CULTURE CLASH AND ADMINISTRATIVE REACTIONS: THE EVOLUTION OF DISSENT AT KENT STATE UNIVERSITY, 1954-1970

by

Louanne Michelle Hoverman

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
The University of North Carolina at Charlotte
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in
History

Charlotte

2019

Approved by:

_____
Dr. Mark Wilson

_____
Dr. Gregory Mixon

_____
Dr. Scott Fitzgerald

ABSTRACT

LOUANNE MICHELLE HOVERMAN Culture clash and administrative reactions: the evolution of dissent at Kent State University, 1954-1970. (Under the direction of Dr. MARK WILSON)

When historians and writers explore college student protest and dissent in the 1960s, they tend to focus on the students. Historians have written rich histories of campus protests, yet there is little about collegiate administrations, and their role in campus unrest. When historians do reference the administration, it is to mention administrative decisions without further elaboration on their significance. This omission is disappointing because administrative decisions affected student behavior, and in the case of some universities, forced presidential resignations.

This thesis presents an original, detailed narrative of the history of dissent and protest at Kent State University using archival sources such as internal memos, and letters from the Kent State University Library and Special Collections. The internal memorandums between various administrators within the University shed light on how they felt privately, and I have also drawn from local and national newspaper articles, and secondary sources. In addition, I have interviewed Kent State alumnus Thomas Grace, who was shot by a National Guardsmen on May 4, 1970, and former Vice President of Student Affairs Dr. Robert Matson. Their interviews and experiences provide greater context and insight into student and administration reactions at Kent State University.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my husband Michael for his enduring support, and I am grateful that he let me bounce ideas off him. I also want to thank my advisor and thesis chair, Dr. Mark Wilson for the many, many hours he spent editing my drafts, and for always knowing exactly what I was trying to say. I also thank Drs. Mixon and Fitzgerald for their time and valuable feedback. I am indebted to Dr. Thomas Grace for his guidance and suggestions with this thesis project. I will never forget the moment he told me that Dr. Robert Matson is still alive and that I should interview him. I am eternally grateful to Dr. Matson for granting me an interview, and entertaining my further questions. I feel honored that he opened up to me, after 50 years of silence.

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to Dr. Robert Matson, whose interview was illuminating and influenced the course of this project. He made me consider the impact of trauma on administrators and faculty.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BUS	Black United Students
CHA	Council on Human Affairs
KCEWV	Kent Committee to End the War in Vietnam
KSU	Kent State University
ONG	Ohio National Guard
ROTC	Reserve Officers' Training Corps
SDS	Students for a Democratic Society
UWM	University of Wisconsin-Madison
YSA	Young Socialist Alliance

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

At this juncture, there is a grave danger that any demonstration on this campus may lead to violence. I fear that any student participating in any demonstration which leads to violence may be arrested for inciting to riot. I have been advised that a conviction under this charge carries a minimum prison sentence of one year…

COOL IT PLEASE

Barcalay [sic] D. McMillen

Special Advisor on Students Rights

April 21, 1969[1]

Dr. Barclay McMillen was a political science professor, attorney, and alumnus of Kent State and served as a legal advisor to Kent State University president Robert White. When McMillen wrote this warning for the student newspaper, Kent State was on the verge of a meltdown. The university had survived three significant demonstrations without severe injuries and worried that the next student protest would be more violent than the last. Pressure had been building since at least 1954 when the Student Council began investigating racial discrimination in the city of Kent. As the 1950s progressed into the 1960s, student activism on a wide range of topics increased; students rallied and protested discrimination, United States involvement in the Vietnam War, inferior quality dining hall food, and the University's role in the military-industrial complex.

Kent State University is best known for the Ohio National Guard (ONG) shootings on May 4, 1970, but this event overshadows earlier students' contributions to

[1] Barclay D. McMillen, "Cool It, Please—McMillen," *Daily Kent Stater*, April 21, 1969.

social protest movements. That day was traumatic for students at Kent State, their families, and students at universities across the United States. Historians and others have used a lot of ink explaining and trying to understand what happened that day and in the following months. But lost in the voices of May 4 are the stories of dissent and protest at Kent State in the 1950s and 1960s, which provide greater context.

Throughout the 1950s, black students at Kent State spoke out against racial discrimination occurring in their town. After the 1960 Greensboro sit-in, which sparked a regional movement and led to the creation of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, black and white students increased their efforts to improve racial equality in Kent. Black students organized in the late 1960s, forming Black United Students (BUS), which celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2018. As the Vietnam War escalated, so did the frequency of anti-war demonstrations. Students were "social justice warriors," decades before that phrase entered our lexicon. They were "agents of change pushing for antiracist reforms on campus amid the drum of the peace movement."[2]

A central theme among the various rallies is that students used dissent as a tool to bring change; BUS is one such example because their efforts prompted the University to increase black student and professor numbers. Students who protested at Kent State risked arrest and expulsion by holding demonstrations. This thesis explores the story of a university administration and the challenges they experienced as students confronted social and political issues. It is also a story of silenced narratives and students who cared enough about discrimination and loss of life in Vietnam to risk arrest and expulsion. I

[2] Lae'L Hughes-Watkins, "Between Two Worlds: A Look at the Impact of the Black Campus Movement on the Antiwar Era of 1968–1970 at Kent State University," *Ohio History* 124, no. 1 (2017), 43.

challenge readers to think about what they care enough about to risk arrest or expulsion. Kent State student activists of the 1950s and 1960s are part of the broader discussion of the social change in the 1960s.

People often ask whether Kent State's pre-May 4, 1970 activism was unique. The answer, like many things in history, is more nuanced than yes or no. Thomas Grace, a Kent State alumnus who went on to write an important history of protest at the university, says that student activism was not typical, but not unique.[3] We know from the historical record that protests on American university campuses in the 1960s were commonplace. Sociologist Christopher Hewitt published a chronology of politically-motivated violence titled *Political Violence and Terrorism in Modern America*," which has a seemingly endless list of nationwide bombings and shootings and includes racially-motivated violence.[4]

The four students shot to death at Kent State were not the first to die on a college campus. After a Black Panther meeting on the campus of the University of California-Los Angeles on January 17, 1968, an altercation between members resulted in the shooting deaths of two Black Panther members. In February 1970, the University of California-Santa Barbara students rioted and burned down a Bank of America branch in Isla Vista. About six weeks later they protested the temporary bank building; riot-gear-clad police arrived, and, in the chaos, a 22-year-old Santa Barbara student was shot and killed by a Santa Barbara police officer.[5]

---

[3] Thomas Grace, telephone interview with author, November 9, 2018.
[4] Christopher Hewitt, *Political Violence and Terrorism in Modern America: A Chronology* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2005), vii.
[5] Taylor Haggerty, "Forty Years Ago, a Mob of Students Stormed the Bank of America Building," *Daily Nexus*, February 25, 2010.

Ohio Governor James Rhodes deployed the National Guard to campuses at least three times prior to May 4, 1970. In December 1969, he sent the National Guard to the University of Akron, after a black power demonstration.[6] In April 1970, he deployed the National Guard to Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, after students forced their way into an ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps) building following a Vietnam moratorium event. Their demand: abolish the ROTC program. The university suspended 169 students and police arrested 130 to 150 students.[7] The third time was on April 28, 1970, at Ohio State University, following days of rallies and demonstrations.

On April 21, 1970, the president of Pennsylvania State University and his wife fled their home after students threw stones and broke windows. Out of a student population of 25,500 (a bit bigger than Kent State's population of 22,000 students), 1,000 students gathered to protest arrests at a sit-in the previous week. Firefighters extinguished small fires in buildings, one of which was ignited by a gasoline bomb.[8] Where Kent State was somewhat unique was that student demonstrations resulted in little damage, until 1970. No one firebombed the ROTC building, as students did at the University of California-Berkeley in September 1968, Stillman College, Brandeis University, and Lane College in March 1969, and Howard University in May 1969.[9]

There is a misconception that May 4, 1970, was the first instance that students at Kent State had ever protested; as historian and May 4, 1970, shooting survivor Thomas

---

[6] Kenneth J. Heineman, *Campus Wars: The Peace Movement at American State Universities in the Vietnam Era* (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 38.
[7] "Miami U suspends 169 after protest," *Daily Kent Stater*, April 17, 1970.
[8] "Racial and anti-war tensions set off protests across nation," *Daily Kent Stater*, April 22, 1970.
[9] Hewitt, 36, 40-42.

Grace wrote, there was a belief that Kent State was an "activist backwater."[10] Kent State's location far from a major metropolitan city is likely why national media outlets missed students' culture of protest. There were no high-profile newspapers nearby to cover the protests and reach a wide audience. The University of California-Berkeley students had proximity on their side: the Berkeley campus is near Sacramento, the state capitol, and is even closer to San Francisco. Thomas Grace believes that writers have overlooked pre-1970 activism at Kent State for several reasons: Kent is in an "indistinct area known as the Heartland," and the university admitted so many students in the 1960s that it did not have the opportunity to achieve national recognition.[11] Also, students at Kent tended to be first-generation college students, and many of them were from blue-collar families; the United States' class system of upper, middle and lower class "tends to make blue-collar Americans invisible."[12]

Ken Burns' 2017 documentary *The Vietnam War* perpetuates both misconceptions: the tendency to ignore the May 1 through 3 protests on and off-campus, and the decade of protest that preceded the shooting, to focus on May 4. The eighth episode, "The History of the World," spans April 1969 to May 1970 and interweaves the antiwar movement narrative with military operations in Vietnam. The narrator begins by describing the start of the noon rally and why students organized it, then explains the Ohio National Guard's presence on campus, allocating just five minutes to Kent State.[13]

---

[10] Thomas Grace, *Kent State: Death and Dissent in the Long Sixties* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2016), 8. Grace was injured on May 4, 1970, by sustaining a gunshot wound to his ankle.
[11] Grace, 9.
[12] Grace, 9.
[13] Ken Burns, "The History of the World," *The Vietnam War*, PBS, September 26 2017.

Craig S. Simpson, former Kent State Special Collections Librarian, wrote that post-May 4 journalism perpetuated misconceptions of Kent State as a quiet school. Citing an article by Douglas Kneeland of the *New York Times*, published May 7, 1970, "Kent State in Flux but Still Attuned to Mid-America," Kneeland depicted Kent State as "a small school, little noted, caught in the riptide of the postwar baby boom." He "concluded that most Kent students – and by extension all students in Middle America – were apathetic or career-oriented and that only a small percentage could be considered activists."[14] The President's Commission on Campus Unrest, also known as The Scranton Commission, remarked that "Kent State had enjoyed relative tranquility prior to May 1970, and its student population had generally been conservative or apolitical."[15]

Falsehoods about the May 4 protest and subsequent shooting as an isolated incident persist because news outlets outside of Ohio did not report on Kent's campus unrest until May 4 and many writers tend to focus on the days leading up to the shooting narrowly and to investigate what really happened. This approach to the shooting is especially pervasive outside academia, perpetuated by popular history works and documentaries. James Michener's *Kent State: What Happened and Why* is a classic example as Michener, a novelist, begins the timeline on Friday, April 30 and ends on Monday, May 4.[16]

This thesis presents an original, detailed narrative of the history of dissent and protests at Kent State University using archival sources such as internal memos and

---

[14] Craig S. Simpson and Gregory S. Wilson, *Above the Shots: An Oral History of the Kent State Shootings* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2016), 33.
[15] Simpson and Wilson, 33.
[16] James A. Michener, *Kent State: What Happened and Why* (New York: Random House, 1971), viii.

letters from the Kent State University Library and Special Collections. The internal memoranda between various administrators within the University shed light on how they felt privately. The thesis also features an interview with Thomas Grace, and for the first time ever, interviews with Dr. Robert Matson, former Vice President of Student Affairs at Kent State University. I have also drawn from local and national newspaper articles, and secondary sources.

Neglected History: The University Administration-Student Relationship

When historians and writers explore college student protest and dissent in the 1960s, they tend to focus on the students. This focus is understandable because students protested frequently, and this made for dramatic photographs. Administrative decisions in response to student unrest were far less visually exciting. Historians have written rich histories of campus protests, yet there is little about collegiate administrations, and their role in campus unrest. Generally, when historians do reference the administration, it is to mention administrative decisions without further elaboration on their significance. This omission is disappointing because administrative decisions affected student behavior, and in the case of some universities, ultimately forced presidential resignations.

Books that discuss university administrations and faculty include *Cold War University: Madison and the New Left in the Sixties* and *Campus Wars: The Peace Movement at American State Universities in the Vietnam Era.* In *Cold War University,* Matthew Levin devotes a lot of space to the University of Wisconsin-Madison's professors and their political ideologies. As in many works, the administration again takes a back seat to the students. Levin does, however, point out that a "relatively tolerant" administration was one reason students at UWM developed a strong protest

culture.[17] Students held a sit-in on campus, and the administration allowed students to continue if they did not cause damage.[18] Kenneth Heineman wrote extensively about the Kent State University administration's feelings toward protesting students, though this was not the focus of *Campus Wars*. He depicts Kent State President Robert White as lenient toward prowar students, declining to discipline them after an altercation with antiwar students in 1969 after White suspended the SDS charter.[19] Furthermore, Heineman explains that the deans and administrators ignored physical violence towards antiwar students, in turn creating an environment that allowed for aggression toward liberal students.[20] Heineman is correct in that the deans and administrators were lenient towards prowar students, but there is no indication that this encouraged student activism. This is one of the few works that explore Kent State's student movement in the 1960s to the shootings, and enriches what we already know about KSU's campus unrest.

Sitting in and Speaking Out: Student Movements in the American South 1960-1970 shares with *Campus Wars* the warning not to view certain student movements as offshoots of Berkeley and Yale. Where *Campus Wars* explores how student movements at four state universities developed alongside movements at elite institutions, *Sitting in*

---

[17] Matthew Levin, *Cold War University: Madison and the New Left in the Sixties* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013), 113.
[18] Kenneth Heineman's *Campus Wars* is an excellent view into typically overlooked colleges, debunking myths that student protests affected U.S. policymakers' decisions to end the war in Vietnam, that their protests did not create social changes, and that campus unrest started at the elite universities. For information on campus unrest in the American South, see Jeffrey A. Turner, *Sitting In and Speaking Out* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010). Black college students were also active in campus protests. Aldon Morris, "Black Southern Student Sit-in Movement: An Analysis of Internal Organization," *American Sociological Review* 46, no. 6 (December 1981): doi:10.2307/2095077 melds sociology and history to analyze how black students organized. On the University of Pennsylvania, Wayne Glasker, *Black Students in the Ivory Tower African American Student Activism at the University of Pennsylvania, 1967-1990* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 2009) explores black student activism.
[19] Kenneth Heineman, *Campus Wars: The Peace Movement at American State Universities in the Vietnam Era* (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 38.
[20] Heineman, 38.

and Speaking Out asserts that southern universities did not lag behind Berkeley and Yale in regards to activism.[21]

One university whose student movement did lag was at the University of Tennessee. Ruth Anne Thompson explains their protests from 1964 to 1970 may be understood as a "microcosm of the issues, participants and tactics of student protest during the Vietnam era."[22] Their protest culture lagged behind that of other universities, and it was President Nixon's visit to Knoxville in the wake of the Kent State shootings that thrust the University of Tennessee into the national consciousness. Through exploring the protest culture of UT, one can see the wide-ranging impact of the national campus protest movement.

Several historians have examined the intersection between race and 1960s campus unrest. Lae'l Hughes-Watkins reframed the KSU antiwar movement and the May 4, 1970, shootings through the context of race in her article "Between Two Worlds: A Look at the Impact of the Black Campus Movement on the Antiwar Era of 1968-1970 at Kent State University." She conducted numerous interviews with black activist alumni of Kent State. She acknowledged that scholars have not explored much regarding race and the antiwar movement, or their influence.[23] Race is a theme of *Sitting in and Speaking Out*, and student activism in the south began earlier as they took cues from the Civil Rights Movement.[24] In addition, its biracial focus adds another lens through which to

---

[21] Jeffrey A. Turner, *Sitting In and Speaking Out: Student Movements in the American South 1960-1970* (Athens*:* University of Georgia, 2010), 2.
[22] Ruth Anne Thompson, "A Taste of Student Power: Protest at the University of Tennessee, 1964-1970," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 1998): 81.
[23] Hughes-Watkins, 41-42.
[24] Turner, 2.

view student movements. Aldon Morris's article "Black Southern Sit-In Movement: An Analysis of Internal Organization," explores the origins of the 1960 southern sit-in movement, and argues that the sit-ins were possible because of existing networks within the Civil Rights Movement.[25]

Most of what is written about Kent State revolves around May 4, determining what happened the prior weekend, and why, and the legacy of May 4 and its memory.[26] Very few authors have sought to write a history of student dissent at Kent State, and no one has written a history, framed in the context of the university-student relationship. Historian and May 4 survivor Thomas Grace wrote a long history of dissent at KSU in *Kent State: Death and Dissent in the Long Sixties*, focusing on reconstructing the social and political environments between 1954 and 1970 that bred Kent State dissent.[27] Grace's contribution to the history of Kent State University is invaluable because he thoroughly researches the history of protest through the lens of the students with blue-collar backgrounds. Activism at Kent State goes beyond antiwar protest and included labor and civil rights activism.[28] Grace emphasized activists who came from urban areas and explored how labor culture and unionization coupled with New Deal beliefs influenced the early values of young people raised in blue-collar households.[29]

In this thesis, I will revisit many of the events covered in *Death and Dissent*, but I also build on Grace's monograph, and offer a new perspective. Thomas Grace so

---

[25] Aldon Morris, "Black Southern Sit-In Movement: An Analysis of Internal Organization," *American Sociological Review* 46, no. 6 (December 1981): 744-767.
[26] To read oral histories from Kent State students and those at other universities, see Simpson and Wilson, *Above the Shots*, and Robbie Lieberman, *Prairie Power: Voices of 1960s Midwestern Student Protest*.
[27] Grace, 6-8.
[28] Grace, 6.
[29] Grace, 7.

thoroughly covered incidences of unrest at Kent State that it is impossible not to discuss some of the same events. I have included minor protest demonstrations Grace did not, such as the dining hall protests in December 1969 that show not all demonstrations were political. Whereas Grace focused on class as the unifying aspect of students at Kent State, I focus on the administration, and track their efforts to deal with the challenges of handling an increasingly radical student population. Until now, no one has approached Kent State through the perspective of the administration bearing more responsibility as agents. In the literature, there needs to be a balanced discussion of administrators and students on Kent State history because administrators influenced student dissenters, which directly affected students. This influence is especially evident in the policy *in loco parentis* which allowed the University to dictate everything from students' dress to curfews and dorm visitations.

This thesis accomplishes two tasks. First, it explores the relationship between the KSU administration and its students. Second, the thesis provides the alternate view that the May 4, 1970 rally was not only about the war in Vietnam. Students felt betrayed by President Nixon reneging on a campaign promise to de-escalate the Vietnam War.

Ultimately, this is a study of human weakness and fallible men forced to make difficult decisions. The KSU administration tried, with limited success to balance their response to student demands against preserving authority, and keeping order on campus. Robert Matson, Vice President of Student Affairs made an effort to prepare for his role at Kent and studied the history of previous student rebellions that went back to the 1600s, because he knew Kent State had a history of student dissent; he now feels that the book

was beneficial in understanding the period they were in.[30] In the late 1960s (perhaps 1967), Dr. Matson became part of a group of 12 other university vice presidents that met and compared notes on student unrest. The Vice President for Student Affairs at Miami University in Ohio was also part of the group; Matson was friends with him already and he knew the rest of the members from a professional organization.[31] He became "a candidate for inclusion because of the SDS ruckus."[32] Interestingly, the University of California-Berkeley's campus unrest was so influential that the group of vice presidents measured time in BB-Before Berkeley and AB- After Berkeley.[33] With the help of WKSU-TV, Dr. Matson set up a hotline in October 1968 that allowed students to telephone questions and grievances; this allowed Dr. Matson to see trouble spots on campus.[34]

Widely accepted as fact, even by Kent State University, is that the demonstration on May 4 was about the war in Vietnam, specifically President Richard Nixon's decision to invade and bomb Cambodia in late April 1970. Students did not plan the protest for that reason: they were protesting authority. The mere existence of the protest was to subvert authority, because on May 3, Governor Rhodes banned rallies with an emergency proclamation. Many students who attended the May 4 rally did so "as a form of protest against the guard."[35] Some students like Carol Mirman, went to the rally to exercise their right to assemble, on which she felt the state tried to infringe, and because she felt "pissed

---

[30] Robert Matson, interview with author, January 9, 2019, and February 1, 2019. He read *Higher Education in Transition: A History of American Colleges and Universities 1636-1956* by John S. Brubacher.
[31] Robert Matson, interview with the author, February 1, 2019.
[32] Robert Matson, interview with the author, January 9, 2019 and February 1, 2019.
[33] Robert Matson, interview with the author, January 9, 2019.
[34] "WKSU Airs Hot Line from Students to Administration, *Daily Kent Stater*, October 24, 1968, Robert Matson, interview with author, January 9, 2019.
[35] Simpson and Wilson, 95.

off about all this army."[36] During the rally, May 4 students chanted "pigs off campus" and "down with the pigs" at the Ohio National Guard. Students chanted the same thing at Ohio State University on April 28, two days before President Nixon's Cambodia address.[37] Approximately 2,000 Ohio State students attended a noon rally that day, which became confrontational between students and police, prompting the deployment of 1,200 ONG to the campus.[38] Ohio State and Kent State reacted similarly, and Ohio State did so before the bombing of Cambodia. In both universities, students were not saying "get out of Vietnam," they were saying "get off my lawn." Tom Hayden, former member of Students for a Democratic Society, and liberal activist wrote that the rally at Kent State on May 4, 1970, was to protest the ban on protests.[39]

Chapter two will examine and deny the common misconception that the demonstration at Kent State on May 4 was an isolated incident. Students at Kent State had a rich history of protest and dissent starting in 1954.[40] The first part of the chapter offers an original account of civil rights activism by Kent students in the 1950s and 1960s. I also trace the story of increasing nuclear disarmament, anti-Vietnam War activism, and the administration's reactions to these activities. The chapter ends in 1968, after the creation of Black United Students (BUS), which formed to promote racial equality on and off campus. Archival memos and statements will aid in highlighting

---

[36] Simpson and Wilson, 102.
[37] The Cambodia address was a televised speech that announced increased North Vietnamese military operations in Cambodia, which necessitated the United States to send troops and bomb key areas of Cambodia.
[38] Bonnie Schwartz, "Student Rioters Battle Police," *The Lantern*, April 20, 1970.
[39] Tom Hayden, *Hell No: The Forgotten Power of the Vietnam Peace Movement* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017) 78. Note, this book was published posthumously.
[40] I chose to begin the study of Kent State in 1954 because it was the soonest instance of student dissent that I could find. I could have started in 1960, but that would disregard part of the students' rich history of protest.

policy shortcomings in the Kent University administration, such as mass disruptions procedures limited to classrooms. The University was much more successful in responding to civil rights demands, evidenced by the administration's creation of a Human Relations Center which aimed to retain students from underprivileged backgrounds.

