138; Kinchen, *Black Power in the Bluff City*, 164-165.

⁷⁹ UMSC, CCHC, Box 4, Folder 29, "Statement of Dr. C. C. Humphreys," 29 April 1969.

year.⁸⁰ Furthermore, by 15 May 1969, seventy-two university presidents resigned following that academic year's campus protests.⁸¹ In a 29 April 1969 petition, the day after BSA members were arrested, some 870 Memphis State students signed in support of the university administration's actions.⁸² Humphreys received dozens of letters from Memphis State students and Tennessee residents in support of his behavior, seen as a strong stand against student unrest and black radicalism. Humphreys, however, sounded a conciliatory tone. "I hope," he remarked, "that everyone realizes that we don't need a strong polarization. I hope we all realize we are trying to present an educational opportunity for everyone."⁸³

When the Memphis State BSA sit-in protests occurred, Humphreys and other administrators knew of unrest at two historically-black colleges in West Tennessee, where students at HBCU LeMoyne-Owen College in Memphis and Lane College, another HBCU in Jackson, had held similar disagreements with their college administrations over the students' role in institutional decisions. While the tenor of the protests was tenser than at predominantly-white campuses like Memphis State or UT (as black students were an overwhelming majority of enrollees at Lane and LeMoyne-Owen), the issues these students raised mirrored the concerns black and white students voiced elsewhere in the state.

Following the merger of LeMoyne College, a four-year institution, with Owen Junior College, a two-year college, in 1968, students voiced resentment over the campus resources available to students.⁸⁴ LeMoyne-Owen College students held a symposium, Inquiry Week, from 11-15 November 1968, which according to their Student Government President, Charles

⁸⁰ Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement*, 123.

⁸¹ William L. Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and American Culture, 1965-1975* (London and Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 66.

⁸² UMSC, CCHC, Box 4, Folder 35, Petition signed by 873 students in support of Humphreys and Memphis State administration, 29 April 1969.

⁸³ UMSC, CCHC, Box 4, Folders 37-40; Sorrels, *The Exciting Years*, 178.

⁸⁴ Kinchen, *Black Power in the Bluff City*, 57.

Diggs, sought to “open the minds of the students.”⁸⁵ The speakers referenced protests on black campuses across the country, and some urged students to report their grievances to their administration. Students subsequently listed nineteen demands for the university administration to address. These included a curriculum that was more tailored to black history and culture, additional work study options, opening of the campus gym to students, more student access to health services, and lower tuition costs. The students also wanted to be involved in the selection of the college’s next president, as the current president, Dr. Hollis Price, was retiring at the end of the year. This final request, to have a say in the next president’s hiring, foreshadowed similar demands by UT students in 1969.⁸⁶ When the students felt their issues were ignored by Price, a group seized the campus administration building, Brownlee Hall. Students held it for two weeks.⁸⁷ Diggs argued that this protest was in fact carefully planned to increase their authority on campus. “Our particular grievances have always been here,” said Diggs. “You can ask any alumnus and he’ll tell you that the problems he had as a student are still prevalent today. But before now there has never been the strength to change those problems. Now it’s different.”⁸⁸

A more violent incident occurred at Lane College in February and March 1969. A Black Power-influenced campus group unrecognized by the university administration, the Black Liberation Front, led protests over student rights, which resulted in the college’s closure for ten days, and damage amounting to several thousand dollars.⁸⁹ Three campus

⁸⁵ RCASC, “Black Campus Erupts In Turmoil; Protest Molds LeMoyne Reform,” *The Sou’wester*, 6 December 1968; Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement*, 120.

⁸⁶ Kinchen, *Black Power in the Bluff City*, 125-126.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 123-141.

⁸⁸ RCASC, “Black Campus Erupts In Turmoil; Protest Molds LeMoyne Reform,” *The Sou’wester*, 6 December 1968; Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement*, 120; Kinchen, *Black Power in the Bluff City*, 124.

