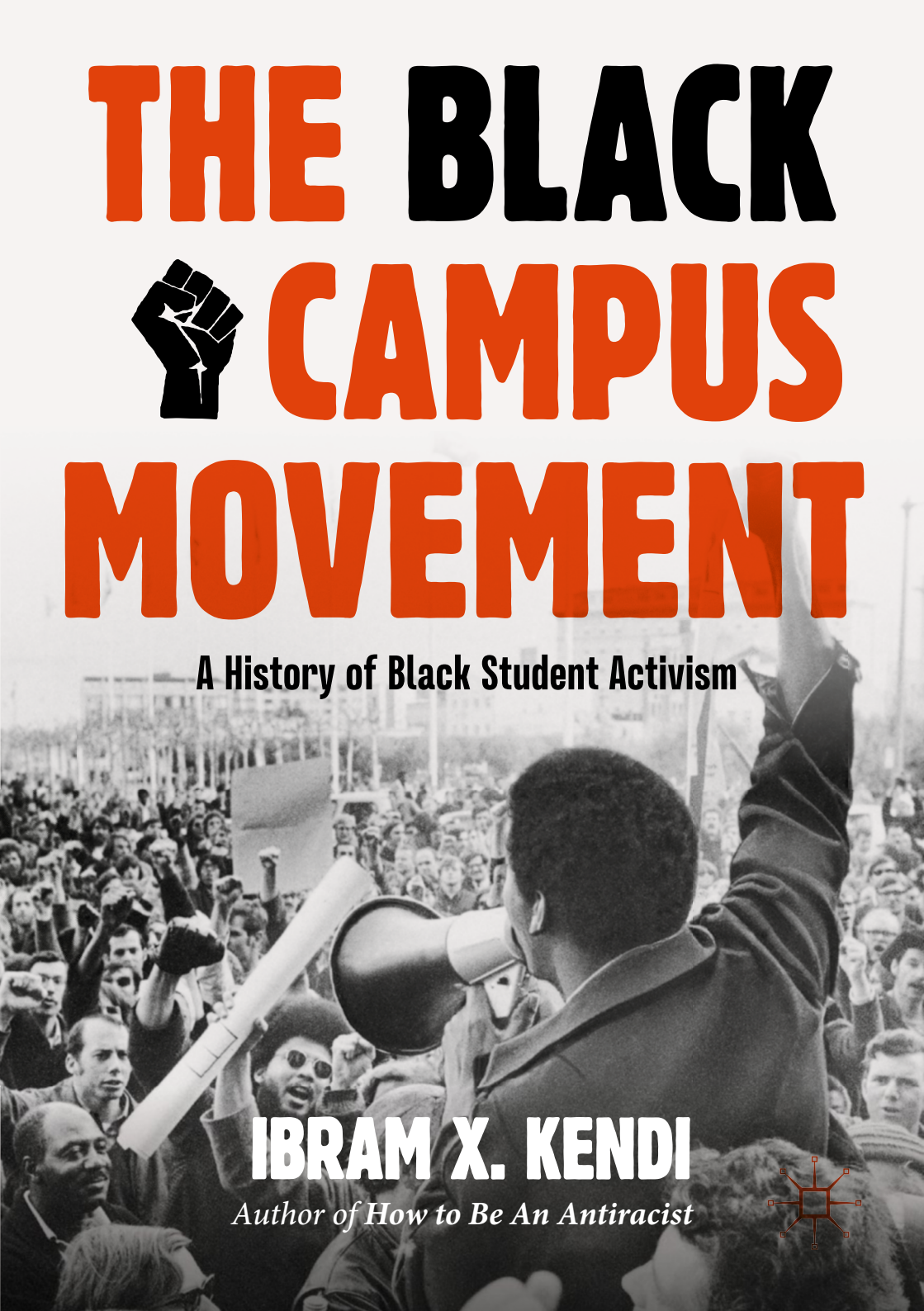
THE BLACK CAMPUS MOVEMENT

A History of Black Student Activism



IBRAM X. KENDI

Author of How to Be An Antiracist

Contemporary Black History

Series Editors
Peniel E. Joseph
Department of History
Tufts University Department of History
Medford, MA, USA

Yohuru Williams
Department of History
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A History of Black Student Activism

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Ibram X. Kendi
Boston University
Boston, MA, USA

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In memory of the youth who died during the Black Campus Movement.
Benjamin Brown, 22, community activist, Jackson State, May 12, 1967
Leonard D. Brown Jr., 20, Southern University, November 16, 1972
Rick "Tiger" Dowdell, 19, University of Kansas, July 16, 1970
Phillip Gibbs, 21, Jackson State, May 14, 1970
James Earl Green, 17, high school student, Jackson State, May 14, 1970
Willie E. Grimes, 20, North Carolina A&T, May 22, 1969
Samuel Hammond Jr., 18, South Carolina State, February 8, 1968
Larry D. Kimmons, 15, high school student, Pepperdine, March 12, 1969
Delano Middleton, 17, high school student, South Carolina State, February 8, 1968
Harry Nicholas "Nick" Rice, 18, University of Kansas, July 20, 1970
Denver A. Smith, 20, Southern University, November 16, 1972
Henry E. Smith, 19, South Carolina State, February 8, 1968
Samuel "Sammy" Younge Jr., 21, Tuskegee, January 3, 1966

Preface to the Second Edition

It was the early summer of 2010. I had just finished my first academic year as a college professor. It was ten years before the police murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor led to the largest series of demonstrations in American history, catapulting the antiracist movement onto the international stage. All these demonstrations against racism, demonstrations for antiracism, in turn, led to a withering effort to crush this budding movement by framing antiracist work as "critical race theory" (CRT) and then "wokeism" and then diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) by misrepresenting CRT and wokeism and DEI as anti-White; by banning antiracist books, African American Studies, and diversity offices; by banning antiracist policies that promote racial equity, like affirmative action; and by calling for race neutrality, when race has never been neutral.

