PROTEST ACTIVITIES IN SOUTHERN UNIVERSITIES, 1965-1972

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# PROTEST ACTIVITIES IN SOUTHERN UNIVERSITIES, 1965-1972

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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This thesis examines the existence and character of protest movements in southern universities from the fall of 1965 through the spring of 1972, and offers an explanation for the student dissent in the South in these years while also accounting for its relevance to the study of the anti-Vietnam War and civil rights movements.

The origin, development, and end of the antiwar movement in southern universities are described. Until the spring of 1969 the few pockets of southern students protesting the war did so in an orderly fashion and with frank patriotism. During the 1969-70 school year, however, more southern students became willing to question the war as well as their own country; even so, antiwar sentiment in southern students did not survive the shootings at Kent State in May, 1970, and had quieted itself by the fall of that year.

This thesis also explores the differences between protest movements on black and white southern campuses. While white protesters often relied on repetitive tactics, black student protesters took more direct, unified action and often met with harsher, and more violent responses than their white counterparts protesting on predominantly white campuses. Unlike the black student movements, which typically focused on civil rights and economic equality, the majority of antiwar activity in the South on white campuses remained vague and ineffective, and failed to attract a large portion of the southern student body to its cause.

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# INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines the significance of the students in the American South who participated in the movement against the Vietnam War. Much of the movement historiography glorifies those in the northern states, the Midwest, and on the West coast who sought U.S. withdrawal from Southeast Asia. That rich literature fails to account for the South, however. In that region of America where the most dramatic phases of the civil rights movement unfolded, where military bases were within easy distance of most homes, and from whence a disproportionately large number of soldiers were sent to fight in South Vietnam, an antiwar movement lurked within universities. The antiwar movement in America grew from sporadic petitions to large, frequent demonstrations until the protesters' belief that the American dream only applied to those who did not presume to challenge it was confirmed by the deaths of four Kent State students in May of 1970. Antiwar activists then quickly retreated from the cause, ending the protest movement before it ended the war.

Those contributing to the historiography of the antiwar movement confront the difficult task of writing objective and unbiased accounts of a decade that has been sharply polarized, and often distorted, in our national collective memory. For many, the 1960s have been a decade romanticized and veiled in pop cultural nostalgia. For others, the decade represents a chaotic departure from order into anarchy and excess. Thus far the

historiography of the antiwar movement has satisfactorily located pockets of protesters in most parts of the United States and documented their activities. Historians of the movement have typically placed two questions at the center of their analyses: what was purpose of the antiwar movement, and what was its value? Writers answer the question of purpose by defining the positions and motivations of antiwar activists, identifying participants' ideals or the ideals they intended to question. In approaching the question of value, historians who see value as central to an understanding of the movement tentatively define it as a success or a failure and supply evidence accordingly. Those who excuse the movement's lack of success by arguing that the characteristics and implications of the movement are central to an understanding of it transform the question of value to one of effect, and are then able to merely describe the movement's value in terms of which areas of society and history the movement influenced.

Charles DeBenedetti and Charles Chatfield, whose co-authored study *An American Ordeal* on the antiwar movement is one of those leading works in the field, base their analysis of the antiwar movement on the proposition that the movement was both cultural and political. The historians largely focus on the purpose of the movement by defining its character; DeBenedetti and Chatfield conclude that the movement failed when its cultural focus undermined its political success. Without extensive speculation on the larger historical significance of the movement's failure, the historians describe the culture of the movement as characterized by radical antiwar activists' willingness to glorify the Vietcong and North Vietnamese, an attitude that prohibited antiwar moderates

from joining the antiwar radicals in what might have otherwise been a successful movement to end the war in Vietnam.[1]

Mark Boren assesses the movement's value as he discusses the American student antiwar movement within the context of other student movements worldwide. This avenue leads Boren to credit the movement with bringing the end to the Vietnam War, and to therefore call it a success. Having to account at this point for the death of the movement prior to the end of the war, Boren provides a tangential argument that the radicalization of the American left and the assassination of Robert Kennedy in 1968 disillusioned students enough that they were willing to abandon the movement when the Voting Rights Act was passed in the beginning of the subsequent decade in answer to one of the activists' demands. Boren contends that the Act left already frustrated students without a cause, and excuses the death of a movement he speculates could have continued to manipulate American politics and economics.[2]

Stewart Burns also discusses the movement within a broader context: in relationship to the contemporaneous civil rights and feminist movements in America. Burns asserts that grassroots social movements are responsible for bringing about change, and like Boren credits the antiwar movement with bringing an end to the Vietnam War. Burns is even more laudatory with his definition of the movement's success, arguing not only that it ended the Vietnam War, but also citing it as the reason for the lack of large-

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[1] Charles DeBenedetti and Charles Chatfield, *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 1, 4, 153, 165, 284, 355.

[2] Mark Delman Boren, *Student Resistance: A History of the Unruly Subject* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 3, 5, 144, 177, 186.

scale American military conflict in the time period following the Vietnam War. Burns bases his declaration of a causal relationship between antiwar protest and the end of American involvement in Vietnam around the fact that the protests of the war occurred roughly simultaneously with a war that did eventually end.[3]

Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, unwilling to make as much of a stretch in terms of causality, instead argue that the significance of the antiwar movement lies not in its success or failure in ending the war, but instead in its very existence. The writers maintain that the movement was important because its participants united in questioning their government out of patriotism rather than as a sign of disloyalty.[4]

Kenneth Heineman is willing to adjudge the antiwar movement a failure, but like Zaroulis and Sullivan finds that judgment of success or failure secondary to the significance of the movement itself. Heineman probes the consciousness of the student activists in his psychological and sociological approach to the antiwar movement. Discussing universities that had not had a radical history, Heineman is still able to glorify the movement participants by concluding that the movement developed as social consciousness, rooted in students' personal ideologies, and that the movement's influence on the war in Vietnam was irrelevant in light of its success in changing campus structures and broadening educational possibilities.[5]

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[3] Stewart Burns, *Social Movements of the 1960s: Searching for Democracy* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990), 162.

[4] Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up?: American Protest Against the War in Vietnam, 1963-1975* (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1984), xi-xiii.

[5] Kenneth Heineman *Campus Wars: The Peace Movement at American State Universities in the Vietnam Era* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 2, 5.

Adam Garfinkle likewise finds the antiwar movement's impact in America more significant than any direct causal in leading to American disengagement from its commitment to South Vietnam. He argues that at its height the movement was unsuccessful at reducing the American military presence in Vietnam, because it silenced the voices of moderates in opposition. Garfinkle credits the movement when he acknowledges that at the peak of the protest movement the radicals lost their agenda, but alleges that at this time the most significant event of the antiwar movement occurred: moderates took control and managed to end the war with quiet conservative opposition to American foreign policy.[6]

Todd Gitlin accounts for the decline of the radical presence in his autobiographical narrative of the 1960s, in which he in essence excuses the antiwar movement for its lack of success on the grounds that both the war and the antiwar movement became unpopular at the end of the decade. But instead of discussing Garfinkle's antiwar moderates who at that time became increasingly outspoken against the war, Gitlin supports his excuse by focusing his analytical energy on antiwar moderates who continued to refrain from vocalizing their position. Gitlin implies that these moderates were responsible for the movement's failure to end the war when he argues that this group remained paralyzed by their fear of being perceived as unpatriotic and in their struggle to accept that an immediate withdrawal of troops would in all likelihood result in a communist Vietnam. The result then, according to Gitlin's

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[6] Adam Garfinkle, *Telltale Hearts: The Origins and Impact of the Vietnam Antiwar Movement* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 1-3, 191.

interpretation, was the death of any movement against the war, but not because of antiwar protesters so much as a lack of public interest and the moderates' unwillingness to speak.[7]

Godfrey Hodgson addresses this same pocket of antiwar moderates in his history of the rise of conservatism. According to Hodgson, the majority of those opposing American involvement in Southeast Asia were of the position that the war was wrong because of its relative insignificance in the larger Cold War, but in their patriotism were resentful of the antiwar movement. Echoing Gitlin, Hodgson contends that the antiwar movement became unpopular; more specifically, Hodgson identifies the concerns of the antiwar movement for the Vietnamese as offensive to patriotic moderates. For both Gitlin and Hodgson, determining the value of the antiwar movement is integrally tied in understanding its character. Gitlin and Hodgson's value determination accounts for the importance of the movement's tendencies to isolate quieter antiwar groups from which it otherwise might have found support, groups whose participation Gitlin and Hodgson speculate might have been able to end the war.[8]

With these studies historians have evaluated the antiwar movement in and of itself, and acknowledging that it existed and that it affected almost every citizen in the nation including the president, is undeniable. The historiography is lacking in two areas, however. As previously stated, historians have avoided almost casually any substantive

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[7] Todd Gitlin *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1993), 183, 262, 288, 294-96.

[8] Godfrey Hodgson, *The World Turned Right Side Up: A History of the Conservative Ascendancy in America* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996), 117, 220.

discussion of the nature of the antiwar movement as it existed in colleges and universities in the South. They have also failed to examine the possibility that the antiwar movement, particularly in its southern student-based manifestations, may have been every bit as much a barometer of students' relationship with the establishment as it was fundamentally about their opposition to the war in Vietnam.

The historians who have confronted question of the nature and extent of the antiwar movement in the South are of one of three opinions on its student antiwar movement. The first is that there was no student antiwar movement, for reasons and variables peculiar to the region: feared association with the civil rights movement, anti-communism, respect for authority, and the view of the military as honorable. Most historians who make the conclusion that no antiwar movement existed in the South do so by implication. A few make a direct statement, almost as an apologetic afterthought, to account for the conspicuous absence of the region in the historical narrative.

Robert Mann, in his history of the Vietnam War, pays a good deal of attention to the antiwar movement and its effect on the American government, tracing its presence through the duration of the war. He explains what he believes to be inactivity in the South by arguing that antiwar sentiment was not present in such close proximity to so many of the nation's military bases and among citizens so closely acquainted with a large percentage of the American troops in Vietnam.[9] Michael Lind, in his explanation of what he argues was the fundamental necessity of the Vietnam War, similarly confronts what he believes to be the lack of an antiwar movement in the South. Lind argues that antiwar

[9] Robert Mann, *A Grand Delusion: America's Descent into Vietnam* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 641.

sentiment had no place in the South because of the tradition in the southern states of interventionism, as compared to that in the northern states of isolationism, after World War I, through World War II, the Cold War, and the Vietnam War. That policies of neutrality and isolationism never gained as much traction in the South as in other areas of the nation, Lind argues, is evidenced by congressional voting patterns and documentation of regional public opinion.[10] Historical trends of pro-war sentiment lead historians away from the South when looking for evidence of protests. As Lind points out, movements in opposition to the war had always been out of the Northeast and West, with the exception of the Spanish-American War, since before the Civil War. Southern tradition prior to the Vietnam War had as a general rule been encouraging and supportive of military endeavors, thus historians' lack of initiative in searching for an antiwar movement in the South during the Vietnam War.[11]

Those who acknowledge the existence of a movement in southern colleges and universities explain its coexistence with conservatism by determining it an exception to those regional attributes. Stephen Wheeler writes of the neglect when he discusses the peace vigils at the University of North Carolina. Wheeler asks why, when thirty-six percent of the students in the South polled during the antiwar movement acknowledged being a part of demonstrations, scholars have refused to show the South as a major source

[10] Michael Lind, *Vietnam: The Necessary War: A Reinterpretation of America's Most Disastrous Military Conflict* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999), 113.

[11] Ibid.

of protests.[12] Wheeler acknowledges the presence of deterrents to protest movements in the South, describing the existence of peace vigils at the University of North Carolina as a contradiction to the far more prevalent pro-war sentiment of the region. He explains the antiwar movement in the South by suggesting it was an expansion and outgrowth of the concerns of the civil rights movement, with antiwar activity undertaken and organized by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Southern Students Organizing Committee (SSOC) when the Vietnam War began to divert attention and energy from the movement for blacks' freedom. According to Wheeler, this alliance between the causes of civil rights and ending the war accounts for the little antiwar activism there was in the South.[13]

William Billingsley also discusses the University of North Carolina. In his monograph on the campus' Speakers Ban, a restriction issued by the North Carolina university system in 1965 prohibiting communists from lecturing on campus, Billingsley confirms the traditional conservativism of the South. He then traces the activities of a significant number of students and faculty who surprisingly opposed the Ban and later the war as a related issue. Billingsley supports his argument for regional conservativism by calling attention to the actions of administrative officials who intended to stunt the growth of an antiwar movement with regulations and policies. Though the antiwar movement in many cases advocated testing and defying authority, the activists as

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[12] Stephen Wheeler, "Hell No We Won't Go, Y'all," in *The Vietnam War on Campus: Other Voices, More Distant Drums*, ed. Marc Jason Gilbert (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2001), 155.

[13] Wheeler, "Hell No We Won't Go, Y'all," 149-52.

Billingsley describes them were fundamentally unwilling to disrespect authority and sacrificed the antiwar cause on as a result of that hesitancy. It was not until the spring of 1970 when violence broke out on American college campuses, Billingsley notes, that members of the conservative administration were willing to acknowledge the radical student and faculty cause as somehow legitimate.[14]

James Dickerson echoes Wheeler's association between the civil rights and antiwar movements in the South as a way of explaining the existence of the antiwar movement in the region. Dickerson's case study focuses on Mississippi and presupposes the alliance. His discussion traces hints of antiwar ideas in white Mississippi students, and while he occasionally runs the risk of overreaching with his claims, he does offer convincing evidence that the Mississippi conservative establishment conspired to silence the civil rights movement in that state and thus attacked with equal vehemence any sign of an antiwar movement. Any challenges to the racial and political status quo were seen as intolerable by the majority of those in positions of authority and those shaping public opinion. The Mississippi government and media are then responsible, according to Dickerson's argument, for silencing antiwar sentiment that may have taken root.[15]

Those that have confronted the South have made the progress of starting to add the region to the antiwar narrative. But historians of the antiwar southern students seem

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[14] William J. Billingsley, *Communists on Campus: Race, Politics, and the Public University in Sixties North Carolina* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999), 228-30, 235.

[15] James Dickerson, *Dixie's Dirty Secret: The True Story of How the Government, the Media, and the Mob Conspired to Combat Integration and the Vietnam Antiwar Movement* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1998), 101, 128, 135, 152-53, 201.

unable to comfortably place the movement within the context of the dominant regional ideals. They then resort to alienating those students from the region by calling the cause an exception to the ideals of the area, or they make the revolutionary challenge to Jim Crow by black and white activists responsible for birthing antiwar sentiment in the South, refusing to acknowledge the possibility that a southern antiwar movement could have been born without the civil rights movement serving in the role of midwife.

Even with what progress this handful of scholars has made in studying the South, antiwar movement historiography falls short in a second matter, a failure of the entire group of historians regardless of their selected areas of study. The historiography has failed to account for the reason, or even the implications of, an antiwar movement that was not primarily concerned with the war nor with changing its methods of protest to make progress. The movement constructed the same demonstrations and organized the same activities without result. The developments of the war in Vietnam made little or no difference in the ebb and flow of student protest in the South, but the words and actions of the establishment did. Influencing the American government to change its foreign policies was the stated intent of the protest movement, so it is therefore difficult to accept the antiwar movement as legitimate because of the protesters' lack of interest in correlating antiwar demonstrations with developments in the war. The movement approached the establishment with its convictions and anger but neglected to present atrocities in Vietnam as evidence to support its demands. Well-broadcasted reports on the war in Vietnam evoked no direct response from the protesters, but the addresses and actions of the American government toward the protesters did. The antiwar movement in

the South apparently then had little to do with the war and everything to do with students' relationship with the establishment.

This thesis explores the implications of the antiwar movement being primarily an index of students' relationships with those in positions of direct authority over them, and offers two rebuttals to historians' virtual elimination of the South as a significant locus of antiwar activity. First, this historiographical emphasis on apathy in the South, insofar as antiwar protest goes, is incorrect. That understanding has been constructed less based on factual understandings of what transpired in the region than on a failure to uncover and consider judiciously the available evidence of what antiwar activity was taking place in the South. A historiography focused on more visible manifestations of antiwar protest elsewhere in the nation has compounded this initial failure to acknowledge the extent of what was taking place in the South. This thesis remedies that oversight, conclusively demonstrating that southern students were in no way apathetic about the war in Southeast Asia. Students in the South made their loyalties and their positions on the war known.

Second, this thesis argues that ignoring the South is dangerous precisely because of the disproportionate number of soldiers in the American military who called the region home, and because of the origins of the civil rights movement in the South. Its citizens were not immune to the most direct effects of the war; indeed they bore a disproportionate number of military casualties. Nor were they ignorant of protest movements; the South had been ground zero for some of the most fundamental challenges to the political and social status quo that the nation had ever witnessed. For these reasons the region should arguably be one of the primary sources for antiwar study. An antiwar movement in a region where the military and the campus are in close

proximity, and where protest had already threatened the lifestyles of white citizens, is that much more significant and valid in that those who protested did so with the greatest knowledge of the effects of dissent.

In the chapters which follow, trends in southern student responses to the war will become noticeable and noteworthy; the trends present in the history of the region account for the coexistence of an antiwar movement and a conservative tradition. While many war supporters in the South cited patriotism and honor in the form of military duty when justifying their pro-war position, an equal number of antiwar students also made certain to clearly state their patriotism and evidenced continued respect for authority by a willingness to operate within university regulation policies when protesting. Not that that was the case with every southern student protester; it was not. Enough radical, authority-testing, and rule-bending students dissented that in some cases a third group of non-apathetic students was provoked to speak out about the war, to express their lack of support for the war and simultaneously register their unwillingness to associate and be associated with unruly demonstrators. Apathy and silence were as undesirable on southern campuses as on other historically documented campuses, even with the confines of regional conservatism.

That changed when National Guardsmen shot and killed four students and wounded nine others in 1970 during an antiwar demonstration at Kent State University in Ohio. To that point, students in the South had witnessed student deaths at black colleges within close proximity that occurred during demonstrations on those campuses concerned mainly with civil rights and university conditions. In the aftermath of the Kent State shootings, white students in the South launched a wave of personal protests that

addressed both the war and violence in America. It was with this event that those previously content to silently oppose the war joined the more vocal southern student protesters. Student protests in the South that spring were an exception in that only those—and moratoriums of the preceding fall of 1969—occurred similarly and simultaneously with the nationwide antiwar movement. In the midst of the national funeral for the students killed in Kent, Ohio, the protesters seemed to realize they could have easily been the dead, that the movement might require of them as much as the war might require. Unwilling to risk more than penalties for breaking university regulations, however, the funeral for Kent became one of the movement as well.

In the pages that follow, southern university protests are discussed as a means of emphasizing the antiwar movement in the South as a region, rather than as a means of microscopic examination of the antiwar movement at particular southern universities. Emphasis on the latter rather than the former would provide little headway in better understanding the movement as a whole, since every region in America that decade included universities that did and did not voice opinion on the war. This study will show the existence of that movement by isolating instances of protest in the South within the context of the war in Vietnam and situating those protests against the backdrop of the prevailing regional, pro-war sentiment, as opposed to discussing the movement only within the context of the national antiwar movement. In focusing on the South as other historians have studied the nation, this study examines campus and local publications during the late 1960s and early 1970s, southern university administrative records, student speeches, and student organization meeting minutes to determine the scope and character of antiwar demonstrations in the South. It should be noted that while every effort has

been made to be thorough, it is still difficult to offer a complete portrait of the antiwar movement in the South. The evidence here represents pieces of the picture, and while those pieces offer ample evidence to create a coherent narrative, this thesis does not presume to offer an encyclopedic accounting of every opinion in the South registered for or against the Vietnam War. Likewise, while this study cannot account for unvoiced opinion or changes of heart, but it can account for actions, which this writer would venture to say are of the most significance. And for that reason it is those actions that are presented here as evidence that an identifiable movement against the war in Vietnam existed in southern universities.

This study begins in the fall of 1965, the first school year that the great majority of Americans realized the extent of their involvement in Southeast Asia and the seeming irreversibility of many of the government policies concerning Vietnam. The years from then through the spring of 1969 reveal a growing awareness of the implications of the Vietnam War that gradually translated into concern. By the fall of 1969 that concern in southern students reached the point that association with radical war protesters was less threatening than the possibility of increased involvement in Vietnam, so that southern students participated when hundreds of thousands gathered nationwide to protest the war as a part of the moratorium movement. When the tragedy at Kent State occurred, the stage had been set with that alliance with the national movement so that even campuses in the South with no previous record of antiwar activity engaged with others in the region and in the nation in the greatest wave of demonstrations to occur during the entire historical trajectory of the antiwar movement. The recognition student movements in the South gained from becoming one that year with student movements nationwide kept the

antiwar sentiment alive in southern universities past the spring of 1970. Students in the South responded to Kent as students nationwide had, but as noted above, Kent was not the first encounter southern college students had had with death. In the South, on the campuses of five traditionally black southern universities, movements for freedom within America ended in violence and in student casualties. For the purposes of giving credit to all protest movements in the South during the era, and for the purpose of exploring the close proximity of death on the college campus to activist students in the region, one section of this thesis will focus specifically on the movements in those five black institutions. Whatever momentum had been building in southern universities before the spring of 1970 was not enough to propel the students to protest in anything but small and infrequent instances past the spring of 1972, resulting in a movement calling for the withdrawal of the American military presence in Vietnam that ended before its purpose was fulfilled.

# CHAPTER ONE

## ESTABLISHING A FOOTHOLD:

## THE FALL OF 1965 THROUGH THE SPRING OF 1969

During the years from the fall of 1965 to the spring of 1969 a dialogue between pro-war and antiwar activists on southern campuses gradually gave way to what seemed to be a prevailing antiwar sentiment. In essence it was a louder antiwar sentiment, the culmination of a debate between anti- and pro-war activists that targeted moderates for the latter part of the decade. Moderates were not the remainder of the students on the southern campuses, but instead students that titled themselves thusly so as to proclaim an antiwar and anti-protest position. These students made known their position largely in the form of letters to the editors of campus publications, and secondly by signing antiwar petitions while protesting antiwar demonstrations. Relatively few, if any, of those students that heckled antiwar demonstrators did so under a banner of support for the Vietnam war; the reasons stated were patriotism and a belief that protest demonstrations were potentially dangerous and therefore unnecessary. These moderates founded their clearly expressed opinion on the deep consideration they gave to the conservative values of their region, the rebellion and disorder protests implied, and a concern for those in the American military. It was this concern for the American military that caused many moderates to shift from that position to one entirely against the war in Vietnam by the

end of the 1960s, by which time most moderate students had become convinced that the most legitimate place for the American military to be was in America.

The escalating conflict in Vietnam between 1965 and 1969 surprised American leaders and commanders with its intensity, forcing them to acknowledge over time the sheer willpower and determination of the Vietcong and North Vietnamese fighters. The unexpected quagmire in Southeast Asia increasingly captured the attention of disconcerted American citizens, who in their increasing disconcertion went from expressing strong support of the war effort to voicing doubt and frustration. Yet support for American troops did not wane, neither with the general public nor with southern students specifically. It was this strong support for the United States military in southern universities that kept students who opposed the war from moving to a position of public protest, which they feared would convey a lack of respect for the military. Those in this moderate camp eventually brought about the shift from noticeable pro-war to noticeable antiwar sentiment during this time period. In the middle of the decade students specifically supporting the military aligned themselves with those supporting the war; by the end of the decade, however, alignment with those opposing the war became more logical as an increasing number of voices were calling for the withdrawal of U.S. troops. In order to understand the origins of the burst of antiwar sentiment of the fall of 1969 it is first necessary to chronicle the shifting positions and activities of these moderate, pro-war, and antiwar southern students in the preceding years.

The Tonkin Gulf Resolution passed by Congress in August of 1964 provided President Lyndon Johnson with the authority to expand the war thereafter. Former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara argues in his autobiography that from January to

July 1965 Johnson began a decision making process that escalated American involvement in Vietnam exponentially, evidenced by an increase in troops there from 23,000 to 175,000.[1] In April of 1965 the official mission of the troops in Vietnam changed from military base security to combat duty; the young men in uniform actively entered the war. By the summer of 1965 Johnson had managed to transform a Vietnamese civil war into what was fundamentally an American war.

During the 1965-66 school year the majority of the college students in the South were relatively silent about the war in Vietnam, either from lack of information circulated about the conflict or from apathy. Student voices that were heard mainly spoke in support of the military itself and refrained from seriously confronting the issues of the war.

Mississippi State University in Starkville evidenced awareness of the Vietnam war during the fall of 1965. In the student publication *The Reflector,* executive editor Bill Atkinson discussed Vietnam in "The Fifth Column," his self-described column of dissent.[2] Atkinson wrote in September that the Vietcong soldiers commanded respect as men who are able and willing to endure extremes; after a description of the conditions in which the Vietcong were fighting, he continued by saying that the Vietcong were unreservedly engaged in a war with American troops who have themselves never

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[1] Robert McNamara, *In Retrospect*: *The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam* (New York. Random House, 1995), 127, 169.