⁸⁹ UMSC, CCHC, Box 4, Folder 29, Statement to Parents of Students, Alumni, Supporters and Friends of Lane College from C. A. Kirkendoll, President of Lane College, 4 April 1969; Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement*, 122; Kinchen, *Black Power in the Bluff City*, 160.

buildings were burned following the campus riot which reportedly involved the entire student body.⁹⁰ Several grievances Lane College's black students raised with the college president, Dr. C. A. Kirkendoll, reflected similar demands for student autonomy on Tennessee campuses: they included extending the campus grill's hours, ending mandatory chapel attendance, allowing women to wear pants to class and all students to style their hair in Afros, and students gaining greater say in administrative affairs of the college.⁹¹ Later on that month, when the science building burned down on 20 March, simultaneous with a visit to campus by the Black Egyptians, a militant African American group from East St. Louis, Jackson's mayor "declared a state of civil emergency." The governor, Buford Ellington, called in 125 state troopers to restore order and seventy-five people were arrested and charged with various crimes including disorderly conduct, violating the twelve-hour curfew that applied to a two and a half square mile area around the campus, and attempting to incite a riot.⁹²

Black student protest also erupted at UT. Emphasizing a feeling of not belonging at UT which echoed Memphis State black student sentiments, the Black Student Union's (BSU) student handbook issued in the autumn of 1969 referred to black UT students as "a fly in the buttermilk."⁹³ Frustrations over the black studies program at UT in fall 1969 resulted in the BSU considering a boycott of all black studies courses but one (a course taught by a professor of both UT and Knoxville College, the city's HBCU). Students were angry about the lack of

⁹⁰ Ibram H. Rogers, "The Black Campus Movement and the Institutionalization of Black Studies, 1965-1970," *Journal of African American Studies* 16, no. 1 (2012), 31.

⁹¹ UMSC, CCHC, Box 4, Folder 29, Statement to Parents of Students, Alumni, Supporters and Friends of Lane College from C. A. Kirkendoll, President of Lane College, 4 April 1969.

⁹² Ibid.; "Fear More Violence At Lane College," *The Chicago Defender*, 24 March 1969; Michael W. Miles, *The Radical Probe: The Logic of Student Rebellion* (New York: Atheneum, 1973), 236.

⁹³ Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement*, 107; Kinchen, *Black Power in the Bluff City*, 150. For more on the student experience in the BSU (as well as the UT SSOC chapter), see interview of James "Sparky" Rucker, "A Sense of Revolution," *The Vietnam War: East Tennessee*, East Tennessee Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), 17 February 2017.

consultation for the new program's curriculum, and the paucity of African American professors involved in the program. One BSU member argued that "a white man cannot possibly have an understanding of the black situation, so he can't very well teach a black studies course" and later, "black students are fed up with the hiring of the Negro for purposes of tokenism and we will not tolerate inter-department racism disguised as an Afro-American Studies Program."⁹⁴

Members of UT's newly created BSU generated a list of further changes they wished to see at the university in the spring of 1969. The official request for university recognition of the BSU and black studies programs came on 8 May 1969 when fifty black students "peacefully picketed" UT's Administration Building for the whole day. The group listed seven "demands" for the university's administration to address. In addition to wanting reconsideration of a black cheerleader's application, they sought the funds they had applied for to the Student Activities Office to be paid to the group as a student organization, more black counsellors, more scholarships for all students, black recruiters as part of the university's application process (for both students and staff members), and an investigation of classroom discrimination. Dr. Howard F. Aldmon, UT's Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, responded to these demands by providing information to the demonstrators on how to move forward with their various requests through existing university administrative procedures.⁹⁵ Peaceful demonstrations involving 75 students took place over the next few days.⁹⁶ A lone reactionary counter-protestor, who held up a sign reading "White Student Union" failed to

⁹⁴ UTSC, Office of the University Historian Collection, 1819-1997 (bulk 1870-1997), Series V- Race Relations (OUHCV), Box 22, Folder 8- Black Student Union and Black Studies Office, "Blacks Consider Class Boycott," *The Daily Beacon*, 25 September 1969.