With this all happening, the fall of 2010 seems such a long time ago. It is when I went on leave from my college and began a year-long postdoctoral fellowship. I secured a reprieve from teaching and found myself in an intellectual community conducive to writing my first book—this book. Little did I know I would be researching a generation of Black students who had built an antiracist educational movement that racist Americans attacked in much the same way that racist Americans attacked the antiracist educational movement fifty years later. The roots of today's racist attacks on antiracist education can be found in the racist reaction to the Black Campus Movement (BCM). Little did I know.

My focus that summer of 2010 was on the lens of the future: the past. I had already secured research grants to visit archives in North Carolina,

Texas, Kentucky, and Missouri. I planned a month-long research drive that summer. I wanted to go where the BCM began—the South.

I rented a car. I departed from my parents' home in Northern Virginia. I headed south on Interstate 95. I visited college and university archives in southern Virginia and then headed to North and South Carolina. After some research in the Carolinas, I drove to college and university towns in Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. On this cross-South road trip, I'd wake up in a motel, check out, spend business hours in the town's college archive(s), drive about three or four hours to the next town, check into a motel, eat, sleep, and wake up the next day, and do it over again. I mostly visited historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and little known historically White colleges and universities (HWCUs).

In Mississippi, I had to pick up a new rental car. My first rental broke down in Greenwood. After hundreds of miles each day for weeks, the car was finished with me. But I was just beginning. From western Mississippi I headed south to hit archives in Louisiana and then drove west on Interstate 10 into Texas, where I eventually conducted research at the Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library in Austin. I headed north to Dallas where I visited extended family. It proved to be a pit stop in the research journey. Fueled up socially, I headed north through Oklahoma and east to college towns in Missouri, Kentucky, and West Virginia and made my way back to my parents' home in Manassas, Virginia.

I cannot recall how many college archives I visited that summer. Perhaps forty or fifty? After the summer, over the 2010–2011 academic year, I scoured hundreds of college archives and corresponded with countless archivists and librarians. I learned how vital librarians were to society, as the keepers of humanity's greatest treasure—knowledge. I also met my future partner, Sadiqa, in April of 2011, as I finished researching for this book. When we wed two years later, instead of changing her last name to mine, we decided to change both of our last names to one we chose together. The byline of the first edition of this book in 2012 was in my former surname, Rogers. The byline of this second edition, which has been made more readable and accessible and features a new chapter structure and additional concepts, is in our married surname, Kendi. I changed my middle name to what these students wanted: *Xolani*, which means "peace" in Zulu.

At the time, I did not know that my new personal relationship with this charming woman, and my older professional relationship studying these student activists, would shape much of my life over the next decade—both

hidden from public view. In 2010, I was passionate about researching and chronicling African American history, in this case the story of this influential generation of antiracist Black students. Passion carried me through that solitary cross-South drive. Passion carried me through the daunting task of researching, collecting, studying, and organizing primary and secondary sources that documented Black student activism at the more than 1,000 colleges and universities in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

But I could not pinpoint, back then, the source of my passion. I can now. My passion came from how much I learned *from* these students. I learned from these students that in order to create justice and equity, colleges could not take a passive approach of merely taking down "Whites only" policies. Colleges need to aggressively and affirmatively take action against injustice and inequity. That is why these students called for what became affirmative action in college admissions and beyond. I learned from these students how it wasn't just segregationist ideas of biological racial hierarchy that were racist. Assimilationist ideas of cultural or behavioral racial hierarchy were racist ideas, too. These assimilationist ideas dominated academic disciplines in the late 1960s—a domination cloaked in the fantasy of race neutrality. That is why these students called for a new discipline, an antiracist discipline, which they called Black Studies. That is why these students called for a new HBCU, an antiracist HBCU, which they called a Black University.

I learned their antiracist vision for higher education through how these students envisioned Black Studies and the Black University. They rejected the tradition of the removed university in an ivory tower, housing the indifferent scholar who pursues knowledge for knowledge's sake and who supports the student advancing herself up the socioeconomic ladder of success. These students envisioned the university coming down from the tower, working with communities, organizing interdisciplinary research projects and service-oriented learning courses in the community, housing the scholar who is pursuing knowledge for change's sake, and supporting the student as she acquires the tools to advance her community. These students rejected higher education for assimilation and accumulation. They envisioned higher education for liberation.

I learned from these students that it is no longer enough to be "not racist" when the status quo represents widespread racial inequity and injustice. I learned from these students that people must activate themselves or remain complicit in the maintenance of the status quo. People must actively play a small or large part in dismantling the power and policy

structure of racism. People must be antiracist. These students were not a monolith. I disagreed with some students on some matters. They disagreed with each other constantly on ideology, on strategy, on theories of change, on nonviolence, on goals. But they commonly agreed that they needed to look in the mirror when looking for the drivers of antiracist change. As I studied their stares into the mirror, I could not help but look in the mirror myself.

