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

On February 13, 1969, black student activism and its challenge soared to a record level. Nine hundred National Guardsmen strolled onto the University of Wisconsin Madison campus with fixed bayonets that Thursday. Some guardsmen rode on jeeps decked with machine guns. Helicopters surveyed the thousands of protesters. If the presence of city police had stirred campus activism a few days earlier when black students kicked off their strike inspired by a Nathan Hare speech, then the National Guard whipped students into a frenzy.

After picketing and obstructing traffic during the day, about ten thousand students, with African American torch bearers leading the way, walked in the cold from the university to the state capitol in the largest student march of the Black Campus Movement (BCM). Their bodies may have been freezing that night, but their mouths were on fire: “On strike, shut it down!” “Support the black demands!”
Meanwhile that day, the nationally renowned San Francisco State College strike—a protest that popularized the mantra “On strike, shut it down!”—entered its third month.

At Cal Berkeley, police brutality caused the two-week-old boycott of classes to escalate.

Black Student Alliance members at Roosevelt University in Chicago continued their week of disrupting classes to teach Black Studies. The night before, black students rejected a deal that did not promise a Black Studies department under their control. In a statement, they yelled, “We will continue our program, BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY!!!” And just for the record, the BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY WAS IN CAPITAL LETTERS with three exclamation points.

Black students at University of Illinois delivered a list of demands to administrators on February 13, calling for the establishment of a Black Cultural Center and a Black Studies department, and the hiring of fifty black residence hall counselors and five hundred black professors.

At City College of New York, also on February 13, 300 black and Puerto Rican students swarmed into the administration building and ejected its workers. They plastered their demands on walls and ceilings and one student waved a sign that read, “Free Huey: Che Guevara, Malcolm X University.” MORE

While City College students occupied the building for three and half hours, in the Deep South, more than 90 percent of students at Mississippi Valley State avoided classroom buildings. Students pressed for the ability to don African garb and Afros, to study people of African descent in their courses, and to terminate campus paternalism, student powerlessness, and the poor quality of faculty and facilities. In total, they presented twenty-six demands leading to the
boycott. State police and campus security officers swooped in and transported 196 strikers to Jackson, imprisoned a dozen others, and put out a warrant on four leaders. Close to 200 protesters were expelled. Two years later, Mississippi Valley State students were protesting yet again. This time, in February 1970, police arrested 896 campus activist, the largest mass arrest in higher education history. President J.H. White expelled the entire student body and compelled them to sign a statement pledging to not take part in protests in order to reenrol. “Anyone who signs this should be enslaved,” announced a student leader.

At Duke University, forty-eight black collegians entered the administration building in the early morning, walked to the central records section, and told the clerical workers they had to leave. They then nailed the doors shut, threatened to burn university records if the police were called, and renamed the space “Malcolm X Liberation School.” They stormed out of the building later in the day on February 13, 1969 and marched triumphantly off campus.

February 13, 1969, stands at the apex of the eight-year Black Campus Movement. During this movement, which emerged in 1965 and declined in 1972, thousands of black campus activists and sympathizers, aided on some campuses by white, Latino, Chicano, Native American, and Asian students, requested, demanded, and protested for a relevant learning experience. Notions of relevancy differed with activist ideologies that ranged from moderate to radical nationalists. In most cases, students considered a relevant education one that interrogated progressive African American and Third World literature and gave students the intellectual tools to fix a broken society. Students crusaded at more than five hundred colleges and universities, in every single state except Alaska. Let me emphasize that again, every single state except Alaska. The movement did not just disrupt colleges in urban centers in New York, California, and Texas.
Seemingly wherever there was a handful of black students, there was the Black Campus Movement.

At Colby College in Waterville, Maine, black and Puerto Rican students occupied the campus chapel for a week in March 1970 fighting for black admissions and Black Studies.

For suggesting to their coach they would boycott an upcoming game against Brigham Young University, the scholarships of fourteen black football players were revoked at the University of Wyoming in October 1969. At a press conference after dismissing the “Black 14,” President Bill Carlson told reporters that football was more important than civil rights. Athletic protests sprang up around the West that season against Wyoming and BYU.

Here in the South, the Black Campus Movement rocked every state. Here is South Carolina for instance, we know about the Orangeburg Massacre at South Carolina State, but students organized and disrupted other colleges, large and small. By 1972, students had formed Organized Black Students at the extremely small Erskine College in Due West. [SLIDE] And they were working towards change at Francis Marion College in Florence through the Afro-Students for a Unified Society.

At Clemson, students walked off campus in October 1969, and in April 1969, armed students at Voorhees took over a building.