⁹⁵ UTSC, OUHCVI, Box 23, File 15- Demonstration Clippings, "Officials Hear Demands of Picketing Black Students," *The Daily Beacon*, 9 May 1969.

⁹⁶ UTSC, OUHCV, Box 22, Folder 8- Black Student Union and Black Studies Office, "[Aldmon] Says Understanding Came From BSU Meetings," *The Daily Beacon*, 16 May 1969.

goad the demonstrators into a fight.⁹⁷ Following these demonstrations, BSU members met with University President Andrew D. Holt, Howard Aldmon, and Chancellor Charles Weaver.⁹⁸

To further demonstrate that the administration took these students' requests seriously, Aldmon wrote to the BSU president, Johnny Pierce, in September 1969 to follow up on progress towards the seven demands the BSU had presented in the spring. Aldmon listed numerous improvements in conditions for African Americans at the university: the university funds the BSU received, the five black students employed in dormitories as Assistant Head Residents or Resident Assistants for the 1969-70 school year (three more than the previous year), the new black counselor hired to the admissions staff and a promise from Dr. Lawrence Silverman, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, to make a "concerted effort" to hire more black faculty. The university also declared openness to establishing a black fraternity or sorority, and agreed to stop playing "Dixie" (a Confederate anthem) at home football games. Finally, it had hired forty-two more black employees for university staff positions.⁹⁹ The university clearly felt it was important to demonstrate its cooperation with the BSU's demands. The BSU continued to challenge administrative policy into 1970 with calls for new courses, a separate Afro-American library, and reorganizing the Black Studies Committee of the College of Liberal Arts to include appointing a black chairman, with a two-week deadline for these changes. BSU president Pierce remained skeptical of the administration's intentions. "Black students on this campus," he noted, "have been continually told that the

⁹⁷ UTSC, OUHCV, Box 22, Folder 8- Black Student Union and Black Studies Office, "BSU Continues Demonstration," *The Daily Beacon*, 10 May 1969.

⁹⁸ UTSC, OUHCV, Box 22, Folder 8- Black Student Union and Black Studies Office, "[Aldmon] Says Understanding Came From BSU Meetings," *The Daily Beacon*, 16 May 1969.

⁹⁹ UTSC, OUHCV, Box 22, Folder 8- Black Student Union and Black Studies Office, "Follow-up to BSU's Recommendations Presented in the Spring Quarter 1969," N.D.

University and the faculty are sincere in their efforts to create a viable and strong Black Studies program. Well, it's time that some substantial results of this 'sincerity' are seen."¹⁰⁰

As the comparisons between Memphis State's and UT's black student organizations and programs demonstrate, many of the issues of student power were tied to concerns over racial inequalities. While both Memphis State and UT administrations cooperated with the BSA and BSU respectively, black and white students continued to feel underrepresented by the administrations. In light of the widespread campus protests across the country during the 1968-1969 academic year, administrators took steps to accommodate student activists to prevent greater unrest on their own campuses. As the Memphis State and UT cases reveal, these measures were often limited and, in the minds of student radicals, did little to tackle the root issue – their feelings of not being heard by university administrations. With student disaffection having developed from small protests over student rights, and from mostly black demands for greater attention to racial inequalities on campus, by the 1969-1970 academic year, Tennessee's campuses seemed on the edge of all-out protest.

After visiting campuses in Nashville for a congressional investigation into campus unrest, specifically Fisk, Tennessee A&I, and Vanderbilt, Pennsylvania Congressman Lawrence Coughlin wrote to Tennessee Republican William Brock about the congressional participants' impressions of campus dynamics in May 1969. According to the congressmen, many of the college administrations had "very poor communication with their students, if any." To resolve this problem, Coughlin noted that "where there is ample communication, the problem of violent confrontation appears considerably reduced."¹⁰¹ Contrary to Coughlin's suggestion to communicate more with disaffected students, and fearing

¹⁰⁰ UTSC, OUHCV, Box 22, Folder 8- Black Student Union and Black Studies Office, "BSU Votes Unified Black Studies," *The Daily Beacon*, 22 January 1970.