[2] Bill Atkinson, "The Fifth Column," *The Reflector* (Mississippi State University), 15 October 1965, p. 4.

previously been burdened with anything similar.[3] Atkinson's laudatory opinion of the Vietcong was a risky one in anti-Red America. The following month the editors of the student paper published a staunchly anti-communist, anti-protest article discussing the nationally organized day of student protest against the war in Vietnam. Accusing the organizations responsible for the growing nationwide antiwar movement as having ambiguous motivations, the columnist proposed that the "poorly coordinated" demonstrations were likely to occur on only a "sprinkling of college campuses."[4] The article went on to say that questioning governmental policy is appreciated in a democracy, but charged that these particular demonstrations against the war were a threat to national defense. The writer contended in a dramatic conclusion that burning draft cards and organizing sit-ins were precursors of riot and revolution, and warned that political revolutions "during the 20th century, have usually proven to be oriented toward Moscow and Peking."[5]

In a more moderate piece published in the campus paper a staff writer discussed questions raised by a student's recent visit to Vietnam sponsored by the National Student Christian Federation. The columnist described how the experience revealed to the Federation's representative the reality of the twenty-five year long war to the Vietnamese citizens, all of whom appeared to have been touched by the war to the point of being accustomed to it as a way of life. He used this student's experience as a basis to question

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[3] Bill Atkinson, "Viet Cong to be respected," *The Reflector* (Mississippi State University), 14 September 1965, p. 4, 5.

[4] "Reflections," *The Reflector* (Mississippi State University), 15 October 1965, p. 4.

[5] Ibid., 4.

whether the United States policies of national security were anything more than a cover to justify interfering in other nations' internal affairs. He also questioned what kind of enemy presumptuous American military tactics would create, feeling that the North Vietnamese would become resentfully unmoving when forced to the negotiation table.[6] The first evidence of awareness of the Vietnam war at this campus was essentially then three people: a tentative protester, a frightened conservative, and a moderate, whose opinions were published in the campus paper editorials.

In November of 1965 Bill Atkinson balanced his previous praise of the Vietcong when he dedicated his column to a critique of what he referred to as the "lunatic left." He alleged that the anti-war movement being conducted by American students could be interpreted by the North Vietnamese as support for their communist cause and would therefore have the unintended effect of prolonging the Vietnam war. Atkinson was answered by a State student who wrote a letter to the editor stating that though he too disapproved of the protest demonstrations of "radicals," Atkinson's attack was no way to deal with the protesters since "the fact is obvious that they are right." The student felt only the protest demonstrations themselves warranted attack, not the protesters' position on the war.[7] At the same time, *The Reflector* editors proposed that the Mississippi State University students were being challenged by the turmoil in America to make their

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[6] Terry L. Alford, "Two Roads Diverged . . . Outsider Looks In," *The Reflector* (Mississippi State University), 15 October 1965, p. 4.

[7] Robert L. Palmer, Letter to the Editor, *The Reflector* (Mississippi State University), 9 November 1965, p. 9.

patriotism known by backing a state-wide campaign to show support for American involvement in Vietnam.

The idea for such a campaign was born when the University of Mississippi Student Senate was recognized by CBS News in the fall of 1965 for unanimously passing a resolution supporting the President's Vietnam policies. From that point the students at Ole Miss, the state's flagship public university in Oxford, began circulating petitions that simultaneously supported the war and condemned student protest against it, and encouraged other Mississippi colleges to follow suit. Support for the effort at Mississippi State in Starkville came from both the Young Republicans and the Young Democrats, and also emanated from those who did not necessarily support the war in Vietnam itself but found dissent concerning it to be dangerously close to treason. While *The Reflector* staff officially pledged support for this opportunity to show patriotism and to crusade against communism, it did acknowledge that qualms existed on the State campus about America fighting an "unofficial' war on an 'official' basis."[8]

Atkinson continued to voice his various concerns about the war in Vietnam in the midst of the pro-war campaigns of November 1965 by attacking the military strategies of the United States. After arguing that the war in Vietnam would only be won after the United States military adopted guerilla warfare techniques, Atkinson backtracked to question America's involvement in Vietnam altogether; he asked whether a totalitarian regime would not be more appropriate than a democracy for a country like Vietnam whose citizens were uneducated and without a concept of a democratic society. Atkinson

[8] "Reflections," *The Reflector* (Mississippi State University), 2 November 1965, p. 4.

concluded by pointing out that if the United States did not win this war its position as a world power would be considerably compromised.[9] In the same issue another student wrote to the editor about the appropriate position for moderates. This writer identified two extremes, one opposing the war and one opposing opposition to the war, but was unable to find a place for those like himself who were self-titled patriots but did not support the war in Vietnam. The writer believed America had "as much business in Viet Nam as a Catholic nun at a stag party," but found no other place to state such an opinion but alongside the radical antiwar groups with which he was unwilling to associate.[10]

A few weeks later at Mississippi State a coordinating committee announced plans for another campus-wide effort to demonstrate student support of the U.S. presence in Vietnam. The committee planned to organize a blood drive for the American troops in conjunction with a petition for support of the military in Vietnam.[11] The Student Association Senate at Mississippi State, an elected representative body, simultaneously passed a resolution formally stating its support of the American military involvement in Vietnam, citing reasons that included the belief that this involvement would prohibit future communist expansion in the world.[12]

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[9] Bill Atkinson, "The Fifth Column: War Not Won by Brute Force," *The Reflector* (Mississippi State University), 5 November 1965, p. 4, 5.

[10] Letter to the Editor, *The Reflector* (Mississippi State University), 5 November 1965, p. 5, 6.

[11] "Committee Begins Study on Viet Policy Support," *The Reflector* (Mississippi State University), 12 November 1965, p. 1.

[12] Ibid., 1.

The increase in activity at Mississippi State supporting the war prompted the editor of *The Reflector* to conduct a poll of the State students concerning their opinions about the war. Of those who participated in the survey that November, seventy-two percent felt the United States was obligated to provide military support to South Vietnam, as compared to twenty-two percent who did not see an obligation. When asked what action should be taken if the current course proved ineffective, sixty-six percent suggested expanding the war into North Vietnam, sixteen percent favored confining military action to South Vietnam only, eleven percent felt the United States should completely remove its troops, and four percent thought aid should be continued but only in monetary form rather than through direct military intervention. When questioned about whether nationwide demonstrations against the war by college students reflected the attitudes of Mississippi State students, only seven percent responded in the affirmative.[13]

Discussion about the war and war protesters continued in *The Reflector* in December 1965. Atkinson was back to discussing protesters, blatantly accusing the antiwar demonstrators of treason in his column, and arguing that because of perceived support from the American protesters the Vietcong were again winning battles in a war they had just started to lose. Meanwhile the advertised "Bleed-In" took place as scheduled on December 10 with the circulation of the aforementioned petition. The petition combined support for the troops in Vietnam, as evidenced with the blood drive,

[13] Bob Sanford, "Student Survey Vietnam: Right or Wrong?" *The Reflector* (Mississippi State University), 23 November 1965, p. 5.

with support of the United States' involvement in Vietnam as a protector of freedom.[14] The president of Omicron Delta Kappa, the leadership society sponsoring the day of publicly-demonstrated war support, issued a statement claiming that the event had been organized in response to the demonstrations on college campuses against the war.[15] Mississippi State surpassed the blood-drive collections of other universities in the state with fourteen hundred pints, as compared with about six hundred at Ole Miss and just over a hundred at the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg.[16]

Support for the military was being shown elsewhere in the South by students stating pro-war positions. On the campus of Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, known for its conservative character, the Vietnam war had become an issue of concern with draft-age male students and a small activist group in 1965. Pro-war Vanderbilt students created the Students for the Support of the Soldiers in Vietnam during December 1965. This organization oversaw a blood drive and a petition supporting the military signed by more than two thousand students and faculty. When an army official arrived to pick up the petition, he was warmly greeted by a student-led pro-war rally.[17] Contemporaneously with the pro-war activities, a delegation of antiwar

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[14] James Sheffield, "The Day of the Needle: Bleed In for Viet Nam Conducted Here Today," *The Reflector* (Mississippi State University), 10 December 1965, p. 1.

[15] Troy Majure, "Ladies & Gentlemen, The President," *The Reflector* (Mississippi State University), 10 December 1965, p. 1.

[16] Sallie Anne Neblett, "The Bleed In: MSU Sets Record with 1400 Pints Donated Friday," *The Reflector* (Mississippi State University), 14 December 1965, p. 1.; see also James Sheffield, "The Day of the Needle: Bleed In for Viet Nam Conducted Here Today," *The Reflector* (Mississippi State University), 10 December 1965, p. 2.

[17] Ibid., 615.

students from Vanderbilt attended the first teach-in, held in Washington D.C., where a former Vanderbilt professor delivered a fervent lecture about the injustices of the war. Students organized a chapter of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) on the campus to distribute literature about the teach-in; the SDS at Vanderbilt was short-lived but resurfaced that fall under the name Student Political Education and Action Committee when the group began releasing a radical periodical, the *Prometheus.*[18]

Up to 1966 Johnson had been able to conceal the true scale of the mounting costs of the war from the American public by requesting less than adequate funding from Congress. In January of that year that deception was no longer possible when Johnson asked the legislature for almost 13 billion dollars, which was still almost five billion short of what military planners saw adequate.[19] The possibility of greater military sacrifice was concurrently revealed to Americans when Ho Chi Minh called the United States appeals for negotiations "an effort to fool public opinion" and refused to meet to discuss a compromise.[20] Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman J. William Fulbright responded to the renewal of the U.S. bombing campaign in February with hearings conducted to question Johnson's policy in Vietnam. The hearings continued for more than a month, receiving steady media attention. Testimony facing the reality of the war was heard by the American public for the first time since American involvement in

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[18] Paul K. Conkin, Henry Lee Swint, and Patricia S. Miletich, *Gone with the Ivy: A Biography of Vanderbilt University* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1985), 615.

[19] Ibid., 479.

[20] Ibid., 482.

Vietnam from top political and military personalities. Polls conducted before the Fulbright hearings commenced showed a sixty-three percent approval rating for Johnson's policies; after the hearings the approval rating dropped sharply to forty-nine percent.[21]

By January 1966 antiwar sentiment had strengthened at Mississippi State. A faculty member published an article in *The Reflector* discussing the debate in Congress over America's involvement in Vietnam. The professor alleged that the United States' intervention in Vietnam would widen and require military support other Southeast Asian countries. His blunt advice was to "get out of Southeast Asia USA!"[22] He went on to suggest that a dictatorship would be more appropriate for the Vietnamese in light of the governments in other Asian countries, and because the South Vietnamese were in effect already under a dictatorship with American backing. He justified his position by proposing that just as early Americans adhered to the idea of manifest destiny on this continent, so too might that concept apply to China and communist expansion throughout Southeast Asia.[23]

In February 1966 columnist Bill Atkinson continued to voice his oscillating opinions on the war in Vietnam in the Mississippi State paper. He cited the Geneva Accords and former president Kennedy's foreign policy when he argued that the Vietnam war should be fought by the Vietnamese, not by the American military. By the standards

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[21] Ibid., 497.

[22] Michael Stockstill, "Faculty Forum: Chinese Should Dominate All Asia," *The Reflector* (Mississippi State University), 4 February 1966, p. 4.

[23] Ibid., 4.

of the Accords, Atkinson said, Vietnam was one country and therefore the war there was a civil war. The columnist asserted that "the present U.S. involvement in Vietnam cannot be justified," and suggested putting money being poured into the war into domestic issues instead.[24] Atkinson and other columnists who had been speaking out about the war did not go unanswered. That month a Mississippi State senior called them communist supporters, and informed them that if they continued to voice antiwar sentiment they would soon lose the freedom of press they currently abused.[25]

Mississippi State sponsored a lecture series on Vietnam in March 1966 where many of the campus ROTC program officers were available to answer questions from students about the duration of the war, its purpose, and its legitimacy. The officers contended that American troop morale was high in Vietnam in spite of the unattractiveness of the situations the war presented, referring to the daily combat actions and to the possible bombing of Hanoi. One officer reassured listeners that the American military was in Vietnam in response to an invitation from the South Vietnamese and to stop communism from spreading.[26] State students, though many had been engaged in supporting these troops, may have become less inclined to join their ranks themselves after the lecture series; editors of the campus newspaper reprinted an article from

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[24] Bill Atkinson, "The Fifth Column," *The Reflector* (Mississippi State University), 22 February 1966, p. 4.

[25] Doug Herring, Letters to the Editor, *The Reflector* (Mississippi State University), 22 February 1966, p. 4.

[26] Lynn West, "Lecture Series: Vietnam: A Holding Action," *The Reflector* (Mississippi State University), 29 March 1966, p. 1.

Berkeley's *Daily Californian* advising readers on conscientious objection and "beating the draft."[27]

Atkinson attacked the war again in a March 1966 issue of the paper from the perspective that the United States would soon be trapped by its rhetoric on negotiations and free elections in Vietnam. Atkinson stated that the "undeclared war in Vietnam" was not justified nor worthwhile, but nonetheless would endure until the government decided on an acceptable alternative course of action. He objected to negotiations and free elections as a goal of the war, arguing that both should be viewed as means toward achieving some grander goal, and that with the current misdirection the American administration was setting itself up for failure in Vietnam. Atkinson echoed his previous claim about the inexperience of the Vietnamese with democratic institutions, saying that with free election propaganda the American government was shrouding the differences between Vietnamese and American citizens' understanding of political regimes. In his melodramatic style, Atkinson alleged that maintaining this devotion to negotiations and free elections would tie the hands of the American policy makers, forcing them to either compromise to create these situations or "remain in Vietnam for twenty to thirty years and virtually wipe out the young male population of the United States."[28]

By the fall of 1966 Americans could no longer deny the magnitude of the Vietnam war. In 1965 the United States bombing campaign in Vietnam dropped 33,000

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[27] Roger Friedland, "Want to Beat the Draft? Become a Conscientious Objector," *Daily Californian* (University of California-Berkeley), quoted in *The Reflector* (Mississippi State University), 29 March 1966, p. 2.

[28] Bill Atkinson, "The Fifth Column," *The Reflector* (Mississippi State University), 29 March 1966, p. 4, 5.

tons or ordinance; in 1966, that amount nearly quadrupled, rising to 128,000 tons. American aircraft lost during 1965 numbered 171, and rose sharply to 318 downed aircraft the following year. In early 1966 news writer Walter Lippmann had determined that Johnson's only option in Vietnam was to choose between expanding the war or accepting a denigrating peace.[29] By the autumn of 1966 the mainstream press had become increasingly critical of the situation in Vietnam. Both liberals and moderates wanted negotiations, while conservatives opposed to the status quo advocated increased involvement for more definitive results.[30]

Antiwar sentiment in southern universities became increasingly louder in the form of sporadic protest demonstrations during the 1966-67 school year. Students had become increasingly disillusioned with the war but not of the nation's political leadership; protesters still held out hope that those in power in the nation's capital would respond to student demands and change the current U.S. course in Vietnam. Antiwar sentiment was largely still expressed that school year in the form of discussion and debate, typically taking the form of newspaper articles and letters to the editor, rather than public demonstrations. Students at Vanderbilt, who had begun to express opinions about the Vietnam war the previous year, engaged in publishing an underground paper, and a smaller number organized sparsely attended teach-ins with the few professors on campus willing to voice opposition to the war.[31]

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[29] McNamara, *In Retrospect*, 228.

[30] Ibid., 229, 259.

[31] Conkin, 616.

A portion of students at the University of North Carolina became similarly vocal about the Vietnam war in the fall of 1966. The newly organized chapter of Students for a Democratic Society on the campus in Chapel Hill launched a new, irregularly published newspaper entitled *The Left Heel* (playing off *The Daily Tarheel*, the primary student newspaper), with the stated goal of encouraging dialogue in response to the conservatism seen as prominent by the student publishers. In the October issues one staff writer questioned America's purpose in the war by asking who exactly would be voting in South Vietnam, arguing that the idea of free elections there was a false pretense. The writer attacked American policymakers, labeling as "Johnsonian Democracy" "an election in which the incumbent government decides who can run, what he can talk about, the government counts the ballots and reports the vote, and then tells the successful candidates what they can and cannot do.[32] Another issue of the paper posted a caricature of president Johnson on the front labeled "the bully with an Air Force."[33]

Editors of *The Left Heel* dedicated an early issue solely to the Vietnam war. The November publication contained an official Pentagon release of the number of casualties in Vietnam, and published articles questioning the war from a variety of angles. One columnist joined the issue of the war with domestic agenda issues of economics and racism in a piece wherein he began with a critique of the situation by aligning President Johnson with Plato's definition of tyranny, then proceeded to argue that Defense Secretary Robert McNamara's version of Johnson's "war on poverty" merely entailed

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[32] Bill Barkley, "In the Name of Democracy," *Left Heel* (University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill), 3 October 1966, p. 5; 17 October 1966, p. 10.

[33] *Left Heel* (University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill), 17 October 1966, p. 1.

drafting the impoverished young men. The columnist concluded with citations of the disproportionate number of black citizens drafted and killed in the war.[34] Another writer expressed concern about perceived university support of the draft.[35]

During November and December, the last two months of that particular publication's time in print, Vietnam became the central topic of discussion, beating out other liberal forums. Another November issue of the Chapel Hill paper grabbed attention with a drawing of Uncle Sam pointing a revolver at the reader, a chilling graphical variant on the iconic World War I-era, "I want you," poster.[36] One student published an article that pointed out the escalated involvement of the American military without equally escalated enemy activity, and repeated the contradictory statements being issued by American foreign policy makers, arguing that those contradictory statements created a barrier that prohibited American citizens from ascertaining the true reasons for the increased American involvement. The writer alleged that America had treated China as if it were 1945 Russia, applying to Southeast Asia without justification the motives used to explain the more European-oriented Cold War with Russia.[37] Another writer published an article attacking the draft in particular, arguing that it was a mechanism of creating

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[34] "The Platonic Johnson," *Left Heel* (University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill), Special Vietnam Issue 1966, p. 2.

[35] Gary Waller, "The University and the Draft," *Left Heel* (University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill), Special Vietnam Issue 1966, p. 3.

[36] *Left Heel* (University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill), 14 November 1966, p. 1.

[37] Chuck Schunior, "Vietnam Weltanschauling," *Left Heel* (University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill), 14 November 1965, p. 7, 9.

prisoners within a self-proclaimed free country.[38] In a similar piece, another writer announced the "dovish" results of the November, 1966 Congressional elections—a setback for the Johnson White House that seriously whittled the Democratic legislative majority—offering them as proof of increasing dissent about the war since candidates critical of America's involvement in Vietnam took over a number of seats held by self-proclaimed "hawks."[39]

Johnson agreed to a hiatus of the American bombing campaign in Vietnam during January 1967, but announced the resumption of the campaign the following month. By May 1967 prospects for the war in Southeast Asia had become increasingly bleak, as evidenced by a memo sent from Secretary of Defense McNamara to Johnson informing him that there was "no attractive course of action" and that "all want the war ended and expect their president to end it."[40]

On the campus of Duke University down the road from Chapel Hill in Durham, antiwar sentiment among students emerged that spring semester where it would exist for the duration of the conflict. A flier circulated on January 17, 1967 announced a silent vigil in protest of the war in Vietnam, commemorating the deaths of Americans there and—tellingly—the deaths of the Vietnamese at the hands of Americans; its premise was the military's disregard for humanity. An anonymous letter, circulated in the form of a

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[38] Bill Barclay, "NO EXIT," *Left Heel (*University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill), 12 December 1966, p. 12.

[39] Roy Felshin, "Elections Reflect Rising Opposition to War," *Left Heel* (University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill), 12 December 1966, p. 9.

[40] McNamara, *In Retrospect*, 266, 284.

flier as opposed to being published in the campus newspaper, dated April 10, 1967 was presented to the Duke student body claiming that the American military and Vietnamese citizen deaths could not be ignored by any American, regardless of his views on the war itself. The letter argued that the purpose of the war was unclear, unless the war was a means for leaders to pursue personal objectives. Another flier circulated a month later informed the student body of a Duke alumnus refusing induction to the military; the flier called on readers to write letters to Washington and to think about their personal position about the draft and how to act accordingly.[41]

In April, 1967 a war-related incident occurred on the campus of the University of South Carolina in Columbia that attracted national attention. General William C. Westmoreland had been invited back to the university, his alma mater, to receive an honorary doctorate of law degree; he had been unable to attend the commencement ceremonies the previous spring because of military duties in Vietnam. About twenty students and some faculty picketed in protest outside of the chapel in which the ceremony took place, and were answered by others who opposed the demonstrations and shouted "get them, kill them." What gained greater recognition though was that inside the chapel chemistry professor Thomas Tidwell stood up with a sign immediately following the award ceremony and stated "I protest, doctor of war."[42]

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[41] Donald J. Fluke Papers 1958-: Vietnamese Conflict, 1961-1975, Duke University Archives, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

[42] Ginny Carroll, "Viet Commander Gets Degree: Picketers Interrupt Ceremony," *Gamecock* (University of South Carolina-Columbia), 28 April 1967, p. 1.

This University of South Carolina activity provoked responses from those interested in the initial incident that sparked an awareness of the Vietnam war that remained for its duration. The student protest organizer cited both American and Vietnamese deaths as cause for the protest when interviewed for the campus paper, and submitted a letter to the editor of *The Gamecock*, the student newspaper, defending her position of dissent, stating that honoring "the general responsible for the implementation of an illegal and immoral war represents a mockery of the sanctity of law."[43] A student senator responded, calling the protest discourteous and a poor reflection on the university, though not disagreeing with the stated cause of the protest.[44] Another student wrote the paper stating that he did not agree with the protesters, but felt that as an American as well he had no right to attempt to suppress their dissent.[45] Still another writer attacked Professor Tidwell directly, calling his action immature and embarrassing, but proposed only that the professor should have demonstrated outside the chapel rather than disrupting the ceremony inside.[46]

Demonstrations followed the storm of articles at the University of South Carolina. The radical student group AWARE, founded during the summer of 1966, organized a

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[43] Trina Parsons Sattli, Letter to the Editor, *Gamecock* (University of South Carolina-Columbia), 28 April 1967.

[44] Louis Parks, Letter to the Editor, *Gamecock* (University of South Carolina-Columbia), 28 April 1967.

[45] James E. Bowers, Letter to the Editor, *Gamecock* (University of South Carolina-Columbia), 5 May 1967.

[46] Charles A. McGeorge, Letter to the Editor, *Gamecock* (University of South Carolina-Columbia), 5 May 1967.

demonstration on May 3, 1967 calling for free speech and student rights. A campus forum for voicing opinion, referred to as a "Speak-Out" was held two days later on the topic of Vietnam veterans. Two speakers at the event received rounds of applause: one sanctioned the right to protest but alleged that protests would decrease American soldiers' morale, and the other was a student identifying himself as one who booed Westmoreland's protesters.[47] On May 19 another "Speak-Out" voiced similar sentiments about free speech with regard to the Westmoreland's visit. The general agreement was that the first amendment should be respected; some voiced the opinion that protests, although legal and acceptable in America, were inappropriate in the Bible Belt where citizens would not understand.[48] Those of this opinion reasoned that the Bible Belt South existed apart from the nation, and that its conservative citizens would immediately dismiss protests as little more than rebellion, rather than listening to the content of the protests and recognizing the genuineness of the participants. The students who expressed this thought at the Speak-Out did so out of fear that protests in the form of a demonstration would fall on deaf ears in the South, though they might succeed in raising concerns in other regions of America where citizens were not as wary of listening to alternative methods of communication.

Chemistry professor Thomas Tidwell's conduct created considerable disruption among the faculty and the trustees. He stated directly after his demonstration that he had

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[47] "Speak-Out: Vietnam Veterans: Fighting for Right," *Gamecock* (University of South Carolina-Columbia), 5 May 1967.

[48] "Free Speech Ideas Head Speak-Out," *Gamecock* (University of South Carolina-Columbia), 19 May 1967.

acted on his own without intention of representing a larger group. A faculty review issued a report on Tidwell stating that his conduct was inappropriate, while the Board of Trustees called him embarrassing.[49] In late June Tidwell, acting upon the suggestion of the Board of Trustees, sent a letter to Westmoreland apologizing for his manner of protest and for any embarrassment he caused, but maintaining his personal views of the United States military involvement in the Vietnam war.[50] Westmoreland replied in a condescending letter in which he stated his recognition of the right to dissent and his expectation that it would be done in a sensible manner.[51]

Student protests continued to crop up around the South. As the school year was coming to a close in neighboring Georgia, six students and an English professor from Savannah State College gathered on May 18 in front of the local military recruiting headquarters with signs protesting the war. They marched for more than two hours asking America to "bring our boys home." A black student protester fused the issues of civil rights and foreign policy when he added, "Don't make me a first-class soldier and a second-class citizen."[52] A group of five young men approached the protesters at one

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[49] "Committee Reviews Protest," *Gamecock* (University of South Carolina-Columbia), 5 May 1967.

[50] Dr. Thomas Tidwell, to General William Westmoreland, 29 June 1967, Board of Trustee Minutes, University of South Carolina Archives, South Caroliniana Library, Columbia, South Carolina.

[51] General William Westmoreland, to Dr. Thomas Tidwell, 8 July 1967, Board of Trustee Minutes, University of South Carolina Archives, South Caroliniana Library, Columbia, South Carolina.

[52] Barbara Dlugozima, "Opposing Group Appears: Students Protest War," *Savannah (Georgia) Morning News*, 18 May 1967, section B, p. 15, 16.

point that afternoon with military recruiting information but were ignored. Later, a hurriedly gathered small group of war supporters from the community organized an impromptu demonstration in answer to the protesters. This group of three remained with an American flag and two signs after the antiwar demonstrators dispersed.