Chapter three explores the growing dissent in 1969-1970, especially toward the Reserve Officers Training Corps and the research at Kent's Liquid Crystals Institute, which produced military surveillance equipment. By the end of the 1960s, many members of Black United Student had a good relationship with Vice President Robert Matson because he nurtured their agenda. In early April 1969, the Kent State chapter of Students for a Democratic Society held a protest known as the "Spring Offensive." Members demanded that the administration end the ROTC program and the Liquid Crystals Institute. The protest turned messy when SDS grappled with Kent State police officers, which resulted in seven student suspensions. President White revoked the SDS charter and banned them from assembling on campus. The same students rallied the following day despite the ban, and met riot gear-clad police officers who arrested several students.

The Epilogue focuses on memory, and the ways Kent State University fiercely protects the memory of May 4, 1970. It also suggests why the shooting still matters. I have provided three examples of people who have diminished the seriousness of the shooting, and Kent State's response to each. A way that the University offers context for the shooting is through signage at various points around the shooting site, and by calling for contemplation at the May 4 Memorial. Lastly, I discuss the annual May 4

Commemoration events at Kent State, in which students stand over the spots where Jeffrey Miller, Allison Krause, Sandra Scheuer, and William Schroeder were shot by guardsmen.

This thesis uses original research to offer a new history of dissent at Kent State, with special attention to the accomplishments and failures of its administrators. This was a campus with a steady activist atmosphere, and its university presidents George Bowman and Robert White struggled to meet antiwar student demands. President Bowman was unable to ensure adequate off-campus housing for KSU's black students after a student investigation uncovered discrimination. In 1961, President White struggled to contain the uproar caused when the *Akron Beacon Journal* erroneously printed an article that White had acknowledged a socialist student group. The administration also struggled to handle large-scale demonstrations. In mid-November 1968, SDS and BUS held a joint sit-in to protest Oakland California's Police Department recruitment on campus. It was not until Vice President Matson read the Riot Act that students dispersed after five hours of protest. After the sit-in, President White struggled to balance demands and criticism that came from concerned citizens, and police departments that were upset by being called in for a non-violent demonstration. Months after the black student walkout, White continued to receive correspondence from citizens critical of how he handled the sit-in and resulting black student walkout. Then there are the events of the weekend prior to May 4, 1970. When unknown people set fire to the ROTC building, Security Director Chester Williams failed to dispatch police protection to firefighters while they battled the blaze.

Nonetheless, the KSU administration had a number of successes. In the 1960s they hired additional black professors (a request of black students), and they created the Equal Educational Opportunities Commission alongside smaller projects designed to boost educationally disadvantaged students. They did the latter on their own, without prompting by students. Vice President of Student Affairs successfully forged a relationship with Black United Students, and supported ending the women's dormitory curfew.

The origins of the May 4, 1970, rally go as far back as the mid to late 1950s when students at KSU began voicing dissent through the Student Council, and in student-run publications. They progressed to forming activist groups and holding demonstrations, rallies, and sit-ins. The May 4, 1970, rally is related to Kent State administrators' struggle to meet antiwar student demands. In the late 1960s, antiwar students watched news reports from Vietnam of rising death tolls, frustrated that there was nothing they could do. It was compounded by the fact that they felt like their university was complicit in an unjust war, so they rallied. This emotional pressure continued to build without release until it exploded on April 30 and into May 1, 1970.

CHAPTER TWO: GROWING PAINS: STUDENT BODY INCREASES, DISSENT, AND PUSHBACK, 1954-1968

"You are the boss. This is not California. Let the anarchists go.
Signed, Mr. and Mrs. John Bergwell of Clinton, Ohio.

"Your capitulation to B.U.S. is a dangerous escalation of black mob rule at Kent.
Signed, ED Gilliam's 1758 Kingslep Akron Ohio."

From correspondence sent to the president of Kent State University, Robert White, November 1968.

These telegrams sent to Kent State President Robert White are representative of the correspondence White received in the days after a few hundred students staged a sit-in on campus to protest racial discrimination in 1968. On a broader scale, this is indicative of the atmosphere President White faced in the late 1960s: a deeply conservative local population watching events at Kent unfold versus a more liberal student population pushing back against the norms of the day. This dichotomy would come back to haunt White two years later both just before and right after the shooting.

During the period from 1954 to 1968, Kent State University saw surges in its student body population, who were increasingly aware of the racial discrimination around them, locally, nationally, and internationally. The Student Council took the lead in 1954 and investigated local discrimination. Then-president of the university, George Bowman, pushed back against charges of allowing racist citizens to discriminate against black students. In the late 1960s, black students at Kent State formed the Black United Students (BUS) to lobby the University for equality and certain improvements such as increases in black student enrollment. In response, the University increased black enrollment and hired additional black professors. Proactively, the University also created the Equal

Educational Opportunities Commission (EEOC), made up of professors, administrators, and students who reported to the President's office.[1] Designed to help students who lagged academically, the EEOC taught them how to read faster, and improve study skills.[2]

Table 1: African American enrollment in 1969-1970 by quarter[3]

Quarter	Enrollment
Fall	628
Winter	658
Spring	644

In the spring of 1970, there were 365 black women and 279 black male students enrolled, ninety percent of whom came from Ohio.[4] Between 1966 and 1970, the number of black graduates at Kent State more than doubled.

[1] "Equal Educational Opportunities Commission," February 19, 1968, Box 35 Folder 22, Robert I. White Papers.
[2] Dr. Robert Matson, telephone interview with the author, February 1, 2019.
[3] Milton E. Wilson, *Involvement/2 Years Later: A Report on Programming in the Area of Black Student Concerns at Kent State University, 1968-1970* (Kent, OH: Kent State Univ., Human Relations Center, Student Affairs Division, 1970), 63.
[4] Wilson, 64.

Table 2: Number of African American students who received bachelor's degrees [5]

Year	Number of black graduates
1966	19
1967	18
1968	27
1969	33
1970	44

The Black United Students continued to protest racial discrimination when the Oakland California Police Department came to Kent State in November 1968 to recruit trainees. The police department garnered notoriety for habitual racial profiling and discrimination. Students at Kent held a sit-in to protest the Oakland Police Department. In reaction to the University's decision to punish students involved in the sit-in, a large contingent of black students walked off campus in protest. The walkout was a major turning point for BUS because it created change within the University—a new department, Afro-American Studies.

Kent State University is a campus with a rich history of protest and political activism in the 1950s and 1960s. In the 1950s when students turned their attention to racial discrimination that occurred in Kent (the city), they discussed the situation in the Student Council and took their grievances to the university president, George Bowman. A few years later, the *Akron Beacon Journal* published a story that Bowman's successor,

[5] Wilson, 78.

Robert White, had acknowledged a socialist student group at Kent State. The incorrect article set off waves of controversy that President White struggled to control. The administration also struggled to handle large-scale demonstrations, such as the November 1968 sit-in to protest the Oakland California's Police Department recruitment on campus. Students did not leave until Vice President Robert Matson read the Riot Act. For months after the sit-in, President White received angry letters and telegrams from Ohioans, and local police departments who were upset by the way he handled the sit-in and subsequent black student walkout.

The administration had a number of successes; black students wanted the University to hire more black professors, so they did. The University also created the Equal Educational Opportunities Commission and had smaller projects to boost educationally disadvantaged students. The administration began both the commission and the projects proactively. Vice President Matson was successful in building a relationship with Black United Students and its leadership.

Kent State Normal School

Kent State University had its origins as Kent State Normal School and opened in 1913. On May 19, 1910, Ohio Governor Judson Harmon signed a bill creating the normal school, and a selling point of the area was that it had a school enrollment of 930, which were enough future students of the training school. The surrounding 25-mile area had a population of 200,000 people.[6] Kent State gained university status on May 17, 1935.[7]

---

[6] Phillip R. Shriver, *The Years of Youth: Kent State University, 1910-1960* (Kent: Kent State University Press 1960), 15.
[7] Shriver, 146.

During World War II, George Bowman accepted the position of president of Kent State University. After the war, Kent State had its first enrollment surge. The day before Dr. Bowman began his tenure in 1944, a U.S. Army contract with the University expired, depriving the school of a lot of its students. Kent State had faculty with no one to teach, but the administration projected an enrollment of 6,000 students. Dr. Bowman immediately had to find a solution to keep the faculty. After the war, Kent State saw its first veteran enrollees (50) and the first of its veteran faculty returning from war. These veteran enrollees used the G.I. Bill to attend college, and totaled seventy percent of the student body.[8] By 1950 civilian students began to outnumber veteran students, and veteran enrollment continued to decline.[9] Working-class freshman Carl Oglesby, future president of Students for a Democratic Society, began his freshman year in 1953; he was part of a flood of working-class students at Kent State.[10]

Table 3: Veteran Enrollment Data

Time	Veteran Enrollment	Total Enrollment
Fall 1945	111	1279
January 1946	452	1460
March 1946	1116	2150
June 1946	1359	2321
Fall 1946	3132	1763
Fall 1947	3257	5340
Fall 1949	2557	6027

[8] Grace, 13.
[9] "Vets Outnumbered Enrollment Drops to 535 Total," *Daily Kent Stater*, January 6, 1950.
[10] Grace, 13.

Enrollment in 1958 was 6,700 students, and the city had almost 17,000 residents.[11] Kent was a town divided by both race and class. Town residents and university residents were divided, the "labor group" lived in a part of Kent known as "the flats," and one's ethnicity dictated at which store one shopped.[12] Italian-Americans went to Italian stores, Germans to the German stores, and residents also segregated themselves in housing according to ethnicity.[13]

On July 1, 1963, Kent State's Vice President of Student Affairs, Robert White, became the sixth President of Kent State University.[14] Over his tenure in the 1960s, enrollment continued to climb: in 1960 there were 7,500 students, in 1964 there were approximately 19,100, in 1967 there were 21,127 and in 1969 20,913.[15] Soon after Robert White became President, Dr. Robert Matson, the Dean of Men, received a promotion to Dean of Students, in 1966.[16] White and Matson had a good relationship, though Matson now recalls that White was sometimes "not good at handling problems."[17] Dr. Matson went on to explain that some people in times of crisis just act, and others need time to think. President White was the latter type who needed space, and time to think and collect data.[18]

---

[11] Grace 16 and 18.
[12] Grace, 20.
[13] Grace, 20.
[14] Tony May, "Trustees Approve White As 6th KSU President," *Daily Kent Stater*, January 18, 1963.
[15] Jack Lewis, "Dean's List Standards Made More Selective," *Daily Kent Stater*, March 2, 1960; "Freshman Class May Prove to be One of the Brightest," *Daily Kent Stater*, August 24, 1964; "Request of Regents New Budget To Double KSU Funds," *Daily Kent Stater*, January 24 1967; "Enrollment Increases," *Daily Kent Stater*, October 3, 1969.
[16] "KSU's Busy Summer in Review," *Daily Kent Stater*, August 25, 1966.
[17] Dr. Robert Matson, telephone interview with the author, February 1, 2019.
[18] Dr. Robert Matson, telephone interview with the author, February 1, 2019.

The Civil Rights Movement in Ohio

Near the end of World War II, the Ohio state legislature turned its attention to employment as a civil rights issue, as there were few protections for black workers. For decades, the Ohio Public Accommodations Law of 1884 made it illegal to racially discriminate in public places, including movie theaters, stores, and restaurants.[19] In 1944 bipartisan politicians at the statehouse introduced a bill that would make racial discrimination in employment illegal, but the bill did not pass the legislature. State legislators made over 30 attempts to pass an anti- employment discrimination bill, until 1959 when they were finally successful.[20] In April 1958, the Ohio governor created the Governor's Advisory Commission on Civil Rights, which he asked to gather information on discriminatory practices in "employment, housing, education, and public accommodations."[21] From their research, Ohio state senators introduced a bill that became the Ohio Civil Rights Act of 1959. The act made it illegal for employers to discriminate on the basis of "race, color, religion, national origin or ancestry."[22] It also provided people equal access to public and private businesses, an improvement on the 1885 law which had no provision for private businesses. Most importantly, the Civil Rights Act created the Ohio Civil Rights Commission, which enforced the new law.[23] In 1965, three years before the federal Fair Housing Act, Ohio passed the Ohio Fair Housing Act which prohibited racial discrimination in regards to housing, with two exceptions: if

---

[19] Ohio Civil Rights Commission, "A Historical Perspective of Ohio's Laws Against Discrimination," https://crc.ohio.gov/AboutUs/History.aspx.
[20] "The Road to Equality and the Passage of the First Civil Rights Law in Ohio," Ohio Civil Rights Commission, 21, https://crc.ohio.gov/Portals/0/Book/History.pdf.
[21] "The Road to Equality," 23.
[22] Ohio History Central, "Ohio Civil Rights Act of 1959," accessed September 12, 2018, http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Ohio Civil_Rights_Act_of_1959.
[23] Ohio History Central, "Ohio Civil Rights Commission," accessed September 12, 2018, http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Ohio_Civil_Rights_Commission.

the owner lived in the residence with the tenant, or if the residence had one or two rental units.[24]

In the 1950s and 1960s education was still a civil rights issue despite the Supreme Court ruling in 1954 on *Brown v Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas.* The Supreme Court ruled that "the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal."[25] The law did not prevent segregated schools in the Cleveland Public Schools District. Cleveland's history is relevant to Kent because the two are only about 40 miles apart, and Kent State students were aware of the civil rights struggles there. Cleveland was a large, industrial city that had a school crisis in the 1950s and 1960s due to African American migration from the south. Between 1950 and 1965, the number of public-school students went from 98,000 to 149,655 and 54% of the student body was African American.[26] Like their counterparts in many school districts, Cleveland's children were assigned to schools based on the neighborhood in which they lived. Discriminatory housing policies like covenants banning African Americans from living in certain neighborhoods meant that Cleveland's African American population was concentrated in just a few areas, which created overcrowded neighborhoods and schools. Elementary school overcrowding was the most severe, so in 1957 the Cleveland Public School District launched a "relay" program for students at the overcrowded elementary schools.[27] Half of a school's students attended in the morning and the other half attended

---

[24] Ohio History Central, "Ohio Fair Housing Act of 1965," accessed September 12, 2018, http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Ohio_Fair_Housing_Act_of_1965.
[25] Ohio History Central, "Segregation," accessed September 12, 2018, http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Segregation.
[26] Leonard N. Moore, *Carl B. Stokes and the Rise of Black Political Power* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 28.
[27] Moore, 29.

in the afternoon. By 1960, 130 classes worked on the relay system, but Cleveland still had 1,700 kindergarteners on an enrollment waiting list.[28] Black parents demanded that the school board send black children to white schools that had space, but the district ignored them.[29] The parents banded together and formed the Relay Parents March to Fill Empty Classrooms and picketed the school board's main office.[30] Their demonstrations went on for months until the school board relented and began sending black students to the white schools.

Black students at the formerly all-white schools found themselves subject to discriminatory policies including not being able to eat lunch in the cafeteria, attend assemblies, or visit the school nurse; they had one bathroom break per day.[31] Their parents learned of the poor treatment and garnered support from the United Freedom Movement (UFM), a multi-racial coalition of religious and civic groups. The Cleveland Public Schools board planned to build new schools to reduce overcrowding, but UFM protested the construction, worried that this was another way for the school board to racially segregate.[32] The school board went ahead with the school construction, and UFM activists protested at several sites, the most serious protest taking place at the Stephen E. Howe Elementary School site. On April 7, 1964, activists lay on the ground in front of vehicles to stop construction, and white activist Reverend Bruce Klunder lay on the ground behind a bulldozer. The bulldozer driver did not see Klunder, and backed up, killing the reverend. United Freedom Movement activists gathered that day to protest

[28] Moore, 29.
[29] Moore, 29.
[30] Moore 29.
[31] Moore, 29.
[32] Moore, 34.

Klunder's death and police used tear gas to break up the demonstration. His death stopped construction, but the construction eventually finished. On April 20, 1964, the UFM sponsored a public school boycott for one day, and 60,000 African American students did not go to school.[33]

Racial Discrimination in Kent

Racial discrimination was not limited to the American South; in Kent, discrimination was more covert. Instead of "colored only" water fountains and restaurant sections, businesses displayed "We reserve the right to refuse service to anyone" signs. African Americans were never sure if "anyone" meant just them or truly anyone.[34] Some students voiced early dissent at KSU in 1954 when the Student Council worked to end racial discrimination in the town of Kent. Students held an open meeting of 100 students to discuss anti-discrimination measures. The President of the Student Council, Joan Webster, told the student assembly that the Student Council had no authority off-campus but could act as advisors in drafting anti-discrimination policy.[35] Student Nick LaLumia suggested that students form a committee to research which off-campus businesses racially discriminated and which ones did not and disseminate the list to the Kent student body. LaLumia's proposal passed and students made plans to draft a list of supposed discriminatory restaurants. A student proposed to boycott the discriminatory establishments, but other students agreed that was not feasible for numerous reasons, the

---

[33] Patrick O'Donnell, "The 1964 Cleveland schools' Boycott to Protest Segregation: Black History Month," Cleveland.com, February 24, 2013, accessed October 25, 2018, https://www.cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2013/02/the_1964_cleveland_schools_boy.html.
[34] Kenneth Cooley and Donald Thomson, "Blindness We May Forgive," *The Kent Quarterly* 1, no. 2 (Winter 1957): 8.
[35] Sue Leick, "SC Airs Discrimination Issue Suggests Committee to Discuss Problems," *Daily Kent Stater*, November 12, 1954.

most important of which was that the committee's suggestion of boycotts was unenforceable. Boycotts had the potential to strain relationships between business owners and the University and were a "last resort" measure to combat discrimination. The Student Council would create a committee to work in conjunction with members of the faculty to ensure a peaceful working relationship between the students and the business community.[36] Students relied on businesses for shopping and entertainment while businesses helped support the student community by advertising their restaurants, stores, and room vacancies in the *Daily Kent Stater*.

Black students at KSU found it difficult to join fraternities and sororities, so the Student Council formulated a plan to force Greek Life to accept all races. Students Kenneth Cooley and Donald Thomson publicly spoke out about the inequality in fraternities and sororities. The Student Council Vice President initiated a motion to give Kent State organizations five years, or until 1962, to eliminate discriminatory clauses from their constitutions and charters. The Student Council's motion meant organizations could no longer discriminate against students based on race, religion, or color.[37] Cooley and Thomson, critical of Kent's exclusionary policies in Greek organizations toward African Americans, wrote at length about the issue. If African Americans wished to join fraternities or sororities, they had to create organizations. In their dissent against the insular PanHellenic organizations, Cooley and Thomson stated that many fraternities and sororities proclaimed to be "CHRISTIAN ORGANIZATIONS" to maintain

[36] Leick, "Suggests Committee."
[37] "SC Acts to End Discrimination, Lowry Moves to End Segregation by 1962," *Daily Kent Stater*, February 7, 1957.

homogeneity.[38] They referenced unnamed universities that pushed for the removal of "CAUCASIAN CLAUSES" and revoked charters for fraternities or sororities with discriminatory practices, implying that Kent State should do the same.[39] As an example, Chi Omega could refuse to allow African Americans into the sorority, if its charter contained a clause only allowing for Caucasian members. Cooley and Thomson brought awareness of racial discrimination at other universities to Kent State.

By October 1959, students at Kent, aware of racial injustices happening outside Ohio, formed the Kent Council on Human Affairs (CHA), a multiracial group of four students, and they staged a sit-in at a Kent bar, which challenged the discriminatory policy of not serving African Americans drinks. In January 1960, African American student Clarence Rogers Jr., a member of an interracial fraternity, went to the Corner Bar on Main Street during "Greek Week" with his fraternity brothers. Bartenders served the white fraternity brothers but not Rogers. It is unclear what took place in the bar after this point, except that there was no altercation between the fraternity brothers and the bartenders. A few months passed without incident, and the CHA held elections in the spring of 1960; members elected Rogers Vice President and white student Lance Buhl president for the new school year.[40] The Council on Human Affairs' contributions to the Civil Rights movement came in the wake of the well-publicized, pioneering sit-in, in Greensboro, North Carolina, at Woolworth lunch counter where four African American students sat down to order on February 1, 1960. Students at Kent took notice of the Greensboro sit-in and felt so strongly about it that the Student Council passed a resolution

[38] Cooley and Thomson, 9. Emphasis in original.
[39] Cooley and Thomson, 9.
[40] Grace, 22.

in April, agreeing with the Greensboro students' desire to integrate lunch counters. In part, the resolution referred to segregation as an "archaic institution" and that "to deny the God-given rights of any individual because of his race or creed is morally wrong and contrary to the American way."[41] These were powerful words that elucidate the Student Council's position on racism. The CHA channeled their abhorrence for racism into action and picketed the Kent Woolworth store on April 21, 1960, in a show of solidarity with the Greensboro students.