¹⁰¹ Modern Political Archive, University of Tennessee (MPA), William Emerson Brock Collection (MPA.106), Box 31, Folder 9- Correspondence- Fisk Univ. Visit, Letter from Congressman Lawrence Coughlin to Congressman William Brock, 27 May 1969.

significant funding cuts if administrators appeared to coddle student protestors, the major Tennessee state university system response to campus unrest became less compromising.¹⁰²

When UT President Andrew D. Holt announced his retirement in June 1969, many students on campus felt they should have more input in the Board of Trustees' choice of a successor.¹⁰³ Demands for greater student and faculty influence over the presidential appointment grew louder amid speculation that the Board of Trustees favored Edward J. Boling, vice president of development, whom many students and faculty did not respect.¹⁰⁴ Many students and faculty wanted an academic as university president; Boling's previous work in the university development office was deemed insufficiently scholarly.¹⁰⁵ Tensions rose throughout the autumn semester as students and faculty heard rumors that Boling was favored for the presidency. Despite administration-led efforts to include students and faculty in the decision-making process, students and faculty grew increasingly concerned that their opinions were not taken seriously. One article in *The Daily Beacon* in August 1969 addressed the Board of Trustees directly, calling for "this damn monkey business to stop," and asserted that "students are *not* little children, and faculty members are *not* intellectual day-dreamers." The article concluded with the demand to "give students and faculty a

¹⁰² These tensions evident on the state and local level between authorities and student activists were clear on the national level as well. Lyndon B. Johnson was angered by young antiwar demonstrators who he felt hindered his administration's efforts to justify American involvement in Vietnam. During Richard Nixon's presidency, White House officials frequently spoke out against protestors, most notably on 19 October 1969 when Vice President Spiro Agnew stated, "A spirit of national masochism prevails, encouraged by an effete corps of impudent snobs who characterize themselves as intellectuals." Robert Dallek, *Flawed Giant: Lyndon Johnson and His Times, 1961-1973* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 451; "As Spiro Agnew Sees It," *The New York Times*, 10 May 1970.

¹⁰³ UTSC, OUHCVI, Box 23, File 13- The Boling Appointment Controversy, "Speculation Running Rampant On UT President's Successor," 27 June 1969.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Barry Bozeman, "40 Year Flashback- Nixon & Graham at Tennessee," 28 May 2010, <http://www.dailykos.com/story/2010/05/28/864563/-40-YEAR-FLASHBACK-NIXON-GRAHAM-at-TENNESSEE>, last accessed 13 March 2014. Bozeman was the twenty-second protestor arrested on the felony charge of inciting a riot following the 15 January 1970 protest.

significant voice, not token toleration, in selecting UT's new president. *You may be sorry if you don't.*"¹⁰⁶ While the article's author may have been angrier than most students about this issue, the article and the tension on campus impacted university administrators' preparation for and later reaction to the announcement of Boling's appointment in January 1970.

Students called for a demonstration on 15 January 1970, where some 2,500 students attended a five-hour protest as participants or spectators. Classes continued throughout the demonstration. At the demonstration, protestor Peter Kami challenged President Boling to a duel. It was to be an arm-wrestling match, but the choice of the term "duel" was significant.¹⁰⁷ Though many students present that day viewed the challenge as a joke, largely due to Kami's thin shape and small frame, the university administration interpreted it as an advance warning of trouble.¹⁰⁸ One student activist who knew Kami then even described him years later as "the frail Brazilian," as students believed—erroneously—that he had been born in Brazil.¹⁰⁹ Despite efforts by administration officials and protest leaders to negotiate, with mediation help offered by an American Civil Liberties Union representative, Harry Wiersema, Sr., after several hours the university and Knoxville police arrived. Following Knoxville police threats to use tear gas, they arrested twenty-two protestors, an incident Chancellor Weaver termed "most distasteful."¹¹⁰ UT Young Americans for Freedom members, a conservative national student organization, and policeman in plainclothes assisted

¹⁰⁶ Original emphasis. UTSC, OUHCVI, Box 23, File 13- The Boling Appointment Controversy, "Will The Board Ever Learn?," *The Daily Beacon*, 22 August 1969.