The Savannah State College protesters had expected students and faculty from Armstrong State College—also in Savannah—to join them in demonstrating, but the second group did not show. Antiwar sentiment at Armstrong State did become evident, however, when the campus staged a forum on Vietnam. On May 24 four professors addressed a crowd of two hundred students and faculty, presenting a range of views on the conflict. The first speaker discussed the relationship between nationalism and communism, proposing the Vietnamese had the right to choose their own form of government. The second professor claimed that American assistance had been promised and that that commitment could not be abandoned. The third professor answered that economic conditions in Vietnam would be a more useful area of American assistance rather than military aid. The final professor to speak charged America with projecting its own ideologies onto other nations, and added that defeating the communist Vietnamese was unlikely since North Vietnam had managed to realize independence with a Communist government.[53]

What were random and unconnected incidents of protests during the 1966-67 school year were to rapidly develop into a cohesive movement in the South as the military situation in Vietnam deteriorated. The following school year brought the antiwar

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[53] "Planned Session: Vietnam Discussion Held at Armstrong," *Savannah (Georgia) Morning News,* 25 May 1967, section B, p. 12, 16.

opinions expressed during this year together in the form of public demonstrations, having a louder and more noticeable effect than the storms of articles.

In a controversial but accurate article, *New York Times* reporter R. W. Apple wrote from Saigon that the situation in Vietnam during the summer of 1967 was effectively a stalemate.[54] Meanwhile Johnson announced a deployment of 45,000 additional troops to Vietnam. That fall public approval ratings specifically of the war in Vietnam shifted; more of those questioned were opposed to the war rather than in support.[55] By November 1967 American bombing campaigns had destroyed almost every target proposed by the Joint Chiefs. Yet in spite of the bleak prospects and seemingly futile military campaigns, a Harris poll taken in December 1967 revealed that support for the war had risen again; sixty-three percent of those asked supported escalation of the war when the alternative presented was complete withdrawal. Pollster Louis Harris speculated this evident swing in public opinion to be the result of discomfort with the antiwar movement, lack of a clear advantage to pulling out, and positive reports from army officials in Vietnam.[56]

Student protests in the South during the 1967-68 school year marked the beginning of an increasingly visible antiwar movement in southern universities as the

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[54] R. W. Apple, *New York Times*, 7 August 1967.

[55] Col. Harry G. Summers, Jr., *The Vietnam War Almanac* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1985), 43.

[56] Robert Mann, *A Grand Delusion: America's Descent into Vietnam* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 568.

antiwar activists organized into titled groups with clear direction as they engaged in more active protests than writing, and as the civil rights and antiwar issues were connected.

In the fall of 1967, a student protester at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia was admitted to the student infirmary on October 17 after a six-day fast in protest of the Vietnam war; he called the war "morally and legally wrong, and against the best interests of the country." The freshman NAACP spokesperson and antiwar activist announced his protest in the form of a sign worn around his neck; his self-described "hunger strike" was an attempt to move other Emory students to take a stand in opposition to the war. Student response was slight, but the activist did have some success in that a patriotic medal from the Freedoms Foundation of Valley Forge, Pennsylvania in the university library was removed at his request. Upon recovery from the fast, the war protester made plans to attend the planned national antiwar march in Washington.[57]

By November 1967 student opposition to the war was on the rise at Vanderbilt University. Discontented students calling themselves the Vanderbilt Vietnam Action Committee demonstrated their opposition to Dow Chemical Company recruitment on campus and the uses of napalm in the war with signs and a coffin; this antiwar group was answered by students from the chemistry department who destroyed the signs, spilled a foul-smelling liquid on the coffin, and demanded the coffin be relinquished. (They subsequently offered monetary compensation and formal apologies for any damages to the protest materials.) Those protesting the war outnumbered these counterdemonstrators; an estimated one hundred and fifty gathered at the antiwar rally,

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[57] "Savannah Student at Emory: War Protest 'Fast' Shifts to Infirmary," *Savannah (Georgia) Morning News*, 17 October 1967.

while between thirty and fifty participated in the specific antiwar demonstrations. A more daring student opposed to the war in Vietnam threatened to burn a dog in protest to call attention to the severity of the burn injuries received in Vietnam by those who came into contact with chemicals used by the American military.[58] A poll taken at Vanderbilt that semester documented seventy-seven percent of the students supporting the war but revealed a clear split between the student body and the faculty: seventy percent of the faculty called for an alternative to continuing the endeavor.[59] Dow recruiters returned to the campus on February 23, 1968 and met a protest similar to that in November; this time two demonstrators were arrested who had unintentionally prohibited access to a campus building.[60]

Students at the University of Chapel Hill released another short-lived underground publication in the fall of 1967 focused solely on Vietnam-related issues. The editorial staff of *Vietnam Viewpoints* intended the publication to register opposition to the war and to raise awareness of the conflict. In the first issue the consensus of the editors was that "a strong, united Vietnam must be our goal." "Regardless of what label it assumes to complement its nationalist character," the editors continued, "it is preferable to the current misguided suppression of this nationalism in the name of anti-communism." This position voiced in *Vietnam Viewpoints* revealed a willingness to

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[58] Bob Thompson, "Chemists Attack Protesters; 'Gut Reaction' Object of Threat," *Vanderbilt Hustler* (Vanderbilt University, Tennessee), 14 November 1967, p. 1; see also Conkin, 625.

[59] Conkin, 625.

[60] Ibid., 625.

accept communism indicative of a turn toward radicalism that began to characterize some antiwar students.[61] Another writer argued that "nationalism invalidates the Domino theory," and that "idealistically and practically we have nothing to gain and everything to lose" in Vietnam.[62]

Students in other parts of North Carolina engaged in antiwar demonstrations as well. In December of 1967 a flier circulated at both Duke University and North Carolina State University, located in the state capital in Raleigh, calling college students' attention to another protest against the draft, to be held at the Raleigh induction center during the national "Stop the Draft Week" schedule for December 4 through 8. As points of concern the flier cited both the expansion of the war in Vietnam and the draft, and its authors accused America of attempting to be the world's police force.

The lack of military progress in Vietnam had become undeniable by the end of 1967. When Johnson delivered his State of the Union address on January 17, 1968, however, he offered an upbeat assessment in which he categorically stated that "the enemy has been defeated in battle after battle."[63] Three days later, on January 20, North Vietnamese forces attacked a United States marine base at Khe Sanh, a battle which Westmoreland initially predicted would result in a U.S. victory. But the battle began to wear on the American military, and Westmoreland fell for what had been a diversionary tactic when he moved numerous troops from Saigon to occupy defensive positions in

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[61] *Vietnam Viewpoints* (University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill), November 1967, p. 2.

[62] Steve Deutch, "Nationalism Invalidates the Domino Theory," *Vietnam Viewpoints* (University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill), November 1967, p. 3.

[63] Mann, *A Grand Delusion*, 570.

support of the Khe Sanh garrison. Ten days after that assault, during the Vietnamese celebration of the Vietnamese lunar new year known as Tet, traditionally marked by a period of cease-fire, Americans at home were riveted by media coverage of a Vietcong assault on Saigon. It became evident more at that time than any other that even with five hundred thousand American troops in South Vietnam, North Vietnamese forces had taken over the American embassy in Saigon in a daring raid and attacked other vital strongholds in the capital city. Eventually the Tet Offensive brought North Vietnamese fighters into five of the six major cities and to more than a hundred smaller cities, towns, and villages. The second week of that February saw the highest weekly casualty rate of the war.[64] Within two weeks of the initial Tet offensives, American and South Vietnamese forces regained control, but the strength of the Vietcong was blatantly obvious to the citizens at home, and although many military analysts suggested the offensive had been decisively thwarted by U.S. and South Vietnamese forces, the communists had won a clear propaganda victory.[65]

An incident in Saigon on February 3 during the height of the Tet offensive triggered questions over whether the South Vietnamese deserved American military assistance. The director of the South Vietnamese police force openly executed a Vietcong guerilla fighter on the streets of the capital, a moment captured on film that became one of the most indelible images of the entire conflict. Though the fighter had killed numerous South Vietnamese, the brutality of the summary execution disturbed

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[64] Summers, *The Vietnam War Almanac*, 45.

[65] Mann, *A Grand Delusion*, 572.

Americans at home who were supporting assistance for what after that incident seemed to some to represent a barbaric country.[66] Questions about the war in Vietnam continued to mount, with increased opposition voiced in the U.S. Senate. In March of 1968 Senator Fulbright held hearings on the Gulf of Tonkin incident of August, 1964 that revealed Johnson had at least partially lied about the facts of the incident and as a result had achieved funds the conflict's escalation and considerable latitude to wage the undeclared war as commander in chief.

Johnson, who had always been ambivalent about what he privately dubbed "that bitch of a war on the other side of the world," but had nonetheless presided over its exponential escalation, himself realized the bleakness of the war in Vietnam by the spring of 1968 and its implications for his presidency. Having reviewed honest and increasingly skeptical reports from his advisors in Southeast Asia, Johnson addressed the nation on television on March 31 about taking specific and immediate steps to deescalate the war and bring about negotiations. Then, in a stunning declaration that was a surprise to many of his closest political associates, he announced at the conclusion of his address that he would not run for another presidential term. Shortly thereafter, the American government commenced formal peace negotiations with the North Vietnamese in Paris.

With the actions of the nation's leaders indicating their faltering hope of a positive outcome of the American military involvement in Vietnam, students desiring to express their own concerns became increasingly confident in 1968. Focus at Duke encompassed specific issues on the university's relationship to the war as well, as was

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[66] Ibid., 575.

frequently the case at Vanderbilt. On February 5, 1968, eighty students and faculty staged a demonstration in opposition to napalm, the war, and the university's willingness to cooperate with the war effort, in that order. Two days later a "study-in" was held at Duke to research the role of the university in the war. Sessions explored the extent to which the university cooperated with the federal government and specific industries responsible for aiding the war effort, the relationship between that cooperation and the purposes of Duke as a university, and whether the Duke administration would discuss its policies concerning the war with students. On February 29 the investment committee of the Duke University Trustees responded to the demonstration opposing the university's complicity with the use of napalm in the war; the students were allowed to question the committee's representative about the morality of having stock investments that profited from what they called an immoral war. The trustees answered that what was moral was support of the United States government in any military endeavor in the form of maintaining the availability of necessary military materials; once the government was elected, said the trustees, individuals must define morality by supporting the government's orders. The consensus among the trustees was that, if the situation arose, Duke officials would continue to support the production of napalm. Duke students followed that conversation with the circulation of its transcription and an attached letter of dissatisfaction to be signed and mailed to Duke administrative officials at the readers' discretion.[67] A month later, the dissatisfaction became further manifest when a flier was posted at Duke in late March in reference to the proposed April 3 national draft resistance day. The flier

[67] Donald J. Fluke Papers 1958-: Vietnamese Conflict, 1961-1975, Duke University Archives, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

announced that those concerned intended to protest in the form of a march to the Durham Federal Building to return draft cards.

At the University of South Carolina activism born in response to a civil rights demonstration on a nearby campus quickly took the form of antiwar sentiment in early 1968. (Authorities shot and killed three students and wounded twenty-seven others during a civil rights demonstration on the campus of historically-black South Carolina State University that February. For a more detailed discussion see section three below.) The first demonstration that semester was a co-sponsored memorial service by the Student Government and the Afro-American Students Association on February 16 for the students killed at South Carolina State College. The service commemorated their lives and called attention to increased violence in America.[68] A rally was held following the memorial service for the Orangeburg students at the University of South Carolina campus chapel on February 27, 1968 in response to an incident at nearby Fort Jackson where soldiers were removed from the chapel there, and told that "Any use of the chapel for questioning or meditating on the role of the United States in the world will be treated as an illegal act." The responsive South Carolina students cited freedom of worship and the number of friends that had become casualties of the war as causes for the protest.[69] The disruptive student activist group AWARE resumed what antiwar activity had existed

[68] Thomas F. Jones, 1967-68--President's Records, USC Archives, South Caroliniana Library, Columbia, South Carolina: box 10, folder "Student Affairs: Student Activities: Student Unrest."

[69] Thomas F. Jones, 1967-68--President's Records, USC Archives, South Caroliniana Library, Columbia, South Carolina: box 10, folder "Student Affairs: Student Activities: Student Unrest."

shortly thereafter by supporting a visit from folk singer and antiwar activist Joan Baez sponsored by a one of the campus Christian organizations that April, and by organizing a peaceful demonstration in support of the March on Washington that spring.[70]

An affair with a Vanderbilt athlete attracted more student interest in April 1968. Football player Terry Thomas left the team and gained national attention when it was revealed that his coaches had discouraged him from bringing a black co-ed as a date to an athletic banquet. The situation began when Thomas signed a petition with twenty-three other students saying he would not serve in the Vietnam war if drafted; the athletic department at Vanderbilt felt the signature reflected poorly on the team. University students rallied in support of Thomas that April.[71]

At Vanderbilt during the same month, a mock presidential candidate election revealed that students favored antiwar candidates Eugene McCarthy and Robert Kennedy almost two to one over Johnson and Richard Nixon. When asked in a simultaneously presented poll about the war in Vietnam, 1,118 students favored gradual withdrawal of American forces, 302 immediate withdrawal, 290 continued military involvement, and 244 increased military involvement. On the bombing of North Vietnam specifically, twice as many students favored some form of suspension as opposed to continuation or escalation. These surveys represented changes in opinion about Vietnam only, not a change in political affiliation. Although the government was now coming under attack

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[70] AWARE, Minutes of Meeting, 11 April 1968, Special Collections and Archives, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina.

[71] Chuck Offenburger, "Ex-Footballer Thomas Quits Squad After Controversy on Draft Stand," *Vanderbilt Hustler* (Vanderbilt University, Tennessee), 5 April 1968, p. 1, 8.

from Vanderbilt students, the war issue did not sway the students' party affiliations; they continued Vanderbilt's traditional Republican voting pattern, which meant Richard Nixon received over half of the November mock election votes from Vanderbilt while the previously favored Eugene McCarthy received an insignificant number of write-ins.[72]

Racism and the war were linked concerns at the University of Mississippi as well, where students were accused in one *New York Times* article of being apathetic toward issues like Vietnam with which other campuses were concerned.[73] University officials in Oxford had attempted to prevent major antiwar disturbances by enacting a tough policy on campus speakers in early 1968. The Board of Trustees believed that opposition to the war in Vietnam would bring violence to the Ole Miss campus. Although the campus to this point had not experienced any antiwar protests, the memory of the violent riots accompanying James Meredith's 1962 admission to the University may have played a role in administrators' attempts to forestall protest. At Ole Miss it was the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. that encouraged antiwar protests. In the wake of the assassination one student went to the campus publication *The Mississippian* to point out how the Vietnam war revealed the continued civil rights struggles for black citizens. The writer stated that "blacks are dying in Vietnam for the dream of American freedom when it doesn't actually exist at all."[74]

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[72] Ibid., 626.

[73] *New York Times*, 1968. The article calls Ole Miss "little more than a party school attended by the empty-headed offspring of planters and bankers."

[74] John Donald, *Mississippian* (University of Mississippi), April 1968.

What happened during the 1967-68 school year in the South was significant for two reasons. Increasing antiwar sentiment forced activists to organize their efforts, an endeavor that naturally resulted in definitions of position and purpose, thus the emergence of a distinguishable antiwar movement in the South. In addition, it was during this school year that the civil rights and antiwar movements came together, having previously struggled to define a relationship. Black students felt they could risk overshadowing civil rights concerns with Vietnam because of the high casualty rates of the black American troops, while white students could felt they could justify crossing the racial barrier because of the student casualty rates on college campuses. The fear student activists' had of losing their primary cause when joining it with another diminished during this school year, when protesters realized that violence was common to both the civil rights and antiwar movements.

On October 31, 1968 Johnson announced a bombing halt in what some criticized as an attempt to influence the imminent presidential election. Five days later Republican nominee Richard Nixon was elected president as the climax of a campaign that had focused extensively entirely on Nixon's critique of the Johnson Administration's handling of the Vietnam situation. The candidate had promised an "honorable peace," which turned out to mean ending the war on his own terms; Americans initially misinterpreted the statement as a step toward de-escalation and withdrawal. In the South the 1968-69 school year was relatively quiet for antiwar activists as students allowed the new president and administration a grace-period to implement their "Vietnamization" policies.

At the University of South Carolina the antiwar members of AWARE remained active for the duration of the school year. That fall they formally aligned themselves with the Students for a Democratic Society and the Southern Student Organizing Committee (SSOC), a move that alarmed many university and community members. The group sent more than twenty representatives to G.I. Day, a march in support of the military to bring the rest of the troops home, held in Atlanta on October 27, 1968. AWARE officers urged the group to independently attend and express disapproval at an October 31 lecture sponsored by the pro-war Young Americans for Freedom. AWARE also participated in the national SDS Elections Disruption Day on November 4 and 5, sponsoring a teach-in and class boycott on November 4 to inform listeners of the presidential candidates' inadequacy; on November 5 the protesters took disruptions to the actual polls.

The university officials did not directly reprimand the antiwar sentiment professed by the members of AWARE, but did hold them responsible for noncompliance with some campus rules; on November 25 a hearing was held because of unauthorized speakers, unauthorized use of loudspeakers, and selling of items at a booth during the Elections Disruption Day. With antiwar students at the University of South Carolina becoming more radical and less respectful of authority, university officials placed AWARE on probation.[75] Undaunted, the activists promoted a local G.I. Peace Rally and United March for Peace on December 7, in which G.I.s were encouraged to march out of uniform with students and then view films on the conflict in Vietnam and showcasing

[75] AWARE, Minutes of Meeting, 21, 23 October, 25 November 1968, Special Collections and Archives, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina.

Columbia University protests of April 1968 that resulted in student occupation of campus buildings in New York City. Just before Christmas an anonymous newsletter circulated through the University of South Carolina campus entitled "That Men Might Live." The writer attacked 1968 American draft policies, reworking the historical 1775 rallying cry "no taxation without representation" to read "no obedience to unrepresentative authority."[76]

Antiwar activity continued throughout the spring semester at the University of South Carolina. In January members were invited to board a bus from Atlanta to Washington, D.C. to attend and heckle during the Nixon inauguration. Sixteen students from nearby Furman College had committed to go.[77] "White Awareness Week" was held February 3-8 at the university in memory of the shootings at Orangeburg the previous year, but with focus on the injustices to black citizens because of Vietnam specifically. The week entailed watching the film *No Vietnamese Ever Called Me a Nigger* and other similar activities for "those who don't give a damn."[78] The same film was shown at the South Carolina Southern Student Organizing Committee State Conference a month later in conjunction with workshops on draft deferment. Antiwar students concluded the 1968-69 school year with an invitation to meet Richard Nixon at the Columbia airport on

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[76] "That Men Might Live," December 1968, Presidential Papers, Special Collections and Archives, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina.

[77] AWARE, Minutes of Meeting, 14 January 1969, Special Collections and Archives, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina.

[78] "White Awareness Week," February 1969, Presidential Papers, Special Collections and Archives, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina.

May 3 with demands to "bring troops home" and to "stop imperialistic war in Vietnam."[79]

At Auburn University, Alabama's land grant institution, antiwar sentiment was voiced for the first time during the 1968-69 school year. The university had a reputation for being tranquil, best evidenced by its uneventful integration in early 1964 after the more melodramatic conclusion to Governor George Wallace's "stand in the schoolhouse door" at the flagship Tuscaloosa campus of the University of Alabama in June, 1963. Student concern at Auburn focused on race, womens' rights, university disciplinary policies, ROTC, and the distribution of student activity funds that decade in the form of student government proposals, student-faculty committees and meetings, and campus newspaper articles.[80] In October 1969 student concerns expanded to encompass the war in Vietnam. A peace vigil was held on the Auburn campus on October 21 in response to the monetary costs and casualty rates of what the protesting students called an immoral and foolish undeclared war.[81] Two months later the administration, uneasy about the possibility of demonstrations erupting in violence, enacted a preventive set of guidelines

[79] "Richard Nixon We Demand," 3 May 1969, Presidential Papers, Special Collections and Archives, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina.

[80] Harry M. Philpott, to Joseph Shoben, 30 May 1968, Presidential Papers, Auburn University Archives, Auburn, Alabama.

[81] Sarah Goodwin, to Auburn University Administration, 21 October 1968, Presidential Papers, Auburn University Archives, Auburn, Alabama.

outlining the character protest demonstrations were expected to have and stating possible consequences of violating the student protest guidelines.[82]

Campuses that did have a short history of protest activity to this point also continued to engage in the antiwar effort as the 1968-69 school year progressed. In December at the University of North Carolina a radical underground newspaper the *Protean Radish* appeared for the first time. This left-oriented publication stayed in print until April of 1970 as a platform on which writers could discuss controversial issues. The paper documented a march for G.I. rights to free speech supported by more than a hundred students on December 7. An article published a week later by the Young Socialist Alliance declared that "US involvement in Vietnam is abhorrent," that America "has intervened on the side of a series of tyrannical Southern regimes."[83] A March 1969 issue provided two pages of information on draft deferments and resistance; the following issue announced a two-day seminar and discussion on the subject.[84] The April 28 issue devoted a spread to the discussion of the roles of the SDS and the Southern Student Organizing Committee, the white sister organization to the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), in the South. The *Radish* concluded that the SSOC

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[82] H. Floyd Vallery, to Harry M. Philpott, 4 December 1968, Presidential Papers, Auburn University Archives, Auburn, Alabama.

[83] Young Socialist Alliance, *Protean Radish* (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill), 16 December 1968, p. 9.

[84] *Protean Radish* (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill), 3 March 1969, p. 10, 11; 10 March 1969, p. 11.

could not solely support the antiwar movement in the South by itself, but required a stronger and more broad-based political organization.[85]

Antiwar sentiment emerged at Clemson University, South Carolina's land grant institution, in 1969. The university's first demonstration against the war was held in the form of a peace vigil in April. The vigil was conducted by a small group of students as part of the national event sponsored by the Students' Mass for Peace. Pro-war students confronted the demonstrators, hurling eggs and a piece of aluminum pipe at them while drowning out peace discussions with "The Green Berets" blasting from a speaker. Shortly thereafter, a decision was made by those at the vigil to transfer to a safer site, but were detained by one of the university deans who arrived to inform the antiwar group that playing their own quieter record player was prohibited. The egg-throwing counterdemonstrators followed the antiwar students to the chosen safer location, at which they witnessed the antiwar activists being greeted again by the same dean, who told them this time that their demonstration could only be held at the previously designated location. Demonstrators were unsure of moving back, since the first location had been outdoors on the campus quad, making students easy targets for hecklers; when students asked the dean to consider turning on the quad lights for safety, he refused and announced he was contemplating turning off the lights in the secondary location the students had chosen. The compromise reached by the antiwar demonstrators and the dean allowed them to stay in the safer of the two locations, provided they remain out of the path of intoxicated students returning to campus through the area. The vigil

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[85] "SDS," "SSOC," *Protean Radish* (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill), 28 April 1969, p. 2, 3.

concluded uneventfully the next morning with the protesters singing "We Shall Overcome," the primary anthem the civil rights movement.[86]

In what could still be considered uncharacteristic display of sympathy for the antiwar movement at the University of Mississippi in early 1969, Dr. Earle Reynolds was invited to deliver a guest lecture to a political science class. Reynolds was a Quaker peace activist who had already distributed medical supplies to Hanoi and Saigon, and had sailed his yacht into a nuclear test area in protest of nuclear warfare. The administration was nervous about this speaker, having already felt compelled to remove three student antiwar demonstrators from the campus. Reynolds had begun speaking before the university administration made a decision as to how to handle the antiwar activist; officials entered the lecture hall and halted Reynolds midsentence, shuffling him silently from the classroom with no verbal explanation for their action. Later that day the Young Democrats and a few black students asked the speaker to continue his interrupted remarks at an off-campus facility. Many of the University's faculty were outraged upon hearing of the administrators' conduct, charging the university with violating its own policy of protecting academic freedom.[87]

The 1968-69 school year concluded with newly-elected President Richard Nixon proposing adjustments to the Selective Service on May 19, having to that point only pursued his Vietnam policies by entering into negotiations with Hanoi and the National

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[86] Richard Street, "Clemson's First: Student Peace Vigil Spawns Confrontations," *Tiger* (Clemson University, South Carolina), 18 April 1969.

[87] Nadine Cohodas, *The Band Played Dixie: Race and Liberal Conscience at Ole Miss* (New York: The Free Press, 1997), 137, 138.

Liberation Front. Congress approved the proposal that 19-year old males were to be drafted before older eligible males, and that those of draft age would be susceptible to the program for one year instead of seven. The following month, in recognition of Americans still awaiting the promised "honorable peace," Nixon announced the withdrawal of five percent of the U.S. troops in South Vietnam.

In the South this school year was the last before an eruption of demonstrations aligning the southern antiwar movement with the national antiwar movement for a brief but significant time. The nascent movement from its origins showed a reluctance to focus on the single issue of the Vietnam war; it displayed its eagerness to embrace any issue that might gain a sympathetic hearing, often by championing civil rights-related issues. Nevertheless, by the spring of 1969, even with the election year lull, the antiwar movement had established a foothold in southern universities. Moderates who had refrained from taking a vocal position on the war moved from subtle support of U.S. policy in Southeast Asia to outright dissent upon forming the conclusion that the best way of supporting the military was withdrawing the troops from Vietnam. Thus the southern student antiwar movement had constructed enough of a secure footing to risk association with other student radicals in nationally-organized antiwar demonstrations the next fall.