I had plenty of time to look in the summer of 2010. When I was not going through boxes and folders in college archives, I was thinking in solitude on long drives, on campus walks, at meals, in motels. The students who changed higher education changed me, fifty years later. These students set my scholarship on the path to exploring the history of racism and exploring what it means to be antiracist. This is not merely my first book; it is foundational.

Boston, MA, USA Ibram X. Kendi

Author's Note

There are hundreds of colleges and universities named in this history book. To make the book more concise, the full name of the college or university is usually mentioned only on the first reference, particularly when "college" or "university" comes at the end of the name. For example, after the first reference to "Howard University," all subsequent references will state "Howard." Also, when colleges have well known abbreviations (NYU for New York University) or well-known shorter nicknames (UPENN for University of Pennsylvania) the full name will be spelled out upon first reference with the abbreviation or nickname in parentheses. All subsequent references will use the known abbreviation or nickname. Upon first reference, when the college or university has its location within its name (University of Kansas), the institution's location will not be noted. Upon first reference, when the college or university does not have its location within its name (Colgate University), the state or known city where it is located will be referenced. In all subsequent references, the location of the college or university will not be listed. Many of the colleges and universities have different names today than when the events described in this book happened. For example, many of the institutions now named universities used to be named colleges. For clarity of the reader, the current name of the college or university is used in this book.

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Introduction

Fists balled and raised, black berets, head wraps, swaying Afros, sunglasses, black leather jackets, army fatigue coats, dashikis, African garb, Curtis Mayfield singing "We're a Winner" in the background, shouting from fuming lips and posters in the foreground: "Black Power, racism, relevancy, Black pride, revolution, equality, nonnegotiable demands, student control, Black Studies, Black University"—higher education was under siege. The academic status quo had been destabilized.

On February 13, 1969, Black student activism soared to its highest level. Nine hundred National Guard members strolled onto a University of Wisconsin campus with fixed bayonets that Thursday. Some rode on jeeps decked with machine guns. Helicopters surveyed the thousands of protesters in Madison. If the presence of city police had stirred campus activism a few days earlier when Black students kicked off their strike, then the National Guard whipped students into a frenzy. After picketing and obstructing traffic during the day, about ten thousand students, with Black torchbearers leading the way, walked in the cold from the university to the Wisconsin capitol building in the largest student march of the Black Campus Movement. Their bodies may have been freezing that night, but their mouths were on fire: "On strike, shut it down!" "Support the black demands!"[1]

Meanwhile that day, the nationally renowned San Francisco State University strike—a protest that popularized the mantra "On strike, shut it down!"—entered its third month. At University of California, Berkeley (UC Berkeley), police brutality caused the two-week-old boycott of classes to escalate. Black Student Alliance (BSA) members at Roosevelt University

in Chicago continued their week of disrupting classes to teach Black Studies. The night before, BSA members rejected a deal offered by Dean of Students Lawrence Silverman that included amnesty and written responses to their demands for a Black Studies Department under their control. In a statement, the BSA yelled, "We will continue our program, BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY!!!" Black students at the flagship campus of the University of Illinois delivered a list of demands to administrators on February 13. They called for the establishment of a Black Cultural Center and a Black Studies Department and the hiring of fifty Black residence hall counselors and 500 Black professors.[2]

At Duke University in North Carolina, forty-eight Black collegians entered the administration building in the early morning, walked to the central records section, and told the clerical workers they had to leave. They nailed the doors shut, threatened to burn university records if the police were called, and renamed the space "Malcolm X Liberation School." They issued thirteen demands, including the creation of a Black Studies Department controlled by students, money for a Black Student Union (BSU) building, a Black dorm, and an end to "racist policies."[3]

At City College of New York, also on February 13, President Buell Gallagher stood on a snow-covered lawn in front of the administration building and delivered a speech that swirled coldly around affirming the five demands issued a week earlier. Livid, since they wanted a firm commitment that day, 300 Black and Puerto Rican students swarmed into the administration building and ejected its workers. They plastered their demands on walls and ceilings, and one student waved a sign that read, "Free Huey: Che Guevara, Malcolm X University."[4]

While City College students occupied the building for three and half hours, more than 90 percent of students at Mississippi Valley State University avoided classroom buildings. Stokely Carmichael had launched "Black Power" into America's political atmosphere in 1966, in Greenwood, ten miles from Mississippi Valley State. Wilhelm Joseph Jr., of Trinidad, like Carmichael, had been radically moved by Carmichael's call for Black power. Joseph successfully ran for student body president on a ticket that boasted, "We are going to move this place! This is a black college." Under his leadership, Mississippi Valley State students pressed for the ability to don African garb and Afros, to study people of African descent in their courses, and to terminate campus paternalism, student powerlessness, and the poor quality of faculty and facilities. In total, they presented twenty-six demands leading to the boycott. State police and campus security officers

swooped in and transported 196 strikers to Jackson, imprisoned a dozen others, and put out a warrant on four leaders (including Joseph). Close to 200 protesters were expelled.[5]

February 13, 1969, looms as the most impactful day of the Black Campus Movement. If there was a day, or *the* day, that Black campus activists forced the racial reconstitution of higher education, it was February 13, 1969. Black students disrupted higher education in almost every area of the nation—the Midwest in Illinois and Wisconsin, the Northeast in New York, the Upper South in North Carolina, the Deep South in Mississippi, the West Coast in the Bay Area. It was a day that emitted the anger, determination, and agency of a generation that stood on the cutting edge of antiracist change. It was like no other day in the history of Black higher education—a history of racism and antiracism, accommodation and advancement, isolation and community. Like the Black Campus Movement it highlighted, this day had been in the making for more than a hundred years and changed the course of higher education for decades to come.