¹⁰⁷ UTSC, OUHCVI, Box 23, File 13- The Boling Appointment Controversy, "Students Set Stage For Protest Today," *The Daily Beacon*, 15 January 1970. For more on this incident, see Fry, *The American South and the Vietnam War*, 298; interview of Gary Heatherly, "A Sense of Revolution," *The Vietnam War: East Tennessee*, East Tennessee Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) 2017, N.D.

¹⁰⁸ Bozeman, "40 Year Flashback."

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ UTSC, OUHCVI, Box 23, File 13- The Boling Appointment Controversy, "UT Student Demonstration Subsides," *The Daily Beacon*, 16 January 1970.

in the arrests.¹¹¹ Those arrested became known as the “Knoxville 22.” An FBI memorandum filed on the event described the participants as a group of “discontented students” and “hippie-type individuals.”¹¹²

Jimmie Baxter, SGA president, told students at the demonstration that he would call for a general student strike the next week if the administration did not approve the demonstrators’ proposed reforms.¹¹³ Baxter did not articulate what these particular suggestions were, but he stated that if these demands were not met, UT students would have “to prepare to shut the system down” with the strike. “If we play this game – the game of violence – then I’ll start taking bets on who will win,” Baxter said, explaining that he believed the police would triumph.¹¹⁴ Almost a month after the January protest, sixty students gathered in front of the university’s administration building in support of the Knoxville 22 then being charged with felony to incite a riot. Some 500 spectators watched.¹¹⁵ While the student newspaper, *The Daily Beacon*, seemed to congratulate the campus on the peacefulness of this demonstration, the student-faculty strike later that spring revealed that the major disagreements between the students and faculty and the administration remained unresolved.

Other UT campuses besides Knoxville protested Boling’s appointment. Prior to the 15 January Knoxville demonstration, there was a large-scale protest at the satellite Chattanooga campus when the university’s Board of Trustees scheduled its meeting there in early January 1970. Amidst about thirty protestors screaming “Fascist pig” at security

¹¹¹ “U.T. Goes Wild,” *The Highland Echo* 55, no. 2, 10 April 1970.

¹¹² FBI, Letter, from SAC in Knoxville, to Director, FBI, 19 February 1970, COINTELPRO – New Left, Bureau File xx-100-3687.

¹¹³ UTSC, OUHCVI, Box 23, File 13- The Boling Appointment Controversy, “21 Arrested: Rebel Students Call for Vote, Strike at U-T,” *The Knoxville News-Sentinel*, 16 January 1970.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ UTSC, OUHCVI, Box 23, File 13- The Boling Appointment Controversy, “Demonstration Conducted Peacefully,” *The Daily Beacon*, 12 February 1970.

policemen guarding the building where the meeting was taking place, the student government president, Russell King, told the trustees that they had “disregarded student rights and ignored the feelings and opinions of students across the state.”¹¹⁶ Governor Buford Ellington was so frustrated by the public animosity towards the administration that he “expressed fears that their juvenile behavior might result in great harm to the institution” to a local Chattanooga newspaper. The article reporting on the incident cited “some [university] officials” who feared the students’ improper behavior could lose the institution more than \$1 million in state funding for the next year.¹¹⁷

Subsequent events at UT in May 1970 “struck deeper into the emotions of the people of the state more than anything [else] that’s happened” and “hurt the image of the University [deeply],” according to Chancellor Weaver. He was referencing the student and faculty strike which followed the news of the deaths of students at Kent State University during a 4 May 1970 anti-war protest.¹¹⁸ During the nationwide student strikes precipitated by the Kent State shootings, nearly half of the undergraduate population participated nationally.¹¹⁹ Students at other Tennessee campuses used the strike as a tactic in reaction to Kent State, including Knoxville College and Southwestern, and classes were cancelled at Sewanee and Maryville.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ UTSC, OUHCVI, Box 23, File 13- The Boling Appointment Controversy, “Several Students Protest Selection Of Boling,” *The Daily Beacon*, 9 January 1970.