# CHAPTER TWO

# RISKING ASSOCIATION:

# THE FALL OF 1969 THROUGH THE SPRING OF 1970

In the first years of its formation, the southern student antiwar movement remained for the most part separate from the more radical national student antiwar movement. This changed in the 1969-70 school year when southern antiwar students decided that the grievances they shared with their northern counterparts were more important than differences in lifestyle and ideological orientation. Compelled at this point more by a desire to end the Vietnam conflict with a united antiwar movement than by a fear of being associated with the counterculture, students across the South engaged in fall moratoriums and spring antiviolence strikes. This is not to say that the pro-war sentiment among students perished; it did not. But a growing number of southern students found it difficult to support the war while confronting mounting casualties in Vietnam and an escalation in violence against protesters in America.

After a cease-fire in Southeast Asia, in August of 1969, the North Vietnamese resumed fighting with attacks on an American military base after a month of silence. Within days the attacks expanded to include more than a hundred other strategic points in South Vietnam. While Nixon was still publicly claiming to espouse a policy of de-escalation, he secretly increasingly involved the United States in Cambodia. His proposal

that September to Ho Chi Minh for a "just peace" was answered with a statement from the North Vietnamese that a just peace would be defined as a withdrawal of American forces. To the Nixon Administration, this was tantamount to allowing the South Vietnamese to destroy themselves; in a press conference the President replied that peace meant continued American involvement until the end of the conflict.[1] In a preemptive attempt to soften the potential domestic repercussions of that reply, Nixon announced the withdrawal of sixty thousand troops and canceled the November and December draft calls.

Not satisfied, activists scheduled antiwar demonstrations across America to take place on October 15, 1969 even with Nixon's recent statement planning for an "honorable peace." The rallies that day were unquestionably a form of protest against war and called for its curtailment; the event itself was called by antiwar activists a "day of national remembrance of the war dead," however, making participation more attractive and safe for moderates.[2] Peace rallies held that day were attended by the largest number recorded to that point in the antiwar movement, yet even at the demonstrations in larger cities with greater movements, Nixon supporters were found opposing the demonstrations and flying the American flag at full staff.[3]

A month later the antiwar New Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam (New Mobe) organized three days of protest beginning on November 14. The

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[1] Robert Mann, *A Grand Delusion: America's Descent into Vietnam* (New York: Basic Books, 2001): 638.

[2] *New York Times,* 15 October 1969, section 1, p. 1.

[3] *New York Times,* 16 October 1969, section 1, p. 1.

"March Against Death" that day in Washington, D.C. initiated the antiwar demonstrations in the nation's capital city, an event that still identified anguish over mounting casualties in the war as more of a rallying point than ending the war itself, thus broadening its reach. The March preceded a mass rally the next day at the Washington Monument. Critics of the war gathered there in protest stated the demonstration was designed to show Nixon that his "silent majority was no majority at all."[4] Between two and three hundred thousand protesters gathered during November in Washington, the largest crowds to ever protest the war in Vietnam.

The moratorium commenced the day after the release of articles describing the My Lai massacre. Nixon had countered the antiwar movement with an attempt to produce support from his silent majority in another speech about the war that November verbalizing his plan to withdraw American forces according to a schedule. He also pointed to improvements in the development of the South Vietnamese army's ability to defend itself, the other half of the policy equation that would be known as "Vietnamization." The *New York Times* article two weeks later publicizing the atrocity of the My Lai massacre offered a grisly counterpoint to Nixon's upbeat assessments, shocking the American public. During the Tet Offensive a small American military unit under the command of Army Lieutenant William Calley had conducted a search and destroy mission in the vicinity of the village of My Lai. On March 16, 1968, in the hamlet of Song, My, the Americans had killed more than three hundred unarmed Vietnamese citizens, many of them women, children, and the elderly. The Army had

[4] Joseph Lelyveld, "Nationwide Protest of War Opens with Light Turnout," *New York Times,* 14 November 1969, section 1, p. 1.

subsequently covered the incident up for a year and a half despite damning photographic evidence and numerous eyewitness accounts of the carnage.[5]

Students in southern colleges and universities were more active the year 1969-1970 than in any other of the antiwar movement in expressing opinion on the war in Southeast Asia. Those institutions that had been steadily involved in protest or support continued to hold demonstrations, and other institutions previously disengaged joined in organizing demonstrations during the nationally-organized protests. Between the larger antiwar demonstrations, southern students continued to address—and often attack—specific issues concerning the war: the draft, economic costs of the conflict, and the legitimacy of American involvement. Other southern students spoke out condemning the antiwar movement.

In Georgia enough universities planned October 15 Moratorium activities that conservative state and city leaders called for counter demonstrations. With marches and memorial services scheduled at most of the state's universities, those in support of the war were asked to keep American flags raised to full staff and go to class and work on the day of the Moratorium, conveying a signal of "business as usual."[6] At Armstrong State College in Savannah, the antiwar and civil rights movements joined in a protest scheduled for that day that was widely supported by the local branch of the National

[5] Mann, *A Grand Delusion*, 648.

[6] "Protest Opposition Mounts in Georgia," *Savannah (Georgia) Morning News*, 15 October 1969, section A, p. 1, 2.

Association for the Advancement of Colored People.[7]

It is worth noting that Georgia Tech, while portrayed historically as preoccupied with university-level issues rather than national concerns, in actuality did not show as much political apathy as has been assumed. The university witnessed tense dialogue between the small antiwar faction and the larger majority of conservative students. (A survey of Tech students that had been taken in 1968 revealed that the majority supported the war in Vietnam. Specifically, the students polled favored strong measures in an effort to win the war, including increased bombing campaigns in North Vietnam. Less than ten percent of Tech students at that time favored a withdrawal of American military forces from Indochina.) In October of 1969 the Tech student government quickly defeated a Vietnam Moratorium bill that had been introduced by antiwar students. Simultaneously, in a letter to the editors of *The Technique*, one Tech student adamantly advocated his pro-war convictions. Christopher Currie wrote of his frustration with the media's unwillingness to critique antiwar demonstrations. He asked whether any specific students and faculty could be identified for their antiwar stance, arguing that the antiwar movement's particular point of massive opposition to the war was an overgeneralization. The student suggested that the end of the war in Vietnam would in fact have no direct influence on domestic concerns, in spite of the tendencies of the antiwar movement to link the two issues. For example, some antiwar protesters had claimed that the economic cost of the war prevented the American government from allocating funds to improve the conditions of impoverished American citizens. Currie went on to argue that while all

[7] "War Protest is Supported By NAACP," *Savannah (Georgia) Morning News*, 14 October 1969.

Americans would like to see an end to the war, immediate withdrawal was not the only option for bringing that about, and would likely result in conflict erupting again in Southeast Asia shortly after a peace settlement. He dismissed national discontent with the war as the personal convictions of protesters masquerading under the guise of moralistic concerns with facts and statistics. Ultimately the student found the antiwar movement to lack credibility.[8]

It was in the same issue of *The Technique* that the Georgia Tech student government announced its defeat of the bill proposing a campus October Vietnam Moratorium and offered a rationale for its members' votes. The student government defeated the bill for the Moratorium with thirty votes against, five in favor, and two abstentions.[9] Some representatives were afraid that an endorsement of the bill would not accurately reflect the sentiments of the student body; others felt that as students and as leaders they possessed the personal right to endorse the bill according to their own convictions. One member of the student government questioned the absence from classes the Moratorium would have required; still others found a college campus an inappropriate environment for a Moratorium or any other such demonstration, and were afraid that resulting publicity would endanger Tech's reputation. The last faction of the student leaders felt that the student government should be active in expressing personal opinion,

[8] Christopher C. Currie, "Moratorium Arguments Attacked," *Technique* (Georgia Tech University), 17 October 1969, 5.

[9] Steven J. Wolfe, "Tech Council Defeats Vietnam Moratorium Bill," *Technique*, 17 October 1969: p. 1, 7.

and additionally that the Moratorium would be designed in a way conducive to substantive debate about the war rather than serving as an inflammatory action.

The University of Georgia's student newspaper, *The Red and Black,* described antiwar demonstrations at the University that October as a "catalyst," a "break in tradition" in an institution having only a few previous incidents of dissent in its history. The paper's report on the moratorium begins with an editorial assurance that Nixon and the White house wanted the same peace for which the protesters were asking. At Georgia, a campus Vietnam Moratorium committee and the Young Democrats sponsored the moratorium, which included plans for an hourly tolling of a bell in remembrance of the war dead, a memorial service, and lectures from professors on Vietnam-related issues.[10] The paper reported that the moratorium was supported by a "massive audience" enthusiastic to hear speeches from a former Army lieutenant speaking about war atrocities and from former U.S. Congresswoman Jeanette Rankin (R-Montana), a lifetime pacifist who had opposed American entry into both World War I and World War II, as well as the Vietnam War. An impromptu student speaker supporting the war was silenced when his microphone cord was unplugged from the speakers.[11]

Student editorials in *The Red and Black* expressed a variety of opinions on the war. One questioned the validity American military involvement in Vietnam but was unable to resolve the clash between morality and patriotism when confronting the Vietnam war. The writer decided instead to be thankful that his "contemplation has

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[10] "Nation to Ponder War," *Red and Black* (Athens, Georgia), 14 October 1969, p. 1, 4.

[11] Ronnie Campbell, "Moratorium Denounces War Stand," *Red and Black* (Athens, Georgia), 16 October 1969, p. 1.

caused confusion," because "the confusion is a good thing; it shows one person has been shaken from his apathy."[12] Another writer appreciated the time taken during the moratorium to think about the war, but found arguments against the war based on morality unjustified, and committed himself to registering concern at home while maintaining support for the troops abroad.[13] One student attacked the moratorium as a gathering of the very leftists responsible for the conflict by stating that antiwar protesters were liberals, as was President Johnson, who had overseen increased American involvement in Southeast Asia. The student furthermore resented the charge that those who did not attend the event were apathetic, remarking that "by apathy one must assume that he means that the student body concerns itself with traditional things like attending classes and getting an education rather than submitting to the ranting and raving of the irrational left."[14]

Antiwar sentiment at the University of Georgia surfaced again a month later with the second nationally-coordinated moratorium that fall. The demonstrations scheduled on the campus for November 14 and 15 were similar to those that took place in October, except that this month the antiwar demonstrators were directly confronted by the Student Majority Opposed to Simple Solutions. This group called supporters of the war to wear blue armbands and to ignore the moratorium. In spite of this increasingly visible pro-war

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[12] Michael Howell, "One's Morality, Another's Patriotism Clash in Contemplation of Vietnam," *Red and Black* (Athens, Georgia), 14 October 1969, p. 4.

[13] Steve Stewart, "Attitudes Needing a Challenge," *Red and Black* (Athens, Georgia), 14 October 1969, p. 4.

[14] Robert M. Pretscher, "'Sense' of the War, an Admirable Goal," *Red and Black* (Athens, Georgia), 16 October 1969, p. 4.

sentiment, the response in support of the moratorium was reported to be stronger than that in October, and though the University administration remained neutral, the majority of the professors supported the antiwar event.[15] The crowd was reported to have "captured the essence of the moratorium" in that it was "young, old, white, black, hip, straight."[16] In an editorial discussing the moratorium, a student writer suggested that "the silent majority seems to be finding its tongue," subtly tweaking the President's slogan, and expressed the hope that "president Nixon will have the courage to find his ears." The writer did clarify that he also hoped antiwar activists would call for increased Vietnamization to end the war, as opposed to a complete withdrawal, a policy the student saw as irrational.[17]

In neighboring Alabama, in a rare display of antiwar sentiment at the state's flagship University in Tuscaloosa, students observed the nationally-organized October 15 moratorium. U.S. Senator Joseph Tydings, a Maryland Democrat and critic of Nixon's Vietnam policies, addressed a crowd of a thousand Alabama students on America's pursuit of a failing endeavor in Vietnam.

Students at Auburn University organized a more extensive observance of the fall Moratorium that included various film-screenings, the reading of the names of the war fatalities, wearing arm bands, and conducting a candlelight march; a "dog burning" was

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[15] Lyn Battey, "Peace Days Planned to Aid Course," *Red and Black* (Athens, Georgia), 13 November 1969, p. 1.

[16] Rebecca Leet, "Goodell Calls Saigon Government Biggest Barrier to Vietnam Peace," *Red and Black* (Athens, Georgia), 18 November 1969, p. 3.

[17] "Silents Speak," *Red and Black* (Athens, Georgia), 16 November 1969, p. 4.

crossed off the list of activities. Auburn's administration, generally conscious of its pro-war stance but supportive of student expression, issued a statement to the local news station that October 15 held "very little formal or organizational activity in support of the Vietnam moratorium." The statement, written by the university vice president, made clear that the "few, in relation to the total enrollment" would show their antiwar feelings appropriately though many found the event "not in the best interest of our country, and believed that it will not help secure an honorable and lasting peace."[18]

Antiwar activism also bubbled over in Baton Rouge at Louisiana State University during that October. The Louisiana State Vietnam Moratorium Committee joined with the University Christian Movement to arrange days of demonstrations to coincide with the planned October 15 national Moratorium. The protest group proclaimed that the most important priority in America was the withdrawal of its military forces from Vietnam. Pursuit of this goal was so urgent that citizens should forego their daily routine to call for peace. October 14 consisted of planning for the demonstration in hopes that this event would lead to an even larger one of the same element in November; the day concluded with a party featuring five antiwar music groups. In a notable break with the more prevalent pattern of university administration responses to peace activism, the effort of the protesters was supported by the university Dean of Women, who removed curfew for Louisiana State female students wishing to participate in the Moratorium activities. The Student Government also officially supported the protest in a statement issued endorsing the Moratorium.

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[18] W.S. Bailey to WRBL-TV, 15 October 1969, President Philpott Papers, Auburn University Archives, Auburn, Alabama.

On the Louisiana State campus a prayer vigil that lasted through the night of October 14 ended the next morning in an assembly called the "Death Watch," and in the creation of petitions, composition of letters to Congressmen, and distribution of antiwar information to the campus and surrounding community. Throughout the day antiwar faculty members delivered lectures that were sponsored by numerous campus Christian groups and civil rights organizations. LSU students were particularly keen to note the support of well-known Arkansas Senator J. W. Fulbright for their observance of the October 15 Moratorium; Fulbright sent a telegram to the Vietnam Moratorium Committee in which he stated, "I salute your efforts in working for Peace in Vietnam and commend you for your help in getting this nation to adhere to its tradition of honor and morality."[19]

In Fulbright's home state, at the University of Arkansas, a group of antiwar students who had been conducting weekly silent vigils since 1967 became even more active during two weeks of the 1969-70 school year. In the spring of 1969 a continuous demonstration was started by one young man content to sit in a tree until the war in Vietnam was ended. When authorities removed him from his arboreal perch, other students replaced him at the post so that the tree was not left vacant for a significant period of time. That fall a group of six hundred marched through the downtown area in protest of the war during the October 15 national moratorium events, followed by a group of a hundred war supporters in a "Victory March." Another antiwar demonstration was held during a football game that week that boasted President Nixon as a spectator; the

[19] LSU Vietnam Moratorium Committee Newsletter, 14 October 1969, Louisiana State University Special Collections and Archives, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

University of Arkansas New Coalition for Peace created a display of white crosses on a hill visible from the stadium and distributed antiwar pamphlets to those attending the sports event.

Mississippi State University students took up the debate over the War again that fall, this time with more than editorials and rebuttals in *The Reflector*, the student newspaper. In support of the October 15 national Moratorium, State students scheduled a class boycott to allow for panels, discussion topics, folk singing, a march, convocation, and an inter-faith religious service. When the prospect of the November Moratorium arose, thirty-five members, or ten percent, of the State faculty signed a petition in support of the idea and of ending the Vietnam conflict. Antiwar students set up a dialogue between pro- and antiwar students for the day of the Moratorium, but *The* Reflector reported that the event was attended by only a small percentage of students, unlike the more vibrant atmosphere of the October event.[20]

Activities at Clemson University continued in the university's second demonstration in protest of the war. Along with other national Moratorium activities on October 15, Clemson students planned a silent vigil, class boycott, a Vietnam related teach-in, and an antiwar folk music concert on campus. The campus coordinator for the moratorium stated that the demonstration was "aimed at a moderate majority position against the war," since he felt many students at Clemson did in fact oppose American involvement in Vietnam but were unwilling to involve themselves in protest movements. The coordinator continued by saying that he felt it was "especially important that these

[20] Sissy Lambreth, "State Students Show Little Interest; 35 from Faculty Sign Anti-War Petition," *The Reflector* (Mississippi State, Mississippi), 14 November 1969, p. 7.

people, often referred to by President Nixon as 'the silent majority,' make known their opposition to the war."[21]

Moratorium participants were answered by the Clemson Young Republicans, who planned a Vietnam Mail Call for the same day. Twenty-five student leaders designed the Mail Call to collect letters for American soldiers in Vietnam and Thailand. (U.S. troops were stationed in the latter country under a military accord that would exist until Thailand revoked it in 1975.) Those organizing the Call stated that they did not intend to create a distraction from the Moratorium, but instead to provide an alternative to the antiwar activities. Among those who wanted to express "support of the U.S. troops in Southeast Asia, regardless of how they feel concerning the war itself" were the student body president and vice president. Interestingly, the article discussing the Mail Call was relegated to the eighth page of Clemson's student newspaper, *The Tiger*, while coverage of plans for the Moratorium claimed the first page.[22]

The Young Americans for Freedom also answered the Moratorium participants, but waited for the event. When approximately three hundred antiwar activists formed a candlelight march to begin the event, more than four hundred hecklers lined the path of the antiwar demonstrators. The students opposing the antiwar demonstration sported red, white, and blue armbands and serenaded the protesters with a spirited rendition of "Dixie." During the reading of the war dead, the hecklers shouted obscenities and

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[21] Randal Ashley, "Vietnam Moratorium Plans Include Folksing, Teach-In," *Tiger* (Clemson University, South Carolina), 10 October 1969, p. 1.

[22] "Vietnam Mail Call Set By Young Republicans," *Tiger* (Clemson University, South Carolina), 10 October 1969, p. 8.

Clemson chants, and threw eggs and cherry bombs into the crowd of demonstrators. Some went so far as to vandalize a Moratorium participant's truck parked nearby. The antiwar group diminished to about fifty by the next morning, but strengthened to more than five hundred by time the former North Carolina coordinator for Robert Kennedy's 1968 presidential bid—interrupted by his assassination—addressed the Moratorium participants that day.

The coordinator began with an attempt to pacify his conservative listeners by clarifying his patriotic stance when he painted the American government in the most favorable light compared with other historical regimes and denounced any who would idolize the Vietcong. Having distanced himself from the more extreme spectrum of the antiwar opinion, however, the speaker went on the say to the crowd of Clemson students that the South Vietnamese government was corrupt and not supported by the South Vietnamese. American efforts to defend such a government were not only futile, but a "mistake."[23] The Moratorium concluded that day with a prayer and the singing of the civil rights movement anthem "We Shall Overcome"; the coordinators of the protest remarked that they were pleased with the university's effort to aid others in the nation seeking the end of American involvement in Southeast Asia.

Clemson demonstrators made even bolder headlines a few weeks later when a planned event led them to court in South Carolina. Coordinators of the October Moratorium activities at Clemson designed a similar regional event that November, but met intense opposition before the event was to take place. Clemson antiwar protesters

[23] Randal Ashley, "First Moratorium Concluded, Attempt at Disruption Fails," *Tiger* (Clemson University), 17 October 1969.

wanted to hold a moratorium in which students from North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia could participate. The university administration rejected the request from the coordinators, who promptly responded by applying for a federal court injunction to bar administration interference with the planned gathering. Students challenged the university's prohibition of the moratorium as a violation of their constitutional right to freedom of speech.[24] Moratorium organizers made clear their intentions to abide by whatever ruling the judge issued upon hearing testimony, expressing no desire to test the ruling with an act of civil disobedience.[25] [By adopting this stance, protesting students at Clemson balanced credibility in the antiwar movement with the perceived imperative of avoiding a "rebellious" attitude toward the law and governmental authority. Like many other southern antiwar activists, those at Clemson were first and foremost concerned with ending the war, not with defying structures of authority. Though this lack of rebellious attitude was a prevalent part of the southern student antiwar movement, at Clemson it is even more notable because of the strenuous opposition to antiwar ideas exhibited by the university's administration.]

During the hearings, the university administration called attention to near-outbreaks of violence at previous demonstrations and the lack of a strong campus police force to prohibit violence at the projected demonstration, which was supposed to draw

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[24] Aubrey Bowie, "Regional Moratorium Prohibited: Students To Seek Injunction Against Clemson University," *Greenville (South Carolina) News,* 2 November 1969; Oconee-Pickens Bureau, "Clemson Students Seek Court Action," *Greenville (South Carolina) News,* 5 November 1969.

[25] News Columbia Bureau, "Vietnam Moratorium: No Off-Campus Rally Planned at Clemson," *Greenville (South Carolina) News,* 11 November 1969.

more than three thousand outsiders. In response, the plaintiffs pointed out that the university regularly drew more than fifty thousand outsiders to football games without the need for additional security.[26] The judge ruled in favor of the defendants, however, supporting the university's right to regulate the use of its facilities. Coordinators of the regional moratorium were disappointed, but altered their plans to a silent vigil in protest of the court ruling and the war in Vietnam, thus abiding by their professed intention to honor whatever ruling the courts issued.[27] In the end, a group of one hundred and fifty gathered in silent observance of the national November 15 Moratorium and ended the ceremony with various student speakers discussing the Vietnam war and problems with the establishment.[28] Clemson protests were all but nonexistent for the remainder of the school year, even during the May Strike Week. One student plastered a peace symbol to the back of his gown during commencement ceremonies that May with eighteen others wearing white armbands in silent protest against Cambodia and the student deaths at Kent State.[29]

The University of North Carolina, like Clemson in its tendency to protest without undercutting a commitment to respect for authority, held a moratorium that fall. Planning

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[26] Douglas Mauldin, "Fear of Clemson Violence Cited as Reason for Blocking Anti-War Meeting," *Greenville (South Carolina) News,* 11 November 1969.

[27] Douglas Mauldin, "Clemson Students Denied Injunction for Regional Moratorium," *Greenville News,* 12 November 1969; see also Gerald Garrett, "Regional Moratorium Halted; Request for Injunction Denied," *Tiger,* 14 November 1969, p. 1.

[28] Aubrey Bowie, "Quiet Protest: 150 Students Gather on Clemson Campus," *Greenville (South Carolina) News,* 15 November 1969.

[29] "Quiet Protest," *Greenville (South Carolina) News,* 9 May 1970, p. 6.

had begun in late September for a class boycott in protest of the war to be held in conjunction with others nationwide on October 15. The endeavor enjoyed support from a number of fraternities, religious clubs, faculty members, and local businesspeople who hoped that the effort would encourage Nixon to take notice and end the war. The UNC chancellor responded that the Nixon administration was already well aware of students' opinion of the war.[30] The prospect of faculty involvement in the protest activities attracted enough attention to warrant a provision from the Chapel Hill chapter of the American Association of University Professors. The Association, a long-standing defender of the principle of academic freedom, determined that faculty involvement in the upcoming moratorium would have to occur on an individual basis and could not detract from regularly scheduled commitments being met by faculty. A petition was circulated among faculty members called for signatures from those who felt "a most profound opposition to the present involvement of the United States in the war in Vietnam." The petition was expected to be signed by more than four hundred faculty and would be sent to Nixon on October 15.[31] The UNC system chancellor and the Chapel Hill campus president launched an investigation into whether the fall moratorium violated preexisting university disruption policies. Students organizing the protest made clear that they did not intend to violate those policies, but were solely concerned with

[30] Steve Enfield, "Class Moratorium Plans Laid," *Daily Tarheel* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina), 23 September 1969.

[31] Bill Miller, "AAUP Decides Profs Must Meet Schedule,'" *Daily Tarheel* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina), 30 September 1969.

conveying their reservations about the Vietnam war.[32] When the moratorium did occur on campus, the protest culminated in the destruction of the North Vietnamese flag; by doing this, the participants demonstrated that though antiwar concerns were being voiced, the protest should not be interpreted as a support rally for the North Vietnamese.[33]

At Vanderbilt University that fall the antiwar sentiment strengthened from its previously mild criticism of the war. Individual expressions of discontent had coalesced into an identifiable antiwar movement at the university by the fall of 1969, though the active pro-war movement still enjoyed considerable support. In October over seven hundred Vanderbilt faculty and students supported the national moratorium against the war. Moratorium demonstrations met opposition from the Young Republicans, the Young Americans for Freedom, and the junior class cabinet. The antiwar events included sermons from the campus chaplain, a speak-out on issues related to Vietnam, the distribution of antiwar literature in downtown Nashville, the reading of the names of the American war fatalities, and a city-wide antiwar rally.[34] In November a small group of Vanderbilt students represented the university at the national antiwar March on Washington.

Like Vanderbilt, North Carolina State University saw a relatively productive dialogue emerge between anti- and pro-war movements. Antiwar sentiment on the

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[32] Bill Miller, "Moratorium Investigated," *Daily Tarheel* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina), n.d., quoted in "Student Protests," Clipping Files at the North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

[33] *Protean Radish* (University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill), 20 October 1969, p. 6.