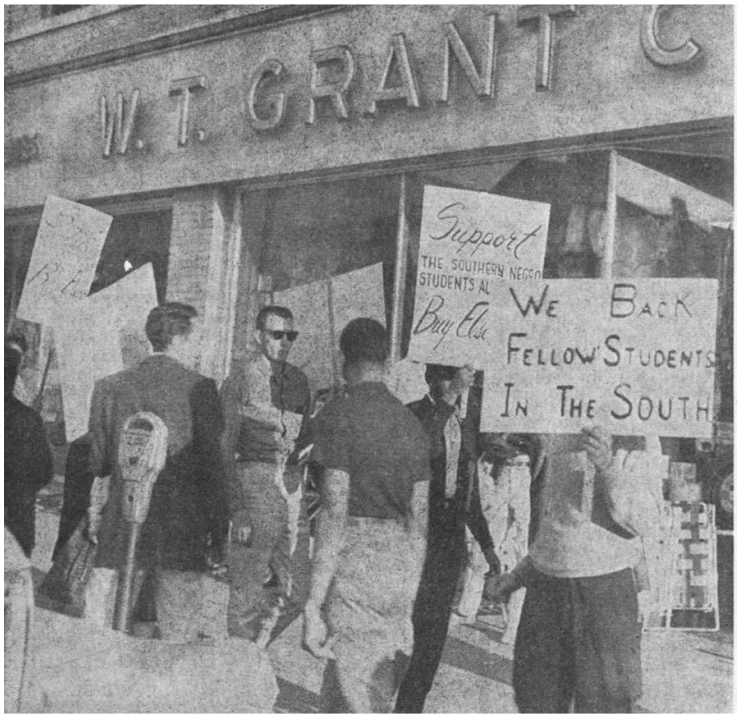

Figure 1: KSU students picket in front of the W.T. Grant store.[42]

Student picketers continued protesting in front of stores despite facing the threat of legal action by Irvin Applebaum, owner of the shopping center which housed the W.T.

[41] Larry Martin, "SC Supports Southern Lunch-Counter Strikes," *Daily Kent Stater,* April 14, 1960.
[42] Jack Lewis, "KSU Students Will Continue Sympathy Strikes of Stores." *Daily Kent Stater,* April 26, 1960

Grant store. Mr. Applebaum threatened to file for an injunction against the students if they interfered with customers, but student protesters persisted in demonstrating. On the following two days, April 22 and 23, 1960, more than forty students turned out to picket the W.T. Grant store, which was a mass-merchandise store with a branch in Kent. Council on Human Affairs president Robert Greenberger told the student-run newspaper *The Daily Kent Stater* that the CHA chose W.T. Grant and Woolworth because they were part of national chains that allowed race-based discrimination. Described by the *Daily Kent Stater* as "orderly," the picketing lasted six hours over two days. The aim of the Council on Human Affairs picket was to persuade the local store to pressure the corporate office to rescind its discriminatory policy that banned African Americans from eating at the lunch counter. Police reported they received no complaints about the protesters and the protesters were not violating any laws. Emboldened by the relative success of the demonstration, more than seventy-five students expressed a desire to join the CHA.[43] On May 28, 1960, six members of the CHA, including its president Robert Greenberger and ten students from Oberlin College, joined students from Youngstown University to picket Grant and Woolworth stores in Youngstown, Ohio.[44] The Council on Human Affairs spoke the week before to students from Youngstown University about their activism, which encouraged students from Youngstown to make their version of CHA.[45] Kent students saw inequality occurring and used it as inspiration for change.

When the bartender discriminated against Clarence Rogers at the Corner Bar in January 1960, CHA staged a protest because the discrimination was personal: Rogers was

---

[43] "KSU Students Will Continue Sympathy Strikes of Stores."
[44]"Human Affairs Groups Pickets Chain Stores," *Daily Kent Stater,* June 1, 1960.
[45] "Human Affairs Groups."

a member of CHA. At the start of the 1960 school year Rogers and the rest of the Council on Human Affairs, borrowing from the Greensboro sit-in, held a sit-in of their own at the Corner Bar. A *Daily Kent Stater* reporter wrote that eleven African American students and a handful of white students entered the bar to request service and did not create a commotion; instead, they sat "quietly waiting for someone to ask them what they wanted."[46] Later, a white student refused to pay for his drink until the bar served the African American students. The waiter refused and took the student's drink back. After roughly an hour, Kent police officers arrived, saying they received a call about a disturbance at the bar. Once the police officers spoke with the bar's owner and told her she had to serve the African American students, she complied. The bar owner said that the African American students had to wait so long for service because there were too many customers and not enough staff to wait on people promptly.[47] After the success of the first sit-in, the CHA planned their next move.

The CHA set its sights on examining discrimination in off-campus housing leases. By 1952, the University no longer segregated dorms, but the racial bias of landlords pushed African Americans further away from campus in off-campus apartments. [48] The CHA, in its investigation of racial bias in housing accommodations, used the approved housing list compiled by the University. African American and white students separately went to landlords on the list who had vacancies and inquired about rentals. In twenty-two out of twenty-five cases, landlords refused to rent to the African American students, claiming a lack of vacancies; but when white students inquired into the same rooms, they

[46] Al Byrd, "Demand Equal Rights Negro Students Stage Local Sit-Down Strike" *Daily Kent Stater*, November 1, 1960.
[47] Byrd, "Demand Equal Rights."
[48] "Kent's Discrimination Battle Widens," *Akron-Beacon Journal*, May 10, 1961.

found vacancies.[49] The CHA compiled these results into a study, which they published in the *Daily Kent Stater*. Student John McCann writing for the *Stater* explained what the Council on Human Affairs found and that the University administration was already aware racial discrimination existed in Kent; University president George Bowman knew barbershops in town discriminated against African Americans. Student John McCann pressed President Bowman about the issue, asking when the University would start to work on reducing racial discrimination and President Bowman replied that the administration would do so "when the time is right," to which McCann replied, "when will the time be right?"[50] McCann proposed that all landlords should have signed an affidavit affirming that they would rent to any student, regardless of race, religion, or nationality, before being placed on the approved housing list. The results of the housing study revealed racial inequality in Kent and exposed President Bowman's permissive attitude towards off-campus landlords.

President Bowman pushed back at accusations that he allowed landlords to discriminate against his black students, and the CHA study spurred the Kent branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to study the results of the CHA's investigation.[51] Five days after the CHA study became public, on April 19, 1961, President Bowman held a press conference with the DKS staff and maintained that the "university is a shining example of non-discrimination in the community" and that dorms were integrated and social events were open to all students.[52]

---

[49] John McCann, "Thoughts of a Student Charges Discrimination in Off-Campus Housing," *Daily Kent Stater*, April 14, 1961. McCann does not say for how long Bowman knew about the discrimination.
[50] McCann, "Thoughts of a Student Charges Discrimination."
[51] "NAACP to Study Housing" *Daily Kent Stater*, April 18, 1961.
[52] Barbara Christman, "Pres. Bowman Clarifies Housing Policy," *Daily Kent Stater*, April 19, 1961.

With regard to private homeowners who rented to students, President Bowman said they had the right to choose which students they wanted to rent.[53] He supported his viewpoint by elaborating that homeowners have "traditional American rights to freedoms" to control which guests they invite into their homes and who is a tenant.[54] President Bowman went on to say that the users of the University-compiled landlord list could be "reasonably sure the Negro student will be accepted."[55] His comments in the school newspaper further cement his permissive mindset regarding racial discrimination and his unwillingness to take a firm stance on racial discrimination. Dr. Bowman later told the *Akron Beacon Journal* that "in those areas we can control, (dorms) Kent State does not discriminate. But Kent State does not propose to tell the community how to run itself."[56]

A late April 1961 memo from Dean of Students Glen Nygreen to President Bowman referenced that Kent State officials received guidance from Ohio State regarding the best phrasing of the housing list. Ohio State suggested KSU use "certification" rather than "approved" because the latter has a connotation of discrimination, whereas certified housing means the housing was inspected and determined to have passed their "standards of physical quality and supervisory responsibility."[57] When the CHA found evidence of landlords discriminating against black Kent State students, the outgoing and incoming CHA presidents presented President Bowman with a statement and a petition.[58] The petition had over 1,200

---

[53] Christman, "Pres. Bowman Clarifies Housing Policy."
[54] Christman, "Pres. Bowman Clarifies Housing Policy."
[55] Christman, "Pres. Bowman Clarifies Housing Policy."
[56] "Kent State's Discrimination Battle Widens," *Akron Beacon Journal*, May 10, 1961.
[57] Glen T. Nygreen to President Bowman, April 27, 1961, Box 13, Folder 8, Robert Bowman Papers.
[58] "Signees Demand Housing Equality: Statement Expected from Bowman," *Daily Kent Stater*, Mat 10, 1961.

signatures, and CHA's statement to Bowman requested publicly recognize racial discrimination in off-campus student housing, to disapprove of such practices, and remove landlords from the approved housing list if they would not "submit a statement of willingness to rent to students regardless of race, religion, or nationality."[59]

Socialism Causes a Stir

Kent student John McCann, active in racial discrimination protests of 1961, helped create the Young Socialist Alliance (YSA) with a handful of other Kent students. The YSA was a national organization with chapters at the university level, founded as a student group by the Socialist Workers Party. In 1965, the group caused an uproar among citizens in the surrounding area. With U.S. military operations in Vietnam increasing, the YSA called for an end to the war. Some parents were outraged to find out Kent had a socialist group at the university. Mrs. Robert A. Batchelor wrote to President White, and told him how "disturbed" she felt after reading an article in the *Akron Beacon Journal* about the YSA at Kent, and that the United States government labeled the group "subversive."[60] She said it was "a potential threat to the University and to young people in this immediate area." She implied that the University should dissolve the group because the freedom of speech the YSA exercised was not "healthful to our national economy."[61] Unfortunately, she did not identify herself as a parent or alumnus but likely lived in the Kent area. The article to which she referred was probably from January 8, in which the *Akron Beacon Journal* ran an article that discussed pamphlets the YSA handed

[59] "Signees Demand Housing Equality: Statement Expected from Bowman," *Daily Kent Stater,* Mat 10, 1961.
[60] Mrs. Robert A. Batchelor to Robert White, January 10, 1965, Box 14, Folder 41, Robert White Papers.
[61] Mrs. Robert A. Batchelor to Robert White, January 10, 1965, Box 14, Folder 41, Robert White Papers.

out after an on-campus talk by Senator Eugene McCarthy. Their pamphlets included such topics as, "Withdraw GIs from Vietnam," and "Support the Negro Struggle for Equality."[62] Mrs. Batchelor was incorrect in that the United States government did not group label the YSA subversive; it was the Socialist Workers Party that was designated subversive. On January 9, the *Akron Beacon Journal* ran another article about the Kent YSA, quoting the club's president Craig Stephens, who said they did not have official university approval but were in the preliminary stages of submitting paperwork.[63] The previous month, members of the Kent YSA traveled to Cleveland, Ohio to protest the United States' presence in the Congo.[64]

The socialist situation at Kent State continued into March, and went all the way to J. Edgar Hoover, director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Ohio's Lieutenant Governor John Brown wrote to President White with concerns about KSU having a socialist club, and said that he wrote to Hoover for more information on the Young Socialist Alliance and their Communist ties.[65] Lt. Governor Brown provided White with a copy of J. Edgar Hoover's reply, in which Hoover wrote that the Young Socialist Alliance shares ideology with the Socialist Workers Party, that the Department of Justice cited them as being subversive, and the Socialist Workers Party "are as dangerous a menace to our freedom as those of the Communist Party, USA."[66] President White admitted to Brown that Kent State had a problem, and that White's friends thought of him

---

[62] Avery Guest, "Student Socialist Workers Okd, Demonstrate at KSU," *Akron Beacon Journal*, January 8, 1965.
[63] "Denies Socialists Have Recognition," *Akron Beacon Journal*, January 9, 1965.
[64] "Denies Socialists Have Recognition."
[65] John W. Brown to Robert I. White, March 5, 1965, Box 14, Folder 41, Robert I. White Papers.
[66] J. Edgar Hoover to John W. Brown, March 10, 1965, Box 14, Folder 41, Robert I. White Papers.

as a "stuffy reactionary," and White wanted time to stall.[67] He knew that if he put off long enough a decision about the group. Kent students would be gone for the summer and the uproar would have died down.

While the battle for racial equality continued, Americans also worried about the threat of nuclear war. The Cuban Missile Crisis was a thirteen-day standoff, in October 1962, between the United States and the Soviet Union stemming from the Soviet installation of nuclear missiles in Cuba, which was 90 miles from the United States. President John Kennedy assured the nation via a televised press conference that the United States set up a naval blockade surrounding Cuba, and that he would use lethal force if necessary to protect the United States. During these thirteen days, many Americans feared nuclear war, until the United States negotiated with Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev to remove the nuclear missiles from Cuba, and a promise from the United States not to invade Cuba. The threat of nuclear war pushed some Americans into anti-nuclear proliferation activism, and such was the case at Kent State.

In early December 1962, a group of professors wrote to the *Daily Kent Stater* that they were going to create a Kent chapter of the National Committee for a SANE Nuclear Policy, which President Bowman blocked. The organization's basic tenets were that governments should try to end their nuclear arms tests and work towards ending their nuclear programs altogether.[68] But President Bowman refused to recognize the Kent chapter. He issued conflicting statements when he explained his refusal. Bowman thought the group "is primarily not a study group, but a propaganda group." However, he agreed

[67] Robert I. White to John W. Brown, March 18, 1965, Box 14, Folder 41, Robert I. White Papers.
[68] "Faculty Members Give Kent SANE Purposes," *Daily Kent Stater*, December 4, 1962.

that "the arms race is going to bankrupt the human race if we don't find some basis for disarmament."[69] He disagreed with the methods but not the message. In March, the Kent State group the Student Religious Liberals and the Unitarian Universalist Billings Lectureship hosted Homer Jack, executive director of the National Committee for a SANE Nuclear Policy. His primary aim was to show the dangers of nuclear war and spur public interest in preventing such a war. As a Unitarian minister, Homer Jack also implored the religious community to use their influence to prevent war.[70] The month following Jack's visit to Kent, the unsanctioned Kent chapter of SANE appealed to the administration to reconsider recognizing them as an official organization. SANE is yet another way students at Kent, affected by events around them, became active in an issue important to them.

The antiwar movement at KSU gained strength when students attended the moratorium in Washington, D.C. in 1965, and later in the year created the Kent Committee to End the War in Vietnam (KCEWV). As President Lyndon Johnson escalated the war in Vietnam, the national office for Students for a Democratic Society called for a nation-wide March on Washington on Saturday, April 17, 1965. Students advertised in the *Stater* that for $12.50, a student could get a ride to the march.[71] The same students who planned the trip to Washington D.C. formed the KCEWV and held their first meeting in October 1965.[72] The committee hoped to make people aware of what was happening in Vietnam, in addition to advocating for the war's end.[73] The group

---

[69] "Bowman Nixes Super Board," *Daily Kent Stater*, January 24, 1963.
[70] "Jack Asks Church to Aid Peace Aims," *Daily Kent Stater*, March 29, 1963.
[71] "March on Washington," *Daily Kent Stater*, April 16, 1965,
[72] "Viet Committee Plans Meeting," *Daily Kent Stater*, October 26, 1965.
[73] Gary Smith, "Kent Committee to End War Begins Program of Education," *Daily Kent Stater*, October 29, 1965.

was barely a week old before a spat broke out between two students via the *Stater*. One student, John Cook, wrote a letter to the *Stater*'s editor, critical of antiwar demonstrators, referring to them as "primitive" and, "ancient, archaic, little evolved" which spurred KCEWV member Tony Walsh to write a rebuttal.[74] Walsh retorted that if Mr. Cook wanted to see something primitive, he should go to the Commons every Tuesday and Thursday at noon, where he could "witness that vulgar pageant of incompetent schoolboyish gladiators which we call the ROTC, stumbling about in the 'ancient, archaic and little evolved style' of the United States Armed Forces." Walsh continued to insult the ROTC (Reserve Officers Training Corps) program in his letter, which is one of the earliest, if not the earliest criticisms of the ROTC program at Kent. In 1969, the ROTC program would become a major target of antiwar demonstrators, and its building was ultimately burned down on May 2, 1970.

The KCEWV held its first demonstration just before Thanksgiving in 1965 and marched with signs in front of Bowman Hall while enduring taunts from other students.[75] Even though this was a small demonstration by a group that had first met less than a month before, KCEWV members assembled quickly. In early 1966, the group held yet another demonstration in front of Bowman Hall, to protest the resumed bombing of North Vietnam by the United States military. Approximately thirty students took part in the demonstration.[76]

---

[74] John E. Cook, letter to the editor, *Daily Kent Stater*, November 4, 1965.
[75] Fran Craig, "Students Heckle Anti-Viet Nam Protesters," *Daily Kent Stater*, November 23, 1965.
[76] Gary Smith, "Demonstration Raps Bombings," *Daily Kent Stater*, February 2, 1966.

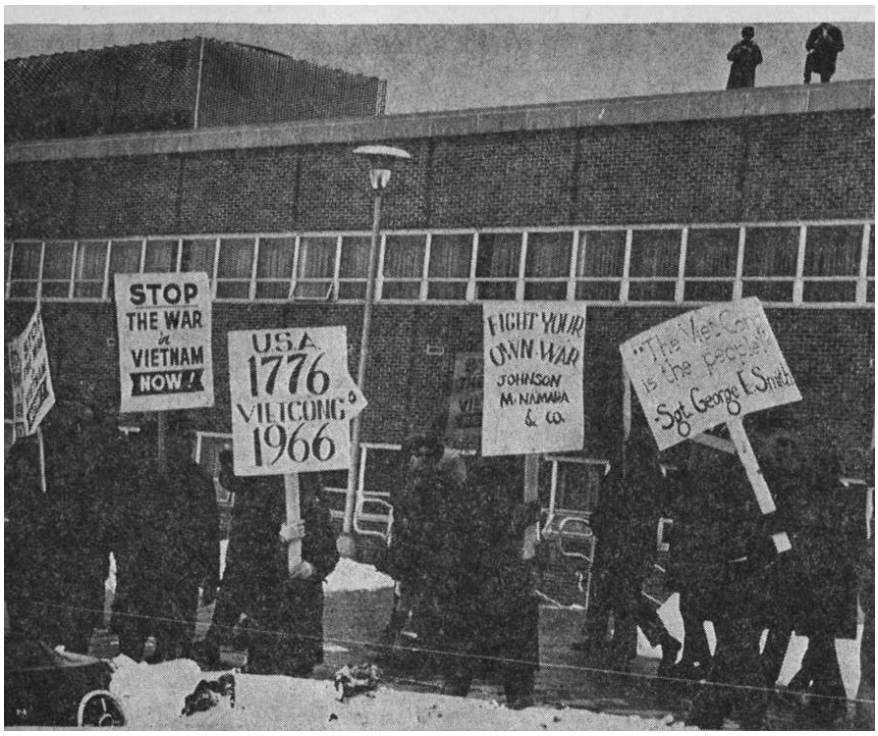

Figure 2. KCEWV demonstrates on campus. *Daily Kent Stater*, February 2, 1966.

One aspect that set the Kent Committee to End the War in Vietnam apart from other groups was the involvement of several professors. This was due to several factors. For one, President Bowman recently retired in June 1963, and his successor Robert White was more tolerant of activism. Beyond this, in the 1960s, the word socialist was widely associated with being subversive, and carried baggage through the name alone. Some professors likely wanted to limit their exposure to anything connected to subversive activities, which might be why more professors flocked to KCEWV than YSA.

The "Moo and Cackle Riots" at Southern Illinois University in June 1966 highlight within the broader context of campus unrest that sometimes unrest is just unrest. The riots are also a prime example of university overreaction creating further animosity between students and the administration. Southern Illinois University had developed a

reputation as a bit of a party school, and in the sixties, there were few opportunities for students to occupy themselves outside of the classroom. One night students had a water fight at the Moo and Cackle, Carbondale's first fast food restaurant. The local police force dispersed the water fight. The next night students had a panty raid, and again the police broke it up. On the third night, students gathered again at Moo and Cackle. Not having much to do, they moved to the downtown area, where state police dressed in riot gear, and local and campus officers stood ready for them. Students threw rocks at the officers and yelled obscenities, and police arrested thirteen students. In solidarity, the remaining students marched to the police station and held a sit-in. The fourth night, police arrested 23 more students, and President Morris expelled all arrested students, which caused resentment among students and damaged their relationship with the administration.[77]

The furor over socialism at Kent State University illustrates how people in the area felt towards liberal viewpoints. It suggests the depth of conservatism in the area around Kent State, given that context, it is notable that students formed a socialist club so early in the 1960s. They also broadened their political activism beyond civil rights, into the anti-nuclear war movement. In the middle of the sixties, Kent students went to the moratorium against the Vietnam War, held in Washington D. C., and formed the Kent Committee to End the War in Vietnam a few months later. As the decade progressed, activism overall steadily increased, not isolated to one particular cause.

[77] Lieberman, 119.

A New Draft Policy

In the 1960s, Kent State increased its role in the Military-Industrial Complex, as changes in draft laws provided an opportunity to expand the ROTC program. Federal authorities announced a change to the draft exemption for graduate students, and the University explored ways to enroll graduate students in the ROTC, thereby expanding the program. The Selective Service Act of 1967 granted deferments to most graduate students; medical and dental students and those in subject areas important to national interests usually gained deferments.[78] The new draft law in 1968 sought to end deferments for graduate students, except for medical, dental, and veterinary students. Martin Nurmi, Dean of the Graduate School, expressed in a memo to President White his disappointment in the draft change. Despite his disappointment, he made it clear that Kent should not promote draft evasion.