February 13, 1969, stands at the apex of the Black Campus Movement, the subject of this book. During this movement, which emerged in 1965 and petered out by 1972, hundreds of thousands of Black campus activists (and sympathizers), aided on some campuses by White, Latino, Native, and Asian students, requested, demanded, demonstrated, and protested for an antiracist learning experience. Activist ideologies ranged from reformist to revolutionary. In most cases, students considered an antiracist education one that engaged Black literature from the perspective of Black people and gave students the intellectual tools to fix a society broken by racism. Black students organized at over a thousand colleges and universities, in every state except Alaska. When they principally utilized *campus activism* against higher education during this eight-year social movement, they were *Black campus activists*, distinct from both the many Black students who chose not to participate and students engaged off campus in the myriad Black power groups in the late 1960s and early 1970s.[6]

To disentangle this social movement from other threads of activism during the Black Power Movement (BPM), from the campus movements waged by other racial groups at the time, and from Black student off-campus activism during the classical civil rights period (1954–1965), this struggle among antiracist Black students at historically White and Black institutions to reconstitute higher education from 1965 to 1972 has been termed the *Black Campus Movement*. Even though they both tend to be

conceptually located in what is widely known as the Black Student Movement, this late 1960s Black power campus struggle represented a profound ideological, tactical, and spatial shift from early 1960s off-campus civil rights student confrontations. They were not merely different phases of the Black Student Movement. They were unique social movements or, more precisely, separate but interlocking tussles in the *Long* Black Student Movement from 1919 to 1972.[7]

Akin to the Black Arts Movement, Black Theology Movement, and Black Feminist Movement, to name a few of the Black power social movements scholars have distinguished, this period of Black student activism should be understood as a social movement in its own right. In addition, even though Black students battled the same structure in the same space with similarities in their ideas and tactics and were sometimes allies, their struggle must be conceptualized as being independent of White campus activism. *The New York Times* published a story on May 12, 1969, with the headline, "The Campus Revolutions: One Is Black, One White." The BCM was a part of and apart from three larger social movements: the multidecade-long Black Student Movement, which began after World War I; the multiracial student movement of the Long Sixties; and the multiobjective Black Power Movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s.[8]

At HBCUs and HWCUs, Black campus activists formed the nation's first chain of politically and culturally antiracist BSUs, under various names, and gained control of many student government associations (SGAs). They utilized these BSUs and student government associations as pressure groups to pursue a range of campus alterations, including an end to paternalism and racist policy and the addition of more Black students, faculty, administrators, and Black Studies courses, programs, and departments. They fought at almost every HBCU for a Black-controlled, oriented, and radical Black University to replace what they theorized as the White-controlled, assimilationist, bourgeoisie, accommodationist Negro university. Their ultimate aim was to revolutionize higher education.

Black campus activists did not succeed in revolutionizing higher education. However, they did succeed in centering a series of historically marginalized academic ideas, questions, frames, methods, perspectives, subjects, and pursuits. They were able to succeed in pushing into higher education a profusion of antiracist reforms—in the form of people, programs, and literature. Most decisively, but least chronicled, Black campus activists succeeded in challenging the academy's century-old racist ideals. The 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* decision, which deemed

segregationist policy in public education to be unconstitutional, did not do this. Neither did the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which outlawed overtly discriminatory employment practices and segregation in public accommodations. The BCM forced the rewriting of the racist constitution of higher education, the central finding of this historical text.[9]

In 1965, there existed at least four entrenched racist elements that had long undergirded the racist constitution of higher education: the *moralized contraption*, *standardization of exclusion*, *assimilationist curricula*, and *ladder altruism*. The moralized contraption was a system of rules, in place at practically all HBCUs, that regulated student freedom and agency. HBCU students were told when to eat, sleep, study, and socialize. Chapel, convocation, and class attendance were mandatory, and women faced additional restrictions at HBCUs. These rules, injected by White and Black assimilationists, were meant to Christianize and civilize and, ultimately, to induce submission to the racist, capitalist, patriarchal American order. The ideas that justified these rules were deeply colonialist, racist, and sexist, and the moralized contraption resembled the off-campus segregationist directives that continuously kept African Americans a step away from enslavement for a century after the Civil War. In place of the contraption, Black campus activists demanded moral freedom.

Moreover, the exclusion of Black people from faculties, student bodies, administrations, coaching staffs—from every facet of the communities at HWCUs—was standardized because the exclusion was not by happenstance. Inequity is never a coincidence. The exclusion stemmed from longstanding racist policies and practices. The prohibition or marginalization of Black scholarship from curricula was standardized by academics at both HWCUs and HBCUs. Black people were customarily excluded from many (usually private) HBCU professorial bodies and presidencies into the 1920s and from boards of trustees into the 1960s. There were instances in which Black concepts and people found their way into these terrains, but these were the exceptions to the rule, to the standard. The desegregation movement created many of these exceptions, as did the small postwar flow of Black students into HWCUs. Black students demanded more than exceptions; they desired the standardization of inclusion.