[34] Paul K. Conkin, Henry Lee Swint, Patricia S. Miletich, *Gone with the Ivy: A Biography of Vanderbilt University* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1985), 626.

Raleigh campus late in 1969 seems to have paralleled developments at the University of North Carolina, a short distance away, though without similar precedent. The first sign of awareness at N.C. State came in the form the circulation of *The Predawn Leftist*, published by the Progressive Action Committee, a local antiwar organization, from the fall of 1969 to the spring of 1971. The underground paper supported American G.I.'s by calling for the withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam: American policies in Southeast Asia were imperialistic, its editorial stance reasoned, and the conflict itself was a "rich man's war, poor man's fight."[35] A Vietnam Symposium was scheduled for October 14 and 15, 1969, commencing with an address from the North Carolina State University chancellor. In a speech that revealed little about his own opinions of the war itself, the chancellor remarked that the United States' involvement in Southeast Asia had burdened an already heavy public conscience with demonstrations and dissent on college campuses, and had forced university administrations to negotiate volatile situations created by the protesters. He referred to the next day as one of "soul-searching" rather than of explicit protest, and suggested that demonstrations might be fueled by misdirected passion and idealism rather than genuine protest of the war. The chancellor concluded with a patriotic flourish, proclaiming that the world needed American compassion, humility, self-denial, and freedom.[36]

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[35] Progressive Action Committee, Luther Russell Herman, Jr. Collection, Special Collections Department, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, North Carolina.

[36] "Chancellor Kicks Off Vietnam Symposium," *Technician* (North Carolina State University), 15 October 1969.

After the chancellor's address, a student in the audience asked the administrator to clarify North Carolina State University's involvement in the Vietnam war in regard to defense research, specifically research on armor-resistant explosives conducted within the School of Engineering. The chancellor replied, somewhat disingenuously, that he saw no connection between the university's research and the war.[37] The "Vietnam Days" activities that October featured a vigil and memorial service for the war dead, various seminars given by faculty members on implications and consequences of the war, and a symposium planned by the Student Senate and a faculty advising committee. Another set of moratorium activities was scheduled for November 3 and was acknowledged this time by the State faculty, who voiced support in *The Technician* for the idea of exploring and expressing personal opinions about the war on the given day.[38] Additionally, the North Carolina State chapter of the New Mobe sent representatives to participate in the national March Against Death on November 13 in Washington.

The peak Duke University's antiwar protest occurred during the 1969-70 school year in counterpoint to a steady drumbeat of prowar support by more conservative students at the prestigious university in Durham. Some radicals who had been engaged that year in advocating the removal of the ROTC program from campus were met on occasion by larger groups of counter-demonstrators who impeded activists' progress. The Young Americans for Freedom spoke out in September in support of the Duke faculty trying to keep the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) program. The

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[37] Ibid.

[38] *Technician* (North Carolina State University), 1 November 1969.

conservative group argued that the ROTC would be the backbone of any future attempt to replace the draft with a voluntary army—an accurate forecast as it turned out—and that it additionally provided the American military with troops that had more background than that afforded by the military's basic training programs.[39] Stronger demonstrations against the war began on October 15 when the Duke Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam organized a Vietnam Moratorium. It commenced with what had by this point become the standard candlelight vigil, suggesting that students were closely monitoring protest activities at other campuses and often developed a similar "choreography" of protest. Events at Duke included a full day of Vietnam-related seminars, including topics ranging from peace in literature to the chemical and biological effects of the war in Vietnam to the morality of the draft to the economic and foreign policy implications of the war for America. The Moratorium concluded with Memorial Peace Services in several local churches, evidence of an alliance between the more radical students and some within the local Christian community.

Most universities in the South that did foster antiwar activity both semesters saw antiwar demonstrations occur in October, November, and May of the 1969-1970 school year. At North Carolina State University and Duke University protest was sustained through the entire year. What is also notable about those two institutions is the evident thought process behind the antiwar movements on the two campuses. North Carolina State's antiwar students made a consistent point to actively engage students supporting

[39] "YAF Supports Duke Faculty on ROTC Issue," *Carolina Renaissance: News & Opinions Suppressed by the Campus Press* (Raleigh/Durham/Chapel Hill, North Carolina), September 1969, p. 1.

the war, keeping a dialogue open that encouraged its participants to seek greater knowledge to buttress their particular positions. Antiwar students at Duke also pursued factual information, in addition to promoting specific ways to bring about change within the government that could directly influence its foreign policy decisions.

Antiwar protest continued at North Carolina State into the holiday season. About twenty members of the Progressive Action Commune distributed thousands of dollar-bill shaped fliers at the Raleigh, North Carolina Christmas parade informing recipients that "war is good for business" and asking them to "stop Christmas commercialism." A *Technician* writer reported on inconsistency in the responses of local police officers in noting that four antiwar demonstrators were arrested for littering while other parade-goers that left behind food containers were not. The students dubbed themselves—perhaps overdramatically—as the Raleigh Four," following the fashion of an era that featured a number of celebrated cases involving groups of defendants identified by their number. They invited anyone concerned with the war and issues of links between commercialism and militarism to attend their trial.[40]

By the beginning of the spring semester student protesters on the North Carolina State University campus turned to the specific in their efforts to discredit the American war effort, referring to its casualty rates and economic costs. A flier circulated at the end of February provided statistics and figures of both American and Vietnamese casualties, damage to Vietnamese land, and an accounting of American tax dollars spent funding the war. Another similar flier circulated late that semester listing for economic boycott the

[40] David Burney, "Following Downtown Protest Cops Bust 4 Litterers," *Technician* (North Carolina State University), 3 December 1969.

top producers of products and war material for the Pentagon.[41] In a creative display of dissent, on March 19 three students were arrested in an attempt to spill pints of blood in front of the Raleigh Armed Forces Induction Center. The display was part of a picket organized during the national anti-draft week by the North Carolina State New Mobe, whose members were also present when the three were cleared of property damage charges in a court appearance two months later.[42]

Though still involved in general demonstrations against the war targeted at the national government, Duke protesters broadened their approach to dissenting by attempting to increase local citizens' awareness issues arising from the conflict in Vietnam. As the fall semester drew to an end, Duke antiwar protesters' sentiment about the war had sharpened from the general discomfort of the October Moratorium to revulsion in responding to U.S. conduct in Vietnam.[43] The Duke/Durham Moratorium Committee, another campus antiwar organization, busied itself that spring a March 3, 1970 report on the campus that discussed the effects of 245-T, a toxic component in the even more toxic defoliant "chemical cocktail" known as "Agent Orange," employed extensively by the American military in Vietnam. In April a related Committee of

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[41]Luther Russell Herman, Jr. Collection, Special Collections Department, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, North Carolina.

[42] Rick Nichols, "Protesters Are Cleared," *News and Observer* (Raleigh, North Carolina), 6 May 1970, p. 30; see also "Protesters Held In Blood Splashing Cleared in Court," *Raleigh (North Carolina) Times*, 6 May 1970, p. 42; Russell Herman, "Blood Throwers Acquitted in District Court Trial," *Technician* (North Carolina State University), 6 May 1970, p. 1, 8.

[43] Donald J. Fluke Papers 1958-: Vietnamese Conflict, 1961-1975, Duke University Archives, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

Responsibility for War-Injured Vietnamese Children sponsored a concert in the Duke gardens from which proceeds were designated for the hospital bills of two Vietnamese children being treated at the Duke Medical Center.

The spring of 1970 was punctuated by new revelations about the extent of American covert military involvement in Southeast Asia. On March 8 the *Los Angeles Times* reported the death an American captain killed while conducting combat operations in the nation of Laos. Pentagon officials were then forced to admit that this captain was one of twenty-seven combat deaths of American military personnel the past year in Laos, Cambodia's northern neighbor adjacent to Vietnam, despite Nixon's public assurance two days earlier that "there are no American combat troops in Laos."[44] Nixon followed that statement with another the night of March 8, in which he admitted that America had four hundred military advisors in Laos and had been using American air forces to support the Laotian government.[45] He amended what was a revision of his de-escalation policy with yet another announcement at the end of April informing Americans that troops had been deployed into Cambodia. Two United States and eleven South Vietnamese ground forces had entered the country on April 29 to remove any North Vietnamese strongholds within nineteen miles of the border. The ground units remained in Cambodia until the end of June 1970.[46]

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[44] Mann, *A Grand Delusion*, 653.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Summers, *The Vietnam War Almanac*, 52, 53.

Nixon's late April announcement sparked increased protests at many institutions, most importantly at Kent State University in Ohio. Protests that spring at Kent State began on May 2 with the burning of the ROTC building and culminated on May 4 with the deaths of four students. A group of National Guardsmen fired sixty-one shots into a group of antiwar activists killing two male and two female students, and leaving eight wounded. Two of those killed had participated in the protests, while the other two were students on their way to class. From the White House Nixon responded that "this should remind us all once again that when dissent turns to violence it invites tragedy." While the President's remarks were arguably toned down a notch from days earlier when he had denigrated the student protesters in Ohio and elsewhere as "these bums…blowing up the campuses," many Americans were aghast for what seemed like the White House's failure to condemn the indiscriminate gunfire by Ohio Guardsmen more forcefully. Tens of thousands descended on Washington in response, and campuses across America erupted in Strike Week demonstrations against the violence in Ohio.[47] Three days later ten campuses were firebombed, and by the end of the week hundreds had been closed because of the intense response to Kent State. Even while galvanizing national antiwar protest, the student deaths also seriously threatened the student-based protest movement on campuses in the South and elsewhere. By the time students finished responding that week to the campus violence, they appeared to be wrestling with the knowledge that expressing dissent could now have fatal consequences. Many of them subsequently opted to abandon the antiwar movement for less risky avenues of expression.

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[47] *New York Times*, 5, 7 May 1970, p. 1; see also A. J. Langguth, *Our Vietnam: The War 1954-1975* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), 569.

In the first week of May 1970 even more southern students spoke out against violence in Southeast Asia and in America than had the preceding fall. For most of the newly-participating institutions, the May Strike Week demonstrations were also the last significant demonstrations held in response to the war and to the tragedy at Kent State. This week of protests is especially significant when considering the larger trajectory of southern-based student antiwar activity, for the Kent State deaths were enough to draw students all over the South out in protest, whereas the war as it had been waged from 1965 to 1970 had provoked comparatively little expression. Universities in the South that had consistently been active in the movement before that May continued protests during Strike Week; those that joined the previously active campuses did so vigorously, drawing large crowds of students to vigils and moratoriums, often in lieu of classes.

That May, according to a pamphlet circulated on the North Carolina State campus canvassing its student protest activities, between five hundred and fifteen hundred North Carolina State students were reported to be actively engaged in antiwar activity, though class attendance and campus operations continued as normal. A convocation was held on May 6 in public denunciation of the escalation of the war, petitioning Nixon to stop further aggression in Southeast Asia. The convocation was followed by a march to the campus ROTC building in response to Kent State.[48] On May 16 students organized a Counter-Armed Forces Day on the premise that the military encouraged genocide, destruction, and continued fighting in Vietnam and Cambodia. The Day was also designed in support of G.I.s opposed to the army and to the war; antiwar protesters

[48] Luther Russell Herman, Jr. Collection, Special Collections Department, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, North Carolina.

conducted demonstrations at the Fort Bragg army base sixty miles to the south in Fayetteville, North Carolina.

A Peace Retreat organized two days later had faculty support in the form of an agreement to modify academic requirements to allow students to attend the retreat. The Retreat involved campus organizations that both supported and opposed the war. A Christian group sought the more spiritualistic "peace through Christ," while the American Students for Action attended the same Peace Retreat in support of Nixon's policies and managed to collect more than three thousand signatures on a petition stating the same. Both the American Students for Action and the radical New Mobe set up information booths during the Retreat. A group of a hundred students representing the antiwar presence at the Retreat traveled to Washington to distribute multiple pages of information on the situation in Southeast Asia, pages complete with expenditure figures, reference book citations, and an essay on "How to Get Out!"[49]

The American Students for Action was an active pro-war student group at North Carolina State that engaged the antiwar students on more than one occasion. The organization articulated a vision of peace in Southeast Asia to be achieved through the policies of Nixon and other government officials. The group presented a pre-convocation for students supporting the President's Southeast Asian policy in response to the May 18 Peace Retreat, though the group had already set up booths during the Retreat discussing their position. The pre-convocation was an attempt to make the public aware that large

[49] Hardy D. Berry, "NCSU and the Great Debate May, 1970," North Carolina State University, 25 May 1970.

numbers of North Carolina State students and faculty did support the United States, its president, and its policies in Southeast Asia.[50]

In early May the Duke/Durham Moratorium Committee circulated a letter of opposition to the war in an effort to make their reasons for dissent clearly known, citing as grievances the recent invasion of Cambodia, the resumed bombing of North Vietnam, and the deaths of the Kent State students. The Committee called on Duke students to join the campus New Mobe's attempt to demand Nixon's removal from the White House and American withdrawal from Southeast Asia. That same day the Associated Students of Duke University sent a letter to faculty members announcing a boycott of classes scheduled for May 6 in protest of the escalation of the war; the letter asked faculty to not give tests that day and to consider changing class topics to Vietnam-related issues and holding their meetings at the site of the protest, in effect a faculty-sponsored "teach-in." Duke students had confidence in a mutually respectful relationship with their administration and faculty. On May 11 students mounted an oxymoronically-dubbed Peace Offensive at Duke encouraging the application of pressure on Congress as a new means to end the war in Vietnam, as opposed to campus demonstrations that might result in violence. The Offensive argued that students were not of voting age and had therefore not elected the President, and that the President had no reason then to listen to students; according to the Offensive, antiwar students appealing directly to the President to make foreign policy changed based on discontented crowds of students were engaged in a futile endeavor. Congressional representatives, on the other hand, would be more inclined to

[50] ASA, Luther Russell Herman, Jr. Collection, Special Collections and Archives, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, North Carolina.

listen to voting citizens opposing the war. Based on that line of reasoning, the Offensive attempted to unite Duke students with Durham citizens in an antiwar protest that would force Congressional representatives to take a definite stance on the war in Vietnam. Again playing on Nixon's own slogan, the flier announcing this event proposed that the voice of the "Silent Majority" was key to ending the war.[51]

The student confidence in a supportive administration and faculty was not unfounded. At the risk of incurring disapproval in and beyond Durham, the university president and a significant number of faculty had worked during the late 1960s to create an environment conducive to protest. The effort culminated when Duke's new president Terry Sanford, the state's former Democratic governor, allied himself with the student endeavor to end the war in Vietnam in an announcement that students working in Congressional election campaigns would be excused from fall 1970 classes. Sanford's position ignited a two-day outburst of opinions by North Carolina citizens who forcefully stated their opposition to campus protest of the war. Sanford sought to clarify his position, insisting that he intended to encourage students to work within the system, rather than against it, to bring about change. When Sanford was questioned about his personal feelings about the war in Southeast Asia by a *Charlotte Observer* reporter, however, Sanford said that he joined with Duke students in their hesitation to embrace Nixon's foreign policies.[52] Following Sanford's statement, the Duke University

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[51] Ibid.

[52] Jim Parks, "Duke Students to Get Time Off to Work in Election Campaigns," *Charlotte (North Carolina) Observer,* 11 May 1970.

undergraduate faculty council decided to release students from academic obligations for the remainder of the semester.

Many in the Durham community saw this action as a statement of faculty support for student demonstrations, but also as a preempting of the further politicization of the campus. While an article in Raleigh's *News & Observer* credited protesting students with having an impact on national policy and regarded the decision of the faculty council as of no threat to students' academic careers, an article in the *Winston-Salem Journal* showed less equanimity. This article, as well as one in the *Raleigh Times*, voiced the concern of a separate section of the population, one concerned with students apathetic about the war taking advantage of an opportunity to avoid school work, in effect academic delinquency disguised under the false pretense of political activism. These articles suggested that in viewing campus-based protest many southerners were not unduly concerned with students' opposition to the war provided it did not interfere with their academic pursuits. The *Raleigh Times* article, entitled "Let's Move from the Brickyard Back into the Classroom," stated that the university should operate as an educational institution rather than a political agent. While the article did not call for the complete removal of protest from the university, the writer did express his desire to keep protests a priority second to that of education. The opposition voiced in these articles was thus concerned primarily with disruption in schools, not with the antiwar movement as a whole.[53]

[53]"Wise Accommodation," *Raleigh (North Carolina) News & Observer,* 11 May 1970; "Let's Move From the Brickyard Back into the Campus Classroom," *Raleigh (North Carolina) Times,* 12 May 1970; "Don't Close the Colleges," *Winston-Salem (North Carolina) Journal,* 12 May 1970.

Against the backdrop of these debates, various student organizations were emerging on Duke's campus proposing an increasing number of ways to oppose the war in Vietnam. A May 13 article in the *Duke Chronicle* announced the organization of a chapter of the Union for National Draft Opposition at Duke. This antiwar group was originally founded at Princeton University to unite men and women opposed to the draft. On May 14 the Duke University Political Action Committee published a letter encouraging its readers to write their representatives in Congress with specific support of the McGovern-Hatfield Amendment which would have mandated the complete withdrawal of American troops from South Vietnam by the end of 1971. (The legislation subsequently failed in the Senate in the Fall of 1970 with a vote of 55-39.) A group of seniors announced protest plans to mark the June 1 commencement ceremonies; they organized the distribution of white armbands to be worn during the ceremony in protest of the political policies of both the United States government and the Duke University administration. A donation was suggested for the armbands, to be sent to the national Peace Commencement Fund and the Black Panther Defense Fund, suggesting the overlapping ideological constellations of national protest in this period. In a flier distributed in conjunction with the protest, students argued that domestic fallout from the war in Indochina included racism, National Guard and police presence on campuses, the repression of groups like the Black Panthers, and the low wages of Duke staff, foreshadowing the direction in which Duke protests would turn.[54]

[54] Donald J. Fluke Papers 1958-: Vietnamese Conflict, 1961-1975, Duke University Archives, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

Further south, the Auburn University administration exhibited more tolerance for student protests in the spring of 1970 than it had the previous fall. Antiwar leaders on the campus planned a day of demonstrations in response to the war and the deaths of the four Kent State students on May 21. Harry Philpott, the land-grant university's president, having issued a statement in support of students' freedom of expression, was commended by the university's American Association of University Professors for his defense of the "Strike for Peace" event as protected free speech.[55] Organizers described the strike as a reflection of opposition to American Southeast Asian policies, to black and white student deaths, and to university attempts to stifle individualism. Students specifically supported the aforementioned McGovern-Hatfield amendment to end the war. Strike activities included addresses, draft counseling, folk music concerts, films, and a debate. On one advertisement the Student Government Association was listed as a cosponsor with the Auburn Human Rights Forum, but SGA representatives quickly responded that they in no way supported any form of strike or boycott. (The SGA ultimately shifted its stance from one of neutrality to opposition; by 1972, the student-elected leadership body actively supported draft resistance by sponsoring campus seminars on the subject.) The student Senate did go so far as to pass a resolution against violence, advocating discussion of all sides of current issues during the Strike for Peace.[56]

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[55] Harry M. Philpott, "Statement by Auburn University President Harry M. Philpott," 19 May 1970, President Philpott Papers, Auburn University Archives, Auburn, Alabama; Allen W. Jones, to Dr. Harry M. Philpott, 20 May 1970, Presidential Papers, Auburn University Archives, Auburn, Alabama.

[56] Bob Douglas to fellow students, 19 May 1970, Presidential Papers, Auburn University Archives, Auburn, Alabama; John Samford, "Senate Approves Resolution to Discourage Violence," *Auburn (Alabama) Plainsman*, 21 May 1970, p. 1.

Auburn president Philpott attended some morning strike activities that day and the members of the administration provided beverages to participating students. Alongside antiwar booths, the Young Republicans provided a petition in support of Nixon's Vietnam policies and sponsored a speech on the same subject coinciding with strike activities.[57] The class boycott at Auburn was reported to be largely ineffective, and antiwar events were attended by no more than four hundred well-behaved dissenting students.[58] Upon the conclusion of the Strike, a university professor who expressed the idea that the majority of Auburn students were not represented by the radical antiwar students seemed to be proven correct by the lack of major antiwar activity in the years to follow.[59]

On May 8, 1970, a group of University of Arkansas students in the home state of antiwar Senator J. William Fulbright staged a "sit-down" in front of the local draft board, resulting in fifty-seven arrests for obstructing the flow of traffic. Those arrested were part of a larger group of six hundred who participated in the anti-draft demonstration, one of many demonstrations that week expressing opposition to the expansion of the war into Cambodia and the deaths of the students at Kent State. Before the sit-down and arrests, the marchers had already burned an image of Nixon and walked with a wooden coffin,

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[57] Emily Pagelson, "Human Rights Forum Calls for Strike Against War," *Auburn (Alabama) Plainsman*, 21 May 1970, p. 1, 3.

[58] "Auburn U. President, Students Hold All-Day Dialogue," *Montgomery (Alabama) Advertiser*, 22 May 1970.

[59] Knox W. Livingston, R.F. to President Harry M. Philpott, 29 May 1970, Presidential Papers, Auburn University Archives, Auburn, Alabama.

chanting "give peace a chance" before the sit-down occurred. In a more pointed response to Kent State, a group of seventy-five Arkansas students blocked campus traffic to call the dead students war casualties, and demanded university' president no longer accept government contracts for military research. They also sought the cancellation of classes for an upcoming teach-in. In another related demonstration on the Fayetteville campus, Nixon was put on mock-trial for the murders of the four Kent State students and found guilty, sentenced to "live with his conscience." The week of demonstrations concluded with a teach-in in conjunction with observance of the national day of mourning for the Kent State students.[60]

The invasion of Cambodia and the deaths of the Kent State students added intensity to Vanderbilt University protests. More than a thousand students signed a petition specifically protesting Nixon's invasion of Cambodia. Over four hundred attended a rally at the federal building, organized a campus forum, held a Kent State memorial service, designed pamphlets, and circulated petitions of dissent in downtown Nashville; at the same time, four hundred attended a local rally in support of Nixon, a reminder that southern student voices were raised on both sides of the issue of the Vietnam war.[61] In the week that followed Kent State, two Vanderbilt academic departments closed, a Navy ROTC drill was cancelled, and nearly four thousand signatures were collected on a petition asking Tennessee's Congressional delegation to

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[60] Brenda Blagg, "Tree-Sitting Incident Most Unusual of War Protests Staged by UA Students," *Morning News* (Arkansas), 18 October 1999, section A, p. 1, 3.

[61] "Memorial Today for Kent students; Strike discussed," *Vanderbilt Hustler* (Vanderbilt University, Tennessee), 5 May 1970, p. 1, 5.

take steps to end the war; a group of students supporting the war responded by having the campus American flag raised back to full staff.

Shortly thereafter President Nixon appointed Vanderbilt's Chancellor Alexander Heard to a committee designed by Nixon to advise the president on campus opinion and activity concerning the war. The appointment was protested by a hundred Vanderbilt students of the Vanderbilt Strike Committee, who called it a "decoy" and proclaimed that "the issue is not communication, but the war."[62] The school year concluded at Vanderbilt with a demonstration at the annual spring Navy ROTC event held on campus; both antiwar and pro-war students attended, with the antiwar group stating a "Pro-U.S." position. Antiwar demonstrators marched through campus with a coffin in a statement that "we mourn our American dead, we mourn the South Vietnamese dead, we mourn the North Vietnamese dead, we mourn the Viet Cong dead."[63] The demonstrations in the spring of 1970 were the last at Vanderbilt, however, and by that fall protests had come to a complete halt.

In Columbia, South Carolina, campus protests continued at the state's flagship university in the same style as the year before, leaning toward tests of authority and provoking more conservative students. Tension on campus was evident throughout the school year, but did not erupt in dramatic fashion until the students responded to the deaths of the Kent State students. The radical student group AWARE continued to voice

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[62] Bill Chafford, "Kirkland Sit-In Protests Heard's New Position," *Vanderbilt Hustler* (Vanderbilt University, Tennessee), 12 May 1970, p. 1, 3.

[63] Clay Harris, "Demonstrators Protest NROTC; Rally Supports Nixon," *Vanderbilt Hustler* (Vanderbilt University, Tennessee), 15 May 1970, p. 1, 2.

dissent beginning in a September, 1969 meeting during which the members viewed a film on napalm in Vietnam that depicted American soldiers as war criminals.[64] The organization sponsored speakers discussing draft counseling, the Vietnam war, American imperialism, the Charleston Sanitary Strike, and conscientious objection in a Bring the War Home rally. Demonstrations subsided until May 5, 1970 when in the aftermath of the Kent State shootings a group of more than a hundred students gathered peacefully on the University of South Carolina campus to protest the deaths in Kent and organize a strike for the next two days. The following day the Student Government agreed to support the strike provided violence did not ensue. Class attendance was reported to be normal during the two days of striking, but tensions escalated sharply on the afternoon of May 7. Protesting students took over the American flag on campus, lowering it to half mast and refusing to submit to four policemen dispatched by the university's president to raise the flag anew. The crowd continued to grow restless until the president allowed the flag to remain lowered, a move that provoked angry responses from eight war-supporting students. Antiwar students, still irate, moved to the campus student center and promptly took it over; the protesters removed the workers and locked down the building. At this point the Student Government officially renounced its support of the demonstration to a growing crowd. The governor dispatched National Guard troops and policemen, who blocked the street until the demonstrators were removed from the building and escorted to buses almost four hours after the takeover commenced. Another hour passed as two

[64] AWARE, Minutes of Meeting, 18 September 1969, Special Collections and Archives, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina.

hundred university students bodily blocked the path of the buses. A total of forty-one were arrested in the incident.