Nurmi viewed such a situation as having "potential bugs," and he did not think the Army and Air Force would act on something so "unrealistic" as introducing graduate students into their ROTC programs.[79] It is unclear why it would be unrealistic, but perhaps some graduate students already served in the military and had no use for the ROTC program. Graduate students were also far less likely than undergraduates to join the military after graduation and had less time to devote to ROTC with the shorter length of graduate programs. The *Daily Kent Stater* asked Dean Nurmi what he thought of the decision to end graduate student deferments: he responded "bad" because he estimated

[78] "Chapter 49—Military Selective Service," Subsection (h). Pub. L. 90-40 §1 (6), accessed November 1, 2017, http://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?path=/prelim@title50/chapter49&edition=prelim.
[79] Memo from Martin K. Nurmi to President Robert I. White, February 20, 1968, Box 28, Folder 50, Robert I. White Papers.

that Kent State would lose approximately 20% of graduate enrollments for the fall 1968 school year, and that would affect the quality of undergraduate education because fewer graduate students meant fewer teaching assistants available for undergraduate classes.[80] The following week Dean Nurmi sent White another memo, briefly referencing a meeting held with military personnel, in which he indicated that the graduate school would subtly promote the possibility of graduate student enrollment in the ROTC. This was a rapid change from the memo sent a week before, when he called graduate students in ROTC "unrealistic."[81] These memos indicate plans to increase ROTC enrollment, not long before students started to protest the program.

The protests against ROTC at Kent were part of a national student movement. At the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, students held their first meeting of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in 1960, and in 1962 SDS chapters came together at Port Huron, Michigan for a national convention in which SDS released "The Port Huron Statement." The statement introduced who they (SDS) were: "We are the people of this generation, bred in at least modest comfort, housed now in universities, looking uncomfortably to the world we inherit" and explained how the social ills of the day influenced them as they grew.[82] As children of the Cold War, and understanding the destructive power of the Atomic Bomb, they were acutely aware of their mortality and the mortality of people around the world. SDS found violence "abhorrent" because it

---

[80] John Kametz, "New Draft Rule Affects Grad Schools," *Daily Kent Stater*, February 20, 1968.
[81] Memo from Martin K. Nurmi to President Robert I. White, February 27, 1968, Box 28, Folder 50, Robert I. White Papers. Nurmi is not clear on who the young men are or which institutions they attend.

[82] Thomas Hayden, "The Port Huron Statement," in *How Democratic is America: Responses to the New Left Challenge*, ed. Robert A. Goldwyn (Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1969), 1.

"depersonalized" people, turning them into "objects of hate."[83] How SDS viewed violence in its early days provides insight into how the organization changed over time, and how it compared to other student organizations like BUS.

Kent student George Hoffman joined SDS in 1966. He completed paperwork in February 1968 and formed an SDS chapter at Kent with his friend Ron Weisberger.[84] Hoffman and his friend Vince Modugro read the SDS weekly tabloid *New Left Notes;* with rumors of President Johnson sending more troops to Vietnam, their dislike of the Selective Service grew.[85] Hoffman and Modugro talked to other disappointed Kent Committee to End the War in Vietnam (KCEWV) members, and they wanted to hold radical demonstrations to end the war in Vietnam.[86] SDS started advertising joint meetings with KCEWV, despite Hoffman telling the *Stater* that "SDS is more radical than KCEWV."[87] Vice President of Student Affairs Robert Matson went to early SDS meetings because the flyers said anyone was welcome to attend.[88]

In October 1967, the Dow Chemical Corporation went to the University of Wisconsin-Madison for a recruitment drive. Students protested the event, in what became known as the Dow Riot. Hundreds of students blocked the entrance to the building because they opposed Dow's presence; the chancellor asked students to leave, and they refused. Police officers, using billy clubs beat students, which forcefully removed them

---

[83] Hayden, 8.
[84] Grace, 102.
[85] Grace, 102.
[86] Grace, 102.
[87] Saul Daniels, "The Draft. Hell No We Won't Go!" *Daily Kent Stater*, January 17, 1968. "What, Where, When" advertisement, *Daily Kent Stater*, February 6, 1968.
[88] Robert Matson, interview with the author, January 9, 2019.

from the building. Police also fired tear gas into the crowd outside and continued to beat students. When the riot ended, 63 students and 13 police officers were injured.[89]

Two weeks after the Dow Riot, Dow Corporation recruiters came to Kent State, and KCEWV held a demonstration in protest. KCEWV members assembled in front of a dorm in the late morning, where they stayed for an hour before morning on to the Student Activities Center where the Dow Corporation held interviews. Committee president Ruth Gibson told the *Daily Kent Stater* that, "This demonstration is against the War in Vietnam, against the use of napalm and against Dow Chemical's making of it."[90] Howie Emmer, KCEWV member returned from the Student Activities Center office with a statement from the Dow Chemical Corporation, which explained that they supplied the Department of Defense with many products beyond napalm, which included aircraft parts and food. Since the United States was involved in the war in Vietnam, Dow Chemical needed to support the United States in their "national commitment of a democratic society," and would continue to napalm production as long as the United States military needed.[91]

[89] June Dieckmann, "76 Hurt in UW Rioting; Campus Strike Results," *Wisconsin State Journal*, October 19, 1967.
[90] Robert Page, "Dow, KCEWV Trade Statements," *Daily Kent Stater*, November 2, 1967.
[91] Page, "Dow, KCEWV Trade Statements."

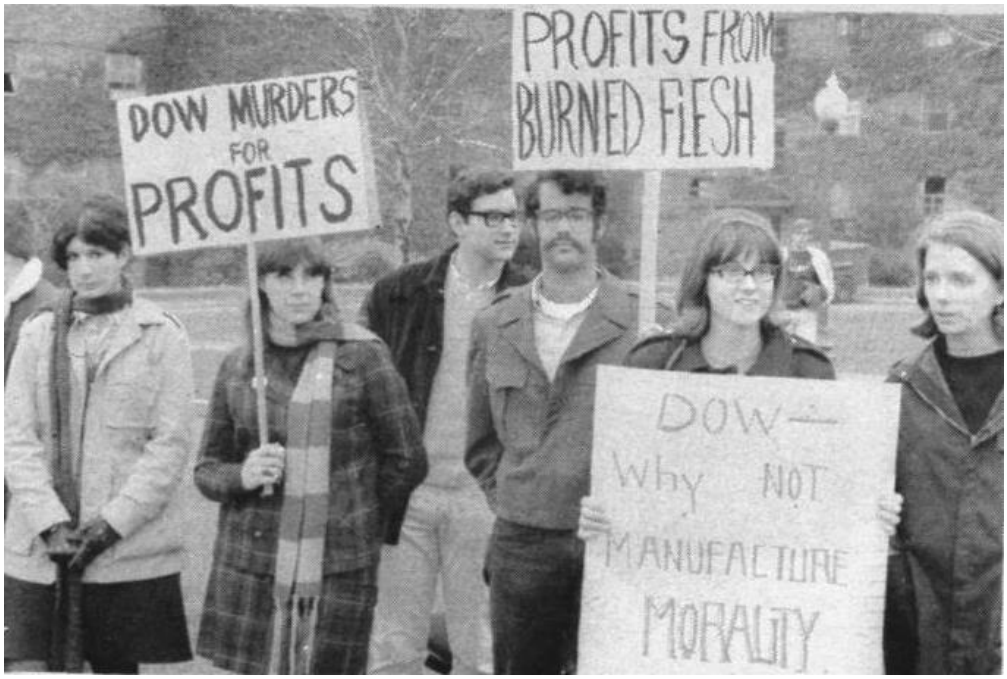

Figure 3: Students carry anti-Dow Corporation signs during a demonstration. *Daily Kent Stater*, November 2, 1967.

In the wake of the extreme violence of the Dow Riot, it was in poor judgment to allow the Dow Chemical Corporation to recruit on their campus. And yet, Kent State's administration invited them back to campus, scheduled for the next winter, in February 1968. KCEWV and SDS members George Hoffman and Ron Weisberger wrote for the *Daily Kent Stater* that members planned a demonstration for Thursday, February 22, 1968, against the Dow Chemical Company, which manufactured napalm.[92] They implored anyone not siding with the demonstrators to examine key points before condemning the protesters. Universities received millions of dollars in contracts with the Defense Department, and when anti-war protesters marched to bring awareness of their university's complicity in the Vietnam War, students ridiculed them. Hoffman and

[92] Ronald Weisberger and George Hoffman, "Dow Won't Debate," *Daily Kent Stater*, February 22, 1968.

Weinberger cited sit-ins and joint faculty-student demonstrations as the most effective way to end a university's relationship with the "Military-Industrial Complex."[93] They also explained why Dow's presence on campus was problematic: Dow Chemical did not come to Kent State to debate, which is a time-honored tradition of universities. Dow came to Kent State to use the campus as a means to an end, to recruit employees to manufacture Saran Wrap and Napalm, and profit.[94]

The protest of Dow Chemical happened as planned in February 1968, with forty Kent students protesting the company's presence on campus. Some students held memberships with the KCEWV, and some were from YSA. The demonstrators went inside the Administration Building and chanted "Hey, hey, LBJ. How many kids did you kill today?" KCEWV member Howard Emmer told the Stater that "I feel the right of Vietnamese men, women, and children to live is more important than Dow's right to produce napalm."[95] SDS opposed the university-sanctioned Military-Industrial Complex. The tripartite demonstration was important because it started a new era of more aggressive activism than in previous demonstrations. At the same time, militant black students unified to present their demands to the university.

Black students at Kent came together for equality, shedding the nonviolent mandate from Martin Luther King Jr., to form a militant activist group. During the winter quarter in early 1968, a group of seven students, including Donald Thigpen and brothers William and Lafayette Tolliver, created a black student organization after attending a presentation by Henry Austin of the Deacons for Peace and Justice. Austin's presentation

---

[93] Weisberger and Hoffman, "Dow Won't Debate."
[94] Weisberger and Hoffman, "Dow Won't Debate."
[95] "Demonstrators Protest Napalm," *Daily Kent Stater*, February 23, 1968.

outlined the goals of his organization, which were to protect African Americans who engaged in Civil Rights events in the south. The Kent students decided to name their organization Black United Students (BUS), which still exists and is active at Kent State. Their message was simple: "the only way to deal with the white man is with violence…militancy is the only way now," said Dwayne White, chairman of BUS, to *DKS*.[96] He went on to say that America lacked a conscience and white people would do anything to make a profit, even if it meant engaging in discriminatory business practices, so planned summertime riots would target white-owned businesses for that reason. Also, Dwayne White felt that Kent would not have violence because students at Kent were happy, out of slums and living in comfortable dorms.[97] White implied that since most of the black students at Kent were happy, there would be no violence at the university.

Shortly after that, Dwayne White and William Tolliver wrote a letter to the *Daily Kent Stater* editor in which they accused the *Stater* of taking White's quotes out of context. The quote was "violence is the only way to deal with the white man," and the students asserted the quote came from a statement about how blacks have tried and failed to communicate with whites.[98] By saying The *Daily Kent Stater* took the quotes out of context, Tolliver and White attempted to diminish their militant rhetoric. They did not help to make themselves seem less violent when they expressed how white America had a violent record dealing with situations and spoke a violent language (figuratively). If black America were to talk to white America, they must use violence to get through. The editor of the *DKS* assured readers that staff took no quotes out of context and any

---

[96] Saul Daniels, "No Violence Forecast Here," *Daily Kent Stater* April 9, 1968.
[97] Daniels, "No Violence."
[98] William S. Tolliver and Dwayne White, "Attacks Coverage," Letter to the Editor, April 23, 1968, *Daily Kent Stater*.

quotation errors were merely typographical. The main reason the students created BUS was to campaign for better opportunities for African Americans on campus, for students and professors alike.

The University, aware of the small number of African American faculty, worked to hire additional professors. By late 1967, Vice President and Provost John Kamerick sent a memo to multiple administration officials, including President White, briefly reminding them that since the University was about to begin appointing new staff, they should be cognizant of the fact that Kent employed so few minorities, particularly African Americans.[99] The following February, Kent State established the Equal Educational Opportunities Commission (EEOC), a committee formed of professors, administrative officials, and students, who reported to the President's office. The administration recognized "the rapid growth and development of Kent State University... and the socio-economic make-up of the student body…to foster and encourage the development of equal educational opportunities."[100] The commission aimed to review University policies concerning admissions, housing, financial aid, job placement, and on-campus employment to improve educational prospects for students in low-income families.[101] This memo shows the proactive administration took steps to improve diversity among professors at Kent. It is hard to say why they chose to be proactive when the University went out of their way to hire black professors, though Dr. Matson may have had something to do with it. He reflected on the EEOC in a telephone conversation

[99] Memo to Members, Academic Administrative Advisory Council from VP John Kamerick, November 1, 1967, Box 35, Folder 22, Robert I. White Papers.
[100] Draft of "Equal Educational Opportunities Commission," February 19, 1968, Box 35, Folder 22, Robert I. White Papers.
[101] Draft of "Equal Educational Opportunities Commission."

in 2019, and said he created the program.[102] Matson went on to say that Kent State needed to "nurture" black students' agenda, and through attending BUS meetings knew their concerns.[103]

The EEOC held meetings to brainstorm ways to improve the academic disparity between upper and middle-class students and those from poor economic households. In May 1968, they held the third conference to discuss changes to black history courses, an upcoming meeting with minority advocacy groups, the appointment of black professor Robert Pitts to Counselor of Minority Affairs, and an investigation into discriminatory housing. A commission member introduced allegations by several black students, accusing Mainline Manor, an off-campus apartment complex, of discriminating against them. Minutes from the meeting stated Dean of Students Robert Matson's responsibility was to investigate the students' claims and to report back to the EEOC. The EEOC also recommended the possibility of the University providing legal assistance for students who needed a defense of their civil or constitutional rights.[104]

Lawrence Litwack, Coordinator of Student Personnel and Counselor Education and EEOC Chairman, wrote a memo to President White with a list of six projects to help minority and economically disadvantaged students succeed at Kent. The first project was to match funding for Upward Bound, a federal program that helped low-income students and first-generation college students succeed in high school to prepare them for college. Matching funds would cost Kent State approximately $200,000 ($1,421,689 today). Dr.

---

[102] Dr. Robert Matson, telephone interview with the author, February 1, 2019.
[103] Dr. Robert Matson, telephone interview with the author, February 1, 2019.
[104] Minutes of Equal Educational Opportunities Commission, May 21, 1968, Box 35, Folder 22, Robert I. White Papers.

Litwack also suggested creating a study skills and developmental reading center that would focus on educationally underprivileged students, at the cost of $20,000 ($142,168 today). Free tutorial or remedial instruction for the educationally underprivileged, students receiving grants, and those on the work-study program would cost $25,000 ($177,710 today). Hiring a full-time counselor to advise and counsel "educationally handicapped (minority group)" students, and students referred by admissions and professors, would cost $16,000 ($113,735 today).[105] Expanding an existing program to help international students adjust to the American educational system cost the University $10,000 ($71,108 today) and creating a program to advise and remediate graduate students, former servicemen, and continuing education students would cost $12,000 ($85,301 today). The program was important because it illustrated that a University administration saw problems within its student body and greater community and made strides to correct them. These projects also came at a significant cost, totaling $303,000 ($2,153, 858 today). They were not altogether altruistic. Because the University made money through tuition and fees and valued high graduation rates, the University benefitted from students who succeeded and ultimately graduated versus those who struggled and dropped out. Dr. Litwack aimed to create programs that equalized the academic levels of all students, by improving grades of minority students, who tended to lag their white peers.

Later, BUS delivered a statement to the administration and demanded a written statement on the EEOC's proposal to appoint Dr. Pitts to the new position. BUS wanted

[105] Memo from Lawrence Litwack to Robert I. White, June 14, 1968, Box 35, Folder 22, Robert I. White Papers. I used the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics' inflation calculator to determine the current costs.

to make it clear to the administration that Dr. Pitts' appointment was important to the organization.[106] Dr. Litwack sent a memo to President White and requested that White encourage all deans, department chairs and directors of graduate schools to hire minority professors and staff members for the subsequent academic year. Concerned about the small number of minority faculty members employed by the University, the EEOC thought increased recruitment was beneficial for students and the University.[107] During the 1969 to 1970 school year, KSU employed 22 full-time faculty members, and by the next year those figures were slated to nearly triple to 58 faculty members.[108] Kent State had to contend with a very small pool of black faculty from which to hire. In 1970, a survey found that of the 2, 200 black people who held Ph.D.'s, only 980 of them went into education, and that spread equally, it was not enough to have one black professor with a Ph. D per university.[109]

Back in 1957, Kenneth Cooley and Donald Thomson had written in *Kent Quarterly* that Kent's fraternities and sororities routinely discriminated against blacks. Discrimination within these groups continued and the EEOC, determined to change that, demanded the organizations submit a non-discrimination report. In October 1968, the EEOC met to discuss how the Greek Life organizations were going to implement the non-discrimination report. Representatives of the fraternities and sororities said at the meeting that they tried to make the non-discrimination policy clear through speeches at

---

[106] "We the Black Students of Kent State University" statement, 1968. Box 33, Folder 42, Robert I. White Papers. The statement is undated with the exception of the year, but from the May 15, 1968 article in the *DKS*, "BUS Gets Hearing" I surmise the statement was issued in May 1968.
[107] Memo from Lawrence Litwack to Robert I. White, October 9, 1968, Box 35, Folder 22, Robert I. White Papers.
[108] Wilson, 61.
[109] Wilson, 60.

conferences and local events. Going forward, they planned to spread the word about non-discrimination policies through oaths and pledge class discussions. The committee did not see these plans as "aggressive" enough and commanded fraternities and sororities to publicize the non-discrimination policy outside of their groups.[110] One recommended outlet for publication was the *Daily Kent Stater*. The article ran on the ninth page and outlined state laws that banned discrimination and the steps the Panhellenic Council and Interfraternity Council would take to end discrimination within its organizations. One such example was inviting the Black United Students to lecture at a fraternity meeting.[111] Finally hoping to end racial discrimination in its organizations, the EEOC demanded equality from its students.

BUS and SDS Stage a Sit-In

Two officers from the Oakland, California Police Department visited Kent State University on November 13, 1968, to recruit trainees, and their presence set off a wave of student demonstrations that ended with several hundred black students walking off-campus. Two members of the Oakland Police Department came to Kent State on November 13, 1968, to recruit trainees.[112] BUS went to the Student Activities Center where the recruitment drive occurred and demanded that the Oakland Police leave the campus. BUS objected to the police department's presence because of systematic racism displayed by the department. Oakland Police Department gained notoriety in 1966 when Officer John Frey pulled over Black Panther Party founder Huey Newton, fresh out of

---

[110] Minutes of the Equal Educational Opportunities Commission, October 1, 1968, Box 35, Folder 22, Robert I. White Papers.
[111] "Greeks Act on Discrimination Problem," *The Daily Kent Stater* November 5, 1968.
[112] Statement, "Why We Are Confronting the Oakland Police," November 13, 1968. Box 46, Folder 40, Robert I. White Papers.

prison for assault, in a traffic stop. When Officer Frey realized who Newton was, he called for backup. Another officer arrived on the scene, a scuffle broke out, and a gun accidentally discharged, injuring all three men. Officer Frey died as a result of his injuries. At the trial, the surviving officer testified that Newton was under arrest before the shooting began, but a witness said Newton pulled out a gun and turned around to shoot. Newton and Frey wrestled for a gun before it fired, hitting the surviving officer. When the witness called for help, he saw Officer Frey fall to the ground, and Newton shot the officer in the back.[113] After Newton was subsequently convicted of voluntary manslaughter, a judge sentenced him to two to fifteen years in prison. This shooting and conviction angered BUS members because they saw it as another black man persecuted by the police and the justice system.

Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) released a statement dated November 13, 1968, outlining why they were going to protest the Oakland Police Department, and SDS demands of the University. The police department was on campus as "representatives of a powerful repressive institution;" BUS planned to confront them to voice anger at "unrestricted destructive power," because the United States allowed "black genocide under the slogan of law and order." The police force were tools of a repressive system and the Oakland Police Department was a key example of "militarized racism."[114] This outrage directed at the Oakland Police Department shows how protest at Kent continued over the decade, despite student turnover due to graduation. Students saw problems happening in the world around them and reacted accordingly. It happened with

[113] Wallace Turner, "Witness Says Newton Shot Policeman," *New York Times*, August 8, 1968.
[114] "Why We Are Confronting the Oakland Police," November 13, 1968. Box 46, Folder 40, Robert I. White Papers.

the Kent Woolworth pickets in 1960, and it happened again here. SDS demands were that KSU should not allow the police force to recruit on campus, the University should not spy on or infiltrate student organizations, and the University Police should disarm.[115]

On the morning of November 13, SDS leaders asked Dean of Students Robert Matson to come to the 1:15 p.m. rally to discuss their three charges, but he declined via letter, as the rally was an unregistered event. When the SDS spokesman came to pick up the letter from Dean Matson's office, staff advised the student that SDS could register the rally, which SDS ultimately did not do.

Figure 4: SDS members march toward the Student Activity Center on November 13. *Daily Kent Stater*, November 14, 1969.

[115] "Analysis—Student Sit-In and Demonstrations Placement Office—Oakland Police Department," November 13, 1968, Box 33, Folder 22, Robert I. White Papers. An analysis dated November 14, 1968 listed the rally start time as 1 p.m..

The University administration informed University police of the rally and put Kent City police on standby to prepare for the rally and potential for disruption. The State Highway Patrol was on standby until 8:00 p.m. and the Sheriff's Department was also on standby. Municipal courts remained open until 6:30 p.m. and university buses were available to transport arrestees until 9 a.m. the following morning. Lastly, the University administration notified the Ohio National Guard to be on standby, if needed. It *seemed* as though this was an administration that prepared for the rally and any ensuing disruptions.