Exclusion was not merely standardized in 1965. White people and their cultures were standardized in scholarship and, thereby, in curricula. The histories and cultures of White people, the literature produced by White people, scholarship on White people, and courses focusing on White

people were all standardized. European history and literature, for example, were not presented as such. They were presented as world history and literature that everyone in the world should learn, while not learning African and Asian and Native history and literature. Whatever ends up being the standard ends up being believed to be superior. And this purportedly superior European (and Euro-American) way of knowing and being was systematically imparted to students of all races in courses. This *assimilationist curricula* ended up educating generations of Black students to be White, to assimilate into the cultures of White people. But in the late 1960s, inspired by Black power ideas of cultural pride and Black solidarity, these Black campus activists rejected assimilationist curricula; they demanded antiracist curricula.

When they were not imparting assimilationist curricula academics and higher education officials were instituting and encouraging ladder altruism. They taught altruistic Black college students to believe that their personal advancement up the American ladder of success advanced Black America as a whole through the societal doors they opened and through their function as role models. Meanwhile, academics, politicians, and capital allowed colleges and universities to serve as ladders, lifting Black students up politically, economically, and culturally from the Black masses. In contrast to ladder altruism, Black campus activists demolished the personal and institutional ladders and demanded an ideological and tactical reconnection to their communities through grassroots activism.

In the end, Black campus activists during the BCM challenged the rules and regulations (moralized contraption), Black marginalization from practically all facets of higher education (standardization of exclusion), Eurocentric courses (assimilationist curricula), and an academia that encouraged and facilitated their removal from the masses (ladder altruism).

Literature on the BCM has been largely subsumed under the historiographies of the Student Movement, Black Student Movement, and Black Power Movement, with White students, early 1960s civil rights protests, and off-campus activism, respectively, receiving most of the attention. The Black campus struggle has been largely relegated to and scattered among these three areas of inquiry. When the BCM has been studied, the treatments have almost always been campus specific, as historians have detailed the struggle at the University of Illinois, University of Pennsylvania (UPENN), Columbia University, Rutgers University, Cornell University, New York University (NYU), and San Francisco State—to name the most

expansive and prominent campus studies. The South Carolina State University (1968) and Jackson State University (1970) massacres of Black students have also been examined. *The Black Campus Movement* provides the first comprehensive national examination of Black campus activism at historically Black and White four-year colleges and universities in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It situates each campus struggle in the national movement and delivers a national purview for future campus studies.[10]

The Black Campus Movement not only centers the combating of the racist constitution of higher education at the locus of this history. It connects the activism at HWCUs and HBCUs. It continues the recent scholarly revelation of the array of radicalism at HBCUs in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the multitude of women activists, Black power organizing with White people, and Black student activism prior to 1960.[11]

At the same time, *The Black Campus Movement* presents the range and attainments of Black power, negotiating local with national activism, connecting and disconnecting Black power to and from civil rights, elaborating on the most recent golden stretch of Black educational antiracism, providing the movement a context for the rise of Black Studies, and showing the vicious backlash to the BCM. It identifies 1969 (as opposed to 1968) as the peak of Black student activism, at both HWCUs and HBCUs, and the national clamor for relevancy, including Black Studies. It pulls the origin of the movement back from 1967 or 1968 to 1965, while demonstrating that the Orangeburg Massacre (February 8, 1968) and the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. (April 4, 1968) did not spark the struggle, as some scholars have claimed. Those societal tragedies only accelerated it. This book proves that the movement did not start at HWCUs, nor did the most "militant" protests disrupt those institutions. It complicates the more celebrated story of campus activism at HWCUs and expounds on this emergent literature by illuminating the largely unknown struggle at rural liberal arts colleges, remote institutions in the Great Plains, Northwest, and New England, and recently desegregated southern HWCUs.[12]

The study enters the discourse at the time of an evolving battle among the increasingly powerful "race-neutrality" and "colorblind" advocates, who oppose multiculturalism and antiracism and are reinscribing the pre-1965 racist constitution of higher education. At the same time, the vines of diversity continue to ensnare the halls of the academy and grow

further away from their roots of resistance—systematically unearthed and revealed at a national level for the first time in this book.

Neither the cultural nor political-economic features of the movement—their cause and effect—are shortchanged during this historical analysis. The words, deeds, and perspectives of Black campus activists reside at the center of this investigation. The documents they produced and their voices, presented in publications during the movement, provided the bulk of the evidence. Oral history interviews of activists conducted after the struggle, secondary campus-specific studies, and documents produced by the marginal actors of the movement—administrators, professors, and Black political leaders, for instance—enhanced this story. Campus-specific ideas, outlooks, reactions, requests, demands, protests, and implementations were synthesized into a national depiction of the movement.

The first two chapters provide an introduction to the history of Black higher education in the United States before the emergence of the BCM in 1965. Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6 discuss the activist response to racism and segregation on and off campus by chronicling the Long Black Student Movement from 1919 to 1962. More than thirty years of mass Black student activism set the stage for the movement. In particular, the successes, failures, repression, and ideological and tactical lessons emanating from the civil rights movement (and early Black power) in the first half of the 1960s provided the immediate social conditions that spawned the BCM. Chapter 7 presents this making of the movement from 1963 to 1965, and Chap. 8 identifies the factors that refined and circulated Black student ideology during the BCM. Since they on occasion reference the BCM and the 1960s, these eight chapters are not traditional historical narratives but rather provide the historical context for the emergence of the BCM.

