



RUTGERS
NEWARK

40th 1969–2009 ANNIVERSARY

THE 1969 LIBERATION OF CONKLIN HALL

Commemorative Journal





Cover Image: BOS members Marvin McGraw and James McGill

Collage created by Tad Hershorn

PASSING OF THE TORCH OF REMEMBRANCE

*May the passing of this torch honor the
sacrifices of generations past,
symbolize our commitment to spread
the message of equal opportunity
and diversity for all from one generation
to another, remind us to remember and honor those
who believe in the eternal power
of justice to triumph over injustice,
and inspire future generations of the
difference we make in the world
and the legacy we leave behind when
we make a choice to do what is right.*

—40TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION OF THE TAKEOVER OF CONKLIN HALL

February 24, 2009

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The Goals of 1969 are Still Our Goals



RICHARD L. MCCORMICK
PRESIDENT

Adapted from remarks at the 35th anniversary of the Conklin Hall Takeover in 2004

It is proper that we honor the courageous students at Rutgers–Newark who expressed their outrage and their determination to change a racist institution by occupying Conklin Hall on February 24, 1969. Rutgers had not caused the fundamental racial and economic inequalities that characterized American life, but prior to that day, neither had Rutgers done very much to address those inequalities. These young men and women wanted Rutgers to serve them and their communities, too, and they were right.

Although the Rutgers Board of Governors, faculty, and administration ultimately got the message, it is fitting that we offer, on behalf of the institution, an apology to the students of Liberation Hall and those who came before them. It should not have required a building takeover, and all the risks involved in that, to make Rutgers recognize its responsibility to the African American community in this city and throughout the state.

It is not hard to identify the changes, within and beyond Rutgers, that followed the occupation of Conklin Hall and the other notable student protests in New Brunswick and Camden. These included new policies of recruitment, admissions, and financial aid; a significantly more diverse student body and faculty; and relevant programs of study.

These changes, and more, brought about as dramatic a transition as any that occurred in the history of this university. Today, our Newark campus is one of the most diverse in the nation, and Camden and New Brunswick are not far behind. What a lesser institution we would be today if not for the actions of February 24, 1969, and the results that followed.

And yet, despite the bravery of the participants on that day and the good will of thousands of Rutgers men and women during the intervening decades, the changes have still fallen far short of what was wanted then or what is needed today. We still face daunting problems in recruiting black males. Retention and graduation rates remain too low. Not enough African American faculty teach here. Our university climate is sometimes less than welcoming and supportive. Just as was the case in 1969, these Rutgers failings are elements of fundamental American failings—a heritage of racism, impoverished inner cities, and schools lacking in quality. We cannot be satisfied as long as these deficiencies remain.

But the goals of 1969 are still our goals.

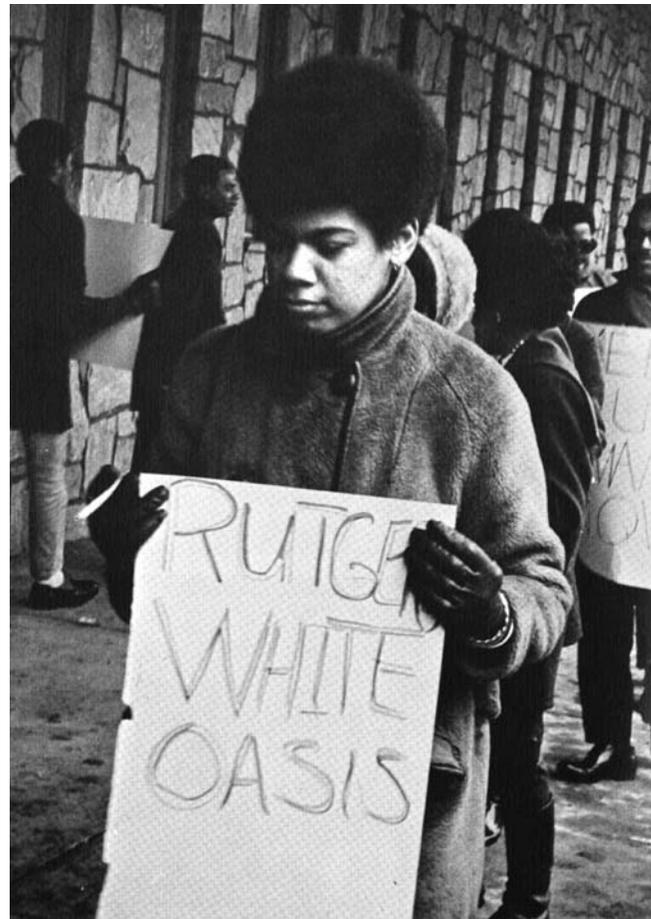
We celebrate the goal of diversity on our campuses because social justice demands it and academic excellence depends upon it. We value the goal of community empowerment, so fundamental to the Conklin Hall occupiers. Rutgers is not

simply located in Newark, Camden, New Brunswick, and Piscataway; we also must be a vital source of strength and support for our home towns. On a larger scale, our goal must be to honor our responsibility as New Jersey's state university, addressing today's failings and challenges in our teaching, our research, and our service.