University of South Carolina activists were not deterred by the arrests. A second strike rally was held the following day with a crowd twice as large as the previous. Three days later the discontented students, supporting those before the hearing committee for the student center takeover, converged on the administration building. The situation grew volatile by the afternoon, and again the university president called on the state governor for assistance. During the event the students looted the university treasurer's office, destroyed furniture, flooded some areas of the building, and damaged cars outside. At nine o'clock that evening the National Guard released teargas to clear the area, prompting a torrent of rocks and bottles hurled between students and policemen stationed at the scene. The next day the governor declared a state of emergency, implemented a curfew, and developed restrictions on meetings. Four days later, Jane Fonda held an antiwar rally on the steps of the South Carolina state capital, adjacent to the university, which was attended by sixty-two students. (She would later draw considerably more notoriety—and the sobriquet "Hanoi Jane"—for her tour of North Vietnam in 1972.) The state of emergency ended on May 19, and effectively marked the end of the antiwar movement at the University of South Carolina, a pattern repeated elsewhere around the South, as noted above.[65]

[65] "A Chronological Record of Events Related to and Including the Present Crisis as Seen by the President," 22 May 1970, Special Collections and Archives, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina.

Antiwar sentiment at the University of North Carolina was quiet from the fall moratoriums until the spring of 1970 when students angrily responded to Cambodia and Kent State. For two days students and faculty replaced classes with marches, pickets, rallies, and memorial services attended at times by more than seven thousand discontented protesters. Students wearing black armbands and buttons served as pallbearers for six coffins as they marched through downtown Chapel Hill. The newly elected student body president was quoted renouncing tolerance for violence in Vietnam, Cambodia, Kent, and Chapel Hill; he offered official Student Government support for the strike and suggested the discontented students attempt to influence their parents and congressmen, and consider joining the planned November national march on Washington. The University of North Carolina chancellor held a moment of silence at the demonstration before reading a telegram to the North Carolina senators requesting they take steps to end the war; he acknowledged that the concerns expressed by the student protesters were shared by himself as a member of the administration.[66] A faculty member commended the student strikers for their methods, and asked that they not forsake the political system despite its current failures. The professor called the war in Southeast Asia a "headlong drive to national suicide," acknowledging the students' righteous anger when he cited a reduction in federal student aid because of mounting war costs.[67] The speaker was one of about fifty professors and graduate assistants who supported the class boycott by posting final grades based on the students' progress to that

[66] Dennis Benfield, "Day-Long Protest Held at Carolina," *Durham (North Carolina) Morning Herald*, 7 May 1970, section A, p. 1, 11.

[67] Ibid., section A, p. 1.

point in the semester. According to an informal faculty poll taken that week, about half of the university students were involved in the striking actions.[68]

Protest gatherings in the days just after Kent State were only part of the University of North Carolina antiwar protest campaign that May. Dissent was expressed throughout the month in a variety of forms. Students circulated widely a fact sheet informing its readers of the extent of American involvement in Laos and Cambodia. On May 11 five faculty members lectured on different aspects of the war. A Blood March was organized by activists at North Carolina for May 14 in Durham in a dramatic attempt to collect four hundred pints to symbolically protest the lives lost to that point in Southeast Asia.[69]

Students at universities in Georgia, though active in the fall 1969 Moratorium activities, responded with even greater intensity to the deaths of the Kent State students. A crowd of fifteen hundred University of Georgia students organized a sit-in at the university president's house the evening of May 6. One participant stated that he had become involved in protests because "Nixon was elected to end the war, but he is beginning another one." Another stated that the effort was being made to gauge how students felt about the deaths at Kent State. A few broke into the campus Military Building in demonstrating, and were escorted straight through and out the back door by security personnel. Unsatisfied with the results of their demonstration, student protesters

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[68] Tommy Bello, "The Strike Continues . . . ," Anti-War Materials from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1967-1970, The North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. NCC FVC378 US13.

[69] Ibid.

moved toward the Academic Building to "shut it down." An observer called after them, "I don't want to shut it down--I want to graduate." The throngs requested student onlookers to "join us if you give a damn" because "you don't want to see your fellow students shot down." They shouted "Kent State, Kent State" as they neared the administration building, prompting a presumably ill-informed observer to ask, "Kent who?" The protesters hoped to persuade the university president to sign a statement addressed to Nixon rebuking the invasion of Cambodia and calling for an investigation of the Kent student deaths.[70] The protests lasted two days at the University of Georgia, with crowds numbering up to four thousand gathered in sit-ins and marches during the suspension of classes. When the issues of the invasion of Cambodia and the deaths at Kent State were sent to the student Senate committee for a formal comment, the committee resolved on May 12 to condemn both. The debate surrounding the issues, though, struggled with "whether the escalation of the war had anything to do with the death of the Kent State students."[71] The committee sent its resolution to the student senate for discussion, and after a week of deliberation the elected student government in Athens, Georgia separately denounced both Kent State and the invasion of Cambodia as "careless and tragic wastes of the lives and potentialities of young Americans."[72]

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[70] Patrice Walters, "Students Jeer Offer to Delay Negotiation," *Red and Black* (Athens, Georgia), 7 May 1970, p. 1, 2.

[71] "Protest Fizzles After Heated Start"; "Tom Crawford"; "Senate Defers Decisions: Kent State, Cambodia issues sent to committee," *Red and Black* (Athens, Georgia), 12 May 1970, p. 1.

[72] Tom Crawford, "Senate Debate on Kent, Asia War Extends into Night," *Red and Black* (Athens, Georgia), 21 May 1970, p. 1.

Whereas the galvanizing issues for University of Georgia protesters were Kent State and the invasion of Cambodia, other students in Georgia protested a different slate of issues. More than five thousand demonstrated in Atlanta in the largest antiwar march recorded in the state. The protesters, largely from Emory University, Georgia Tech, and Georgia State, denounced the war and the oppression of blacks without specific mention of Kent State. In an intense display that was less typical for southern anti-war protest than activism elsewhere in the country, the marchers boldly displayed the Vietcong flag while shouting "Ho Ho Ho Chi Minh, NLF is gonna win" and "power to the people," the latter slogan most closely identified with the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense.[73]

Students at the University of Kentucky, having held small peace demonstrations in 1966 and expressed dissent sporadically in the spring of 1968, provoked the governor to call in the National Guard on May 5, 1970. Angry about the situation in Vietnam and the insecurity of American student protesters, a near-riotous group of over a hundred students burned the ROTC building on campus and met National Guard bayonets and live ammunition the following night.[74]

Faculty at the University of Virginia, rather than students, had been the first to voice measurable dissent over American policy in Southeast Asia; the previous fall 192 faculty had signed a petition in support of the national October moratorium, submitting

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[73] Tom Crawford, "5,000 Protest in Atlanta," *Red and Black* (Athens, Georgia), 12 May 1970, p. 2.

[74] *The Public Papers of Governor Louis B. Nunn 1967-1971*, ed. Robert F. Sexton and Lewis Bellardo, Jr. (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1975): 352-3, 389; Carl B. Cone, *The University of Kentucky: A Pictorial History* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1989): 156, 158.

their call to a faculty committee. A statement made by two newspapermen in Charlottesville that demonstrations of dissent at the university were "coat and ties strikes" was supported by the flurry of petitions used to make student opinions known that school year.[75] Immediately following the announcement of the invasion of Cambodia the following April, however, students escalated their tactics, organizing a strike calling on the government to curtail the Cambodian invasion, to withdraw American military forces from Southeast Asia, to end repression of the Black Panthers, and seeking to terminate the university's ROTC and military research programs. The list of demands, supported by just over a hundred student signatures, preceded a memorial service attended by more than fifteen hundred students on May 4 in protest of the war and hastily in honor of the students killed at Kent State. The following day the extent of the feeling on campus in response to the Ohio tragedy became fully evident. In an event called "Freedom Day," fully eighty percent of the student body abandoned classes to attend a second campus rally. Among strike supporters were the university Student Council and faculty members willing to offer grading modifications to striking students. Those opposed to the strike were not silent; on May 6 a petition opposing the Virginia Strike Committee collected signatures from about four hundred students asking that the university be kept open as a non-political institution, and another was signed the next day by more than two hundred in support of the university president and traditional university values. Support for the university president shifted dramatically shortly thereafter, when on May 12 he signed a letter charging the President with attempting military campaigns in Southeast Asia,

[75] Allen J. Neuharth and Daniel J. Neuharth, *Times-Union (Virginia),* 26 September 1970, p. 11.

specifically the invasion of Cambodia, in an effort to reassure Americans that the U.S. troops were making progress and regain their support for the war.[76] The university president, who had been denounced by antiwar students during a demonstration against the invasion of Cambodia, was immediately backed by more than twenty-five hundred signatures on a petition after he received negative feedback from Virginia residents for his critical statement of Nixon's recent expansion of the war.[77] Results of a campus referendum taken at the time showed 4,909 of those polled favored the strike while 2,266 opposed it.[78] Of those in opposition, members of the Young Americans for Freedom called for an end to the strike on May 19 because of unmanageable demonstrators disturbing non-participants.[79]

The College of William and Mary also responded in May to the deaths of the students at Kent State. Noticeably more attentive to domestic violence than to the Vietnam conflict, more than six hundred students erected white crosses on the campus as a memorial to those killed in Kent. The student strike began on May 6 and was voted by two thousand students to extend through May 8. Alternatives to daily classes began with an "Idea-In" and picketing, included a teach-in, and concluded with a Festival of Life.

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[76] "The University Bows," *Richmond (Virginia) Times Dispatch,* 12 May 1970, section A, p. 14.

[77] "Turnabout," *Cleveland (Ohio) Plain Dealer*, 26 May 1970.

[78] Rob Buford, Peter Shea, and Andy Stickney, *May Days: Crisis in Confrontation: A Pictoral Account of the Student Strike at the University of Virginia, May 1970* (Charlottesville: The Cavalier Daily, 1970): 42; see also *Cavalier Daily* (University of Virginia), 6, 11, 14, 15 May 1970.

[79] *University of Virginia News,* 23 May 1970.

The College of William and Mary was known previously to only foster small protests of campus regulations, yet the demonstrations concerning Kent State were supported by over half of the college's student population, a sign of just how widespread were the protests around the region and nation in the aftermath of the Ohio shootings.[80]

Tennessee students joined other collegians around the region that May in antiwar protest activities. The University of Tennessee, Knoxville campus had been active in protest activities to that point, but those activities were mainly concerned with university issues.[81] Protests became more radical in January 1970 when twenty-two were arrested, later termed the "Knoxville 22," in a demonstration against how the new university president acquired his position. At the university a hastily formed conservative Committee for Peace on Campus began distributing blue buttons to show unwillingness to be intimidated by the "radicals" at the January demonstration.[82] The appropriation of the terminology of "peace" in the organization's name suggested just how contested the discourse of the late 1960s and early 1970s could be, and rhetorically placed student protesters on the defensive as alleged "disturbers" of campus peace. The January

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[80] "Student Strike, May 6-9, 1970," Special Collections and Archives, The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia; Lisa Katz, "Fever Pitch of Kent State Never Reached Local Campuses," *Daily Press* (Newport News, Virginia), 4 May 1990, section A, p. 12.

[81] In 1965 the UT SGA sponsored a meeting to support the United States policy in Vietnam; a group attempted to opposed the meeting by contacting the national Students for a Democratic Society, but nothing was actually organized by the antiwar students. Primary grievances from that point to the end of the decade centered around administration issues in civil rights, reaching another peak in the spring of 1969 when for the first time a black student was elected as SGA president.

[82] "Voices of Responsibility," *Tennesseean* (University of Tennessee-Knoxville), 30 January 1970.

incident resulted in a "rally against repression" organized that April in Nashville, drawing college crowds from Knoxville, Chattanooga, Murfreesboro, Johnson City, and Memphis to protest the state's anti-riot law that had been passed in response to the activities of the Knoxville 22.[83]

Protests did not fully embrace the antiwar effort until the invasion of Cambodia and the deaths at Kent State, however. In response to those events, the University of Tennessee student government president organized a three-day strike on campus against "violence in Indochina, violence at Kent State, and violence at UT." Some attempted to burn the campus ROTC facility until one protest leader brought the crowd's attention back to the Vietnam war, which was said to be the central focus of the strike. More than four thousand students supported the edgy antiwar effort that May, which was punctuated by a two thousand person march to the ROTC building where protesters symbolically deposited miniature guns; another group negotiated with a police officer to have the American flag lowered to half-mast. Tension mounted after a "1-2-3-4 we don't want your war" chant when students again made their way toward the ROTC building, this time to squirt the place with water guns because "the military gets dirtier every day."[84] These events preceded the boldest University of Tennessee protest, which occurred during a ten-day Billy Graham crusade at the University's stadium in late May of 1970, and which was attended by President Nixon. Students confronted American Vietnam

[83] "Riot Law Rally Draws Near," *Tennesseean* (University of Tennessee-Knoxville), 11 April 1970.

[84] Frank Gibson, "Point Proven as Cooler Heads Guide Antiviolence Strike," *Tennesseean* (University of Tennessee-Knoxville), 10 May 1970.

policies during the event with numerous protest signs carried through the stadium during the prominent evangelist's address.[85]

The 1969-70 school year marked both the beginning and the end of the most dramatic stages of the antiwar movement on southern campuses. What progression and development that did occur that year was possible because many of the moderates who had previously opposed both the war and the antiwar movement became willing to risk association with those openly opposing the war. Southern antiwar students joined others in the fall of 1969 in the mobilizations, two massive attempts to engage the establishment, even if only by announcing the number of those interested in protesting the war. But the power of the establishment became tragically apparent at Kent State in May of 1970, and reminded most students that whatever allegiance they claimed to the cause of ending the war was without a strong foundation. The students' attempt to disguise a national funeral as a genuine desire to end the Vietnam war foreshadows the decision those involved in the antiwar movement would subsequently make to quietly abandon the war in Southeast Asia to protect their existences in America.

[85] Susanna Taipale, *Thou Shalt Not Kill: Graham, Nixon, and the Anti-Vietnam War Demonstrations at the University of Tennessee, May 1970* (Thesis in General History, Tempere, 1990): 1, 3.

# CHAPTER THREE

# NOT JUST THE WAR:

# PROTESTS IN BLACK SOUTHERN UNIVERSITIES

In the summer of 1970, following the explosion of student unrest that had greeted the Cambodian incursion and the Kent State shootings, Richard Nixon organized a Commission on Campus Unrest chaired by Pennsylvania governor William Scranton. The Commission released an official report in September of that year describing the nature of campus unrest and speculating about its causes. The writers determined that "race, the war, and the defects of the modern university" were the issues that sparked student discontent, and proposed that the campus protest movement "signifies a broad and intense reaction against—and a possible future change in—modern Western society and its organizing institutions."[1] The Commission, after discussing campus unrest generally, went on to conclude that black and white students' grievances were not the same; the report stated that unrest on black college campuses, unlike on white campuses, was not confined to the institution: it "extends beyond the college and university campus and, in varying degrees, involves the total black population of America."[2]

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[1] President's Commission on Campus Unrest, *The Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest* (Washington, D.C.: September 1970), section 2, p. 1, 3.

[2] Ibid., section 3, p. 4.

There was a fundamental difference between the concurrent movements in the South: the antiwar movement had as its object peace (or at least the withdrawal of American troops from war-torn Southeast Asia), while the civil rights movement had as its professed goal freedom, with the more concrete objectives of civil rights, voting rights, and economic justice. It might be argued that antiwar activists wanted out of society, while civil rights activists wanted in. Activists in the antiwar movement tended to scoop up a variety of causes, attacking each with repetitive and all but unproductive gestures, lacking a clear focus or stated direction. Participants in the civil rights movement arguably picked their battles with even greater care, attempted to implement well-defined protest strategies, and willingly engaged their enemy, be it individual antagonists like Birmingham's Bull Connor or structural obstacles like segregation and voter disfranchisement. (Admittedly, less tangible barriers like the powerful ideology of white supremacy and the prevalence of economic equality were to prove far harder to engage.)

Historically black colleges and universities (HBCU's) with traceable student activism have been singled out for study in this section, which calls attention to characteristics of black protest that can be contrasted with the typically futile protests white students were content to organize. It should be noted that antiwar and civil rights activists in southern universities were tentatively willing to embrace both the antiwar cause and the struggle for racial equality on some occasions. Joining the two movements proved to be impossible, though, because somewhere close to the bottom line the civil rights protesters engaged their cause with full knowledge of the risks of doing so, while

most antiwar activists when faced with the realities of protesting resorted to either disengaging from American society altogether or to quietly rejoining its ranks.

For historians of America in the late 1960s and early 1970s the inclination is to move beyond race. Many of the chief obstacles to the civil rights movement had been "overcome," including *de jure* segregation and the most blatant forms of voter discrimination, and some observers of the movement joined its leaders in referring to a "crisis of victory." Martin Luther King, Jr., himself, had turned his full attention to intractable issues of economic discrimination and labor concerns in the last months of his life. Having expressed concern over U.S. involvement in Vietnam as early as 1965, King came out squarely against President Lyndon Johnson's policies in Southeast Asia in the spring of 1967, and had joined his critique of "racism abroad" with his critique of economic injustice. His assassination in Memphis in April of 1968 came against the local backdrop of a strike by African American sanitation workers and the larger planned campaign for a "Poor People's March" that would unite the economically disadvantaged across lines of color and ethnicity, climaxing with a massive wave of civil disobedience in the nation's capital.

Many of the emerging advocates of civil rights causes that were left have been clumsily lumped together by both contemporaries and subsequent historians as black supremacists; the "forgotten years of the civil rights movement" are often written off against the backdrop of the violence of urban uprisings and clashes between law enforcement and black militants. In its place the antiwar movement is moved to the forefront as the dominant protest metanarrative for the second half of the 1960s. Historians contrast the racist and riotous civil rights movement after 1965 with the

antiwar movement that emerged after 1965 dedicated to peace. In his synthetic interpretation of the postwar period, historian William Chafe marks the years after the summer 1965 ghetto violence in Watts and the summer 1966 commitment to "Black Power" as dominated by a new spirit of radicalism.[3] Harvard Sitkoff, in his history of the civil rights movement, argues that the civil rights movement peaked and began receding with the 1963 March on Washington because of divisions within the movement and tendencies in its participants toward black racism. By the summer of 1965, according to Sitkoff, many blacks and whites had lost interest in what had become a riotous movement. Sitkoff states that "with King, it had ended with a bang," and that the movement had "also ended with a whimper, with many of the established African-American organizations and leaders valiantly struggling on with diminishing funds and decreasing support."[4] Sitkoff calls attention to the return of white control by the end of the 1960s because the association of the civil rights movement with antiwar radicals and racial violence had supported prejudices and created fear. Godfrey Hodgson echoes this interpretation when discussing the fortunes of the civil rights movement, ascribing its lack of progress in the late 1960s to the 1965 shift to economic equality demands that increasingly prevailed; by the 1970s, Hodgson contends, the movement had become characterized by aggressive and criminal tendencies, and the extremes tended to cloud

[3] William H. Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II*, 5th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 309-11, 331.

[4] Harvard Sitkoff, *The Struggle for Black Equality: 1954-1992*, rev. ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 209.

public perceptions of the larger constellation of black activism.[5] Todd Gitlin similarly finds 1965 the pivotal year of the civil rights movement, arguing that the assassination of Malcolm X initiated the desire for black separatism, and that by the 1968 assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. hopes of nonviolence were all but lost.[6] Historians have failed to acknowledge that into the 1970s traditional, conservative, black college students with their livelihoods at stake still felt it worth the risk to protest in anticipation of simple racial equality. And that they were killed for it.

The deaths of the four students at Kent State University in 1970 dominate the nation's historical memory and studies of campus violence during protest movements. In the South, however, four black southern university campuses experienced violence and resulting fatalities during the late 1960s and early 1970s. The deaths occurred in the context of black student protest movements, movements organized by those concerned with issues of race relations, educational opportunities, economic circumstances, American foreign policy, and the draft. Black students enrolled in southern universities were often well-positioned to move on into relatively successful lives, constrained certainly by the glass ceiling of racial prejudice, but still lives of comparatively greater potential than those not fortunate enough to be able to pursue postsecondary educational opportunities. Choosing to challenge head on the governments and citizens responsible for the quality of those institutions was not a decision to be made lightly, and blacks who

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[5] Godfrey Hodgson, *The World Turned Right Side Up: A History of the Conservative Ascendancy in America* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996), 115-17.

[6] Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1993), 313.

protested publicly had to confront the reality of both the economic and social repercussions they would face for their actions.

Reminded by the deaths of their fellow classmates of the degree to which inequality and unfairness prevailed in their surrounding communities even after the watershed victories of the civil rights movement's heyday, frustration and anger the students had been directing toward seeking change in their environment began to be rechanneled after the deaths of their fellow classmates into more introspective avenues and in ways less threatening to the establishment. The violence was difficult for students to move beyond; after witnessing some of their classmates pay the ultimate price for speaking out, African American students found little hope in continuing to do so. Black students recoiled, setting up memorial services on the appropriate anniversaries but otherwise keeping quiet, leaving citizens beyond their campuses to choose whether to acknowledge the students' frustrations or to ignore them.

In the days after Kent State the student protest movement erupted across American campuses, its energy catalyzed by having an atrocity to point to in the faces of the nations' government and citizens. In sharp contrast, student deaths in black southern universities curtailed the protest movements on those campuses. At South Carolina State and Alabama State economic and university concerns provoked by racism that had stimulated the protests prior to the students' deaths were replaced by silence interrupted only by memorials remembering the dead and by speeches about broad hopes for a better society very few concrete challenges to continue the transformation begun during the peak years of the civil rights movement. At North Carolina A&T University students abandoned protests over local civil rights issues that climaxed in the death of a student,

ratcheted back their broadest demands, and subsequently spoke out with more specific concerns about the war in Vietnam and the draft. At Jackson State in Mississippi's capital, protests preceding the fatal shootings of two students there were focused on racial injustice and the war in Southeast Asia; when white law enforcement personnel killed the students, wounding a dozen others, the protest movement ended and was replaced by memorials and righteous indignation over the deaths of the classmates. At Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, mass demonstrations protesting university policies ended when two student lives were taken, and the handful of persistent protest efforts left after that November were not supported by the student body.

A discussion of the civil rights movement that maintained directed protests on southern university campuses though the late 1960s, even with the tendencies of some of its participants elsewhere beyond campus environments to resort to violence, illuminates the deliberation with which those students confronted injustice in their environment and the price they paid for doing so. Such a discussion will also provide a basis of comparison between two concurrent protest movements on black and white campuses that ended with the deaths of some participants.

At the climax of a series of demonstrations that lasted from February 5 through 10 of 1968 in Orangeburg, South Carolina, local policemen stationed near a bonfire held on the historically-black South Carolina State College campus killed three of its students and wounded twenty-eight others in a deadly barrage of gunfire. The deaths of Samuel

Hammond, Henry Smith, and Delano Middleton were the first on a college campus during the sixties' movements for freedom and against the war in Vietnam.[7]

Pat Watters, seasoned reporter and director of information for the Southern Regional Council, and civil rights veteran Weldon Rougeau provided the first interpretation of the shootings in a report distributed shortly after the tragedy took place. Watters referred to Orangeburg as a microcosmic view of the larger Civil Rights struggle. The violence there, he suggested, was evidence of larger struggles between black power and white fear, of a shift in black protests toward violence born out of frustration with the lack success from the pursuit of strategic and tactical nonviolence, and of the rise of the black college as fertile ground in which these potentially dangerous ideas might take root.[8] The protests that later erupted in this violence, Watters said, began earlier that week over a local segregated bowling alley. Watters showed that the bonfire set by students later in the week was perceived by whites in the community as part of a "riot" atmosphere. Moreover, the report demonstrated that the area's whites supported the police after the shooting, while the nation's response was at the least silence, if not indifference.

Through interviews with participants Watters found that this perception of the bonfire was inaccurate, that the students' primary motivating concern was not Black

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[7] Lewis, Charles, "Eyewitnesses to a Tragedy," *Collegian* (South Carolina State College), March 1968, p. 1; see also "Negroes Ask President's Protection as Three are Killed in Orangeburg," *Columbia (South Carolina) Record*, 9 February 1968, p. 1-3.

[8] Pat Watters and Weldon Rougeau, *Events at Orangeburg: A Report Based on Study and Interviews in Orangeburg, South Carolina in the Aftermath of Tragedy: Southern Regional Council Special Report* (Atlanta: Southern Regional Council, February 25 1968), i.

Power, as the public claimed, but instead was the quality of education at South Carolina State in that it was considerably lower than that of white colleges in the state. The press fed the misapprehension by citing the segregated bowling alley as the cause, eager to charge the civil rights movement with radicalism and the students with revolting against authority.[9] Watters argued that the center of the protesters' problem was "deprivation of opportunity" because of race.[10]

The students at South Carolina State University had a history of dissatisfaction with the quality of their educational programs. In the spring of the previous school year roughly half of the State students, led by student body president and a four-person coalition of class officers, organized a protest triggered by the college administration's refusal to rehire two professors. Students felt these two professors, who had been at the university on a temporary arrangement, were among best at the university in the sense that they encouraged students to think for themselves.[11] The protest endured for two weeks before being stifled by the academic suspension of the four students in the coalition and three additional students supporting the professors.[12] The student protest had been in the form of an agreement to boycott certain businesses and college functions, including classes. Orangeburg citizens took note of the cause and determined the main

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[9] Ibid., 24, 27, 29.