Chapters 9 and 10 provide a narrative historical overview of the BCM. Chapters 11 and 12 delve deeper into the movement by examining the disposition of Black student organizers—their demands, protests, and support—while Chaps. 13 and 14 disclose the forms of opposition and repression students faced. The final chapter lays out the new ideals (and reforms) their struggle brought to life or, rather, forced to the center. An epilogue providing a posthistory of Black campus activism and the revitalization of the racist constitution through "egalitarian exclusion" concludes *The Black Campus Movement*.

CHAPTER 1

An "Island Within": Black Students in the Nineteenth Century

People of African descent educated themselves for thousands of years in scholastic centers across Africa. They learned about and analyzed the social, physical, and spiritual world of antiquity in renowned universities in Egypt that taught legendary Greek philosophers and, later, in the bustling West African cities of Timbuktu and Jenne. When hundreds of thousands of Africans were snatched from their communities and enslaved in the United States, they were shut out of colleges and universities for two centuries, as were most Americans.[1]

Outside of the formal academy, African people maintained their storied tradition of higher learning by informal means and in clandestine schools. Eighteenth-century poet Phillis Wheatley and the multitalented Benjamin Banneker both received a home-schooled higher education. Princeton president John Witherspoon secretly tutored John Chavis, who went on to study at Washington and Lee University in Virginia in the late 1790s. (His great-great-grandson Ben Chavis later powered the Black Campus Movement at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.) Sent out to a religious family as a teenager, Maria Stewart found refuge in the family library and took advantage of religious teaching to become an intrepid nineteenth-century public speaker for women's rights and abolition. Jemmy, Gabriel Prosser, and Nat Turner are a few of the innumerable enslaved and free Africans who employed their higher learning in the planning and execution of revolts of the enslaved, which invariably led to revolts of enslavers against Black learning.[2]

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Alexander Twilight, who graduated from Vermont's Middlebury College in 1823, became the first known person of African descent to earn a bachelor's degree in the United States. Likely the son of biracial parents, he probably passed for White. He parlayed his education into positions in the pulpit and the Vermont General Assembly in 1836, becoming the earliest known state legislator with African ancestry. Edward A. Jones (Amherst College) and John Russwurm (Bowdoin College) became the second and third graduates in 1826. As Russwurm established the nation's first Black newspaper, *Freedom's Journal*, Jones attended Trinity College in Connecticut, securing Black America's first M.A. degree in 1830.[3]

Promoters of free Black removal from the United States to Africa (or what they termed "colonization") welcomed the emigration of Jones, who helped found Sierra Leone's first Western colonial college, and Russwurm, who became a school superintendent in Liberia. Quite a few of the early Black graduates and educators bowed to the relatively conservative dictates of the day that posed Black emigration to Africa as the solution to the enslaving society's racial quandary: what to do with free Black people. These pioneers were imbued with an assimilationist Pan-Africanism, a belief that African Americans should impart their "superior"

Photo 1.1 Alexander Twilight (Supplied by staff, Special Collections, Middlebury College, Middlebury, Vermont)

civilization to "backward" Africans. Their educational benefactors were often the American Colonization Society (ACS). Enslavers desiring the ejection of free Black people, Christians distressed by Africa's "pagans," and those who believed emigration must follow Black emancipation—the "colonizationists," as Carter G. Woodson termed them—were an antebellum force.[4]

These White colonizationists held assimilationist ideas, meaning they expressed that Black people can be civilized in the mores of White people. They promoted education for colonization, or educating African Americans to go back to Africa and advance an "inferior" race. Colonizationists tried to inaugurate schools in the 1820s in Newark, New Jersey, and Hartford, Connecticut, but their schemes were sometimes foiled by Black assimilationists guided by ladder altruism. These Black thinkers asserted that both races were capable of receiving the same education for the same purpose—training a talented few to lead and provide a model for the many in the United States. Joining these Black assimilationists in opposition to the colonizationists were some White abolitionists, who also held assimilationist ideas. These White abolitionists believed they were endowed with a civil or Christian mission to educate African American leaders to uplift and civilize their communities in the United States. This relatively unknown ideological dispute *between* assimilationists who supported education for Americanization and education for colonization was the first great debate over the function of Black higher education.

Assembling in Philadelphia in 1830 and 1831, the First Annual Convention of the People of Color went on record as opposing the ACS's colonization rationale for the higher education of "African youth." The delegates proposed the establishment of a Black college in New Haven, Connecticut, so Black Americans could receive "classical knowledge which … causes man to soar up to those high intellectual enjoyments … and drowns in oblivion's cup their moral degradation." But New Haven residents voted against it. Unyielding, the convention delegates, with the support of the New England Anti-Slavery Society, struck a deal with Noyes Academy in Canaan, New Hampshire. They would build an interracial, manual labor school.[5]

As quickly as the daylight of upper learning beamed for New England Black people, night fell. In 1835, 300 White Canaan residents, with a hundred oxen, dragged the schoolhouse a mile down the road into a nearby swamp, where they set it on fire. "No sable son of Africa remains

to darken our horizon," a speaker proclaimed after the institutional lynching.[6]