In 1969 this building was temporarily given a new name: Liberation Hall. Let us keep the spirit of Liberation Hall. Let us never fail to explain why the diversity of Rutgers is so important and truly work with our students to nurture that diversity. Let us make Rutgers a more welcoming community for people of every culture and background.

Let us commit more fully than ever to addressing today's problems in collaboration with schools, communities, churches, employers, and government. Let us lend strength to the revitalization of our three home cities and work more closely with P-12 schools to expand opportunity. And let our best research find solutions to the state's most pressing community problems.

Honoring the actions and the values of the Conklin Hall occupiers is not enough. Only by facing the very major problems that persist—on our Rutgers campuses and beyond—will we give them the honor, and the thanks, that they deserve.



Bloomfield College student Ivy Davis, now a prominent attorney

Accelerating the Pace of Social Change



STEVEN J. DINER
CHANCELLOR
RUTGERS-NEWARK

When I came to Rutgers-Newark in 1998 as dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, our institution had just been named the most diverse national university in America by U.S. News. I arrived on a campus whose students and

their families came from all over the globe, and in which there were no minority groups because no student group constituted a racial, ethnic or religious majority. I also came to an institution with a long tradition of making opportunity available to students of poor and modest backgrounds. A centerpiece of this mission was a vibrant Educational Opportunity Fund program which brought low income students to campus and provided them with the support they needed, both academic and financial, to succeed at Rutgers-Newark. Every year since my arrival, Rutgers-Newark has continued to be named the number one national university for racial/ethnic diversity.

A new campus leader inevitably hears a great deal about the institution's history. Almost immediately, I heard from all sorts of people about the legendary Conklin Hall sit-in, or liberation, as the participants in this momentous event called it. Rutgers-Newark had always been a place where students of modest backgrounds could get a first-rate education, and it had educated successive generations of Jews, Germans, Italians, Irish, Portuguese and members of other white ethnic groups. I quickly learned, however, that years after African-Americans became the majority population in our city, and two years after the 1967 civil disturbances that highlighted the discrimination and poor living conditions faced by so many African-American residents of Newark, the state university located in the heart of that city had only a tiny number of African-American students or faculty. I learned that a small group of courageous African American students who carried out the nonviolent takeover of Conklin Hall sought to change this grossly unjust and unacceptable situation. And I learned that outside the building, other Rutgers-Newark students had demonstrated in support of the protesters. The Conklin Hall takeover succeeded spectacularly.

The Conklin Hall liberation brought about a very substantial increase in the number of black students and faculty at Rutgers-Newark. It also led to the establishment of the Educational Opportunity Fund program across all of New Jersey's public colleges and universities, opening the possibility of a university education to students of all sorts of backgrounds who would otherwise be effectively excluded. It caused the university to seek much greater faculty diversity, a task at which we are still working. And it caused Rutgers-Newark to engage with the City of Newark. Indeed, shortly after the Conklin Hall take-

over, our Law School established the first minority student program in the country, and it began to develop its now renowned clinics that engaged law students with low-income clients from our home community.

I take great pride in Rutgers-Newark's complete engagement with the city of Newark. We have become a national model of how a top research university can connect thoroughly with its host city.

Would any of this have happened without the courageous action of the students who marched into Conklin Hall on February 24, 1969 and bolted the doors? Perhaps, although it surely would have taken much longer. But the Conklin Hall protesters not only accelerated the pace of positive social change. They shaped the identity of Rutgers-Newark for decades to come, and inspired the students, faculty, deans and even chancellors that followed them. Whenever I talk about the unique diversity of our campus and our extensive engagement with our city—and I talk about these all the time—I always tell the story of Conklin Hall as the great turning point in the history of my institution. Today, our graduates tell us repeatedly that the diversity of Rutgers-Newark is one of the institution's greatest educational assets. So just as the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the March on Washington still inspire contemporary advocates of justice and equality, the Conklin Hall Liberation inspires the uniquely diverse and engaged urban university that is Rutgers-Newark today.