¹¹⁷ UTSC, OUHCVI, Box 23, File 15- Demonstration Clippings, “UTC Leftists Stir Anger Of State’s Legislators,” *The Chattanooga News-Free Press*, 18 January 1970.

¹¹⁸ UTSC, OUHCVI, Box 23, File 13- The Boling Appointment Controversy, “Strike Worse Than Nixon Protest,” *The Daily Beacon*, 30 May 1970.

¹¹⁹ Seymour Martin Lipset, *Rebellion in the University: A History of Student Activism in America* (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge and K. Paul Press, 1972), 5.

¹²⁰ Interview with Cynthia Fleming, “A Sense of Revolution,” *The Vietnam War: East Tennessee*, East Tennessee Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) 2017; Judith Warren, “Strike,” *The Sou’wester* 51, no. 23, 15 May 1970; RCASC, President’s Papers, 70-62 Campus Unrest-1970, press release, 8 May 1970; “ACC Discusses National – International Crises,” *The Highland Echo* 55, no. 6, 8 May 1970.

Speaking at a rally of around 3,000 students after the UT memorial service for Kent State, Baxter said, “Yesterday four students were killed because they were in the process of protesting something we probably should have been protesting long ago... We have an obligation to speak out... we can’t wait until it comes to UT.”¹²¹ The three-day strike of classes resulted in a fifty percent drop in class attendance. Many professors joined in. In reaction to the strike, the Army Reserve National Center and the Music Annex Building on campus were firebombed as “mass demonstrations” occurred across the campus.¹²²

On 14 May 1970, a week after the post-Kent State student strike and just before Billy Graham’s anticipated crusade on campus, the civil rights activist and lawyer William Kunstler spoke at UT to a reported crowd of fifteen hundred students. Kunstler was famous for his widely-publicized defense of the Chicago Seven, anti-war activists charged with conspiracy to incite a riot in the aftermath of the violence surrounding the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago.¹²³

The news that UT students intended to invite Kunstler to speak on campus enraged conservatives across the state. With Kunstler’s larger-than-life personality, his public statements that students should organize against oppressive campus administrations, and his committed defense of the Chicago Seven (whom many Americans saw as ridiculous and disrespectful of the justice system), many of the state’s leaders would not support funding his visit. The governor and ex officio chairman of UT’s Board of Trustees, Buford Ellington, said he would “put up a strong fight to see that no state funds or student fees go into

¹²¹ UTSC, OUHCVI, Box 23, File 12- Anti-War Protests (2 of 2), “Baxter Calls 3-Day Student Strike,” *The Daily Beacon*, 6 May 1970.

¹²² UTSC, OUHCVI, Box 23, File 20- Nixon-Graham Crusade- 1970, “UT scene of political activism, rapid expansion in recent years,” *The Daily Beacon*, 9 May 1977.

¹²³ See Terry H. Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); David Farber, *Chicago ’68* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1988); James Tracy, *Direct Action: Radical Pacifism From the Union Eight to the Chicago Seven* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

financing speeches by men like Kunstler.”¹²⁴ Knoxville mayor Leonard Rogers, and Republican Congressman John Duncan, Sr. joined Ellington in opposing Kunstler’s visit.¹²⁵ The local paper’s editorial section mocked the event for weeks leading up to the speech; one state resident even suggested that Kunstler give the speech at the city dump rather than the UT campus. “It shouldn’t be too hard to provide him with a soap box,” the man argued, but if it should take place at UT, the campus “should be fully fumigated following the long hair and hand waving affair.”¹²⁶