Despite the resistance, the HBCU idea gained traction, particularly since new pages were needed for the list of talented Black Americans turned away from HWCUs. No more than fifteen were admitted before 1840. Even though they warmed to the Black college idea, Black and White abolitionists stalled the growth of HBCUs for colonization, compelling colonizationists to focus collegiate funding on aspiring Black emigrants. Black Americans' own stirring to create a Black college for Americanization was likewise halted, until Richard Humphreys, a Philadelphia Quaker, bequeathed $10,000 to educate people of African descent. In 1837, his money gave birth to what is now Cheyney University outside of Philadelphia.[7]

Twelve years later, in 1849, Charles Avery founded Pennsylvania's Allegheny Institute. In 1851, New York abolitionist Myrtilla Miner founded the University of the District of Columbia (UDC) amid a groundswell of antagonism in the enslaving city. The Presbytery of New Castle in Pennsylvania garnered funds to build Lincoln University in 1854. Two years later, Cincinnati Methodists founded Wilberforce University, which served the mulatto children of enslavers until the Civil War. Deep in in debt, school officials appealed to the African Methodist Episcopal Church. With Bishop Daniel A. Payne leading the way as the nation's earliest Black president of a U.S. college, in 1863 Wilberforce became the first college controlled by Black Americans.[8]

Like many HWCUs at the time, these initial HBCUs primarily provided preparatory programs—special high schools and sometimes junior colleges—for students aiming to teach, preach, embark on a mission, or attend a university. Lincoln (PA) became the first bachelor's-degree-granting HBCU in 1865.[9]

As antiracist change flung open the doors of HBCUs, racist tradition kept the revolving doors of HWCUs closing in Black faces. In 1845, Dartmouth College president Nathan Lord refused to "have a flood of blacks" at his New Hampshire college because he doubted "the fitness of Africans," a rare *doubt* in the age of outright dismissals. "They will need cultivation as a people, for centuries, before many of them will hold their way with long civilized and Christian Saxons, if, indeed, that is ever to be expected, which I doubt." Nonetheless, unlike many, President Lord kept his college open to "help a struggling people," revealing his assimilationist ideas.[10]

In 1847, David John Peck, the first Black American admitted to medical practice, graduated from Chicago's Rush Medical College. The college was named after one of the early abolitionists and scientific racists, Benjamin Rush, who claimed African phenotypic features verified leprosy in a 1799 academic talk. Founded to accept all students, regardless of race or gender, New York Central College allowed Black students to enroll upon its opening in 1849 in upstate New York. Charles L. Reason, an abolitionist, suffragist, and son of Haitian immigrants, joined its faculty as a professor of belles lettres (Greek, Latin, French) and an adjunct professor of mathematics. As two other Black scholars accompanied the nation's first known Black professor at an interracial college in 1850, Lucy Stanton, the daughter of Cleveland abolitionists, became the first Black woman to graduate from a U.S. college. She completed the "ladies course" of study at Oberlin College in Ohio.[11]

Meanwhile, that fall in 1850, Martin Delany entered Harvard University's medical school along with Daniel Laing and Isaac Snowden. When the three Black students entered the lecture hall for their first class, the noisy room of 113 White students fell into a loud silence. Harvard's White male students "endured" the three Black pariahs. But when the faculty voted to admit a White woman in December 1850, within days the White males met and passed a resolution barring both White women and Black men. Concerning the latter, the resolution stated, "We cannot consent to be identified as fellow students with blacks." The faculty upheld the racist (and sexist) policy. Snowden and Laing finished at Dartmouth with the help of the ACS, setting out for Liberia in 1854.[12]

But Delany, intending to practice in the States, was crushed when Boston abolitionists did not press for his readmission. The ordeal led Delany to later write of his "sad, sad disappointment" with White abolitionists, hastening his ideological journey to Pan-Africanism, Black colonization, and antiracism. Even as he advised emigration, unlike assimilationists, Delany demanded education for self-determination and self-respect at home, the final thrust of Black thought that birthed Black higher education.[13]

As enslaved Black people emancipated themselves and in turn dictated the course of the war in 1862, Mary Jane Patterson, the daughter of fugitives from Raleigh, North Carolina, became the nation's first known Black woman to receive a B.A. degree. Fanny M. Jackson and Frances J. Norris were next in line at Oberlin, finishing in 1865, the year before Sarah Jane Woodson accepted a professorship—the first black woman to do so—in

English and Latin at Wilberforce. In total, twenty-seven Black Americans, all of whom could fit in a single classroom, had received bachelor's degrees prior to the passage of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863.[14]

When the Civil War drew to a close, aside from family and land, the newly freed searched for knowledge. Northern White missionaries descended on the South to douse the "downtrodden." They found legions of antiracist Black educators creating their own schools to obtain what had been kept from them—self-determination, self-respect, equality, power, and civil rights. "They have a natural praiseworthy pride in keeping their educational institutions in their own hands," reported William Channing Grant, a White American Missionary Association teacher from New England. "What they desire is assistance without control." Black educators and White missionaries launched a cause for organized education between 1861 and 1871, which W.E.B. Du Bois described as "one of the marvelous occurrences of the modern world; almost without parallel in the history of civilization."[15]