<<. . . the Conklin Hall protesters not only accelerated the pace of positive social change. They shaped the identity of Rutgers-Newark for decades to come . . .>>

Reflections on the Conklin Hall Liberation



DR. NORMAN SAMUELS

I am of course very aware of the social and political ramifications of the 1969 events, but I know that others will cover those in some detail. At this remove, what my mind dwells on most is the people involved—the students, my students, who became my friends and colleagues. While their actions changed this Campus and this State, Conklin Hall also changed their lives and mine, generally positively, sometimes negatively, always powerfully. We were caught up in a tornado that forcibly penetrated hearts and minds, and left the inner as well as the outer landscape fundamentally changed.

The Black Organization of Students planned, executed and sustained a major action, and negotiated with powerful people to reach a resolution—with lots of success and without casualties: an extraordinary outcome for any such physical confrontation. In the process, they learned valuable skills and acquired self-confidence. While those students were bright and capable to begin with, the experience moved them along at a faster pace. People saw the direct impact of law and politics and de-

termined to make careers in those fields. People saw that some whites could be useful and trusted allies. People made close, life-long friendships and developed a special commitment to this Campus.

But ultimately, they were real people with strengths and vulnerabilities: when the spotlight shines on your face, some people perform better but others are blinded. Stardom can mess up personal lives and interfere with good judgment. For some of our friends and colleagues, Conklin Hall induced long detours in their promising young lives—but even there, the upside was having a close group of friends who never let go, who were there for you when you were finally ready. Those of you who know, will understand who is meant, who we celebrate, who we mourn.

There's a rumor around that I taught some of those students to take an activist approach to addressing political problems. Whatever I may have taught them is outweighed by what they taught me, by their direct impact on my subsequent career, and in turn by whatever impact I have had on Rutgers. Sure we all contributed to an astonishingly concentrated change in the political culture of this extraordinary country, and our students stand as a "how to" model for the generations who followed them. But I am getting old, and after all these years, it's those beautiful and determined students who matter most to me and who remain most clearly in my mind.



The Sixties Were a Time of Change, Challenge and Controversy



MARCIA BROWN
VICE CHANCELLOR

Those of us living in those tumultuous times were participants in, witnesses to and beneficiaries of profound social struggles occurring throughout the country. From civil rights to black power movement, to the anti-war protests,

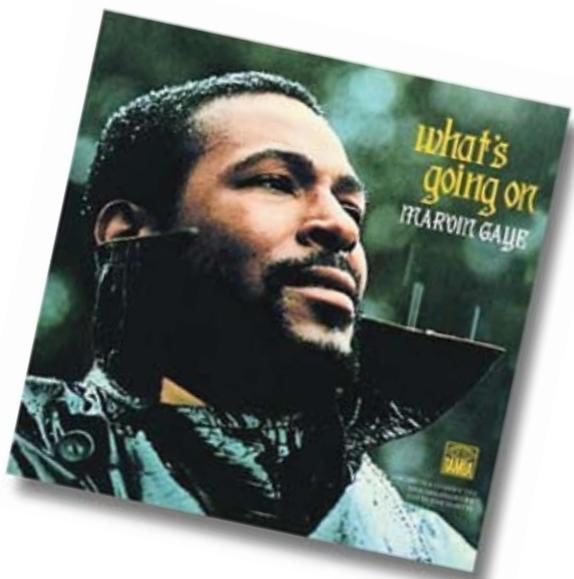
to worker and labor struggles, there was tremendous political engagement on questions of race, war, economy, class, citizenship, and democracy. In many ways, many of those questions all came together 40 years ago in the event known as the “Conklin Hall Takeover of 1969.” At that time, the Newark campus was predominantly white while the Newark community was predominantly black and brown. One could argue that Rutgers Newark was experiencing an “identity crisis.” Certainly, the impetus for students to challenge the administration to change the cultural complexion of the campus by demanding more students of color, more faculty of color, relevant curriculums did not have to come from far given the proximity of the Newark community in the shadow of the campus itself. But beyond that, the protestations of those students were also fueled by national debates, dialogues, and protests about integration, state power, revolution and the “movement.” We wanted social justice, in part, by demand for greater democratic access. King had been assassinated, outbreaks

of civil unrest and rebellion had occurred, and many progressive people were reviewing ideas, strategies and tactics on the struggles needed to change the world. And a very few people with the courage to act in a bold and decisive way made change happen right here on this campus locally that has culminated in global impact.