Probably the most heralded and most improbably SGA president at a historically white university was Harry Walker, who sported a large Afro, adored Malcolm X, and had been a BSU president at the University of South Carolina. Walker became the first black SGA president at a formerly segregated school in March 1971.
During the Black Campus Movement at historically white and black colleges and universities, black campus activists formed the nation’s first chain of politically and culturally progressive black student unions with varying names and gained control of many student government associations. They utilized these black student groups and Student Government Associations as pressure groups to pursue a range of campus alterations, including an end to paternalism and racism, and the addition of more black students, faculty, administrators, Black Cultural Centers, and Black Studies courses, programs, and departments. They fought at almost every historically black college and university for a black-dominated, oriented, and radical “Black University” to replace what they theorized as the white-controlled, Eurocentric, bourgeoisie, accommodationist “Negro University.” At historically white institutions with or near a large black populations, students usually and principally demanded Black Studies, so students could use their learning to advance the black community. At historically white institutions distant from black population centers with small black student bodies, students usually and principally demanded Black Cultural Centers. These Centers served as sociocultural homes away from home for black students.

Why do I term this struggle the Black Campus Movement? I am seeking to disentangle and showcase this relatively unappreciated struggle from three other threads of activism: activism during the Black Power Movement, from the campus movements waged by other racial groups at the time, and from black student off-campus activism during the contemporary civil rights period from 1954 to 1965. So this struggle among black students at historically white and black institutions from 1965 to 1972 has been termed the Black Campus Movement.

The Black Campus Movement was at the same time a part of and apart from, a part of and apart from three larger social movements: the trans-historical Long Black Student Movement
beginning after World War I; the transracial student movement of the Long Sixties; and the trans-objective contemporary Black Power Movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Like the affiliated Black Arts Movement, Black Theology Movement, and Black Feminist Movement, to name a few of the black power social movements scholars have distinguished, this period of black student activism should be understood as a social movement in its own right much larger than the push for Black Studies. But it has been reduced to the Black Studies Movement and overshadowed by the well chronicled and exciting story of black power off campus.

In addition, even though black students battled the same structure in the same space with similarities in their ideas and tactics, and were sometimes allies, their struggle must be conceptualized as independent from white student activism. A few scholars have already followed the New York Times, which published a story on May 12, 1969, with the headline “The Campus Revolutions: One is Black, One White.” But it is often a footnote in the general histories of student activism, a supporting actor to the white anti-war and student power activists.

Even though they both tend to be conceptually located in what is widely known as the Black Student Movement, this late 1960s black power campus struggle represented a profound ideological, tactical, and spatial shift from early 1960s off-campus civil rights student confrontations. They were not the smaller counterpart to the well know student activists of the early 1960s. There were not merely different phases of the Black Student Movement. Along with the generally unknown New Negro Campus Movement of the 1920s, and the civil rights movement in between, they were unique social movements, or, more precisely, separate but interlocking tussles in the Long Black Student Movement from 1919 to 1972.
Although it was their aim, Black campus activists in the late 1960s and early 1970s did not succeed in revolutionizing higher education. However, they did succeed in shoving to the center a series of historically marginalized academic ideas, questions, frames, methods, perspectives, subjects, and pursuits. They were able to succeed in pushing into higher education a profusion of racial reforms—in the form of people, programs, and literature. Most decisively, but least chronicled, black campus activists succeeded in exchanging the academy’s century-old racist ideals. The 1954 Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka decision did not do this. Neither did the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The Black Campus Movement forced the rewriting of the racial constitution of higher education, the central contention of my book.

Now, some of you may be thinking, Ibram, what do I mean by the so-called racial constitution of higher education?

Before I explain this, I would like to address briefly how I came upon this terminology. As I began to conceptualize my national study of black student activism, I asked myself a few complicated questions. In a national and general and theoretical sense, what effect did the Black Campus Movement have on higher education? We know about the hundreds of Black Studies programs. We should known about the hundreds of Black Cultural Centers, diversity officers, the thousands of diversity workers, the diversity statements at nearly ever college—all of which emerged out of this movement. Scholars have carefully documented how the movement changed specific campuses. But in a larger, more national sense, what changed? And more importantly for today’s context, what stayed the same? How do I account for the vast legacy of the Black Campus Movement in higher education today in the midst of the pervasiveness of racism that we all face at our institutions? This paradox of progress haunted me until I dawned on this notion of the racial constitution.
When I speak of the racial constitution, I am speaking about the racialized ideals and practices of higher education. When I speak of the Black Campus Movement, I am speaking about a black student struggle that I argue racial reconstituted or challenged the racial constitution of higher education. Taken together, when I speak of the Black Campus Movement, I am speaking about a struggle that shifted the racial ideals of higher education.

By 1965, even after the Brown decision, the desegregation of higher education, and the Civil Rights Act, the racial constitution remained as it had been the previous century—profoundly racist. There were at least four entrenched racist elements that had long been the basis of the racial constitution of higher education. They are: the moralized contraption, standardization of exclusion, normalized mask of whiteness, and ladder altruism.