After the rally, SDS members held a sit-in at the Placement Office. Campus Security Director Schwartzmiller recommended confronting the student protesters at the entrance to the Placement Office to avoid a student takeover of the building, to which Safety Director Williams agreed. When directors called Vice President Matson, he rejected the suggestion. The police department went ahead with plans to protect employees and non-protesting students in the Placement Office. During the rally, SDS and BUS asked Vice President Matson to speak to the group, but he declined.

When students came to the Placement Office for their scheduled job interviews, protesters barred them from entry, so students had to walk through the back entrance. As soon as protesters started blocking passage, Dean Matson warned them they were violating the Student Conduct Code and the University could expel them. Then the administration established security and communication centers inside the Placement Office to monitor the sit-in, and Dean Matson spoke to SDS at approximately 2:30 p.m. Shortly after that, BUS joined the sit-in, and 250 people including staff, students and newsmen filled the office. When Dean Matson ascertained the sit-in situation to be

severe, he notified President White, who was attending a board meeting at a local country club. At 5:10 p.m. Vice President Robert Matson notified students at the sit-in that they were now subject to discipline. It was not until 6:45 p.m. that President White instructed Dr. Matson to read the students the Riot Act (Administrative Procedure for Dealing with Sit-Ins and Similar Coercive Acts), and moments later the protesters voluntarily dispersed.[116] Meanwhile, a group of counter-demonstrators, 300 to 400 strong, gathered around the Placement Office to voice their disagreement with the sit-in protesters. More students joined the counter-protesters, and soon the group numbered 1000 students.[117] President White released a statement calling the sit-in "intolerable" and "unfortunate" because the University had open lines of communication that students could utilize to air their grievances before protests became necessary.[118]

On Friday, November 15 Dr. Matson met with students from BUS who presented five demands and told him that if the University did not meet their demands that they would withdraw from school. Matson was sympathetic to BUS and their agenda; he sometimes hosted BUS presidents at his home, and he said four decades later, that he "wanted to nurture the BUS. The agenda was one we needed."[119] Three BUS members reported receiving pressure to leave campus with the rest of the black students, even though they did not want to leave.[120] The primary BUS demand was amnesty for all sit-in

[116] "Analysis—Student Sit-In and Demonstrations Placement Office—Oakland Police Department," November 13, 1968, Box 33, Folder 22, Robert I. White Papers.
[117] "Analysis-Student Sit-In Placement Office-November 13, 1968," November 14, 1968, Box 46, Folder 40, Robert I. White Papers.
[118] Statement from Robert White, November 13, 1968, Box 33, Folder 42, Robert I. White Papers.

[119] Dr. Robert Matson, interview with the author, January 9, 2019.
[120] Handwritten note with the names of three women who felt pressured to leave campus, November 19, 1968, Box 33, Folder 42, Robert I. White Papers.

participants, which Dr. Matson admitted he would not grant.[121] He cited the preservation of law and order on campus, coupled with his warning of disciplinary action as reasons why he would not grant amnesty.[122] President White argued in a statement that amnesty would infringe upon due process. He also felt it was regrettable that black students threatened to leave campus if they did not receive amnesty since Kent State made strides in achieving racial equality. He reiterated that Dr. Matson planned to charge protesters with disorderly conduct, which carried no financial aid penalty and a maximum penalty of conduct probation.[123]

Kent State's policy on "sit-ins and similar coercive acts" was as follows: The Dean of Students or equal University officer would ask the person or people holding the sit-in to disperse to a conference room to discuss the students' complaints. If they did not leave, the University officer at the scene would inform the students that they were at risk of arrest and expulsion from the university. At this point, officials would tell remaining students they have fifteen minutes to leave before the police start making arrests. Those who leave were not subject to disciplinary action, and those who stayed were in danger of suspension.[124]

The problem with the University's policy was that it did not account for the possibility of a large and violent mob. This was shortsighted, since large scale, very violent demonstrations had happened on other college campuses. On October 18, 1967,

---

[121] "Analysis—Student Sit-In and Demonstrations Placement Office—Oakland Police Department," November 13, 1968, Box 33, Folder 22, Robert I. White Papers.
[122] Statement released by Jim Bruss Friday night to a limited few news media. Box 33, Folder 42, Robert I. White Papers.
[123] "Recent Events Involving B.U.S. and S.D.S.," Robert I. White, November 18, 1968, Box 35, Folder 68, Robert I. White Papers.
[124] Statement, "Policy on Sit-Ins and Similar Coercive Acts," 1969, Box 33, Folder 42, Robert I. White Papers.

students at the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus rioted against the presence of representatives from Dow Chemical, the manufacturer of Napalm. It started as a peaceful sit-in and escalated to include police officers in riot gear beating protesters.[125] At Madison in 1967, and at Kent in 1968, students chose both buildings for the same reasons: to oppose policies and impede interviews. Students chose the location of the sit-in at the University of Wisconsin to interfere with students interviewing for Dow Chemical, and students at Kent chose the Placement Office to interfere with Oakland Police interviews. There was no way to know if University officials wrote Kent's policy on sit-ins before or after the SDS/BUS incident because the statement is undated, except for the handwritten [1968] in the upper right corner. Based on its place in the archival file, it seems likely that administrators wrote the statement after the sit-in; the form was in the same file as post-sit-in administration statements.

SDS and BUS Briefly Join Forces

Kent SDS planned their next demonstrations for November 15, 1968, and advertised them on a flyer signed "Kent SDS." The two rallies, one at 10:00 a.m. and another at 10:30 a.m. were to oppose the Student Conduct Board. The student protesters planned to confront the Student Conduct Board because the board charged students involved in the sit-in two days prior. On the flyer, SDS wrote that they wanted to fight back because they felt the University singled out certain students for punishment, thereby dividing SDS from BUS members to "destroy the movement."[126]

---

[125] Colleen Leahy, Remembering the Dow Protest and Riot 50 Years Later, October 18, 2017, accessed December 6, 2017, https://www.wpr.org/remembering-dow-protest-and-riot-50-years-later.

[126] Kent SDS, "Amnesty," Box 33, Folder 42, Robert I. White Papers.

President White did want to divide the two organizations, but it was unclear how he accomplished that, or why. BUS and SDS did not have a partnership, except to come together for common interests, such as being antiwar. As Dr. Matson said in an interview, "you didn't have to be black to be against the war."[127] In a letter to a colonel in the Ohio State Highway Patrol, White said he appreciated the State Patrol and the local officers for being on stand-by during the sit-in days before. He reiterated that not pressing charges against the students was not amnesty but due process and that Kent's black students issued a statement vowing to work with University officials in regards to grievances. In the most revealing part of this letter, White wrote, "it just may be that we have now separated them from the S.D.S. group who, privately, I believe to be the ones with whom real battle will have to be had."[128] The passage implies that President White and his administration planned to separate BUS from SDS. Perhaps dividing the groups was his way to divide and conquer. White knew that if the administration banned SDS because it was subversive, students would revolt, so he opted for a surreptitious approach.

Responses to the rally and sit-in were swift and severe. The State Highway Patrol voiced their annoyance to Campus Security Director Schwartzmiller, and "told him not to call on them again until our backs are to the wall."[129] The Kent City police department "were thoroughly disgusted with our lack of action," the Sheriff's Office was thoroughly disgusted with us," and University police officers were also upset, as were Judge Kent

[127] Dr. Robert Matson, interview with the author, January 9, 2019.
[128] Robert I. White to Colonel Robert Chiaremonte, Letter, November 23, 1968, Box 35, Folder 68, Robert I. White Papers.
[129] "Analysis-Student Sit-In Placement Office-November 13, 1968," November 14, 1968, Box 46, Folder 40, Robert I. White Papers.

and the county prosecutor.[130] It was unclear why these agencies were so troubled with Kent's administration. The memo implied that they were annoyed by being called out for an event where they were not needed. Officials cited a lack of action as a reason, but there was no further explanation. The BUS/SDS sit-in was a big stress test for the administration, and they were not successful, based on reactions from law enforcement professionals.

Parents of students were quick to write to President White and let him know how they felt about how the University handled the sit-in. One parent of two sons at Kent State wrote that the sit-in situation was a "crisis" and wanted to lend his support to President White and appreciation for the "firm" stance White took against the protesters.[131] Another parent with a son enrolled at Kent wrote a letter to President White praising him for his statement and stance taken concerning "the outrageous conduct of the Black United Students and Students for a Democratic Society;" he went on to question the legitimacy of the two organizations as sanctioned groups, and appealed to White to reconsider their approved status.[132] A member of the KSU Dads' Association wrote to the organization's Secretary-Treasurer, arguing that that the group should support President White's actions in dealing with the students and that any student who did not follow University rules should withdraw from classes or face expulsion. The member voiced concerns that this sit-in would serve as a "spark which could kindle a full demonstration and disrupt classes and the routine of the school to where it would be

[130] "Analysis-Student Sit-In Placement Office-November 13, 1968," November 14, 1968, Box 46, Folder 40, Robert I. White Papers.
[131] Robert B. Rust to Robert I. White, letter, November 15, 1968, Box 46, Folder 40, Robert I. White Papers.
[132] J.E. Lough to Robert I. White, letter, November 15, 1968, Box 46, Folder 40, Robert I. White Papers.

unsafe nor would it be practical for parents to enroll their children in the state schools."[133] These letters are examples of the reactions to the sit-in, which speaks to the conservative political and cultural environment around Kent State.

Three days later, on November 18, 250 black students, many of them BUS members walked off-campus to protest not receiving amnesty. They marched off-campus and to a shopping center where they waited for rides to Akron. President White told the Stater that Dr. Matson planned to charge the sit-in protesters with disorderly conduct, which carried a maximum punishment of conduct probation and no loss of financial aid. Meanwhile, black parents showed up on campus while the University discussed which action to take towards BUS.[167]

While students waited for university action and hoped for amnesty, University attorneys examined the evidence regarding the BUS/SDS sit-in. They decided that the evidence was not adequate to get a conviction for disorderly conduct. Staff efforts at the time of the sit-in resulted in a confusing situation, which affected the evidence (photographs, statements, et cetera). As a result, Dr. Matson decided to drop charges against the students in question. In a statement, President White remarked that one of the lessons for the University to learn was delays ultimately hampered the legal case and that University security should wait to arrest students.[134] One of the important aspects of this walkout is that it created change within the administration. University officials formed a

[133] Joseph M. Falbo to Ronald S. Beer, November 14, 1968, Box 46, Folder 40, Robert I. White Papers.
[134] Statement about University counsel's findings regarding disorderly conduct charges, November 20, 1968, Box 33, Folder 42, Robert I. White Papers.

planning committee to discuss creating an Afro-American Studies department. The committee was a mixture of students, professors, and high-ranking officials.

Dissent was a tool many Kent State students utilized in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s. They expressed frustration in letters to the editor, and through columns in the *Stater* like William Tolliver and Dwayne White. Students did not always protest racial discrimination, especially as the 1960s wore on and the war escalated. Kent State students started to take a closer look at their university's role in the world, and in the Military-Industrial Complex, and did not like what they saw.

From 1954 to 1968, the Kent State administration struggled to balance external and internal influences. The University also had a number of failures and successes. University president George Bowman had great difficulty with charges of racism toward black students who tried to rent off-campus housing. His successor, Robert White, struggled to contain controversy triggered by an inaccurate article printed by the *Akron Beacon Journal* that White had acknowledged a socialist student group. The administration also struggled to handle large-scale demonstrations and a stress test came in mid-November 1968. Students for a Democratic Society and Black United Students held a joint sit-in to protest Oakland California's Police Department recruitment on campus. It was not until Vice President Matson read the Riot Act that students dispersed after five hours of protest.

Despite their struggles, the University administration did make improvements in several instances, such as when they hired additional black professors, and when they created the Equal Educational Opportunities Commission (EEOC) alongside smaller projects designed to boost educationally disadvantaged students. Robert Matson, the vice

president of student affairs received credit for creating the EEOC, and forged a relationship with BUS, which helped advance parts of their agenda.

CHAPTER THREE: SDS, ROTC AND A CAMPUS AT WAR: 1969-1970

By 1969, student unrest increased in both intensity and frequency all over the United States. The Black Student Union and Third World Liberation Front at San Francisco State College led a strike in late 1968 and demanded that the college admit more black students, hire twenty full-time professors, and establish the College of Ethnic Studies.[1] Kent State President Robert White sent the strike demands to his administration and noted that the strike leaders declared the strike demands as "non-negotiable."[2] The KSU administration was well aware of student protests that occurred across the country. Still, they chose not to examine their policies to prevent or control a student strike similar to the one at San Francisco State College. The strike demands at San Francisco State College bore many similarities to the BUS demands at Kent from November 1967. One of the things that helped defeat the black student walkout at Kent was the administration's decision to offer amnesty to the protesters. Also, the University took their demands seriously and formulated a plan to meet their requirements and created the Afro-American Studies Department.

In February 1969, the drama from the BUS walkout had not abated. President White was under a lot of pressure from students and people in the community to resolve student unrest. White received a letter from Carl Meade of Louisville, Ohio, who was critical of how White handled the black student walkout. Mr. Meade "thought we had a real man heading one college in Ohio. What happened?" before proceeding to give his

---

[1]Robert I. White to Members of the Cabinet, University Committee, and Academic Deans, January 23, 1969, Box 33 Folder 43, Robert I. White Papers, Kent State University Library and Special Collections.
[2] Robert I. White to Members of the Cabinet, University Committee, and Academic Deans, January 23, 1969.

opinion—that when students walk off campus, the University should not allow them back on campus, and that he "felt sorry for you (President White)."[3] Kent State President White was also under pressure from United States Senator Stephen Young who wrote to White and suggested ways to ease tension on campus.[4] The tension increased as the number of student-led rallies grew in number, particularly among Students for a Democratic Society.

This chapter spans 1969 to 1970 when students protested more often than in the years 1954 to 1968. This was also a time marked by continued administrative struggles, with mixed success while administrators tried to meet student demands. President White struggled against the tide of critical letters from citizens, even United States Senator Stephen Young, and had to balance that against demands and criticism from students. The University struggled to control the "Spring Offensive" in April 1969, when Kent SDS tried to break into the Administration Building to present demands and President White revoked their charter. Undeterred, the remnants of SDS held two more rallies, the last of which caused damage to the Music and Speech Building, and during which police officers made mass arrests. The University went on the offensive, citing the court case *Barker v Hardway* as justification. When SDS tried to present their demands, President White made little attempt to listen to SDS, and this was a failure of his leadership. If he had taken the time to listen to them, it may have tempered their dissent. Dr. Matson believed that Kent's SDS just wanted attention and publicity.[5] The University also failed in extending an invitation for Dow Chemical to hold recruitment sessions on campus in

[3] Carl W. Meade to Robert I. White, February 6, 1969, Box 35 Folder 68, Robert I. White Papers.
[4] Senator Stephen Young to Robert I. White, February 26, 1969, Box 35, Folder 68, Robert I. White Papers.
[5] Dr. Robert Matson, interview with the author, January 9, 2019.

1969, two years after the Dow Riot at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The Dow Riot began as a sit-in and escalated to a fracas between students and police who tried to remove them. It was a well-known violent protest so inviting Dow Chemical Company to Kent invited dissent. Fortunately, two days before Dow's arrival, Kent State canceled their recruitment drive.

Administration Works to Meet Student Demands

The Afro-American Studies Planning Committee met on February 21, 1969, to discuss the details of the new department. The department was a demand of the Black United Students in 1968. On the agenda committee members debated whether the new department would concentrate on Afro-American Studies, African Studies, or both. Administrators assessed which existing courses they could add to the new department. For example, African American history courses in the History Department, and the English Department's Sub-Saharan Studies courses were perfect additions to the Afro-American Studies Department. The University planned a doctoral program in ethno-musicology, and already offered both undergraduate and graduate classes in Sub-Saharan Art. The Political Science department featured courses about African politics and the politics of Black Power, and in Sociology, the Anthropology program offered courses on African Studies and race relations. From this meeting, administrators decided to make a list of the relevant courses already offered at Kent State, and created new classes where gaps existed.[6]

[6] "Afro-American Studies Planning Committee," February 21, 1969, Box 33, Folder 8, Robert I. White Papers.

Campus Police arrested white student Matthew "Rebel" Flanagan for distributing "indecent and immoral" literature on February 27, 1969.[7] Thomas Grace described the flyers in *Death and Dissent*, as depicting "a gang of police sexually violating Lady Liberty and included the provocative name of the SDS chapter in New York City, the Motherfuckers,"[8] Gordon Bigelow, whose office oversaw approval of student handouts, pamphlets and signs said his office did not sign off on Flanagan's handouts. He went on to tell *The Daily Kent Stater* that the SDS spokesman brought posters and handouts to his office and the secretary approved the first 20 or so handouts with a stamp, and the SDS spokesman helped the secretary stamp the last materials. Bigelow admitted that the materials may have had questionable content, but that only two words of the film's description were "objectionable."[9] One poster did get approval, though it had a blank space, which the students may have filled in with indecent content. There were gaps in the procedure, which allowed questionable material to gain approval. A certain amount of blame does lie with SDS, for potential alterations of the content of the literature after its approval.

This arrest ignited a firestorm of controversy: President White wrote to Vice Presidents Matson and Dunn, of Student Affairs and Business, respectively, on March 3, 1969, and requested a thorough investigation of Mr. Flanagan's arrest. Matson and Dunn replied in a memo that they had suggestions for changes in procedure to prevent future controversy. The Campus Security Office had to gain permission from the Vice President for Student Affairs, to arrest students, and if he was not available, the Assistant Vice

---

[7] "'Immoral' Leaflets Lead to Freshman's Arrest," *Daily Kent Stater*, February 28, 1969.
[8] Grace, 154.
[9] Grace, 154.

President.[10] Student Affairs was the administrative department responsible for the management of student disciplinary investigations, so it was understandable that the Vice President would grant arrest permissions.

Meanwhile, students in the Art program grew tired of inadequate course offerings and facilities and began making demands on the university. More than 1,200 art students and supporters signed petitions, delivered to Dr. Louis Harris, vice president, and provost, which listed several improvements with a spring quarter deadline. Students also demanded that the administration commit to a new art building and that art students and faculty have ultimate authority in its planning.[11] The faculty also threatened to refuse to sign their contracts for the 1969-70 school year if the University did not improve the conditions in West Hall. Among their complaints were inadequate heating and a general lack of maintenance.[12] In the early hours of March 10, 1969, someone set West Hall on fire. Damage to the building was extensive, but University officials hoped it would open in time for the spring quarter in April.

Vice President for Student Affairs Robert Matson outlined for students the ways they could air their grievances, which had the potential to go a long way towards quelling unrest. He explained in a memo to students and student leaders that the Student Government provided students a way to help draft University policies, the Student Affairs Council handled social grievances, which revoked the women's curfew, resolving a common complaint. The Student Rights Committee's members heard cases of student

[10] Vice Presidents Robert Matson and Richard Dunn to President Robert White, March 6, 1969, Box 35, Folder 68, Robert I. White Papers.
[11] Terry Oblander and M.J. Kukla, "1,200 Call for Art Changes," *Daily Kent Stater*, March 7, 1969.
[12] Oblander and Kukla, "1,200 Call for Art Changes."

rights violations, and in this committee, three students held voting rights. Dr. Matson went on to list six other committees or organizations in which students are involved. By reminding students they had avenues to air complaints, he hoped to prevent further campus disruptions. [13]

Once again, President White found himself caught between two groups: students who wanted to eliminate the ROTC program, and outside civilians and military personnel who called for its expansion. The Public Relations officer for the Summit County Young Republicans Club wrote to Ohio Governor Rhodes and sent a copy to President White on April 5, 1969, to ask for assistance in saving the ROTC program at Kent State. The officer noted that SDS kept pushing for the elimination of the ROTC program, despite the matriculation of thousands of officers. SDS felt that the ROTC program was part of the University's explicit support of the war in Vietnam, which SDS was against. The Public Relations officer asked Governor Rhodes to "encourage the university to protect this ROTC program and even expand it on this State-supported campus."[14]

The Spring Offensive

On April 8, 1969, the Kent SDS chapter launched their largest protest to date, which became known as the "Spring Offensive." Its members rallied in front of the Student Union before going to an administration building to present University administration with their demands: end the ROTC program and Liquid Crystals Institute (LCI), among others.[15] The reason SDS called for the elimination of these programs was

---

[13] Robert E. Matson, "President's Statement on Campus Disruptions," March 1969, Box 35, Folder 68, Robert I. White Papers.
[14] George P. Manos to Governor Rhodes, April 5, 1969, Box 33, Folder 10, Robert I. White Papers. KSU is located in Portage Co. Summit Co. borders Portage and encompasses the nearby city of Akron.
[15] "Here are 10 Ways to Gripe," *Daily Kent Stater*, April 8, 1969.

that they were "weapons produced for the ruling class wars of imperialism and racism."[16] They did not want their university to take part in a war they saw as morally wrong. In a hearing before the United States House Committee on Internal Security, tasked with investigating SDS activity at Kent, President White said SDS wanted the administration to dissolve the LCI because it held a grant from the Department of Defense. It was his view that this grant led students to make "presumptions which are not necessarily correct."[17]

Armed with their demands, SDS members marched to the Administration Building, which housed offices of upper University administrators, to present said demands and instead found the building entrances blocked. A scuffle broke out between forty SDS members and twenty University police officers as students tried to open the doors and the police tried to keep them closed.