I celebrate and salute the participants and supporters of the Conklin Hall Takeover. They were the founding men and women of our modern diversity. The students from all over the country and the globe who attend college here on the “most diverse campus in the nation” owe them a debt of recognition and respect, as do those of us who are faculty and administrators of color on this campus.

As our generation reaches another milestone, it is a perfect time to look back and see how the events of 1969 on this campus affected the participants, the campus and this community, and to begin a collective conversation about the meaning of the takeover for today’s students. What are the legacies, consequences, and future opportunities/challenges presented to the generation today? Has the university itself reflected a better understanding of its role as both a venue and arbiter of change? Do we understand diversity as more than just a description, but rather, a criterion of academic progress and social justice? I think we do. Is there more work to be done? I believe so. Yes. Can it be done? Yes, it can. This is the time for new definitions and new paradigms. While we honor those who came before us, let us also honor the mission it has bequeathed the next generation to fulfill. Let us remember what we know and look backward to make a leap forward.

<<From civil rights to black power movement, to the anti-war protests, to worker and labor struggles, there was tremendous political engagement on questions of race, war, economy, class, citizenship, and democracy.>>



40th Anniversary Commemoration Program

THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE 1969 LIBERATION OF CONKLIN HALL

FEBRUARY 24, 2009

A LOOK BACK: A LEAP FORWARD

Presiding: Dr. Clement A. Price

PROCESSION

(DRUMMERS BRING IN HONORED GUESTS)

UNITY THEATER PERFORMANCE

REMARKS

Dr. Steven J. Diner, Chancellor

Dr. Richard L. McCormick, President

Chancellor Emeritus, Norman Samuels

HONORED GUESTS ROUNDTABLE

PASSING OF THE TORCH AND SPECIAL TRIBUTE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

RECEPTION

40th Years: Liberation of Conklin Hall Reunion

THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE 1969 LIBERATION OF CONKLIN HALL

FEBRUARY 27, 2009

PERSPECTIVES

Master of Ceremonies: George Hampton

- 6:00 PM OPENING WITH THE LEO JOHNSON JAZZ TRIO
- 6:30 PM OPENING REMARKS *Rev. Dr. Howard*
- 6:40 PM THE HISTORY OF BOS *Richard Roper*
1st BOS President
- 6:50 PM THE 1969 TAKEOVER OF CONKLIN HALL *Vickie Donaldson*
- 7:05 PM THE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT *Junius Williams*
- 7:15 PM DINNER WHILE WATCHING THE DVD PRESENTATION
We Only Know What We Can Remember, Jannah Abdullah, Producer
- 7:45 PM SPOKEN WORD PERFORMANCE
- 7:50 PM THE STATE OF RUTGERS POST TAKEOVER *Janice Morrell*
- 8:10 PM TRIBUTE TO THE JOE BROWN FAMILY *Vicky Donaldson*
- 8:20 PM SALUTE TO THE LIBERATORS
(THE PASSING OF THE TORCH) *Liberators, BOS,*
BOSAA, etals
- 8:30 PM SPOKEN WORD PERFORMANCE
- 8:35 PM CURRENT STATE OF EOF *Deborah W. McCall*
- 8:40 PM CURRENT STATE OF BOS *BOS Representative*
- 8:45 PM THE LEGACY OF BOS CONTINUES *BOSAA Rep*
- 8:50 PM OPEN DISCUSSION/Q&A ABOUT CONTINUING THE LEGACY *BOSAA Rep*



A Celebration of Diversity

black student takeover of conklin hall



NEWARK IN THE LATE 1960s

In the late 1960s in Newark, there were many organizations. I was the Director of one such group called the Newark Area Planning Association (NAPA). Joe Brown was my Deputy Director. Through our association, Joe brought BOS closer to the urban struggle, and NAPA in turn became a training ground and source of support for BOS students like Joe.

NAPA came on the scene in the fight to contain the size of the University of Medicine and Dentistry (UMDNJ). Joe Brown was a member of the negotiating team representing the community as a part of NAPA, along with me and Brother Jamil. The entire Team totaled nine for the community. Across the table in negotiations were representatives from the Governor and Mayor Addonizio of Newark, in late 1967, early 1968. NAPA and the Committee Against Negro and Puerto Rican Removal were able to vastly reduce the size of the school from 150 acres to 60 acres, obtain and help enforce a demand for construction jobs training and union hiring for the work on UMDNJ, and spearhead the development of more than 1000 units of affordable housing on vacant urban renewal land through an umbrella organization we created called the Newark Housing Council. Later, we stopped a highway (Route 75). Joe Brown was a part of all of this, while he was a student at Rutgers and a member of BOS and NAPA.