The moralized contraption was a system of rules that regulated student freedom and agency at almost every historically black college and university. These rules were injected into campus codes at the founding of HBCUs by white benefactors, paternalists, and black accommodationists. They were meant to Christianize and civilize, and ultimately to induce submission to the white supremacist, capitalist, patriarchal American order. Students were told when to eat, sleep, study, and socialize. Chapel, convocation, and class attendance were mandatory, and women were slapped with additional restrictions. Black students during the Black Campus Movement challenged and largely decimated the moralized contraption.

The open exclusion of African Americans from faculties, student bodies, administrations, coaching staffs—from every facet of the communities at historically white colleges and universities—was standardized. Standardized or standardization as opposed to standard, since the exclusion was not by happenstance. Inequality is never a coincidence. African Americans were purposefully excluded by academics. The prohibition or marginalization of Africana scholarship
from curricula was standardized by academics at both white and black institutions. African Americans were also customarily excluded from many (usually private) HBCU professorial bodies and presidencies into the 1920s, and from boards of trustees into the 1960s. There were instances in which black concepts and people found their way into these terrains particularly as a result of the desegregation movement, but these were the exceptions to the rule, to the standard. Black students demanded more than exceptions or what were called tokens at the time. They demanded through their hundreds of protests, the standardization of inclusion.

Exclusion was not merely standardized in 1965 at the start of the Black Campus Movement. Those who kept African Americans at bay projected the exclusionary environment as the norm. Notions of objectivity, a Eurocentric universalism, and evolutionism are a few of the many constructs that academics, politicians, and benefactors used to mask the preponderance of whiteness—white ideas, people, and scholarship—as normal. Thus, white racists and capitalists and black accommodationists actively created and maintained this white normality by masking it, by removing the adjectives, by denigrating and downgrading everything non-European, everything outside of the Eurocentric or capitalist homily. European history and literature were not presented as such during the century before the 1960s. Academics labeled it the history and literature. By conceiving of European (and Euro-American) scholarship as superior to all others, they racialized it, they gave it whiteness—an officious social construct of racial superiority. Academics still had veiled the academy with the normalized mask of whiteness in 1965, with few holes, compelling students to demand its removal and de-normalization.

During the century preceding the Black Campus Movement, when academics were not normalizing and masking whiteness, they were instituting and encouraging what we can call ladder altruism. They taught the many altruistic African American college students to believe
that their personal advancement up the American ladder of success advanced African America as a whole through the societal doors that graduates opened and through their function as role models. Meanwhile, academics, politicians, and capital allowed colleges and universities to serve as ladders, removing African Americans politically, economically, and culturally from the black masses. In contrast to ladder altruism, black campus activists demonstrated for the demolishing of the personal and institutional ladders, and demanded an ideological and tactical reconnection through grassroots altruism.

In sum, black campus activists during the Black Campus Movement challenged the rules and regulations, or moralized contraption; they resisted the black marginalization from practically all facets of higher education, or the standardization of exclusion; students rebelled against the irrelevant curriculum, which they termed White Studies, or the normalized mask of whiteness; and they opposed the practice of higher education encouraging and facilitating their removal from the masses, or ladder altruism.

I have discussed what students challenged and what changed, now let me go into what has remained the same. The ideals have shifted, but is higher education living up to its ideals? Higher education now values diversity, but are we diverse? Higher education now values multiculturalism, but do we teach a multicultural education? Higher education now says it is socially responsible, but socially responsible to who, to us all?

What has changed? What has remained the same? Scientific racists are as strong and vigorous as ever. But since the Black Campus Movement changed the racial ideals of higher education, scientific racists have changed their strategy. As they spoke against racial equality before the 1960s to galvanize white support for black exclusion and exploitation, the twentieth-
first century academic racists speak for racial equality to galvanize white support for black exclusion and exploitation.

This is their strategy, just like the strategy of candid racist language used before civil rights. I call this new strategy egalitarian exclusion. I define egalitarian exclusion as "the prohibition or limiting of nonwhites, nonwhite authority, or race-specific initiatives using derivatives of equality or 'reverse' discrimination as justifications.” Of course, we have seen this strategy used to undermine the affirmative action the Black Campus Movement forced onto the academy. Before it was notions of reverse discrimination, now the opponents are calling for what they call race-neutral admissions policies.

The rhetorical tools that the Black Campus Movement forced onto the academy for racial progress in the late 1960s--language like equality and discrimination--are now being used to hold back or reverse racial progress. To say it another way, academic racists are using the new ideals, that were instituted to eliminate the deeply racist old, to maintain the old.

One of the first among the Black Left to discuss this crisis of mythical progress, this conserving egalitarian exclusion, was Nathan Hare at San Francisco State College in his groundbreaking Black Studies proposal, dated April 29, 1968. “It will be an irony of recorded history,” he wrote “that ‘integration’ was used in the second half of this century to hold the black race down just as segregation was so instigated in the first half.”

With the second half of this century now recorded, Hare’s irony has come to fruition. While the civil rights and black power programs have been somewhat implemented, the ideals of a countermovement to black freedom movement have kept and continue to try to keep the “black race down” in the name of equality, integration, and racial progress.