They started building schools as early as 1861 in territories occupied by Union forces, which was the origin, in 1862, of Western University in Kansas and LeMoyne-Owen College in Memphis. The movement reached its peak as the battle cries ceased. From 1865 to 1867, a staggering minimum of seventeen HBCUs were established. Five states founded institutions, along with the American Missionary Association, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Episcopalians, United Church of Christ, and African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. The formerly enslaved Rev. Richard C. Coulter, from Augusta, Georgia, aided in the birth of Morehouse College in 1867, the same year Congress chartered Howard University in Washington, DC. As many as two hundred private HBCUs opened in the 1870s and 1880s, but most closed not long after due to constraints related to finances, racism, and clientele.[16]

The antebellum debate over education for colonization or Americanization was eclipsed by a relative Reconstruction consensus on the mission of Black higher education, forged by progressive assimilationists. Black higher education would utilize European classical curricula to school intellect, self-reliance, moral regeneration, Christian orthodoxy, and the tools for American citizenship. HBCUs were to raise an army of teachers and preachers (and to a lesser extent professionals, politicians, and entrepreneurs) to guide the race out of their hundreds of years of political captivity, forced illiteracy, and supposed moral degradation.

Assimilationists who desired a higher education that trained Black students to accomodate to political and economic captivity had to sit on the

sidelines of history. However, they bided their time and planned. The most prominent postbellum accommodating assimilationist, General S.C. Armstrong, founded Hampton University in Southern Virginia in 1868. Compared to White people, who had three centuries of "experience in organizing the forces about him," African Americans "had three centuries of experience in general demoralization and behind that, paganism," he once wrote. At Hampton, Armstrong created a model of education for accommodating assimilationists that would take hold of Black higher education with the support of Southern segregationists and Northern capital when they deconstructed the gains of Reconstruction.[17]

Armstrong endeavored to mold teachers who would go out and fashion a submissive, stationary, easily exploitable Black laboring class through the language of morals, Christianity, virtue, thrift, and freedom. "The Hampton-Tuskegee curriculum was not centered on trade or agricultural training; it was centered on the training of teachers," according to James D. Anderson. Of the 723 Hampton graduates in its first twenty classes, 84 percent became teachers. The habitually exaggerated manual-industrial component to the Hampton curriculum was to "work the prospective teachers long and hard so that they would embody, accept, and preach an ethic of hard toil or the 'dignity of labor,'" Anderson explained. Armstrong's new solution to the old problem (what to do with free Black people) resembled the model of education for colonization. Instead of training teachers for the maintenance of colonialism and White supremacy in Africa, Armstrong trained teachers for the maintenance of exploitative labor relations and White supremacy in the American South.[18]

Still, Armstrong failed to convince people like Virginian Better Puryear, that higher education for control was possible. Education "instills in his mind that he is competent to share in the higher walks of life, prompts him to despise those menial pursuits to which his race has been doomed, and invites him to enter into competition with the white man," which he is destined to lose due to his inferiority, Puryear stated in 1877.[19]

At the dawn of Black higher education in the mid-nineteenth century, White presidents, administrators, and professors were the norm at HWCUs and HBCUs, with credentialed Black Americans excluded, unavailable, or unrecognized. At every HBCU, students were imprisoned with bars of regulations by means of the widespread institutionalization of the moralized contraption. HBCUs emerged as moralizing plantations. This contraption was politically configured to teach subordination. It was

philosophically roused by religious affiliations, the presence of women (who purportedly needed an additional set of patriarchal rules), the racist ideas of the nineteenth century (such as the hypersexuality, immaturity, intellectual inferiority, and laziness of African Americans), the concomitant desire among ladder altruists to nurture or demonstrate racial equality and Black civilization to White Americans, and the fact that initially many colleges were only colleges in name, having mostly boarding students of elementary, junior, and high school age.

Replicating the White New England schools and colleges, educators wrote assimilationist ideas into the original HBCU curricula. Just as these lily-white New England institutions did not label themselves Euro-American or White institutions, they did not brand their literature and scholarship and curricula as such, either. It was "classical" education, teaching "high culture." Latin and Greek erudition were placed on a pedagogical pedestal at HBCUs. To gain admission to the 1868–1869 freshman class at Howard, students needed to read "two books of Caesar, six orations of Cicero, the *Bucolics*, the *Georgics*, six books of Virgil's *Aeneid*, Sallust's *Cataline*, two books of Xenophon's *Anabasis*, and the first two books of Homer's *Iliad*," according to graduate school dean Dwight Oliver Wendell Holmes.[20]

Amid the European topics, courses and content specializing in Africa were practically nonexistent. But few objected. Some Black Americans had internalized the racist ideas that Africa was figuratively the "dark continent," shaded from the sun of progress, civilization, and history. Many believed that people of African descent were innately inferior or that slavery or colonialism made them inferior. Academics accentuated cultural assimilation along with Black civic grooming for lifelong swimming in the White American mainstream.

Initially, the standardization of exclusion of Black literature did not seem to unnerve many Black students. If anything, many were motivated to demonstrate that they could learn anything White people could. Others were like Richard Wright, who shortly after graduating from Clark Atlanta University in 1876 used the classics, through words from Humboldt and Herodotus, to assert that "these differences of race, so called, are a mere matter of color and not of brain."[21]

With more than 90 percent of Black Americans in the South in the decades after the Civil War, HBCUs were effectively the only option for most aspiring collegians, unless they wanted to trek up North to the meager number of desegregated HWCUs. Discouragement, custom, and then laws preserved the standardization of exclusion of Black Americans from HWCUs