[16] "Here are 10 Ways to Gripe."
[17] United States., Congress., House., *Investigation of Students for a Democratic Society ...: Hearings Before the Committee on Internal Security, House of Representatives, Ninety-first Congress, first session.* (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1969)., 498

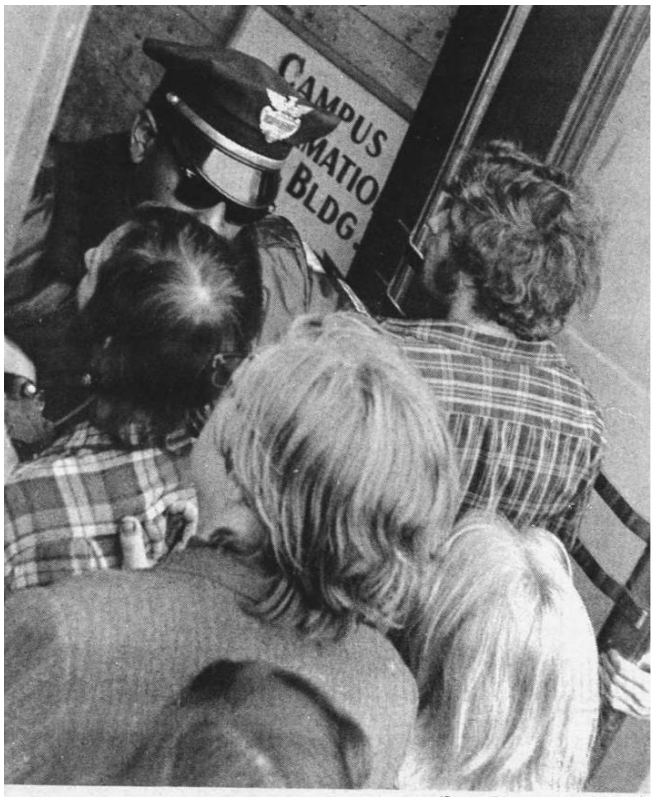

Figure 5: SDS members try in vain to enter the Administration Building, *Daily Kent Stater*, April 9, 1969. Photograph by Len Henzel.

Police officers succeeded in keeping the doors closed, and a Students for a Democratic Society spokesman turned to address the crowd to reiterate their demands. A SDS flyer explained that their issue with the LCI was that "liquid crystals are used in a heat-sensing device which was used to detect jungle hideouts of guerilla bands."[18] University police officers accused SDS members of assault and arrested five students. The University suspended seven students, and President White revoked the SDS charter

[18] Bill Armstrong, "SDS Bumps Heads with Campus Police," *Daily Kent Stater* April 9, 1969. Jungle hideouts may be in reference to Vietnam, or it could reference a rumor that liquid crystals were being used to locate Che Guevara in Bolivia (See the Investigation of Students for a Democratic Society Part 2 Kent State University, June 24 and 25, 1969, 498.)

after the altercation. Suspensions meant the students could not come on campus until the suspension ended.[19]

Defying the SDS ban, members gathered on campus the following day, April 9, at an SDS rally to protest the ban. Police officers showed up dressed in riot gear, including helmets and nightsticks, which was customary.[20] They arrested SDS members Howie Emmer, Jeff Powell, and Colin Neiburger and charged them with assault and battery. Six students appealed their suspensions, and the appeal hearings began on April 16 in closed sessions. Students not involved in the hearings thought that by being secretive about the details of the hearings; the University was trying to conceal the disciplinary process. Kent State's administration told the *Daily Kent Stater* that it was university policy to hold closed-door hearings for Student Conduct Code violations.[21] University rationale for closed-door hearings was to keep matters discussed in the hearing private, to protect a student's reputation, and that attorneys advised the administration that if they opened the hearings, the University was at risk of lawsuits.[22]

At 4 p.m. on April 16, SDS members once again held a rally in front of the Student Union, during which spokesmen called for an end to the Vietnam War and "imperialistic oppression by the United States."[23] When student protestors learned that the hearings were at the Music and Speech building, the protesters headed across campus,

---

[19] Mary Chastain and Saul Daniels, "Arrest 5, Suspend 7, End SDS Charter," *Daily Kent Stater*, April 9, 1969.
[20] "Why City Police?," *Daily Kent Stater*, April 10, 1969.
[21] "SDS to Rally; University Sets Hearing," *Daily Kent Stater*, April 16, 1969.
[22] United States., Congress., House., *Investigation of Students for a Democratic Society ...: Hearings Before the Committee on Internal Security, House of Representatives, Ninety-first Congress, first session.* (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1969)., 499.

[23] "Charge 7 with 'Riot'," *Daily Kent Stater*, April 17, 1969.

chanting "these buildings are ours" along the way.[24] SDS protesters and counter-protesters engaged in fistfights with one another along the way to the Music and Speech Building. When the students reached the building, they found it blocked by more counter-protesters, and the doors locked. SDS members found another entrance to the building and approximately 70 students entered the building by breaking a glass door.

Figure 6: SDS protestors as they confront an anti-demonstration group at the Music and Speech Building, *Daily Kent Stater,* April 17, 1969. Photograph by Skip Rigby.

The *Stater* reported that some of the protesters "pried the hinges from the chained doors and broke into the third-floor hall where the hearing for one suspended SDS member, Colin Neiburger, was being held."[25] Thirty-three Ohio state highway patrol officers dressed in riot gear followed the protesters to the third floor where they sealed off the stairways, trapping approximately 175 students. In the end, police officers arrested sixty people.

Due to the April 8 rally and disturbance, the administration wrote new guidelines for dealing with disruptions. President White released *Guidelines for Faculty in Event of*

[24] "Charge 7 with 'Riot'."
[25] "Charge 7 with 'Riot'."

Class Disruptions on April 16, using two cases as guidance. The first case considered was a situation in which registered students disrupt the class. The professor should ask the disruptive student to stop, then tell the student he/she was subject to suspension and expulsion and further disciplinary action by the University. If the disruption continued, the professor was supposed to dismiss class, and notify the Provost's office of the interruption, and meet with the department chairman. If the disruptor was not a student registered for the course, the professor should ask the disruptor to leave, and attempt to identify the intruder. If he/she did not leave the classroom, the professor would inform him/her of violations of the Student Code and its punishment. Then, if the disruptor refused, the professor should end class and notify the Vice President and Provost office and immediately meet with the department chairman. In either case, unless violence erupted, the professor should not call Campus Police or the Kent Police Department without consulting with the Vice President and Provost or Vice President of Student Affairs. It was unclear if President White also drafted an outside the classroom disruption policy because no such policy exists in his papers. Without this policy, it left the University vulnerable since most of the large-scale disruptions occurred outside classrooms.

Two days after President White released the guidelines, Vice President for Student Affairs Robert Matson issued a special bulletin, defending the University's handling of the SDS Spring Offensive. He reiterated that the University did not violate students' due process, and the decision to immediately suspend and remove violent and disruptive students followed regulations from the state legislature and Kent State's Board of Trustees. Vice President Matson explained that the University announced the

suspensions twice, on March 16 via the President's statement, and in the *Daily Kent Stater* on March 28. The administration received information that SDS would continue their disruptions and violence on campus unless the school met SDS demands (ending the ROTC and Liquid Crystals Institute programs), so the administration made the suspension decisions to prevent further disruptions. Vice President Matson also explained in the statement that the university notified the suspended students (and SDS as an organization) that they could request hearings to appeal the suspension. The Student-Faculty Judicial Board presided over student hearings, and the Student High Court presided over hearings for organizations. [26]

A few days later, on April 21, Black United Students with its 600 members, released a statement condemning the University's handling of the SDS Spring Offensive. The report said that it was the "SECOND crisis within four months" and that Kent State University showed "overzealous attempts at repression."[27] BUS did not believe that the administration acted within legal boundaries when they suspended disruptive SDS members, and the suspensions set a precedent, making all organizations subject to the same "authoritative rulings."[28] They hoped the University would stop suppressing organizations that held "opposing intellectual thought."[29]

The University reacted by suspending those involved and police arrested some students. The University also suspended the SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) charter, which in turn inflamed students who rallied again and more student arrests.

---

[26] Office of Vice-President for Student Affairs, "Special Bulletin," April 18, 1969, Box 35, Folder 69, Robert I. White Papers.
[27] "A Statement from Black United Students," April 21, 1969, Box 33, Folder 43, Robert I. White Papers.
[28] "A Statement from Black Students."
[29] "A Statement from Black Students."

Hearings for the suspended students went on as planned, though in secret, and students gathered before breaking into the building and interrupting a hearing. In reaction, police officers locked students in the building.

SDS repeatedly demanded that Kent State end its ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corps) program, and in doing so some of its members felt so strongly about this that they were willing to get arrested by University police. Despite this demand, the University made plans to improve and expand the ROTC program. In a letter to Colonel Robert Jackson of the Military Science department, Louis Harris, Vice President, and Provost reiterated the ROTC program's value to Kent State University as a "symbol for other students who share similar ideas and a sense of obligation." He went on to say that ROTC's "role on campus is recognized and most important during these times of extensive political and philosophical disagreement."[30] The ROTC program produced officers for the United States Army, important during peacetime, vitally important during the Vietnam War. Dr. Harris recognized that the facilities for ROTC were not ideal and wanted to continue contact with Col. Jackson. Colonel Jackson wrote to President White on June 4, 1969, thanking him for his involvement in awarding ROTC cadets during the Honors Day Program. The awards, given to the cadets for exceptional leadership or academics, served as an incentive, and President White's appearance at the awards ceremony "added even greater import."[31]President White responded that "the program could not have meant more to you, your staff, or the cadets than it did to me personally. I trust that this is clear. The efforts of all have been ever so important and, shall I say,

[30] Louis Harris to Robert Jackson, letter, May 2, 1969, Box 33, Folder 27, Robert I. White Papers.
[31] Robert J. Jackson to Robert I. White, letter, June 4, 1969, Box 33, Folder 27, Robert I. White Papers.

effective."[32] Even though President White tried to be coy in his reply, it was clear that the ROTC program was valuable to him.

On October 15, 1969, Americans gathered across the country to peacefully protest the United States' involvement in the Vietnam War. Students at Kent State planned a rally and used the *Daily Kent Stater* to advertise and as a medium for discussion. The moratorium began with a midnight mass at the Newman Center, the university's parish. The next event was a 9 a.m. invocation by a local reverend, followed by faculty speakers. Vice President and Provost Louis Harris also spoke, sharing his anti-war beliefs; he opposed the war "because of its effects on American society."[33] That afternoon Ohio politician John J. Gilligan served as guest speaker at the rally held in Memorial Gym. Speaking to a crowd of more than 5,000 people, he called for an end to the war and "an end to violence, tyranny, and slaughter in Vietnam today."[34] Later, over 3,500 students marched around campus and through Kent, singing "Give peace a chance."[35] The *DKS* interviewed several Kent residents who were impressed by the students' good behavior. Several factors ensured a peaceful demonstration: the advertisement of the moratorium as a day of peace, and Kent State's administration also made concessions for its students.[36] Students thought by having their absences excused, the administration cared about them.

---

[32] Robert I. White to Robert J. Jackson, letter, June 9, 1969, Box 33, Folder 27, Robert I. White Papers.
[33] "Protest: Midnight -Morning," *Daily Kent Stater*, October 16, 1969.
[34] Terry Oblander, "Peace Hike Stays Just That—Peaceful," October 16, 1969, *Daily Kent Stater*.
[35] Oblander, "Peace Hike."
[36] The concession was offering excused absences for anyone who attended the moratorium.

KSU Protests Bring Additional Change

Students planned another rally for October 29, 1969, to protest Dow Chemical Company recruiters on campus. Dow Chemical made napalm, and students saw the University as complicit in the war machine.[37] Two days before the rally, the University announced that Dow would not come to Kent State due to a lack of recruitment appointments, but students remained skeptical. Ultimately recruiters from Dow did not come to Kent, and one student told the DKS that Dow's absence meant Kent students did not want to support the war.[38] Just a couple of weeks before the Dow protest, former KSU students Jeff Powell, Mark Lencl and Matthew "Rebel" Flanagan attended the "Days of Rage" demonstrations in Chicago. Organized by the Weatherman, a faction of SDS and held over four days, the "Days of Rage" demonstrations were supposed to protest the war in Vietnam but turned into a riot. The courts indicted Powell on three counts of aggravated battery and resisting arrest, Mark Lencl charged with resisting arrest, mob action and two counts of aggravated battery. Matthew Flanagan charged with aggravated battery, mob action, and resisting arrest.[39] These three students were also involved in the Kent State SDS Spring Offensive earlier in the year.

Not all protests at Kent State were political. In December 1969, twenty women from Engleman Hall dormitory protested the quality of food served in the Terrace Dining Hall. They marched from the dorm to the dining hall while chanting, "We want meat, we want meat…Alka-seltzer, Alka-seltzer."[40]

---

[37] Statement on Dow Chemical Company, October 27, 1969, Box 46, Folder 27, Robert I. White Papers.
[38] Judy Greiner and Debie Shryock, "Rallies: Hit Dow; Discuss Demands," October 30, 1969, *Daily Kent Stater*.
[39] "Jury Indicts Three Ex-KSU'ers," *Daily Kent Stater*, December 3, 1969.
[40] "Girls Protest Terrace Food, Service." *Daily Kent Stater*, December 4, 1969.

Figure 7: KSU students protest food quality in a dining hall. *Daily Kent Stater*, December 3, 1969.

The women brought signs to the dining hall: "Buy the cafeteria a Betty Crocker cookbook for Christmas," "What you don't eat today you get tomorrow," "We are not human garbage disposals." They were met with applause from dining students. *The Stater* organized food protest organizer Gail Herzberg who said the food at Terrace Dining Hall was substandard in recent weeks. Staff served uncooked food, leftovers, and on one night, two pork dishes which was unacceptable for the Jewish students.[41] Speaking on behalf of the other protesting women, Herzberg said they wanted "better meat, less potatoes, and fewer rolls" and promised to continue protesting until the quality of the food improved.[42] Terrace Hall food service manager Mrs. Floree Clayton was unaware of the protest and had no comment. While their protest was apolitical and small, it was

[41] "Girls Protest Terrace Food, Service," *Daily Kent Stater*, December 4, 1969.
[42] "Girls Protest."

essential because it highlighted the spirit of dissent on campus. Like those who protested the war in Vietnam or racial discrimination, these women found a cause that was meaningful to them and acted. Students held another dining hall protest in late January 1970, this time boycotting food in Prentice Hall. The *Daily Kent Stater* reported that a grievance committee and the dining hall staff began negotiations to improve the food served.[43]

A *Daily Kent Stater* article in the winter quarter 1970 revealed a dip in enrollment for that quarter. Winter quarter enrollment was 19,042 students compared to the fall quarter's enrollment of 21,198 students. The winter quarter, which began in early January, saw 5,049 freshmen enrolled, 3,795 sophomores, 3,719 juniors, and 3,824 seniors. The graduate student population increased: 516 Ph.D. students versus 425 the previous year, and master's degree students increased from 1,652 to 1,720.[44]

An antiwar march held by the Student Mobilization Committee (SMC) on April 14, 1970, brought out 250 students as they walked through Kent for an hour, briefly stopping in front of the Army recruiting station. The *Akron Beacon Journal* reported that the turnout was much lower than the march the previous October when 3,000 students attended, and the SMC believed the rainy weather reduced attendance.[45] Also in April, activist Jerry Rubin spoke at Kent State, as a fundraiser for the SDS members who were still in jail because of the previous year's Spring Offensive.

---

[43] Photo caption, *Daily Kent Stater*, January 23, 1970.
[44] "KSU enrollment drops 2,156 winter quarter," *Daily Kent Stater*, January 8, 1970.
[45] "KSU's Anti-War Front Dampened," *Akron Beacon Journal*, April 15, 1969.

Sophomore history major Bill Arthrell held a publicity stunt outside the student center in which he advertised he would napalm a dog. Students spread the news of the event by word of mouth, and several hundred people came out to stop him, including campus and county police, the Portage County prosecutor, and an employee of the Portage County Animal League. Arthrell spoke to the gathering crowd about napalm and its uses before proclaiming that he would napalm a dog. "You have the audacity to tell us to stop napalming a dog, but you don't stop the government from using it on people," he said to the crowd.[46] Ronald Kane, the prosecutor, told the *Stater* that the demonstration changed his viewpoint towards the Kent State students and that he was impressed by how well-mannered they acted, and he was satisfied by the turnout to stop the napalming.[47]

President White replied to Dr. Robert Tschantz, a physician in Canton, Ohio on April 20, 1970, confirming his attendance at a luncheon on May 28. (This will be important after May 4.) [48] He also replied to a letter sent by Kent State student Karen Gigliotti, offering his regrets that he had to reject her invitation to a Regional Conference at Kent from May 1 to May 3. President White said he would be out of town on University business that weekend.[49]

Nixon Ignites Kent State

On April 20, 1970, President Richard Nixon spoke live on television and radio updating Americans on Vietnam War peace initiatives. The previous June he said withdrawing United States' troops from Vietnam would depend on three conditions:

---

[46] Harold Greenberg, "Crowd rallies to stop napalming of dog," *Daily Kent Stater*, April 23, 1970.
[47] Greenberg, "Crowd rallies."
[48] Robert I. White to Dr. Robert Tschantz, letter, April 20, 1970, Box 13, Folder 5, Robert I. White Papers.
[49] Robert I. White to Miss Karen Gigliotti, letter, April 22, 1970, Box 6, Folder 2. Robert I. White Papers.

improvement in the training of South Vietnamese forces, Paris negotiations, and a decrease in North Vietnamese activity.[50] He went on to explain that the United States military made great strides in training and equipping South Vietnamese forces.[51] However, the North Vietnamese government still demanded the United States unconditionally withdraw all troops, and depose South Vietnamese President Nguyễn Văn Thiệu. To accept these terms, Nixon said, would mean "humiliation and defeat for the United States. This we cannot and will not accept."[52] President Nixon went on to discuss the third condition: activity level of North Vietnamese forces. Since December 1969, he noted Hanoi had deployed thousands of soldiers to neutral Laos, violating the Geneva Accords of 1969. Soldiers and supplies continued to flood the Ho Chi Minh trail, a supply chain that stretched from Hanoi down through Laos, into South Vietnam and part of Cambodia. Even with the increase in activity through the trail, North Vietnamese troops declined in number. A successful pilot program to reduce the number of American troops in Vietnam provided President Nixon the opportunity to announce a drawdown of 150,000 American troops from Vietnam. He hoped to complete the drawdown by spring 1971. President Nixon warned Ho Chi Minh, leader of the North Vietnamese government that if their increased activity risked the lives of American forces in Vietnam, he would "take strong and effective measures to deal with that situation."[53]

Ten days later, on April 30 President Nixon returned to the public airwaves announcing that the United States military had begun an invasion into Cambodia to repel

---

[50] Richard Nixon: "Address to the Nation on Progress Toward Peace in Vietnam.," April 20, 1970, accessed January 25, 1018. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2476.
[51] Richard Nixon, "Address to the Nation."
[52] Richard Nixon, "Address to the Nation."
[53] Richard Nixon, "Address to the Nation."

North Vietnamese forces. This announcement set off an en masse protest by students at Kent State University. Nixon opened this nationwide address by reiterating his earlier warning to the North Vietnamese, that the United States would have to take strong and effective measures. In the face of this warning, the North Vietnamese continued moving equipment and soldiers along the Ho Chi Minh Trail, especially in Cambodia. After speaking with advisors, President Nixon decided to launch an aggressive offensive against North Vietnamese troops to protect the United States military forces already stationed in Vietnam. As he spoke, South Vietnamese and United States forces prepared to assault the Communist military headquarters in Cambodia. Nixon assured the public that this attack was not an invasion of Cambodia, that South Vietnamese-United States joint military operation would only attack North Vietnamese forces.

The record of riots at Ohio State University in April and May 1970 lends support to the argument that the Kent State shootings were not just about the war in Vietnam. Students and Ohio National Guardsmen clashed for several days; student dissent stemmed from arrests during an earlier demonstration. Wednesday, April 28, 1970, two thousand students took part in the strike, and Governor Rhodes deployed the National Guard after students fought with police officers.[54] Ohio State students rioted for a second day, despite the presence of the Ohio National Guard on campus. Students chanted, "Pigs off campus," and "Pigs go home," which were the same chants students at Kent State would say on May 4, 1970.[55] The riots at Ohio State happened before President Nixon

[54] Bonnie Schwartz, "Student Rioters Battle Police," *The Lantern*, April 30, 1970.
[55] "Guardsmen, students clash at OSU," *Daily Kent Stater*, May 1, 1970.

gave his Cambodian address and those students had no idea the United States invaded Cambodia.