NAPA grew because we helped other organizations. In 1968 we formed an alliance with the recently formed Welfare Rights Organization. Their goal was to put so much pressure on the welfare agencies giving AFDC (Aid for Dependent Children) checks to poor mothers (and fathers) of poor children, that the agency would eventually break down and have to be replaced by something more equitable.

EXCERPTS FROM A BOOK IN PROGRESS BY JUNIUS W. WILLIAMS ENTITLED, *Unfinished Agenda: The Rise and Fall of Black Power in My Lifetime*



Peacemakers including Dana librarian Gil Cohen remove dangerous pole from doors of Conklin Hall

Here's how we worked: the Welfare Rights mamas, like Mrs. Kidd, and Juliet Grant, were involved daily with getting checks for poor mothers who had been denied support through the AFDC program funded by the Feds but administered through the Essex County Welfare Department. When a potential recipient was denied help, for all kinds of real and contrived reasons, reflecting the disdain the administrators had for the poor, Welfare Rights went into action. They would approach a local welfare office administrator, explain the circumstances, and point out the error in their bureaucratic ways (because the "welfare mamas", as they were affectionately called, read the printed page and knew the Regulations backward and forward). They would give the nice lady one chance to make amends. If that conversation didn't work, then they called in the troops, which is where NAPA, Donald Tucker's organization, BOS and others came in: every so often, we had to help them take over a welfare office . . . came in, acted loud and ugly, stopped all other business from being transacted, and waited for the hand-cut check to be issued on the spot. Of course the cops were called. But cop-call pre-Rebellion (before July 1967), and cop-call Post-Rebellion (anytime after

<<The black undergraduate students at Rutgers were mad because there were very few faculty members and students on any of the 3 campuses at Rutgers in 1969. And mad at the way blacks were treated on campus.>>

July 1967) were two different animals: Before the Rebellion, Cops rushed in, called everybody a "Nigga", pushed us around, and made arrests. But this coalition was formed and went into action after the Rebellion. After the Rebellion, same cops, but with some cop who knew how to negotiate, and had some patience for these things to work themselves out. Which in this case was a check for the lady in question. We got so notorious and so regular on our raids that the when the nice lady saw us coming up the walk way to the Welfare Office, she went and got the check book. "How much do you want, and who is the recipient?" . . . Now that's what I'm talking about!!!