Kunstler’s speech at UT’s Circle Park concerned the UT administration by encouraging the students to continue their protests until the university met their demands. A report on the speech filed by the local branch of the FBI, included the following underscored sentence: “He [Kunstler] stated students should not worry about getting jobs, getting degrees, getting into law school, but should worry about rights and, if necessary, occupy buildings and destroy property.”¹²⁷ In his speech, the lawyer urged UT students to strike for greater student political power and in solidarity for the anti-war movement. While Kunstler claimed not to advocate rebellion per se, he contended that “we’re beyond the point where conventional protest is called for.”¹²⁸ Kunstler’s words did nothing to assuage the already-apprehensive university administration’s fears of further student protests. Following Kunstler’s speech, Carroll Bible, a UT student activist, led an impromptu march, where students chanting “strike” with raised fists as they walked across the campus to the Humanities Plaza.¹²⁹ With

¹²⁴ “Our Neighbors Speak: ‘Attorney Kunstler and UT’,” *The Knoxville News-Sentinel*, 17 March 1970.

¹²⁵ “ACLU Criticizes Anti-Kunstler Talk,” *The Knoxville News-Sentinel*, 18 March 1970.

¹²⁶ Fred A. Peters, “Says City Dump Should Be Site of Kunstler’s Speech,” Letter to the Editor, *The Knoxville News-Sentinel*, 26 March 1970.

¹²⁷ FBI, Memo, Knoxville, to Director, FBI, William Moses Kunstler, Bureau File xx-100-3811, 15 May 1970.

¹²⁸ Lois Reagan Thomas, “Carroll Bible Planning; Kunstler Urges All-Out UT Strike,” *The Knoxville News-Sentinel*, 15 May 1970.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

two UT professors in attendance, a group of seventy-five students debated the idea of a strike later that evening in the University Center.¹³⁰ As UT students had just held a strike the week before, the leaders of the earlier strike did not feel another one so soon afterwards was viable.¹³¹

The most public manifestation of student frustrations over Kent State occurred during President Richard Nixon's surprise appearance at Reverend Billy Graham's evangelical crusade in Knoxville. The Graham Crusade Committee of Knoxville had secured Neyland Stadium, UT's 65,000-seat football venue, for the event, planned for 22-31 May 1970.¹³² Prior to Nixon's visit, a rumor spread throughout the campus that Nixon's administration had chosen UT as a reliably friendly venue for his first public speech on a university or college campus following Kent State.¹³³ This frustrated students, faculty, and administrators alike at UT. Administrators like Chancellor Weaver feared the potential for campus protest with the announcement of Nixon's appearance, particularly given the presence in Knoxville of journalists from around the country and the three major news broadcasting networks (CBS, ABC, and NBC) to cover both the crusade and Nixon's speech.¹³⁴

On 28 May, a small yet vocal group of students and faculty protested Nixon's presence inside Neyland Stadium. Student and faculty protestors carried signs stating "Thou

¹³⁰ These professors were Dr. Richard Marius and Dr. Charles Reynolds.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² UTSC, OUHCVI, Box 23, File 20- Nixon-Graham Crusade-1970, Billy Graham Crusade at Neyland Stadium Program, 30 May 1970; UTSC, OUHCVI, Box 23, File 20- Nixon-Graham Crusade- 1970, *Volunteer Moments: Vignettes of the History of The University of Tennessee, 1794-1994*, prepared by The Office of the University Historian, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 1994, 78.

¹³³ Rick Perlstein, *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America* (New York: Scribner, 2008), 500.

¹³⁴ MPA, Richard Nixon/Billy Graham Episode Tapes, 1987 (MPA.190) (RNBG), Interview #21- Dr. Charles Weaver, 1 June 1987.