[10] Ibid., 39, 40.

[11] James E. Sutton, "State College Protest," *State* (Columbia, South Carolina), 26 March 1967.

[12] "State College Students Due Testimonial," *State* (Columbia, South Carolina), 7 April 1967.

problem to be the university's president who had a history of being more than compliant with white government officials. (It bears mentioning that many administrators at state-supported historically black educational institutions in the South were reputed to be subject to fiscal pressure from white legislatures and politicians not to "rock the boat.") After the student suspensions, concerned black citizens in the surrounding area drew up a petition requesting the removal of the university president from his position; the petition was circulated by more than three hundred members of the South Carolina Task Force for Quality Education that had been formed specifically for this purpose. The collected signatures were later presented to the South Carolina governor but achieved no notable changes for black students.[13]

When the violence occurred in Orangeburg less than a year after that, the town's black citizens drew on this prior experience in boycotting campaigns and immediately launched a new boycott in cooperation with the State students. On February 12, 1968, four days after the deaths of the students, between five hundred and eight hundred organized blacks implemented an economic boycott of white businesses in the area, demanding the immediate removal of the National Guard troops from the university and the suspension of law enforcement officers involved in the shooting.[14] In conjunction with the boycott, State students assembled a list of grievances endorsed by the faculty and administration of the college, who were increasingly vocal in the aftermath of the

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[13] "Petition Seeks State College Head Dismissal," *State* (Columbia, South Carolina), 11 April 1967.

[14] "S.C. Negroes Set Boycott of Stores," *Washington Post*, 12 February 1968: section A, p. 14, 16. *see also* "Negro Boycott Set In Orangeburg," *News & Courier* (Charleston, South Carolina), 12 February 1968: section A, p. 2.

shootings. These points of contention were centered on police brutality, the persistence of the practice of segregation at the local medical centers in defiance of the federal legislation and court rulings, the opening of the local drive-in theater to black citizens, releasing the young black man held on charges of inciting a riot, and fully implementing in Orangeburg all parts of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.[15] The list of grievances was published in the local newspaper but otherwise received little attention.

Ultimately the desire to seek change through protest was all but extinguished in State students by the white-authored violence. When the radical student group AWARE at the nearby University of South Carolina (still overwhelmingly white) attempted to join forces with South Carolina State students in sponsoring various teach-ins and weekend rallies concerning racism and the war, State students offered little support. On another occasion, a Claflin College professor attended an AWARE meeting at the University of South Carolina to request those students' assistance for a small group at South Carolina State attempting to organize antiwar activities. Though an AWARE member did visit the group at South Carolina State, no similar groups or activities emerged on the State campus as a result.[16]

Commemoration events struggled to define the reasons for the deaths. On the first year anniversary of the student deaths, drums were played on the State campus as more than two hundred students marched to remember the dead and unveiled a

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[15] "College Officials Endorse Grievances," *Times & Democrat* (Orangeburg, South Carolina), 23 February 1968.

[16] AWARE, Minutes of Meeting, 10 December 1968, Special Collections and Archives, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina.

monument to them on campus. Commentary on the tragedy recorded that day by the press centered around the nebulous idea that the students had died "for change."[17] The two-year anniversary commemoration of the event broadened the focus to include more than only the memorial for the dead. The services in Orangeburg were attended by seven hundred, and speakers stated that "Black Americans, especially those in South Carolina, should rededicate themselves to better housing, better recreation, better education, a better economy, and the elimination of racism."[18] Four years after the tragedy State students remembered the dead in a quiet memorial with an address by George Hamilton, director of South Carolina Governor John West's Commission on Human Rights. Hamilton reminded his audience that the three were not killed over bowling, but "because they were men, and they asked their society to accord them the dignity of men. It is not a cause limited to our age, to our race, to our nation. And it has never been an easy cause."[19] The deaths of the South Carolina State College students did not seem to attract much attention from other black universities in the region at the time, however, and the memory of the "Orangeburg Massacre" has become gradually absorbed into the narrative of the civil rights era only in relatively recent years.

The assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. on April 4, 1968 did provoke a strong response on the South's historically black campuses, beginning with seven

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[17] David Bledsoe, "State College Honors Three Slain Last Year," *State* (Columbia, South Carolina), 9 February 1969.

[18] "700 Attend Memorial Services for South Carolina State College Students on Sun.," *Carolina Times* (Columbia, South Carolina), 28 February 1970, p. 1.

[19] Jack Bass, "Quiet Memorial Eulogizes 3 Slain at S.C. State College," *Charlotte Observer,* 9 February 1972: section B, p. 2.

hundred National Guard troops being deployed to the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama on April 6 to free the Institute's Board of Trustees who were being held hostage by a group of students demanding certain changes in the institution. The main focus of the kidnapping was anti-militaristic, demanding the removal of the mandatory requirement of the ROTC program for Tuskegee students. Sporadic demonstrations of student unrest occurring previously had been sparked by discontent with the university's engineering facilities, curfew hours, and removal of the student government; the kidnapping of the trustees was the culmination of the movement amongst the Tuskegee students.[20]

Black students at Alabama State College in the state capital of Montgomery were equally discontented over similar issues. A year after the Tuskegee incident Alabama State students refused to obey the college president's orders to leave campus. For ten days students had been occupying themselves by protesting current college policies and demanding changes that would give them greater influence over university regulations. Numbering up to eight hundred at one point, the students refused to modify demands for prohibiting military recruiting on campus and renaming the campus buildings after civil rights movement leaders like Malcolm X.[21]

Just over a year after King's assassination, and nearly a decade since the famous "sit-in" movement had been launched by North Carolina A&T students in February of

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[20] Milo Dakin and Frank Skinner, "Guard is Sent to Tuskegee," *Montgomery Advertiser & Alabama Journal*, 7 April 1968, section A, p. 1, 2. See also Robert J. Norrell, *Reaping the Whirlwind: The Civil Rights Movement in Tuskegee*, rev. ed. (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1998, 1995), 193-94.

[21] Milo Dakin, "Alabama State Closed; Student Group Remains," *Montgomery Advertiser*, 8 April 1969, section A, p. 1.

1960, Greensboro was again the site of racial confrontation. On May 23, 1969 one student was killed, another wounded, and five policemen also were wounded as a result of gunfire exchanges on the North Carolina A&T University campus. Sophomore honor student Willie B. Grimes died after receiving a gunshot wound in the back of the head. According to reports in national, local, and campus publications, the disorder leading to the shooting concerned civil rights; it began days earlier at nearby Dudley High School, where a black student who had been barred from participating in a campaign for a student government office because of his alleged militant affiliations had elicited support from the A&T student body. This was not the only instance in which A&T students experienced violence. Two months earlier Greensboro police had opened fire on A&T students striking on behalf of their food service and cafeteria workers' wages.

In the late 1960s A&T students were primarily concerned with issues stemming from the still-incomplete agenda of the civil rights movement, though other issues were at work as well. Antiwar sentiment at the university surfaced briefly and co-existed without detracting from more longstanding concerns of racial equality. During the spring of 1968 campus protests ended A&T's compulsory Army ROTC program for reasons ranging from dislike of the required classes to opposition of the war in Vietnam. This series of demonstrations was the first at A&T that directly confronted the war in Vietnam. Students were encouraged two years later in *The A&T Register,* in the second confrontation of the war in Vietnam, to visit the Draft Counseling Center "if only to rap" because "now is the time to find out what opportunities and rights you can exercise in

regard to the draft."[22] The Center was created on October 23, 1970 at the suggestion from a group of twenty political science majors at the university. A&T students concerned with the military were not all opposed to the war. The support for the situation in Vietnam that did exist seemed to be focused on the military; the draft center was formed at the same time a women's Air Force ROTC program was introduced to the campus to provide leadership roles for women. By 1971 campus protests and student concern had shifted back to civil rights as students marched with thousands of other black North Carolina students in Raleigh on what they termed "Black Monday," an effort to improve higher education for black students in the state.

Each spring seemed to bring with it another violent tragedy as the result of student protests on a historically-black campus, from Orangeburg, South Carolina in 1968 to Greensboro in 1969, to Jackson, Mississippi in 1970. On May 14, 1970 white police officers shot and killed two black students on the Jackson State College campus in Mississippi's capital city. The unrest leading to the shooting centered around a traditional annual gathering of college students and local blacks on Lynch Street, a street known for being a violent location on the border of the college campus. Those gathered primarily had a night of revelry in mind, but that particular night, as had happened in previous years, a volatile atmosphere increasingly prevailed as whites drove through the street. Students angry over black/white relations in the city were irked at the perceived invasion of a black majority-area, and as their anger grew some began throwing rocks at the passing cars. With the tensions of the decade and of the Kent State violence of the

[22] "Progress Being Made at Draft Counseling Center," *A&T Register* (Greensboro, North Carolina), 13 November 1970, p. 3.

preceding week looming large, police dispatched to the area reacted strongly to the perceived violent intentions of the students; after approaching a crowd of more than two hundred gathered at the Alexander Hall dormitory, police began firing at the fifth floor of the building and then downward into the crowd of students. Some blacks fled into the building for cover, while others scattered elsewhere. When the firing ended, students Phillip Gibbs and James Earl Green were left dead, both victims of shotgun blasts from the police.[23]

When Jackson State College president John A. Peoples, Jr. made a statement describing the situation leading to the shooting, he attributed the atmosphere of escalating violence to the students' tradition of rock-throwing and reprimanded the student body for damage done to campus property.[24] In actuality, the situation was a result of discontent the students had voiced the previous week. Peoples maintained correctly that no civil rights or antiwar groups were present on the Jackson State College campus, but failed to mention that students, on their own accord, had taken up the two causes actively just days before the shootings. Common themes of frustration heard around the Jackson State campus in early May of 1970 centered around the war in Southeast Asia and the shootings of the Kent State University students. In May of 1970 students at Jackson State joined the traditional cause of civil rights (Jackson State students had become civil rights

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[23] Newspaper Clippings 1970, Gibbs/Green Memorial Collection, Jackson State University Archives, Jackson, Mississippi; see also Lelia Gaston Rhodes, *Jackson State University: The First 100 Years, 1877-1977* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1979), 176; Tim Spofford, *Lynch Street: The May 1970 Slayings at Jackson State College* (Kent: The Kent State University Press, 1988).

[24]John A. Peoples, Jr., A Message From the President, 14 May 1970, The Gibbs-Green Memorial Collection, Jackson State University Archives, Jackson, Mississippi.

advocates as early as 1963 when black students of Tougaloo College staged a sit-in at the Jackson Municipal Library) with the antiwar movement when the local branch of the Students for a Democratic Society organized a student strike. On May 7 a flyer circulated on the Jackson State College campus encouraged students to "be concerned" about America's recent invasion of Cambodia. Seven students delivered speeches that day on the steps of the campus dining hall expressing how they were "concerned" with the draft, the war in Vietnam, the disproportionate number of black solder casualties in Indochina, and the struggles of black citizens in America. Protesters simultaneously circulated a handbill to passersby informing them of a planned class boycott in response to these issues. Two days later, twelve college students attended a downtown peace rally organized by the Jackson Peace Coordinating Committee.[25] The day before the fatal shootings in Jackson, some students had attempted to burn the campus ROTC building, causing little damage to any part of the compound but the barracks, but nonetheless making the point that the Jackson State students found the invasion of Cambodia unacceptable.[26]

After the shootings on May 14 members of the press attempted to determine the direct cause of the student gathering by interviewing those at the scene. One newspaper quotes Jackson State student Walter Ramsey as saying that "it all started over

[25] Spofford, *Lynch Street*, 26, 30-1.

[26] Newspaper Clippings 1970, Gibbs/Green Memorial Collection; Rubye Hughes, "A Night of Terror: Jackson State," *Close-Up*, June 1970: 12, 13; Peoples, A Message from the President, 14 May 1970.

Cambodia."[27] Another student commented to the press that the destruction of the campus was about "a lot of things: the war, Cambodia, the draft, the governor, Mississippi," suggesting just how complicated the causal links often were between the outbreak of campus protest and underlying dissatisfaction with a host of issues.[28] An article in a locally published magazine echoed the same themes, stating that though Jackson State students were "more passive than some students," they were nonetheless "concerned. And like students all over the country, the students at Jackson State were displeased with President Nixon's move into Cambodia, the draft and the killing of four students at Kent State." [29] In William Scranton's special report on Jackson State for the President's Commission on Campus Unrest, racial hostility was referenced by the Commission as the primary cause of the disturbance, but two students were quoted in the report with more specific responses. One stated that although some cited the "Vietnam issue" as the primary catalyst for protests, even more pressing concerns were the military draft, and perennial problems with the poor conditions of the educational facilities at Jackson State. A second student referred to "political and social overtones" as the cause, stating that the rock-throwing resulted from anger ultimately directed at the government.[30]

The Jackson State deaths occurred in the wake of the Kent State shootings and consequently received more national attention and sympathy than the previous deaths on

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[27] Newspaper Clippings 1970, Gibbs/Green Memorial Collection.

[28] *Jackson (Mississippi) Clarion-Ledger,* 15 May 1970.

[29] Hughes, "A Night of Terror: Jackson State," 12.

[30] President's Commission on Campus Unrest, *The Killings at Jackson State* (Washington, D.C., October 1970), 50.

black southern college campuses in South Carolina and North Carolina in 1968 and 1969. An article was published by *The Washington Post* in May 1970 comparing the incident at Jackson State with that at Kent State. President Nixon was vacationing at the Florida White House when the incident was reported to him, and he responded by saying that "this tragedy makes it urgent that every American personally undertake greater efforts toward understanding, restraint, and compassion." This comment was considerably softer than his response to Kent State, which had been just short of blaming the demonstrators.[31]

After the campus shootings, protests at the college concerning national issues ended as abruptly as they had begun the previous spring. The Jackson State student body president stated that though demonstrations to that point had been attended by only a fraction of the college's population, "that will change." The tone on the campus had quickly become militant; in explanation of the evident ideological shift underway, the student president flatly answered, "They're mad."[32] Classes were cancelled at Jackson State for the remaining weeks of the spring term and did not reconvene until the fall; when students returned, the campus newspaper noted that the environment had changed from a "complacent, apathetic campus" to "an institution of awareness."[33] Perhaps this referred to the economic boycott organized by black students and citizens of Jackson

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[31] "JSC Deaths Sadden Nixon," *Washington Post,* 15 May 1970, p. 1.

[32] Haynes Joitrison, "Striking Similarities: Kent State . . . and Jackson State," *Washington Post,* May 1970.

[33] Kenneth Washington, "From Campus to Compound," *Blue and White Flash* (Jackson State College), October 1970, p. 2.

during the summer of 1970. The boycott was planned as a protest of the state highway patrol, but proved unsuccessful when some black merchants took advantage of the situation by raising their prices, thereby gouging African Americans who were seeking to demonstrate their grievances through the selective withholding of economic patronage of white-owned businesses. With that in conjunction with a press supportive of the governor's policies and overall confusion with both blacks and whites about the exact facts of the shooting, black protests of the highway patrol became more frustrating than effective and had diminished by the time the students returned to campus for fall classes.[34]

Despite its students' momentary embrace of militancy in the spring of 1970, Jackson State had not been fundamentally transformed in the aftermath of the fatal shootings. The students commemorated the anniversary of their two classmates' deaths the following year, but even then the memorials were dedicated more to revisiting controversies surrounding the shootings and to expressing indignation at various responses of the nation rather than mustering an ongoing critique of racial inequality and U.S. foreign policy. In a special edition of the campus publication *The Blue and White Flash* printed on the first anniversary of the Gibbs and Green deaths, the editors compiled articles published in national newspapers discussing the Jackson State situation. The special edition focused solely on the Jackson State shootings in spite of national attention given to the anniversary of the Kent State deaths. One article from the *Los Angeles*

[34] Anon., "Victims Blamed For Own Death," Jackson (Mississippi), quoted in *Blue and White Flash* (Jackson State College), May 1971, p. 5., heretofore referenced as "Victims Blamed for Own Death."

*Times*, reprinted in the Jackson State paper without commentary, suggested that insulting remarks black students directed toward the law enforcement officers had provoked the shots and markedly praised the Jackson mayor's initiative in creating a biracial committee to collect testimony about the incident.[35] An article from a local newspaper remarked that the Mississippi state government was "eager to blame the victims for last month's massacre at Jackson State College." The article went on to report the black attorney Reuben Anderson's findings about the situation at the College that night; Anderson contended that no evidence supported the presence of the alleged "mob" on the campus, and that no "riot" was taking place.[36]

In spite of persistent tensions in black-white race relations in and beyond Mississippi, and ongoing American involvement in Vietnam, the Jackson State campus remained silent again until the second anniversary of the shootings. In May 1972 Jackson State student Margaret Alexander delivered remarks on the May 1970 incident. Alexander placed the deaths of Gibbs and Green into the context of national dissent being voiced at the time; the speech targeted injustices inflicted in the 1960s on blacks and radicals by law enforcement officers attempting to repress dissent voiced about racism

[35] Kenneth Prich, "Obscenities Blamed For Shooting," *Los Angeles Times,* May 1970, quoted in *Blue and White Flash* (Jackson State College), May, 1971, p. 4, 5.

[36] "Victims Blamed for Own Death," p. 5.

and the war in Vietnam.[37] Alexander challenged the student body of Jackson State to remember the deaths of the two students by embracing the black struggle for freedom.[38]

Silenced reigned again for a year on the Jackson State campus until third special edition of *The Blue and White Flash* was released in May 1973. What had become the most prevalent issue about the deaths of Gibbs and Green was the controversy surrounding the actual events of that May, spurned by numerous conflicting descriptions. The campus paper discussed the inconsistencies that were reported, noting that publications targeted toward black audiences cited Kent State, Vietnam, and Cambodia as the causes for the students' gathering; publications for whites, and official government reports, concluded that the violence erupted in response to a riotous atmosphere on the campus that night.[39] With this yawning gap in perceptions across the Color Line, according to the *Flash* staff, all that remained at that point for the college's students was simply to continue commemorating the deaths of Gibbs and Green.[40]

Historians discussing the Jackson State incident in the last two decades have concluded, almost unanimously, that the shootings occurred as part of the antiwar movement. In 1988 Tim Spofford published a study of the Jackson State shootings, discussed entirely in comparison with the Kent State shootings, that presents the causes

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[37] Margaret Walker Alexander, "Reflections on the Events of May 1970," May 1972, The Gibbs-Green Memorial Collection, Jackson State University Archives, Jackson, Mississippi: 1, 4.

[38] Ibid., 7, 8.

[39] *Blue and White Flash* (Jackson State College), May 1973, p. 1.

[40] Ibid., p. 1.

of unrest as the invasion of Cambodia and the deaths at Kent State.[41] On the thirtieth anniversary of the students' deaths, an article published in the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* argues along similar lines that the situation was a result of student dissent over Kent State and the war in Vietnam. The article begins by stating that the four Kent State students have been "immortalized," while the two killed at Jackson State are all but forgotten, and continues by saying that the shootings themselves occurred in response to student anger present on the campus for three previous days because of the aforementioned national crises. [42]

In the last several years, the close chronological proximity of the Jackson State Shootings to those in Kent State has resulted in their pairing in the nation's historical memory of violence attending antiwar protests, although the deaths of the two black students in Mississippi are almost always present as a footnote to the better-known violence that left four white students dead in Ohio. It seems that for Jackson State to carve out its own place in the historical narrative, even in close proximity to Kent State, investigations into the violence have had to be made in a way that aligned the Jackson State protesters with the antiwar movement more so than with the civil rights movement.

In another all but unheard of incident of campus violence, this time at Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, a fall 1972 demonstration of three hundred students met law enforcement officers in a round of gunfire that left two on campus

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[41] Spofford, *Lynch Street*, 26, 30, 31, 35, 51, 53.

[42] "The Shootings at Jackson State University: Thirty Years Later," *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* 28 (Summer 2000): 42-43.

dead.[43] On October 21 Students United had been formed by about five hundred students demanding educational improvements in the form of African-American heritage courses and increased state funding. At the first demonstration more than three thousand gathered, including the elected student government officers. Not satisfied with the results of the demonstration, a concerned group of almost seven thousand students marched five miles to the State Department of Education two days later to meet with the superintendent. Six were granted a ten minute interview with the Louisiana governor in response to the demonstration; similar meetings continued with various officials until October 31. At that time more than three hundred marched to the university administration building to demand the resignation of the institution's president. From a location off campus the president made a decision to close the university upon hearing of the demonstration and that the students had elected the student government vice president the president of the university system. When the campus reopened on November 6, administration officials busied themselves with the arrests of participants in the demonstrations.

The university closed again ten days later when the November 16 protest demonstration ended with participants Denver Smith dead and with Leonard Brown fatally wounded. An initial investigation suggested that injuries sustained by the students were from fragments, rather than bullets, emboldening some critics to argue that the students had been killed by the objects hurled by their fellow demonstrators. The

[43] "Clash Leaves 2 Dead on SU Campus Shuts Down," *Morning Advocate* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana), 17 November 1972; "Testimony Conflicts End Inquiry Probe on Incident at SU," *Morning Advocate* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana), 29 November 1972.

conclusive forensic investigation, however, revealed that the students had died of gunshot wounds to the head. The students' response ended in the burning of the university registrar building. When the campus reopened in January 1973 it welcomed back a despondent student body. A boycott was suggested in protest of the student deaths but never materialized.[44]

After participants were killed during protests at Kent State in Ohio and at four different historically black institutions, in Orangeburg, South Carolina, Greensboro, North Carolina, Jackson Mississippi, and Baton Rouge, Louisiana, student footsoldiers in civil rights and antiwar movements on American campuses, particularly in the American South, largely disengaged from their causes, but for different reasons. The concerns voiced on the six black southern campuses were fundamentally about race and by extension economic conditions and educational opportunities; the basic issues at stake at those universities were variables that dissenters had next to no control over nor power to change. Regardless of improvements that might take place in racial issues over time, it was difficult to imagine surmounting fundamental structural obstacles in the short run. The daunting odds black student protesters faced makes their protest of greater significance, and as events in Orangeburg, Greensboro, Jackson, and Baton Rouge were to illustrate, the very real physical risks they faced were even greater than those faced by their protesting counterparts at predominately white campuses.

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[44] "A Response to the Report of the Attorney General's Special Commission of Inquiry On the Southern University Tragedy of November 16, 1972," *Black Collegian* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana), January-February 1973; *State Times* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana), 15 November 1973; 28 February 1974.

Degrees of importance in causes of protest determine the effect of a direct assault on the protest movement: the greater the importance of the issue to those engaged in attempting to bring about change, the more vulnerable the participants. A tragic event then leaves a sincerely dedicated movement wary of risking even more than what they had already sacrificed by protesting, as seen in historically black southern colleges and universities. Tragic events also shake transform a less committed movement, shattering the façade of a group already lacking a strong foundation on which to rebuild, as will be described as the final section chronicles the events in the months and years just after the Kent State tragedy.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# THE END OF THE ANTIWAR MOVEMENT:

# THE FALL OF 1970 THROUGH THE SPRING OF 1972

Nixon's last major departure in his policy in Southeast Asia before the fall of 1970 was the deployment of troops into Cambodia. That incursion and expansion of the theater of military operations in Southeast Asia ended in June. In early October, Nixon proposed to North Vietnam a "standstill" ceasefire where all regular military forces and guerilla fighters engaged in Southeast Asia would hold the ground they then occupied, but not undertake offensive operations, remaining there until negotiations yielded a peace settlement. (Hanoi failed to respond to the overture, and by the end of the month South Vietnamese troops had begun offensive operations across the border in Cambodia, but Nixon's proffering of the olive branch was probably intended to mollify American critics every bit as much as bring about an end to fighting.) November congressional elections returned many outspoken antiwar senators to their seats, evidence of mounting dovish tendencies in the American voting public, or at least the electoral equivalent of "battle fatigue." Though combat deaths in 1970 were half what they were in 1969, more than three hundred thousand military personnel were still stationed in Indochina as the year drew to a close, and Pentagon releases showed the war had claimed 44,245 American

lives to that point.[1] Troops remained in Southeast Asia during early 1971 as Nixon pushed into Laos, protecting a South Vietnamese ground force invading the Ho Chi Minh trail with American Air Force artillery. The Laos campaign ended abruptly, and disastrously, with more than six hundred American helicopters damaged and over a hundred shot down, and with the South Vietnamese troops fighting each other for a place on the few helicopters that were left in the operation, an eerie foreshadowing of the scramble to board military helicopters as Saigon fell to communist forces four years later.

On the campuses of universities in the South that had openly confronted the war during the previous school year, even those that had employed radical slogans and tactics when protesting, only one instance of radicalism occurred in the region after the spring of 1970. The exception to the generally quiescent character the southern university antiwar movement had assumed was found in Florida, in a fledgling movement at Florida State University in Tallahassee that had come into being only during the 1970-1971 school year after the sharp spike in protest that had emerged following the Cambodian invasion and Kent State the preceding spring. Florida State students organized an anti-military demonstration organized in September 1970 on the campus during which fourteen out of the fifty-five participants were suspended, prompting another demonstration on October 2 in support of the right to freedom of speech. Later that October, students circulated a flier on the campus that discussed the indictment of twenty-five Kent students and conversely noted the lack of consequences for members of the National Guard responsible for opening fire on unarmed students five months earlier. The flier charged

[1] Col. Harry G. Summers, Jr., *The Vietnam War Almanac* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1985): 53.