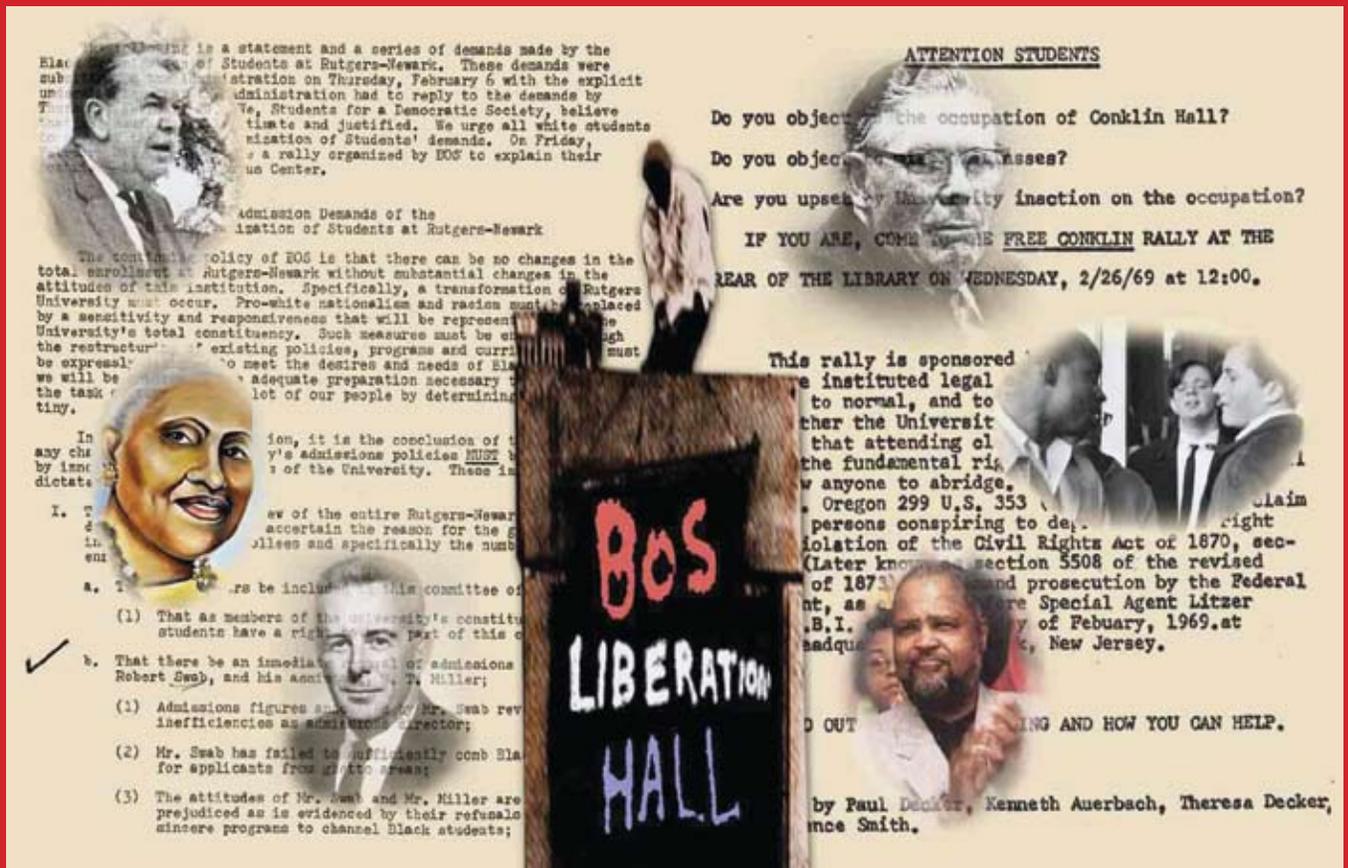
Then there was the Black Organization of Students takeover of Conklin Hall at Rutgers University in Newark, led by none other than Joe Brown, my Deputy Director. The black undergraduate students at Rutgers were mad because there were very few faculty members and students on any of the 3 campuses at Rutgers in 1969. And mad at the way blacks were treated on campus. With great planning, they secretly pulled off a takeover at Conklin Hall on the Newark campus. They chained themselves in the building and wouldn't let anyone else in. They held the building for a number of days, "liberated"

it, if you will. Joe Brown asked for our help. In addition to the BOS members outside Conklin, SDS and other progressive students on campus, The NAPAs and other community organizations in our coalition supported the students on the outside. I remember sleeping overnight in Ackerson Hall, across the street in what was the Law School at that time. We conducted press conferences to "explain and warn." During our watch, some of the guys on our team had to take a battering ram away from local vigilante Anthony Imperiale's boys, who were planning to break down the door at Conklin to get the black students out. I was off campus, so to speak, on food procurement detail. When I returned, I found our young men flexing their muscles, proclaiming that "ain't nothin' comin' through here!" By the way, where were the police? A good cop sure is hard to find when you need one.

Such was the nature of the bond between Town and Gown: they supported us, we supported them. After negotiations with BOS, Rutgers ended up admitting many more black students pursuant to an affirmative action plan that was one of the best in the nation. Rutgers Law School by the 1970s produced the third largest number of black law school graduates, next to Howard and Texas Southern. The Bakke case wiped away some of its grip as we shall see, but all of that because of Joe Brown and the black undergraduates at BOS in Newark. With a little help from their friends!

In return, the Welfare Rights members, BOS, and other various and sundry folks would accompany NAPA as we constantly challenged Lou Danzig at the Housing Authority. There just wasn't enough housing to put people dislocated from the various urban clearance projects he commandeered, including the proposed Route 75. Sometimes we had to take over NHA to make that point, in similar manner as we dealt with the nice ladies at the welfare offices. Life for "activists" or "militants" as we were called was a constant confrontation. It is hard to get my children to realize that we were demonstrating or taking over some office sometimes 2 or 3 times a week. The big ones took more energy, and so we needed to have some fun. The bars were our outlet in Napaland, but on occasion we got together at the NAPA office on South Orange Avenue with this little coalition for more than just planning and executing showdowns. On every Thursday evening we would gather our friends and supporters from coast to coast . . . organizational members from BOS, the Welfare Rights Organization, the folks from the Medical School fight-team (like Gus Heningburg and members of his new staff at the Greater Newark Urban Coalition); our bar buddies and individuals in the neighborhood who had their children in our Freedom School; and anybody else people chose to bring. I remember Donald Tucker and his folks brought up African drums (Donald played the Conga; his brother sang); other people brought in other instruments. It was "time for the weekly 'NAPA Soul Session', brought to you each week free of charge by the Militants of Newark!" We laughed, told lies, exaggerated our accomplishments; sang freedom songs and the latest R&B hits; danced; made plans for "coming events"; all done up in one swirling, seamless string of events, lubricated by a drink called, "MF"!!! . . . (yes, folks, it is the word you think it is . . .