Kent students watched the president's address on television and their outrage was swift. Students Kent Hoffman recounted to Thomas Grace that he was angry at Nixon's decision: "We had just had enough. After all the anti-war speeches, all the days spent at literature tables, all the demonstrations and now the war was getting bigger."[56] Student Jeff Powell, fresh out of jail, was also watching the address, recalling "we could hear someone shouting at the TV next door."[57] Spray painted graffiti cropped up overnight across Kent and graduate students belonging to the club World Historians Opposed to Racism and Exploitation (WHORE) quickly disseminated flyers for a noon rally planned for the next day on the Commons.[58]

The next afternoon, on May 1, 300 students assembled on the Commons with WHORE to bury a copy of the United States Constitution, in symbolic protest because "Nixon violated our constitutional rights by invading a sovereign nation without a declaration of war by Congress… President Nixon has murdered the Constitution and made a mockery of his claims to represent law and order."[59] WHORE planned to hold another meeting on Monday, May 4. That evening, on an ordinary Friday night, people gathered on Water Street in downtown Kent to enjoy the nightlife when a riot erupted. Approximately 500 people, students, and non-students gathered downtown at midnight,

---

[56] Grace, 198.
[57] Grace, 199.
[58] Grace, 199.
[59] "Other KSU Groups: Flyers and Postings," *Kent State University Libraries. Special Collections and Archives*, accessed August 3, 2018, https://omeka.library.kent.edu/special-collections/items/show/3160.

yelling "Down with Nixon," smashing windows, lighting fires, and blocking traffic.[60] By 3 a.m. the rioters dispersed, partially due to tear gas usage by Kent and Portage County police officers. At the end of the night, police arrested fourteen students, seven of whom were Kent State students.[61]

Meanwhile, other college campuses erupted in violence. Rutgers, Cornell, Michigan State, San Jose State College, and Purdue all had protests, including firebombings.[62] At the University of Maryland at College Park, 300 National Guard troops deployed to the campus after 1,500 students destroyed the Air Force ROTC armory building, later that day, 200 students threw rocks at police officers and students at Union College in Schenectady, New York burned an effigy of President Nixon.[63] These protests were the same day President Nixon referred to college radicals as "bums, you know, blowing up the campus."[64]

Saturday, May 2 started quietly for Kent, both in the city and on campus. Uniformed ROTC cadets met at the ROTC building on campus to await transport to the rifle range, which sparked a rumor across campus that the Ohio National Guard was occupying the Kent State campus.[65] In reality, only one guardsman was on campus, liaison Lieutenant Charles Barnette. When the cadets returned to campus, students "heckled them" and threatened to set the ROTC building on fire.[66] Later in the morning

---

[60] Sanford Levenson and Jeff Sallot, "'Down With Nixon,' Scream 500 Rioting Kent Students," *Akron-Beacon Journal*, May 2, 1970.
[61] "7 Students and 7 Others Arrested," *Akron-Beacon Journal*, May 2, 1970.
[62] Associated Press, "Nixon Decision Fires Campus Protests," *Akron-Beacon Journal*, May 2, 1970.
[63] Associated Press, "Campuses Agitated by Nixon," *Akron-Beacon Journal*, May 3, 1970
[64] Juan de Onis, "Nixon Puts 'Bums' Label On Some College Radicals," *The New York Times*, May 2, 1970.
[65] United States. *President's Commission on Campus Unrest. The Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest.* [Washington] 1970, 244.
[66] *Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest*, 244.

students helped clean up the damage done by the previous night's riot, and rumors persisted of radical anti-war activity planned in Kent. Shop owners received threats by young people to post antiwar signs in their stores or face further vandalism or arson.

Kent Mayor LeRoy Satrom, aware of the threats, requested the assistance of 75 officers from the Portage County Sheriff's Department to support the Kent police force.[67] The mayor then imposed a dawn-to-dusk curfew, and the University restricted students to the campus.[68] He also called the Ohio governor in the early evening, and requested the Ohio National Guard, but did not tell Kent State's administration. Kent State's Director of Safety and Public Services attended five separate meetings with city and University officials May 2 to preserve order on campus and in the city. An informal group of faculty marshals, which had been formed the previous year by Vice President Matson after criticism of the University's handling of the Music and Speech building sit-in, assembled after rumors circulated of a planned rally that Saturday night.[69] There was no guidance on what role the marshals would take, but they decided amongst themselves to act as a go-between for the University and the students and hold discussions with students attending the rally.

On May 2, 1970, National Guard liaison Lieutenant Barnette reminded the mayor that 5 p.m. was the deadline for requesting the National Guard since it took a while for the soldiers to gear up and deploy. Mayor Satrom procrastinated calling the ONG because he hoped to receive help from the sheriff's deputies, but at the 5 p.m. meeting, he learned

---

[67] *Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest*, 244.
[68] "Kent Under 'State of Emergency'," *Akron-Beacon Journal*, May 3, 1970.
[69] *Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest*, 245-246.

that the deputies were unavailable to assist the Kent police.[70] Campus Safety Director Williams and the University administration preferred to use the Highway Patrol because of their handling of the Music and Speech Building sit-in, but their jurisdiction was limited to the highways and areas owned by the state, so if students rioted on Water Street again, the Highway Patrol would not be of assistance. Kent Police Chief Roy Thompson received intelligence from a reliable campus informant that students made plans to damage the ROTC building, Post Office and Army recruiting office. With rumors of destruction and rallies, plus the unavailability of the sheriff's deputies and inability to use either the Highway Patrol or Kent State police force (they were on campus), Mayor Satrom knew he needed help, so with Lt. Barnette, he called Governor Rhodes' office and requested the Ohio National Guard.

At 7:30 p.m. a crowd formed on campus by the Victory Bell, and they marched around campus chanting antiwar slogans. The crowd grew to be 1,000 students, and 45 minutes later they gathered in front of the ROTC building where they began throwing rocks at the building. They broke windows, then threw railroad flares into the building, which caught a curtain on fire.[71] A man dipped a cloth into the gas tank of a nearby motorcycle and lit the cloth, then set the ROTC building on fire. Aware of the disturbance on campus, Mayor Satrom called General Sylvester Del Corso of the National Guard, to renew his request for troops. By 8:45 p.m. the ROTC building began to burn, and fifteen minutes later the Kent Fire Department appeared on the scene. Firefighters had no police protection from the mob of students, who started slashing

[70] *Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest*, 246.
[71] *Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest*, 248.

firehoses and throwing rocks at the firemen. Kent State police officers arrived on the scene just as the live ammunition started exploding in the ROTC building. Their headquarters were only 200 yards from the ROTC building. Kent State police officers were on campus, away from their headquarters, doing "training" exercises at the time of the ROTC fire.[72]

Ohio National Guard Generals Sylvester Del Corso and Robert Canterbury arrived with guardsmen at 9:30 p.m., and after a briefing at City Hall, Del Corso sent guardsmen to protect another group of firefighters trying to extinguish the ROTC blaze. The generals did not ask for permission from the university administration to deploy guardsmen to campus because it was state property. So, guardsmen, campus police, sheriff's deputies and highway patrol gathered at the ROTC building to protect the second group of firemen who eventually extinguished the fire. President White was at his sister in law's house in Iowa Saturday, May 2, and was in frequent telephone communication with his assistants in Kent. White requested the Kent State aircraft to return him to Ohio, and he left Iowa early Sunday, May 3.

Sunday dawned relatively quiet, and like the night before, nighttime brought out more demonstrators. The Akron Beacon Journal reported two KSU students went to the hospital with puncture wounds, listed by the hospital as bayonet wounds.[73] A National Guard spokesman denied the allegation. Two guardsmen had injuries that required hospital attention, and another received treatment for a head wound at the scene. At 10 in the morning, Governor Rhodes arrived in Kent for a news conference, in which he

[72] Robert Matson, interview with the author, January 9, 2019.
[73] "More Than 100 Arrested In 3 Days' KSU Disorders," *Akron Beacon Journal*, May 4, 1970.

likened the demonstrators to brown shirts and Communists and said in the news conference that he would work toward ironing out the details of an injunction, similar to a state of emergency. Unfortunately, he did not elaborate, so University officials had to determine that on their own. After speaking with a guardsman, the Administration got the impression that the state of emergency prohibited all gatherings or rallies, so they made 12,000 leaflets which explained curfew hours, the National Guard control of the campus, and announced the cancellation of all outdoor demonstrations.[74] Embroiled in a highly competitive US Senate primary, Governor Rhodes was aware of the impending election in two days. Many Kent students saw Governor Rhodes taking advantage of their anger toward Nixon for political gain: if Rhodes showed voters that he was tough on campus unrest, he would win the primary.

That evening, a crowd gathered at the Victory Bell around 8 p.m. and grew large, worrying campus police and the Ohio Highway Patrol contingent. A Highway Patrol official suggested the National Guard change the existing 1 a.m. curfew to 9 p.m. At nearly 9 p.m., a large contingent of students gathered, and sat in the intersection of a street near the Prentice Gate.[75] They had six demands: abolish the ROTC, remove the National Guard from campus by Monday evening, cancel the curfew, pardon anyone arrested Saturday, May 2, lower tuition, and grant any demand by BUS (Black United Students).[76] A police officer went to the Administration Building to pass along a message from the students that they wanted to speak with President White. Robert Matson and

---

[74] *Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest*, 256.
[75] Ottavio M. Casale and Louis Paskoff, eds., *The Kent Affair: Documents and Interpretations*. (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1971), 144.
[76] *Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest*, 257.

Ronald Roskens, who was Vice President for Administration, told the officer that President White would not speak to them because the ONG was in charge of the campus.[77] A student falsely promised the crowd that President White would speak to them, and by 11 p.m. the demonstrators learned that President White was not coming. The nonviolent crowd became agitated by this news and reading of the Riot Act.[78] They ultimately dispersed, but not before two students received bayonet injuries.[79]

Tin Soldiers and Nixon's Coming

Early Monday morning, bomb threats closed the Education Building and caused the cancellation of some classes. Students spread through word of mouth details for a planned rally for noon on the Commons to protest the presence of the National Guard on campus.[80] National Guard General Canterbury called a 10 a.m. meeting, in which White, Matson, Satrom and Shimp (legal officer for the Ohio National Guard) attended and discussed the governor's ban on rallies. The Young Socialist Alliance president, Mike Alewitz, called another student and suggested an emergency meeting to discuss the cancellation of the planned noon rally. They opted to go ahead with the rally, so at 11 a.m. students began appearing on the Commons.[81] Students thought President White would meet with them at noon to discuss their issues, namely the presence of the Guard on campus. When he did not show, it angered them further. Combat veteran and student

[77] Casale and Paskoff, 144.
[78] Casale and Paskoff, 144.
[79] Casale and Paskoff, 144.
[80] *Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest*, 260.
[81] Kenneth Heineman, *Campus Wars: The Peace Movement at American State Universities in the Vietnam Era* (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 248.

William Heasley thought by speaking with students there was hope for a peaceful resolution.[82]

At lunchtime, Kent administrators were at the Brown Derby Kent discussing whether or not to close the school despite the governor's orders.[83] They were not sure how to get all the students off the campus in the event of campus closure; they considered using the campus buses to shuttle students. The administrators were also discussing what would happen to the university if they closed the campus.[84] Vice President Matson recalled that while at lunch they received a phone call about the shooting and heard the ambulances.[85]

There were two main reasons students had for attending the rally: they came to protest the National Guard and were curious or had free time. Later, students who self-identified as conservative said they participated in the rally to protest the National Guard on their campus.[86] The vast majority of black students did not attend the noon rally, because the previous weekend, the president of Black United Students issued the warning "keep your black asses out of sight or you'll get shot" to its members.[87] BUS had "an instant network of people who fanned out. They told people not to even go to classes if they needed to go to that part of the campus."[88]

---

[82] Heineman, 97.
[83] Robert Matson, interview with the author, January 9, 2019.
[84] Robert Matson, interview with the author, January 9, 2019.
[85] Robert Matson, interview with the author, January 9, 2019.
[86] *Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest*, 261
[87] Robert Matson, interview with the author, January 9, 2019.
[88] Robert Matson, telephone interview with the author, February 1, 2019.

General Canterbury reached the Commons around 11:30, and later told the Scranton Commission that he did not think the crowd, numbering about 500, was threatening.[89] He then ordered the crowd to disperse, and Lt. Col. Fassinger directed 100 guardsmen to assemble around the former ROTC building "locked and loaded weapons."[90] A clip contained .30 caliber ball ammunition and each clip held eight bullets in the M-1 rifle so that after loading a bullet into the chamber and releasing the safety mechanism the rifle would fire instantly upon pulling the trigger. While on duty, guardsmen locked and loaded their rifles, which students did not know. A KSU policeman gave another order to disperse, and then another, to which the students responded with cursing and chanting "Pigs off campus," and "one, two, three, four, we don't want your fucking war." Students also threw rocks at the police and guardsmen.[91]

Just before noon on Monday, May 4, 96 guardsmen and seven officers lined up on the Commons, opposite students. These guardsmen slept an average of three hours the night before, having been on duty nearly all night guarding the former ROTC building, and various points around campus.[92] By now, 2000 students gathered on the Commons, and Canterbury ordered two volleys of tear gas, which made the students scatter but not disperse, and some students threw the canisters back at the guardsmen.

---

[89] *Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest*, 263.
[90] *Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest*, 263.
[91] *Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest*, 263.
[92] *Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest*, 259.

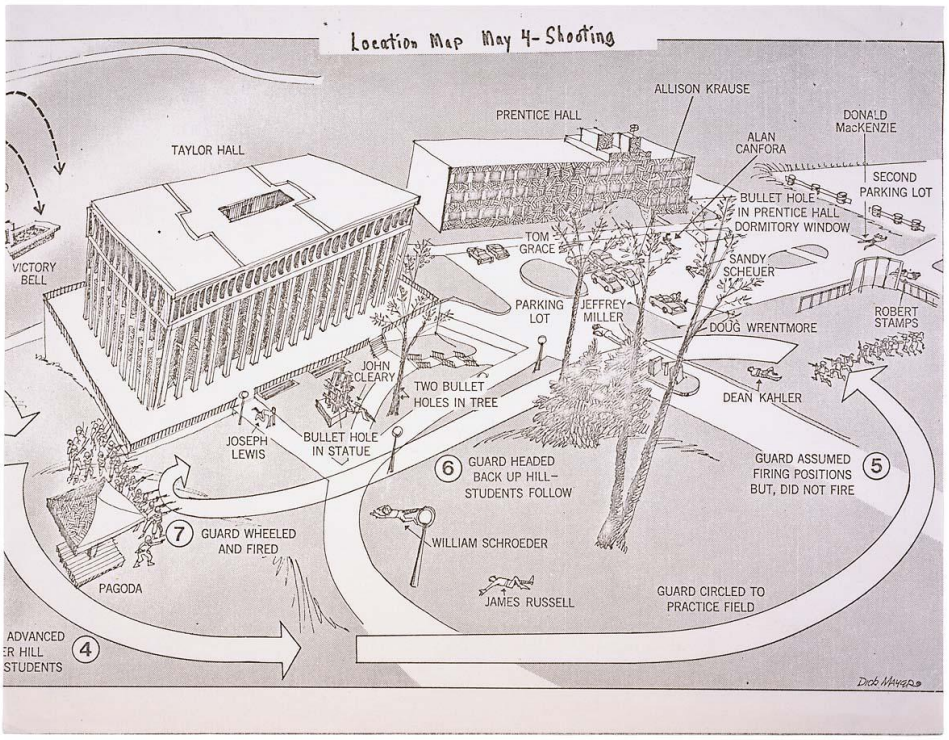

Figure 8: Map of Site of Shootings at Kent State University

Guardsmen followed the crowd up the hill to the top of Blanket Hill (number four on the diagram), and students threw more rocks at the guardsmen while shouting "Pigs off campus" and called them "green pigs" and "fascist bastards."[93] Guardsmen started to get frustrated by the students' refusal of numerous orders to disperse, while students were angry that the National Guard was infringing on their right to assemble. Then the guardsmen marched to the football field (number five on the diagram), and stood, aiming their weapons at the students in the Prentice Hall parking lot. General Canterbury felt that the crowd had dispersed, so he ordered the guardsmen back up to Blanket Hill (number six on the diagram). Nearing the Pagoda next to Taylor Hall, twenty-eight guardsmen turned around and fired their rifles into the students gathered in the Prentice Hall parking

[93] *Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest*, 266.

lot (number seven on the diagram). They fired sixty-one shots in thirteen seconds, killing students William Schroeder, Jeffrey Miller, Allison Krause, and Sandy Scheuer, and injured nine others. Professor Glenn Frank urged the students who remained, to leave the Commons, shouting, "They're going to shoot us again. We're going to be slaughtered."[94] Many believe his pleading was what prevented more violence since for some students the shootings strengthened their resolve. That afternoon, county prosecutor Ron Kane successfully petitioned a judge to close the university.[95]

In the days and weeks following the shootings, Kent State University came to a standstill. Administrators held a few meetings to determine how to finish the semester.[96] Faculty scrambled to hold classes any way they could so students would not lose credits, and Dr. Matson taught his graduate class in his rec room.[97] On May 7, 1970, President White sent condolence letters to the parents of the injured students.[98] Two days later, upper administrators at KSU met to determine how the University should operate while closed.[99] Over the next several days, administrators focused on notifications, such as letters to students and parents about the closure and end of quarter classes, and bulletins to faculty about paychecks, upcoming holidays and overtime. It was not until mid-June that activity increased on campus with the announcement of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest and Chairman Scranton began coordinating with President White.

---

[94] Heineman, 249.
[95] Grace, 233.
[96] Robert Matson, interview with the author, July 31, 2019.
[97] Robert Matson, interview with the author, July 31, 2019.
[98] Robert White to Mr. and Mrs. J.R. Kahler, Box 6, Folder 4, Robert I. White Papers.
[99] "Coordination of Operating Plans: Minutes," *Kent State University Libraries. Special Collections and Archives*, accessed August 9, 2018, https://omeka.library.kent.edu/special-collections/items/show/6143.

EPILOGUE:

PROTECTING THE MEMORY OF MAY 4, 1970

Kent State is not just Kent State.

Kent State is a metaphor…

It represents the war machine crushing the peace movement.

It represents idealism and youth rising up against cynicism and conservatism.

It represents the First Amendment and its expungement…

It is a sentinel among other sentinels: Chicago, May Day, People's Park, the murder of two more students at Southern University in New Orleans and Kevin Moran and James Rector in Reagan's California…

It reflects the status quo, the establishment's need for domination by employing the most draconian tactics to secure that domination…

Their intrepid spirits stared down M16s, B-52s, cluster bombs and white phosphorus, all while Lt. William Calley killed their children and Gov. Jim Rhodes killed ours…

On our side of that ocean and of that battle, only one side had guns.

The other side had their mortality.

Kent State will always return in May.

But in this dreaming world there will also be this: youth in their springtime, the eternity of their hope.[1]

Bill Arthrell, Kent State University Class of 1973

[1] Bill Arthrell, "What Kent State Represents," *Kent Stater*, May 3, 2017. Edited for length.

At the heart of this epilogue is the memory of the Kent State shootings: how the thought of four dead students served as an impetus for college students nationwide to strike and protest. In the years since the shootings, KSU worked in various ways to commemorate the event and honor the memories of the students, which included a memorial and museum. Recently, people and organizations have used black humor at Kent State University's expense. These instances have come with great criticism and swift statements from the University. Finally, Dr. Robert Matson expressed in interviews a lot of regret and grief at the memory of the shootings. He felt regret at not having closed the school sooner, and reflected that if they had done so, four students would still be alive.

Kent State University as Participant and Catalyst

Kent State has two places in the broad history of campus unrest. First, its student activists merit a rightful place alongside activists from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the University of California at Berkeley. Second, KSU was also a catalyst for activism after May 4. The deaths of Sandra Scheuer, William Schroeder, Allison Krause, and Jeffrey Miller at Kent State angered college students around the country. After May 4, 1970, college students across the country rose up at once as if to say, "enough is enough."

After May 4, 1970, emotions ran high at universities across the United States. Protests and demonstrations broke out in solidarity with Kent State and to mourn the shooting victims. At Iowa State University, police arrested students in large numbers for

the first time, on May 7, 1970.[2] At the University of Missouri, some faculty canceled classes so students would be able to attend memorials for Kent State University.[3] On May 12, students, faculty and the administration mutually decided on a plan for students who had missed class for the memorial. The agreement turned messy when the board of curators rejected the agreement, and demanded that faculty and students who missed class be disciplined, and grades and degrees withheld.[4] The chair of the sociology department refused to comply with the university's request to hand over the names of faculty who had defied the board's order, so the University suspended him. They also fired another professor, which led to University censure by the American Academy of University Professors for 11 years.[5]

Beginning the evening of May 4, 1970, students at Southern Illinois University went through "Seven Days in May." There were several rallies in front of the library that 2,000 to 3,000 people attended.[6] Then, students held a sit-in at the Air Force ROTC building until they were removed by the police.[7] The sheriff called the National Guard and 650 guardsmen arrived on May 6; over the course of the next several days that number swelled to 1,200.[8]

Several historians have explored universities that had massive protests in the wake of the Kent State shootings. Dr. Christopher Broadhurst wrote "There Can Be No Business as Usual: The University of North Carolina and the Student Strike of May

---

[2] Robbie Lieberman, *Prairie Power: Voices of 1960s Midwestern Student Protest* (Columbia: University of Missouri, 2004), 120.
[3] Lieberman, 105.
[4] Lieberman, 105.
[5] Lieberman, 105.
[6] Lieberman, 126.
[7] Lieberman, 126.
[8] Lieberman, 126.

1970," in which he argued that local and national student protests in May 1970 were the conclusion of a decade of activism.[9] Students at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill learned of the Kent State shootings on the afternoon of May 4 and identified with the students at Kent State. The SDS chapter called for a student strike the next day. Student Body president Tommy Bello later recounted that students felt angry but did not know what to do with their anger. Bello wrote that "betrayal fueled the escalation at America's colleges and universities as appalled students turned indignation into action."[10] Betrayal was the heart of the May 4, 1970 rally at Kent State University.

Previously politically inactive students at the University of Kentucky had peaceful demonstrations in the wake of the Kent State shootings. Mitchell K. Hall argued that students had tense interactions with state police and National Guardsmen, despite the peaceful protests.[11] Similar to the University of North Carolina students, University of Kentucky students "felt a certain kinship" with Kent State students.[12] Students also scheduled a "mock funeral march" for the slain Kent State four.

Dark Humor and the Exploitation of Memory

In 2017, Dan Adamini, the secretary of the Marquette County, Michigan Republican Party made two social media posts in response to campus unrest at the University of California-Berkeley. He said that another campus shooting was the only way to stop student dissent.

---

[9] Christopher Broadhurst, "There Can Be No Business as Usual: The University of North Carolina and the Student Strike of May 1970," *Southern Cultures* 21, no. 2 (Summer 2015):85.
[10] Broadhurst, 85.
[11] Mitchell K. Hall, "'A Crack in Time': The Response of Students at the University of Kentucky to the Tragedy at Kent State, May 4, 1970," *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 83, no. 1 (Winter 1985): 37.
[12] Hall, 42.