Shalt Not Kill” and attempted to enter the stadium for Nixon’s speech.¹³⁵ The Secret Service and local law enforcement standing outside the stadium confiscated these signs but members of the group were still able to enter Neyland Stadium, some with their signs hidden on their persons.¹³⁶ The protestors numbered between 300 and 500, and were outnumbered between 100-to-1 and 250-to-1 by crusade attendees.¹³⁷ Protestors interrupted Nixon’s speech enough that at one point he stopped speaking and gestured to them. Chants of “One-two-three-four we don’t want you anymore” could be heard at times until the crowd drowned it out with either cheers and clapping for Nixon or with boos towards the protestors.¹³⁸ National media also analyzed the event, and highlighted his domestic agenda of appealing to southern and youth voters.¹³⁹ In the ABC News report on the event, which unlike NBC and CBS focused on the presence of anti-war demonstrators rather than Nixon’s speech, reporter Charles Murphy stated that within Neyland Stadium “the anti-war demonstrators were a small minority, but the fact that they were even here, on a conservative campus in a conservative state illustrates the deep division even here.”¹⁴⁰

Chancellor Weaver defended the university’s position soon after the event. “The University of Tennessee is not now and will never be a sanctuary of any sort for those who break the law... There is never any excuse for the disruption of speakers on any platform at the University of Tennessee.”¹⁴¹ Photographs of protestors taken during the event assisted

¹³⁵ MPA, RNBG, Tape Number 16, Dr. Charles H. Reynolds, 27 April 1987; Richard M. Nixon Presidential Library (RNPLM), The White House Communications Agency, Weekly News Summaries (WHCAWNS), File ID: 3737, 29 May 1970.

¹³⁶ MPA, RNBG, Tape Number 12, Dr. Kenneth Newton, 27 April 1987.

¹³⁷ See RNPLM, White House Central Files (WHCF), Trips (TR), Box 38 Ex TR 48-1 Knoxville, Tenn. to speak at the Billy Graham’s “Crusade,” Univ. of Tenn., 5/28/70; UTSC, OUHCVI, Box 23, File 20- Nixon-Graham Crusade- 1970, *Volunteer Moments*, 80.

¹³⁸ RNPLM, WHCAWNS, File ID: 3737, 29 May 1970.

¹³⁹ Steven P. Miller, *Billy Graham and the Rise of the Republican South* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 142.

¹⁴⁰ RNPLM, WHCAWNS, File ID: 3737, 29 May 1970.

¹⁴¹ UTSC, OUHCVI, Box 23, File 15- Demonstration Clippings, Statement from Chancellor Weaver regarding his involvement in bringing Graham’s Crusade to campus, 5 June 1970.

with the arrests of over forty people for violating Tennessee Code Annotated 39-1204, which criminalised the disruption of religious services.¹⁴² Several of the participants in the January 1970 demonstration against Edward Boling's appointment as university president were also present at the crusade to protest Nixon's speech. Many UT student activists believed that those arrested in January had been unfairly treated by the administration and local officials; the charges against their peers for disturbing a religious service at the crusade seemed to be yet another example of the system's injustice.¹⁴³

The operation of Tennessee colleges and universities changed significantly between 1968 and 1970, as leftist students and faculty sought greater control over university policies and their personal lives, while administrators sought to limit student protest, and occasionally student complaints. The reformation of university administrative policies occurred on campuses across the country, catalyzed by increased student enrolment in the 1960s. Throughout Tennessee, demands for greater student autonomy often overlapped with concerns over racial inequalities, as the push for greater sensitivity to black students' academic and extra-curricular lives on campus demonstrated. As disputes over university speaker policies showed, disagreements between students wanting greater control, and administrators who worried about losing funding and enraging local white politicians and community members proved intractable. Fearing student unrest, many universities devised policies for dealing with student demonstrations, although with few exceptions these approaches sought to contain protest, rather than resolve the causes of student dissatisfaction. For Tennessee student activists, protest crested in 1970 as demands for power and concerns

¹⁴² UTSC, OUHCVI, Box 23, File 20- Nixon-Graham Crusade- 1970, *Volunteer Moments: Vignettes of the History of The University of Tennessee, 1794-1994*, prepared by The Office of the University Historian, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 1994, 82; Jack Neely, "The World Was Watching," *The Metro Pulse*, 22 May 2000; Wheeler, *Knoxville, Tennessee*, 146.

¹⁴³ Bozeman, "40 Year Flashback."

over the Vietnam War brought the state's most significant campus clashes. 1968, rather than a point of no return, was just prologue.