Tribute



IN MEMORIAM

JOE BROWN

MARVIN MCGRAW

ARTHUR BOWERS

JERRY JACKSON

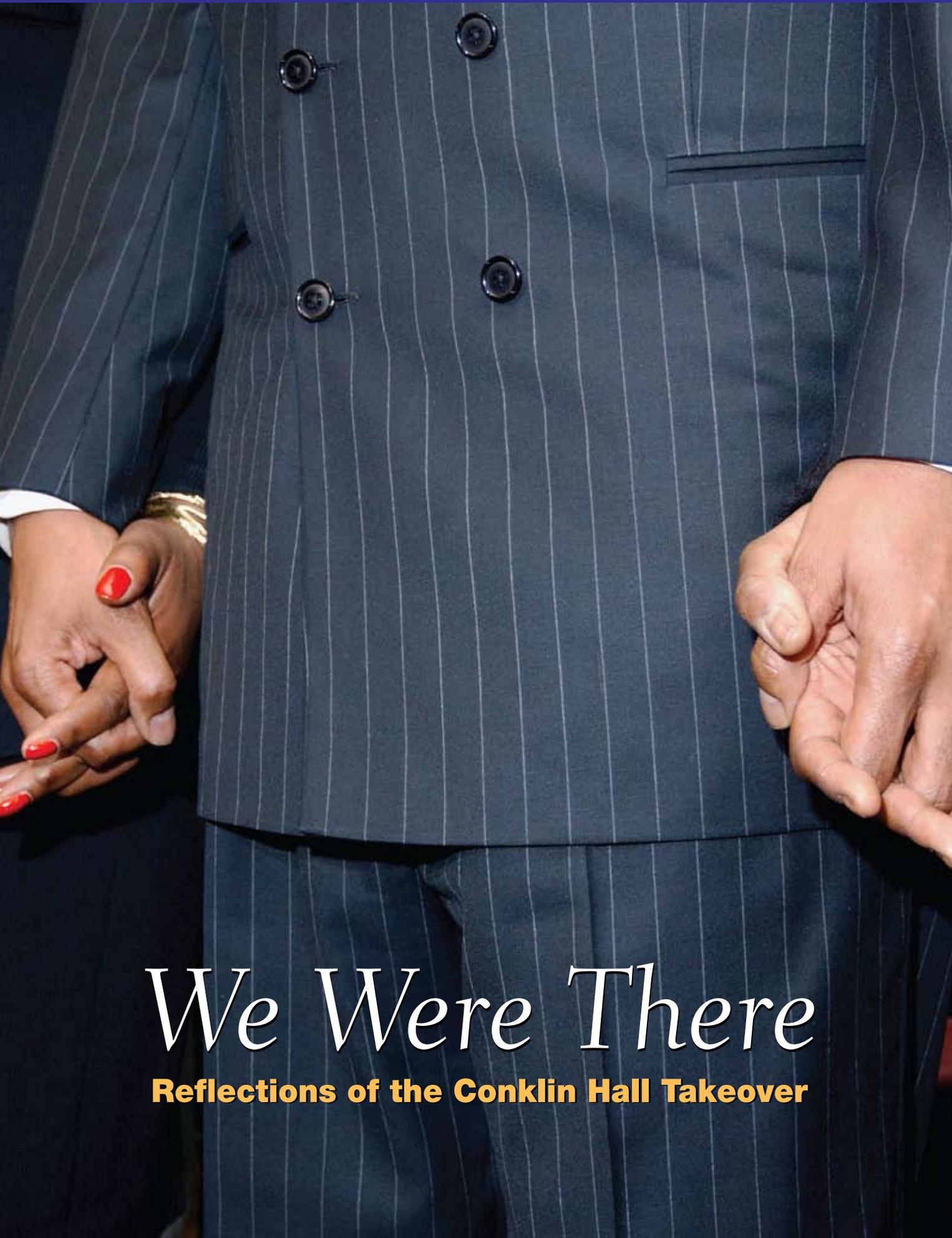
CHARLES STEWART

“

But ultimately, they were real people with strengths and vulnerabilities: when the spotlight shines on your face, some people perform better but others are blinded. Stardom can mess up personal lives and interfere with good judgment. For some of our friends and colleagues, Conklin Hall induced long detours in their promising young lives—but even there, the upside was having a close group of friends who never let go, who were there for you when you were finally ready. Those of you who know, will understand who is meant, who we celebrate, who we mourn.