[13]

Figure 9: Facebook post from Dan Adamini

Adamini spoke to the *Detroit Free Press* and clarified his remarks, saying that there was too much violence, reminiscent of campus unrest in the 1960s, and he wanted the violence to end before students died again.[14] Kent State University learned of Adamini's tweets and released a statement that his Tweet was in "poor taste and trivializes a loss of life that still pains the Kent State community today."[15] They also invited him to visit the May 4 Visitors Center to understand other viewpoints of the shootings.

Clothing retailer Urban Outfitters sold a one-of-a-kind vintage Kent State University sweatshirt in 2014. Buzzfeed News picked up on it after screenshots went viral on Twitter, forcing Urban Outfitters to issue an apology after becoming inundated with disparaging Tweets: "It was never our intention to allude to the tragic events that

[13] Gerstein.
[14] Niraj Warikoo, "GOP leader apologizes for tweeting: 'Time for another Kent State,'" *Detroit Free Press*, February 5, 2017.
[15] Niraj Warikoo, "GOP leader apologizes for tweeting: 'Time for another Kent State.'"

took place at Kent State in 1970 and we are extremely saddened that this item was perceived as such."[16]

Figure 10: Urban Outfitters Kent State University sweatshirt

They also asserted that the discoloration was due to the original dye and that no one altered the sweatshirt. The official Kent State University school colors are navy blue and gold, so their explanation is weak at best. Just as with Dan Adamini's Tweet, Kent State University issued a statement condemning the sweatshirt: "…We take great offense to a company using our pain for their publicity and profit. This item is beyond poor taste and trivializes a loss of life that still hurts the Kent State community today."[17] They also invited Urban Outfitters leadership to visit the May 4 Visitors Center. Kent State

[16] Urban Outfitters, (@UrbanOutfitters), "Urban Outfitters sincerely apologizes for any offense our Vintage Kent State Sweatshirt may have caused. It (cont)," Twitter, September 15, 2014, accessed April 3, 2018, https://twitter.com/urbanoutfitters/status/511515053791907840?lang=en.
[17] University Communications and Marketing, "Kent State Statement Regarding Urban Outfitters' Sweatshirt," Kent State University, September 15, 2014, accessed April 3, 2018, https://www.kent.edu/news/kent-state-statement-regarding-urban-outfitters'-sweatshirt.

University carefully protects the events of May 4, 1970, and its legacy, by quickly denouncing statements in poor taste in regards to May 4.

The Delta Kappa Epsilon fraternity at Louisiana State University hung the banner, "Getting Massacred Is Nothing New to Kent St." before a football game versus Kent State in September 2013.

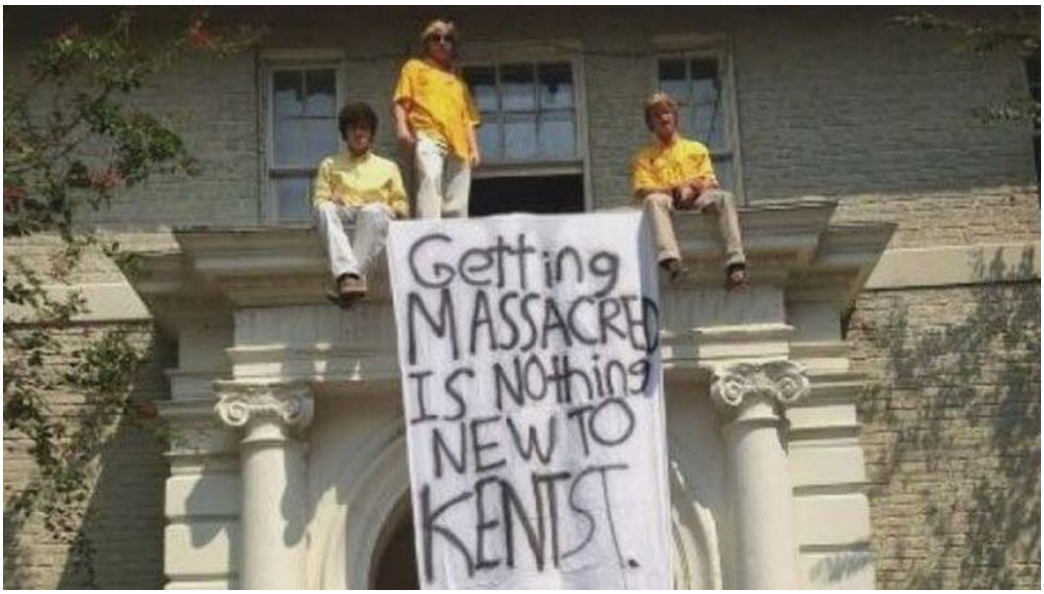

Figure 11: A sign outside the Delta Kappa Epsilon fraternity house at Louisiana State University.

The photograph quickly became popular across social media, and Kent State spokesman Eric Mansfield promptly issued the following statement:

> We take offense to the actions of a few people last night who created an inappropriate sign and distracted from the athletic contest on the field. Our new May 4 Visitor Center, which opened less than a year ago, is another way in which Kent State is inviting the country to gain perspective on what happened 43 years ago and apply its meaning to the future. We would invite those who created

> the sign to visit our campus to visit the May 4 Visitor Center and learn more about the event which forever changed Kent State and America.[18]

The fraternity later apologized to Kent State University, both in writing and via a new banner.

Starting in 2000, Kent State University began publicizing the 30th anniversary of the shootings. The administration decided to turn May 4 into a positive event, looking forward instead of backward.[19] At the same time, the University installed concrete pillars with lights and name plaques, to honor and permanently block off the four spaces in the Prentice Hall parking lot where Jeffrey Miller, Sandra Scheuer, William Schroeder, and Allison Krause died. Shifting the focus of the annual commemoration to place May 4, 1970, within the context of progress, and making the shootings a teachable movement is the mission of the May 4 Visitor's Center.

---

[18] Graham Ulkins, "LSU fraternity apologizes for offensive banner," WAFB, September 16, 2013, accessed April 3, 2018, http://www.wafb.com/story/23438019/lsu-fraternity-apologizes-for-offensive-banner/

[1919] John Fitzgerald O'Hara, "Kent State/May 4 and Post War Memory," American Quarterly 58, no. 2 (June 2006):304.

Keeping Their Memories Alive

Opened in October 2014, the May 4 Visitors Center is a museum that contextualizes the 1960s, explains what happened the weekend of May 4 and tells the story of its victims.

Figure 12: Panorama view of the May 4 Visitor's Center[20]

The Kent State Board of Trustees established the Kent State University May 4th Memorial Committee, tasked with learning what May 4, 1970, means to Kent State, and proposing a permanent memorial. The committee determined that the memorial should have several characteristics: a physical memorial to May 4 that is reflective, references the deaths of the four students and should be located northwest of Taylor Hall, near the protest site, on top of a small wooded hill. A selection jury comprised of artists and architects formed to determine the winning memorial design. The commission received 698 design submissions, 488 of those from individuals and 210 from teams.[21] Bruno Ast,

[20] *Galley,* May 4 Visitor's Center, Kent State University, https://www.kent.edu/may4visitorscenter, accessed March 13, 2018.
[21] James E. Dalton, ed. *Kent State May 4 Memorial Design Competition* (Kent: Kent State University, 1988), 12.

an architect from Chicago, won first prize. The final memorial design overlooks the commons, on which students gathered May 4, 1970.

The memorial provides a place for reflection and is constructed from granite, and surrounded by daffodils, one for each American life lost in Vietnam. The short walls symbolize shelter and conflict, while the words "Inquire, Learn, Reflect" are inscribed on the granite entryway to the plaza.[22]

Figure 13: The view from the May 4 Memorial, looking toward the right.[23]

To the right are four polished granite disks fixed in the ground, leading from the plaza. Since the discs are polished, they reflect our image, much like the Vietnam Veteran Memorial Wall in Washington D.C. From there, four pylons serve as a physical

[22] "May 4 Memorial (Kent State University)," Kent State University Libraries,, accessed November 02, 2018, https://www.library.kent.edu/special-collections-and-archives/may-4-memorial-kent-state-university.
[23] Photograph taken by the author.

reminder of each student killed on May 4. There is a long bench for visitors to sit and reflect.

In addition to the May 4 memorial, the four places in the Prentice Hall parking lot where Sandra, Allison, William, and Jeffrey were shot, are permanently blocked off. Each space also has a triangular granite marker inscribed with the student's name.

Figure 14: Space where Sandra Scheuer was shot by the Ohio National Guard and lay dying.[24]

Every year beginning on May 3, the May 4 Task Force holds a candlelight vigil and walk starting at 11 p.m. Candle bearers stand by each of the four places in the parking lot, and keep vigil throughout the night, until noon May 4. Then the Task Force begins its commemoration events, with a guest speaker. In 2018 Kent State also held an

[24] Photograph taken by the author.

event celebrating the May 4 site's addition as a National Historic Landmark, and that evening, journalist Dan Rather delivered a speech.

The University and the May 4 Task Force fiercely protects the memory of May 4, 1970, and for a good reason. Four students died, and it is important to remember and reflect on how the United States got to the point that a military organization gunned down four college kids, some of them just going to class. At the same time, Kent State is doing a disservice to the students who came before, those who spoke out against the war in Vietnam, or racial discrimination. Those students deserve to be remembered for cultivating such a rich history of dissent when doing so meant risking expulsion. Their efforts created lasting social and academic change within Kent State University.

The Drunk Professor and Survivor's Guilt

When I interviewed Dr. Matson, he told me a curious story of a drunk Kent State professor. It happened Saturday, May 2, 1970, in the evening after the National Guard came to Kent and set up roadblocks. The guardsmen were there to ensure no one came into the city and violated the 8 p.m. curfew. A man approached the roadblock in his car and began yelling at the guardsmen at the roadblock to let him pass, but the guardsmen would not allow it.[25] The man in the car inched towards a guardsman and bumped him with the car.[26] He turned out to be a drunk professor, and the guardsman could have easily shot him for disobeying orders, but he did not. Dr. Matson reflected on the story

[25] Howard B. Means, *67 Shots Kent State and the End of American Innocence* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 2016), 38.
[26] Dr. Robert Matson, interview with the author, January 9, 2019.

and said that if the guardsmen had shot the drunk professor, the campus would have closed, and the four students would not have been killed.[27]

Conclusion

I asked Dr. Matson what he thought of Dan Adamini's social media posts, and he said that Adamini is "fanning the flames with that kind of picture in mind. It makes him a danger to our well-being. That it can be used like that after 50 years paints a stark picture."[28] It is remarkable that even though the shootings happened so long ago, as soon as someone referenced it in a joke, there was a lot of outrage. This speaks to the extreme nature of the shootings, and the indelible mark it left on America. Matson reflected on "the killings" as he called them, saying that if it had not happened at Kent State, it would have happened somewhere else. "The heat was rising without a political release."[29] He reflected on how he could have better contained dissent, and he said he "tried too long to hold on. Students interrupted classes and SDS was a real problem. I tried to use the on-campus court for misbehaving. Keeping students out of the [Portage County] courts."[30] Dr. Matson took on a fatherly role for rule-breakers, opting to have the student conduct board handle their cases to keep them from facing the Portage County judicial system. He also said that Kent State President Robert White "wasn't good at handling problems."[31] Matson clarified that "when they run into a crisis some people just act. He just wanted

[27] Dr. Robert Matson, interview with the author, January 9, 2019.
[28] Dr. Robert Matson, telephone interview with author, February 1, 2019.
[29] Dr. Robert Matson, interview with the author, January 9, 2019.
[30] Dr. Robert Matson, interview with the author, January 9, 2019.
[31] Dr. Robert Matson, interview with the author, January 9, 2019.

space…time to think, collect data."[32] This style of conflict management was not always conducive to handling the fast-paced demands of college students.

An effective modern university administrator will need a leadership style that can handle the ever-changing environment of the university. Thanks to social media, we are more connected than ever before. Twitter hashtags, for example, give people a slogan to phrase to rally around; in a short time, the hashtag becomes the identity of the movement. Imagine the photos and videos students would have posted using #KentStatepolicestate or #KSUonfire if Twitter existed in 1970.

Unfortunately, history books overlook Kent State's rich history of protest in favor of the focus on the May 4 shootings. It is time to place Kent State and its activists in their rightful place as participants in the 1950s and 1960s campus unrest. Since there is so much emphasis on the Kent State shootings, it is also time to correct the historical record and clarify that the May 4, 1970 rally and subsequent shootings were not only about the Vietnam War. Furthermore, students were acting out their anger towards authority figures who had broken promises. President Nixon campaigned on a promise to end the war in Vietnam, yet he appeared on television expanding its reach into Cambodia. They were also angry at the National Guard for occupying their campus and suppressing their constitutional right to freedom of speech and assembly.[33]

---

[32] Dr. Robert Matson, interview with the author, February 1, 2019.

[33] Thomas Grace's conclusion differs in that he tracks the hours, days, weeks and months following the May 4, 1970, shootings, and illustrates its wide-ranging effects. He begins with the National Guard writing their reports hours after the shooting, and the closure of the university the next day, to the U.S. senate primary election, nationwide university strikes and mobilization of the military, as well labor's role in Vietnam War dissent.

The 1960s were an era of protest, a time when students were steadfast in their determination to do what they felt was right. One of the most important implications of failing to acknowledge the long history of dissent at Kent State University is that is a mistake to see singular events as spontaneous or formed in a vacuum. The May 4, 1970 rally did not come from nowhere; it is the result of years of disillusionment, and anger. We recognize the Free Speech Movement and all of the rallies at Berkeley, so why is it that we cannot do the same with Kent State? At Kent State, their activism formed a pyramid of protest: on each side are *in loco parentis*, racial discrimination, the First Amendment, and anti-war beliefs. At the base was a desire for people to be treated equally.

Students at Kent State University have a long, rich history of dissent that has largely been ignored by media and historians. Contrary to the predominant narrative, the May 4, 1970 protest was not only about the Vietnam War. As historians, we need to be willing to take risks and challenge predominant narratives.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Newspapers
Akron-Beacon Journal, 1961-1970

Daily Kent Stater, 1950-1970, 2017

Haggerty, Taylor. "Forty Years Ago, a Mob of Students Stormed the Bank of America Building." *The Daily Nexus*. February 25, 2010. Accessed July 1, 2018. http://dailynexus.com/2010-02-25/forty-years-ago-a-mob-of-students-stormed-the-bank-of-america-building/.

de Onis, Juan. "Nixon Puts 'Bums' Label On Some College Radicals," *The New York Times*, May 2, 1970.

Schwartz, Bonnie. "Student Rioters Battle Police," *The Lantern*, April 30, 1970.

Turner, Wallace. "Witness Says Newton Shot Policeman," *New York Times*, August 8, 1968.

Warikoo, Niraj. "GOP Leader Apologizes for Tweeting: 'Time for Another Kent State'." *Detroit Free Press*. February 06, 2017. Accessed February 10, 2018. https://www.freep.com/story/news/politics/2017/02/05/gop-leader-apologizes-tweeting time-another-kent-state/97525120/.

Kent State University Library and Special Collections
George Bowman Papers

Robert I. White Papers

Government Documents
"Chapter 49—Military Selective Service," Subsection (h). Pub. L. 90-40 §1 (6) http://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?path=/prelim@title50/chapter49&edition=pRelim.

"Map of the Site of the Shootings at Kent State University." National Archives and Records Administration. Accessed August 07, 2018. https://catalog.archives.gov/id/596837.

United States. *Investigation of Students for a Democratic Society ...: Hearings Before the Committee on Internal Security, House of Representatives, Ninety- first Congress, first session.* (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1969).

United States. *President's Commission on Campus Unrest. The Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest. [Washington]: [For sale by the Supt. of Docs., U.S. Govt. Print. Off.], 1970*.

Secondary Sources

Books

Casale, Ottavio M., and Louis Paskoff, eds. *The Kent Affair: Documents and Interpretations*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1971.

Grace, Thomas. *Kent State: Death and Dissent in the Long Sixties*. Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2016.

Hayden, Thomas. "The Port Huron Statement." in *How Democratic is America: Responses to the New Left Challenge*, ed. Robert A. Goldwyn. Chicago: Rand McNally and Company 1969.

Heineman, *Kenneth*. *Campus Wars: The Peace Movement at American State Universities in the Vietnam Era*. New York: New York University Press, 1992.

Hewitt, Christopher. *Political Violence and Terrorism in Modern America: A Chronology*. Westport: Praeger Security International, 2005.

Levin, Matthew. *Cold War University: Madison and the New Left in the Sixties*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013.

Lieberman, Robbie. *Prairie Power: Voices of 1960s Midwestern Student Protest.* Columbia: University of Missouri, 2004.

Moore, Leonard N. *Carl B. Stokes and the Rise of Black Political Power.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003.

Shriver, Phillip R. *The Years of Youth: Kent State University, 1910-1960*. Kent: Kent State University Press 1960.

Simpson, Craig S. and Gregory S. Wilson. *Above the Shots: An Oral History of the Kent State Shootings.* Kent: Kent State University Press, 2016.

Wilson, Milton E. *Involvement/2 Years Later: A Report on Programming in the Area of Black Student Concerns at Kent State University, 1968-1970*. Kent, OH: Kent State Univ., Human Relations Center, Student Affairs Division, 1970.

Articles

Broadhurst, Christopher. "There Can Be No Business as Usual: The University of North Carolina and the Student Strike of May 1970." *Southern Cultures* 21, no. 2 (Summer 2015): 84-101.

Cooley, Kenneth and Donald Thomson. “Blindness We May Forgive,” *The Kent Quarterly* 1, no. 2 (Winter 1957): 6-10
.

Hall, Mitchell K. “’A Crack in Time’: The Response of Students at the University of Kentucky to the Tragedy at Kent State, May 4, 1970.” *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 83, no. 1 (Winter 1985): 36-63
.

Hughes-Watkins, Lae’l. “Between Two Worlds: A Look at the Impact of the Black Campus Movement on the Antiwar Era of 1968-1970 at Kent State University.” *Ohio History* 124, no. 1 (Spring 2017): 41-64.

O’Hara, John Fitzgerald. “Kent State/May 4 and Post War Memory.” *American Quarterly* 58, no. 2 (June 2006): 301-328.

Thompson, Ruth Anne. “A Taste of Student Power: Protest at the University of Tennessee, 1964-1970, *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 1998): 80-97.

Online Sources

“Coordination of Operating Plans: Minutes,” *Kent State University Libraries. Special Collections and Archives,* Accessed August 9, 2018. https://omeka.library.kent.edu/special-collections/items/show/6143.

“May 4 Memorial (Kent State University),” *Kent State University Libraries.* https://www.library.kent.edu/special-collections-and-archives/may-4-memorial-kent-state-university. Accessed November 3, 2018.

“Other KSU Groups: Flyers and Postings,” *Kent State University Libraries. Special Collections and Archives,* Accessed August 3, 2018, https://omeka.library.kent.edu/special-collections/items/show/3160.

Gerstein, Michael. “U.P. GOP Official Resigns over ‘Kent State’ Tweet.” February 7, 2017. Accessed March 1, 2018, The Detroit News. https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/michigan/2017/02/08/gop-official-resigns-kent-state-tweet/97668394/.

Kent State University. *Gallery.* May 4 Visitor’s Center. Accessed March 13, 2018.

Leahy, Colleen. "Remembering the Dow Protest and Riot 50 Years Later.” October 18, 2017. Accessed June 5, 2018, Wisconsin Public Radio. www.wpr.org/remembering-dow-protest-and-riot-50-years-later.

Nixon, Richard. “Address to the Nation on Progress Toward Peace in Vietnam." April 20, 1970. Accessed January 25, 2018. Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2476.

O'Donnell, Patrick. "The 1964 Cleveland Schools' Boycott to Protest Segregation: Black History Month." February 24, 2013. Accessed October 25, 2018. http://s.cleveland.com/AgA0rab.

Ohio Civil Rights Commission. "A Historical Perspective of Ohio's Laws Against Discrimination." Accessed September 12, 2018. https://crc.ohio.gov/AboutUs/History.aspx.

Ohio Civil Rights Commission. "The Road to Equality and the Passage of the First Civil Rights Law in Ohio," Accessed September 12, 2018. https://crc.ohio.gov/Portals/0/Book/History.pdf.

Ohio History Central. "Ohio Civil Rights Act of 1959," Accessed September 12, 2018. http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Ohio Civil_Rights_Act_of_1959.

Ohio History Central. "Ohio Civil Rights Commission," Accessed September 12, 2018. http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Ohio_Civil_Rights_Commission.

Ohio History Central, "Ohio Fair Housing Act of 1965," Accessed September 12, 2018. http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Ohio_Fair_Housing_Act_of_1965.

Ohio History Central, "Segregation," Accessed September 12, 2018. http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Segregation.

Ulkins, Graham ."LSU fraternity apologizes for offensive banner," WAFB, September 16, 2013. Accessed April 3, 2018, http://www.wafb.com/story/23438019/lsu-fraternity-apologizes- for-offensive-banner/.

University Communications and Marketing. "Kent State Statement Regarding Urban Outfitters' Sweatshirt," Kent State University, September 15, 2014, Accessed April 3, 2018, https://www.kent.edu/news/kent-state-statement-regarding-urban-outfitters'-sweatshirt.

Urban Outfitters (@UrbanOutfitters). 2017. "Urban Outfitters sincerely apologizes for any offense our Vintage Kent State Sweatshirt may have caused. It was never our intention to allude to the tragic events that took place at Kent State in 1970 and we are extremely saddened that this item was perceived as such. The one-of-a-kind item was purchased as part of our sun-faded vintage collection. There is no blood on this shirt nor has this item been altered in any way. The red stains are discoloration from the original shade of the shirt and the holes are from natural wear and fray. Again, we deeply regret that this item was perceived negatively and we have removed it immediately from our website to avoid further upset." Twitter, September 15, 2014, 7:01. A.M. Accessed April 3, 2018. https://twitter.com/urbanoutfitters/status/511515053791907840?lang=en.