Nixon with attempting to portray student dissenters as a minority, and challenged Florida State students to meet Nixon at the airport when he visited Tallahassee to prove his argument about the student minority false. The meeting was sponsored by the Student Mobilization Committee to tell Nixon "No more phony peace plans!!! U.S. out of Asia now!!!"[2] Another larger event was organized the following May, on the first anniversary of the deaths at Kent State. This moratorium at Florida State honored the students killed at Kent State and Jackson State Universities the previous year while still protesting the escalation of the war. The Student Government, the campus chapter of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) civil rights organization, and other sponsors staged a candlelight vigil, a march to the federal courthouse, and workshops on Vietnam related issues.[3] Immediately following the moratorium events, Spiro Agnew was greeted at the Florida State Legislature by a group of Florida State students protesting the Vietnam war on May 12, 1971, the last antiwar activity recorded at that university.

With the threat Kent State posed, few antiwar protesters returned for fall classes in 1970 with the same vigor they had shown the previous spring. Universities across the South fostered little to no antiwar activity after May of 1970. It should be noted that the schools with a track record of an authentic desire to end the war in Southeast Asia, evidenced by direct and deliberate effort to engage those with the power to bring about change, did not abandon the antiwar movement quite as quickly after Kent State as

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[2] Student Mobilization Committee, "Confront the Myth and the Media," 26 October 1970, Student Protests, Archives, Florida State University Library, Tallahassee, Florida.

[3] Student Protests, Archives, Florida State University Library, Tallahassee, Florida.

protest groups on other campuses that had busied themselves with repetitive and vague attempts to express antiwar ideas.

Antiwar students at Clemson, who as noted above had purposefully sought to oppose the war without jeopardizing their position by disrespecting authority, continued demonstrations until 1971. At North Carolina State, where antiwar students were constantly challenged to know their facts and justify their antiwar stance by an active pro-war movement, protesters maintained activity against the war into the early 1970s. In the same way at Duke University, where the antiwar movement made a notable effort to educate the student body and the community about the atrocities of the war, the protesters remained dedicated to speaking out. Students in Georgia, where the antiwar movement had carefully strengthened itself by removing boundaries between black and white students, radical and conservative students, the antiwar sentiment felt among students prevailed in demonstrations directly responding to ongoing developments in the last stages of the conflict in Southeast Asia. Yet as dedicated as these four antiwar groups were, they were the only four campuses among those southern universities discussed that maintained significant antiwar activity in the form of protests and demonstrations after the most intense outbreak of protest in the spring of 1970.

It should also be noted, though, that not every school that witnessed an end to antiwar demonstrations remained entirely silent. Students sill expressed antiwar ideas, but in the overwhelming majority of the universities that maintained some semblance of an antiwar movement there was a tendency to revert back to the original means of protesting seen between 1965 and 1969: letters, editorials, and demonstrations carefully calculated to be construed as “supporting the troops” while opposing the war itself. The

University of Louisiana-Lafayette is an example; the university came to life during the fall of 1970 when an editorial appeared in the campus newspaper discussing the United States military. The editor proposed that the "patriotic military men of yesteryear volunteer their services in the Vietnam conflict." The article argued that wars should not be fought by young men, but by "those whose peers placed America in this foreign country." Other than that statement, the articulation of a powerful generational critique, the article did not directly confront the Vietnam war itself other than to note its lack of Congressional support and to call it Nixon's "ego war."[4] Yet the appearance of the article actually generated a steady stream of war-supporting statements, starting with a rebuttal that accused the initial writer of proposing that all those who support a war were bound to fight in it. That particular rebuttal also managed to bring the Vietnam war into the debate when its author maintained that the Tonkin Gulf Resolution was proof enough of Congressional backing of the Vietnam conflict, and that an actual declaration of war had been avoided so as not to bring Russia and China into the conflict. That writer concluded with a statement that the war had been "toned down" since Nixon took office and therefore was not his "ego war."[5] In an ambiguous reply that almost addressed that rebuttal, another student wrote to *The Vermilion* that the issue at hand was not the "technicality and precision" of the war but instead the morality of it. The writer supported what he saw as the editor's attack on the morality of the war, arguing that the

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[4] Gwenn Boudreaux, "Gwenn and Bear It: Who's War?" *Vermilion* (University of Louisiana-Lafayette), 25 September 1970.

[5] Thomas W. Parker, "War Article Attacked," *Vermilion* (University of Louisiana-Lafayette), 2 October 1970.

war violated the "sacredness of human life."[6] The debate at the University of Louisiana widened to include other war issues as it continued that month, particularly when the brother of the editor wrote that "communism is beautiful when used the right way." This comment spurred another series of articles and letters by those appalled by this evident support for communism, not surprising in a region where anti-communism had assumed the proportions of an article of faith.[7]

Additionally, *The Vermilion* provided students with information as to how to join other Louisiana college students and community members in bringing an end to the Vietnam war.[8] A March for Peace was organized on October 31 in New Orleans, beginning at Tulane University and ending in the downtown area with a candlelight vigil in honor of the war casualties. Two weeks later, on November 13, a Prisoner of War day was organized on the University of Southern Louisiana campus and was followed the next day with the same event in Lafayette. The organizers of the POW days, the Arnold Air Society, refrained from wearing their military uniforms to the events to stress that feelings on the war itself were irrelevant to the concern over bringing the prisoners taken by North Vietnam back to America safely.[9] The POW event managed to obtain more

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[6] Jack L. Benoit, "The Issues of Justice . . ." *Vermilion* (University of Louisiana-Lafayette), 16 October 1970.

[7] Douglas M Brewster, "Debate Continues on 'Whose War,'" *Vermilion* (University of Louisiana-Lafayette), 30 October 1970.

[8] "Peace March Set in N.O.," *Vermilion* (University of Louisiana-Lafayette), 30 October 1970.

[9] Paul Herpin, "AAS Sponsors POW Day on Campus Friday, Nov. 13," *Vermilion* (University of Louisiana-Lafayette), 6 November 1970. p. 13,

than sixteen hundred signatures on a petition asking the North Vietnamese government for humane treatment of American prisoners, in spite of only a small crowd attending the rally for the event. Some students were reported being discourteous or disinterested in what they perceived to be an antiwar event, while others were upset that "the families of the POW's and MIA's have to rely upon people who advocate the destruction of this country to get information about the well-being of their loved ones."[10] Actions displaying any sentiment about the Vietnam war at the University of Louisiana ended with the fall semester, and did not resume in the spring of 1971.

A third Clemson University protest was planned as part of a national day of protest organized in the end of October 1970. This demonstration was distinguished from the previous fall's by its participants, who stated that the 1969 Moratorium activities had been in honor of the war dead, whereas the fall 1970 demonstration was specifically in protest of the Vietnam war.[11] Antiwar students urged their fellow classmates to replace October 30 and 31 classes with rallies and workshops supporting an end to American involvement in Vietnam. Topics for discussion were not exclusively limited to the conflict in Southeast Asia, but also included the war in the Middle East (the Israeli-Egyptian "War of Attrition" waged from 1968 to 1970 had followed shortly on the heels of the 1967 "Six Day War") and strategies of draft resistance. The newly organized and short-lived Clemson University Underground, responsible for the Strike for Peace, added

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[10] Tony Herpin, "Comment: POW Speakers," *Vermilion* (University of Louisiana-Lafayette), 20 November 1970; see also USL Angel Flight, "Thanks for POW Day," *Vermilion* (University of Louisiana-Lafayette), 4 December 1970, p. 6.

[11] John Carrier, "Students Protest War," *Tiger* (Clemson University, South Carolina), 30 October 1970, p. 1.

plans to protest Vice President Spiro Agnew's upcoming visit to Greenville, South Carolina following his speech in Raleigh, North Carolina.[12] Actress and antiwar lecturer Jane Fonda derided Agnew as "the country's most unguided missile" in her address to more than four thousand Clemson students that November at the last of the university's antiwar rallies. Fonda was not booked and supported by an influential antiwar group at Clemson, but actually by a neutral student organization that in an evident effort to seek ideological balance promised a conservative speaker during the spring semester.[13] In April 1971 a group of twenty Clemson students met for a planning session for antiwar representatives to attend the April 24 demonstration against the war in Washington, D.C. that appeared to have ended there, with the planning.[14]

Spiro Agnew's visit to Raleigh provoked confrontation between anti- and pro-war students at North Carolina State University. The Vice President was scheduled to speak to a crowd at the university coliseum on October 26, 1970. A group calling itself the Conspiracy, co-chaired by the student body president and another well-known campus leader, at first planned to hold a candlelight march to the coliseum during the speech but rejected the idea in favor of another they hoped would be better received by the general public. Instead of the march, antiwar students planned to hold a free dinner in answer to the fundraising dinner planned by the Republican party for Agnew and congressional

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[12] Tim Doyle, "Strike Planned: CUU Envisions Boycott for Friday," *Tiger* (Clemson University, South Carolina), 23 October 1970.

[13] Walt Belcher, "Jane Fonda Attacks War Policy Before Overflow Clemson Crowd," *Greenville (South Carolina) News*, 17 November 1970, p. 13.

[14] "Students to Participate in March on Washington," *Tiger* (Clemson University, South Carolina), 9 April 1971, p. 3.

candidates. State students opposing Agnew urged those of similar opinion to remain quiet during his speech and to direct concern to the media in the form of letters; antiwar students were afraid unruly demonstrations would be used to discredit the movement.[15] The Free People's Dinner and rock concert was attended by over six hundred while a comparable number of other students milled about outside the coliseum in support of Agnew. With the policy of silence being feared by some to be misinterpreted as support, the protesting members of the student body issued a packet to the press stating clearly that the policy "does *not* endorse Mr. Agnew, his tactics, his rhetoric, or his visit."[16] In an even clearer display of the silence policy, a group of a hundred protesters picketed outside the coliseum with blank signs and tape covering their mouths. One small instance of dissent occurred inside: a small number of antiwar signs made from notebook paper and pens, hung on the balcony.[17]

Opinion of the war continued to be voiced sporadically during that spring semester at North Carolina State. Antiwar students were answered in January by the formation of the pro-war Student Committee Against Radical Extremists (forming the memorable acronym SCARE), but the State New Mobe remained active. The antiwar group busied itself with the circulation of the People's Peace Treaty, a proposition to end the war and encourage self-determination for both Vietnamese and American citizens. In

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[15] Bob Ashley, "Students Urge Quiet Agnew Reception," *Raleigh (North Carolina) Times*, 23 October 1970, p. 1.

[16] Cathy Sterling, to Members of the Press, 26 October 1970, Special Collections and Archives, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, North Carolina.

[17] "As Agnew Speaks to Crowd," *News and Observer* (Raleigh, North Carolina), 27 October 1970.

April the same group sent representatives to the March on Washington that Clemson students had attempted to support to protest the war and the draft, which marked the end of the movement at the land grant university in Raleigh as it had its land grant neighbor Clemson in South Carolina. Afterward, antiwar students at North Carolina State resigned themselves to circulating fliers in protest of Nixon and the cost of the war in Indochina.[18]

Antiwar protest at Duke University had by 1971 become less frequent and more specific. A letter from the Coalition Against Imperialism at Duke was circulated through the student body dated February 23, 1971; it called for anti-imperialism activities to be carried out that spring directed toward ending silence about Nixon's Vietnam policies. The writer was fearful that Nixon would be able to destroy the antiwar movement if those who opposed the war refused to continue to speak out against it. Four days later students organized a march in the Durham area protesting the invasion of Laos and Cambodia and Nixon's renewed escalation of the bombing in Southeast Asia. The march was also dedicated to ending the silence of the American people opposed to the war, claiming that vocalization of opposition had effectively brought about the end of Johnson's career in the White House and might therefore continue to be effective as a means of delimiting Nixon's political future as he prepared for his reelection bid in 1972. As at North Carolina State University, on March 3 information on the People's Peace Treaty was distributed to Duke students in an effort to involve them with educating other Duke students and the Durham community on ways to end American involvement in Southeast

[18] An advertisement announcing the "fall anti-war offensive is beginning" called a meeting on October 14, 1971, but apparently made little other effort to continue the antiwar campaign. Luther Russell Herman, Jr. Collection, Special Collections and Archives, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, North Carolina.

Asia. As the year progressed, protests continued to decline into quieter methods of promoting awareness of the ongoing war.[19]

A few weeks after Agnew completed his rounds, Daniel Ellsberg culminated his career with the release of the *Pentagon Papers*, Robert McNamara's commissioned study of America's plunge into Vietnam. Ellsberg meticulously copied and leaked the study to the *New York Times* that June, confirming the suspicions held by those already disconcerted with the war and planting doubt in some who had supported it. The premise of the *Papers* was that American government officials had received and ignored reports since World War II that consistently alluded to ominous prospects of American participation in Vietnam. Though the antiwar movement was all but nonexistent as an effective organization entity capable of maintaining sustained protest, the eagerness with which the *Pentagon Papers* were received revealed that support for the war had similarly waned. It was as though both camps had largely exhausted their energies.

Press coverage of Ellsberg and his bold antiwar act remained consistent, but the situation in Vietnam by the fall of 1971 was no longer on the front pages of newspapers and did not dominate the evening newscasts as had been the case less than a year earlier. In early October 1971 the United States ground forces engaged in what would be their last major ground-based combat operation in Vietnam. Nixon changed the tactics of the American forces back from offensive to defensive measures on November 12, leaving offensives from that point on to the South Vietnamese army. Yet in the last days of December the President ordered the United States Air Force to commence a renewed

[19] Donald J. Fluke Papers 1958-: Vietnamese Conflict, 1961-1975, Duke University Archives, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

bombing campaign of North Vietnam; Nixon's Vietnamization was still far from being complete, but aerial bombardment promised to result in fewer American casualties than infantry fighting. This was confirmed in a January 1972 interview with CBS news correspondent Dan Rather, where Nixon announced that the Vietnam war would not be a presidential campaign issue that fall and refused to comment on whether that implied that the removal of American troops would occur by the November election. He alluded to a continuation of the bombing of the North,[20] which did in fact resume on April 15, 1972 with the bombing of Haiphong and Hanoi after a four-year pause during which those targets had been largely spared, an action subsequent historians have ascribed to Nixon's and Henry Kissinger's "madman theory" strategy, whereby the wily Secretary of State would warn the North Vietnamese that Nixon's irrationality might lead to unexpected military escalations in response to any communist military aggression. The month before, North Vietnamese troops had launched an unexpected attack on South Vietnamese provinces, including the area just north of Saigon. Nixon did not hesitate to respond that April by increasing bombing campaigns, and also by increasing the number of naval and air troops in Vietnam from 47,000 to 77,000.[21] On May 8, North Vietnamese ports were mined by the United States Navy days before the Army headquarters in Vietnam were dismantled.[22] The war was not over, yet within what had

[20] Robert Mann, *A Grand Delusion: America's Descent into Vietnam* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 692.

[21] Ibid., 696.

[22] Summers, *The Vietnam War Almanac*, 55, 56.

been the antiwar movement the majority of former protesters were content to act as though it was.

Still, some antiwar pockets that had been committed to ending the war held out and responded infrequently to specific war issues. College students in Georgia, for example, did respond to Nixon's mining of North Vietnamese ports with peaceful protest marches on May 12. Hundreds of University of Georgia students marched in Athens, while a smaller group of fifteen protested at Georgia State University. Two hundred Emory University students demonstrated against the mining with a rally. The belief among the protesters was that "Nixon can't send in troops without the universities of the country closing down," that in demonstrating they had "saved lives in Vietnam."[23]

Duke University also continued its active antiwar movement through the spring 1972 but in contrast to its previous deliberate character seemed oblivious to any events occurring in Southeast Asia, and looked instead at what issues the war had created in America. A March 1972 handbill from the North Carolina Resistance was distributed at Duke calling for a pledge to end the draft. The handbill promoted refusal to pay the ten percent telephone tax devoted to helping finance the war in Vietnam, as well as refusal to register for the draft or to be inducted into the military. Continuing the protest tradition in Durham of fact-based educational efforts, an anonymous April flier distributed to Duke students cited the military expenditures at the cost of the needs of the American public, comparing the price of fuel for jets and the cost of meals for families. The flier also labeled South Vietnam a dictatorship and claimed that American soldiers were dying

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[23] "Georgia Students Join in Protests," *Savannah (Georgia) Morning News,* 12 May 1972.

only for businessmen's profits. Unlike others in previous years, the flier proposed no concrete means to end the war; it simply cited the problems with the military endeavors in Vietnam and called for them to cease.[24]

The Kent State tragedy and its aftermath revealed that most student antiwar protesters in the South were not entirely committed to their stated issue, and so when difficulties arose, they largely abandoned the most visible and disruptive efforts to end the war. The few cases of antiwar protesters remaining active longer than their classmates were in those movements that had displayed an attempt to seek out methods that might actually end the war, as opposed to seeking out methods of discussing ending the war, or of saying why the war should be ended. In all cases, though, the antiwar movement diminished several years before the process of Vietnamization was complete (and Vietnamization became a moot point when the North Vietnamese Army took control of South Vietnam in a sweeping set of offensives early in 1975). Unlike civil rights protesters who decreased protest activities having witnessed the fatal application of force by whites in four different campus environments, white antiwar protesters in the South who abandoned their movement did so without an excuse as compelling in its immediacy.

[24] Donald J. Fluke Papers 1958-: Vietnamese Conflict, 1961-1975, Duke University Archives, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

# CONCLUSION

The memorial ceremonies held by the former protesters were in a sense their own acknowledgement that the movement had died. On the whole, participants in the antiwar movement were too apathetic about the movement's stated purpose to maintain a steady pattern of activity that might have engaged the issue of U.S. participation in the war in Southeast Asia more effectively. The activities and motivations of those protesters that were genuinely committed to the cause over a long period of time should not be overlooked, and the significance of their actions is not diminished by the fact that a majority of participants in antiwar activity were "summer soldiers" who saw their participation in the antiwar movement as a transitory experience rather than as a vocation or "calling." Ultimately, however, the preponderance of evidence demonstrates that the majority of southern student participants in antiwar activities abandoned the movement far too easily to claim full-blown dedication to its goals or to be able to have claimed full identification with the movement, as many activists came to do with other social movements in the nineteenth and twentieth century American history.

The southern student antiwar movement began in the fall of 1965 with an awareness of the war in Vietnam registered in written form, in questioning and wrestling with U.S. policy and occasionally in full-blown written dissent. Demonstrations that occurred in the South from that semester up to the fall of 1969 were small and infrequent,

and while noteworthy, were characterized by a palpable awareness of the conservative values of the region in which they were protesting. Most opposing the war were careful to do so while acknowledging support of the military as an institution, while deferring to campus authorities and other local and state officials, and with a willingness to halt protest activities before expressions of protest escalated into rhetoric or activity that could be tarred by association with radicalism, communism, or anti-militaristic ideas.

During the fall of 1969 the national antiwar movement took on an increasingly visible form with the organization of two moratoriums that drew attention to the growing number of American citizens identifying with opposition to the war. At that time students in the South aligned themselves with other antiwar activists by organizing their own campus moratoriums, albeit ones that reflected the same respect for authority, America, and the military that the previous quieter protests had shown. Their questioning of U.S. policy was heard in counterpoint to other students whose commitment to the values of respect for authority, unqualified patriotism, and support for the military led them to be vocal in their own right. These students often rhetorically challenged or directly protested antiwar demonstrators, organizing their own activities to publicize their beliefs, and both sides occasionally sought to intimidate the expressions of the other. Extreme activists were rare in the southern student antiwar movement, and when they did emerge they usually found a welcome among their fellow antiwar activists that was every bit as chilly as the reception of antiwar activists by the pro-war students.

The second instance of national unity in demonstrating occurred in the spring of 1970 in response to the fatal shootings of the four Kent State students, and again students at southern institutions participated in a nationwide antiwar movement. More students in

the South attended demonstrations that May than at any other time during the antiwar movement years, though it should be noted that in spite of the recent invasion of Cambodia the majority of demonstrations that week were specifically in response to the violence at Kent State, and only secondarily manifestations of discontent with U.S. policy in Vietnam.

Despite this sharp spike in activity in May of 1970, for many antiwar students this was the end of their participation in a nationwide movement. They had seen the price they might possibly pay for demonstrating, and evidently absorbing Kent State's graphic reminder of their own mortality and the links between student protest and retaliation by those in authority, they opted for inactivity rather than live with the vulnerability and unpredictability of ongoing protest. The few that did continue protesting into the 1970s either did so willing to accept increasingly visible strands of radicalism and communism among those protesting, or because their own identity as antiwar protesters had been built on a foundation of authenticity that provided the strength to confront unexpected reverses like Kent State and Jackson State.

The South had also served as the epicenter of the civil rights movement, with college campuses playing a critical role in the struggle for racial equality. The overlapping campus geography of civil rights and antiwar protest must be considered when discussing the southern student antiwar movement. Civil rights student activists maintained dedication to their desire for economic and social equality as they faced the deaths of some movement participants, though they were also quieted by these deaths as students nationwide were by the deaths of the four students at Kent State. Civil rights movement participants' silence after the deaths of their classmates was arguably more

legitimate, since their digression from their agenda came from having literally seen the possible consequences of protesting, whereas antiwar students who abandoned their agenda after the tragedy at Kent State did so out of fear that they might also see violence on their campuses as it had occurred at Kent.

This study has presented extensive evidence documenting the existence and outlining the evolving characteristics of the antiwar movement in southern universities, and suggests the vital importance of adding the southern region to the national antiwar movement narrative. When revisiting the historiographical question of how to best determine the value of the antiwar movement in terms of its ultimate success, it is helpful to isolate what exactly progressed and developed during the most significant years of antiwar sentiment. Based on conclusions drawn from this evidence, evidence taken from a region that arguably might have produced the most dedicated antiwar activists of any because of the many ideological and structural obstacles in the region to protesting the war, what actually evolved in the South was primarily anti-establishment thought and not a concrete strategy to engage those responsible for America's involvement in the Vietnam war.

Even in the South participants in the movement failed to see beyond the protest activities themselves, often presenting a variety of ill-defined demands to a vaguely-identified audience. Consider instead the efforts made by activists in the region who specifically maintained support for the U.S. troops in Vietnam: these students organized blood drives that would directly benefit the troops while exemplifying the participants' dedication to their stated agenda and confronted antiwar statements and demonstrations that might lessen the morale of the American troops. Other examples of genuine

dedication to campus activism – in this case protest – are the few pockets of antiwar activists who gathered statistics, distributed knowledge pertaining to the military situation in Vietnam, organized events to meet the needs of the war-torn soldiers and citizens, and carefully targeted with their protests specific community and national leaders in positions to bring about change.

With these examples as a comparative basis, it is apparent that the overall character of the antiwar movement in the South was conflicted about its stance on the actual war. Responding to the historiographical emphasis on determining the value of the antiwar movement in terms of success or failure, this thesis illuminates a southern-based movement that was largely a failure. On the whole its participants had no sustained interest in the war, and those exceptional participants in the movement who did maintain steady opposition to the war – as opposed to those more "reactive" protesters whose activism was tied to events like the Cambodian incursion and Kent State – were still unable to end it. Such a conclusion is not intended to insinuate that there is no intrinsic value in the antiwar movement. Its very existence, too often dismissed or overlooked entirely by historians, makes it worthy of note. The existence of the antiwar movement shows that those coming of age in America did not find the tranquil contentment promised by the previous generation, and attempted to put words to their unease with the status quo in attempts to confront the tangible issue of the nation's involvement in the Vietnam War, even though those attempts may look misguided and ineffective with the benefit of hindsight.[1]

[1] In this regard their concerns echoed those of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), whose founding document, "The Port Huron Statement," opened with a statement

Adding southern states to the geography of antiwar protest offers a more complete and accurate narrative of the antiwar movement, and the attempt to listen to a relatively small group of unheard voices from the South who have hitherto largely escaped comparative historical scrutiny is a worthy endeavor in its own right. These southern college students channeled larger, ill-defined grievances against a nation through more specific protests of the Vietnam war. In activities that were allegedly designed to register their concerns about the conflict in Vietnam, the antiwar students also served notice that things they had been taught to accept as true about America – essentially political and ideological articles of faith – had little or no substance. Still, these southern students chose to raise their voices in an inhospitable climate, in the faces of their parents and the establishment, including university administrators serving *in loco parentis,* against white citizens weary from the turmoil of civil rights demonstrations, in close proximity to military bases and the homes of both veterans and active service personnel, and within the same classrooms as peers who questioned their patriotism and sought to drown out their dissent with pro-war and pro-government utterances. The decision antiwar students in the South made to speak in such a region justifies studying a movement that made little effort to tactically and strategically engage its slated issues. Whether or not the actions of these antiwar activists can be adjudged to have been successful, these students demanded that the nation in which they resided provide a greater sense of fulfillment than platitudes and unquestioning conformity.

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of identity: "We are people of this generation, bred in at least modest comfort, housed now in universities, looking uncomfortably to the world we inherit." See http://lists.village.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML_docs/Resourses/Primary/Manifestos/SDS_Port_Huron.html (last accessed 27 October 2005).

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