”

—NORMAN SAMUELS



We Were There

Reflections of the Conklin Hall Takeover

The Liberation of Conklin Hall: Reconsidered Forty Years Later



DR. CLEMENT A. PRICE
PROFESSOR OF HISTORY
DIRECTOR, INSTITUTE ON
ETHNICITY, CULTURE, AND
THE MODERN EXPERIENCE

On February 24, 1969, a group of student members of the Black Organization of Students barricaded themselves within Conklin Hall.

For seventy-two hours they held their ground within the building while a mounting protest against—and in favor of—the takeover gained momentum outside the building and around New Jersey. Behind the scenes of their bold and, let's not forget, illegal protest, there were negotiations between the students and the University. There was also discussion to end the protest by taking back the building . . . by force. Gus Heningburg, whose memories of those days are virtually without peer, remembers counseling then Governor Richard Hughes to keep the New Jersey State Police—the Troopers—off the campus, certainly to keep them out of the building. Had he and others not been successful, I don't think we would now celebrate the Liberation of Conklin Hall. Instead, we would likely commemorate it as a tragic event.

By any measure, it was a tense seventy-two hours on all sides. For the black student liberators of Conklin Hall, there must have been many minutes of fear and loathing. What would they do if law enforcement officers sought to end their protest? Would they resist? They were without arms, thank God, and all of them came from families ill-prepared for scandal and shame. For the Rutgers administration, the Conklin Hall takeover was a potential nightmare, a public relations disaster, and a fearful encounter in a city that had recently, in July 1967, witnessed a collapse of civility and order on its streets. White students, too, were in quandary. At that time, Rutgers-

<<The takeover was well organized and disciplined. There was no vandalism; the students were disciplined in their comportment and in the propriety of their writings. And they launched their protest with adult consultation . . . >>

Newark wasn't so much a predominantly white campus as it was a predominantly white ethnic campus—comprised of the progeny of the eastern and southern Europeans who had come through Ellis Island on their way toward the American Dream of success. Some of them were white; others were on their way to becoming white.

Indeed, one way to look at the Liberation of Conklin Hall is how it played out in the imaginations of those for whom Newark and America offered opportunity as opposed to those for whom America had little respect and offered few avenues to equal opportunity. Put another way, Conklin Hall can be seen through several lenses as a contested place, where one of the great struggles for the soul of Rutgers was waged.

It is important, I think, to consider the historical context in which the Liberation of Conklin Hall occurred, this 40th anniversary of the event. More than a generation has passed. The faculty, students, and administrators who witnessed the event have moved onto other paths. Some lives of participants in that drama have ended, including Joe Brown, the ostensible leader of the liberation, and Marvin McGraw, another brash leader within the building. Dean Henry Blumenthal, Provost Malcolm Talbot, and President Mason Gross, among other administrators who negotiated with the students during the takeover and after it ended, have passed on. With the passage of so many eyewitnesses and with the now challenged memories of those still alive, the Liberation of Conklin Hall has increasingly yielded to historical analysis.

Here is what we know: The liberation, though a localized event involving local people, was a part of nation-wide black civic, political and cultural aspiration unique to the mid and late 1960s, when the Civil Rights Movement swung into a different gear in the northern states. While the southern theater of the Movement focused on elemental constitutional rights, like the right to vote and to enjoy equal protection under state and federal laws, in the north blacks sought an expansion of their economic domain and better housing. Such was the case here in Newark, which for most of the 20th century had been a City of Opportunity for European immigrants and their progeny. The paltry opportunities available to blacks seemed to be a custom of racial discrimination and indeed it was. But it was also caused by the reality of a city whose job infrastructure had been declining for years. It is likely that the black students who took over the building knew that Newark was declining as a blue collar town, making higher education all the more pivotal to them and their brothers and sisters.

Newark by the mid-1960s was well on its way to becoming a predominantly black city. That reality embellished ethnic and racial tensions, hastened white flight out of Newark, and made the primacy of ethnic struggle one of Newark's defining narratives for the rest of the decade.

Rounding out the historical context of the period was, of course, the riot, the rebellion, the disorders, the Revolution. From July 12th to July 17th, all Newarkers witnessed, and all would remember forever, the 1967 Summer of Discontent. The rebellion/riots of that summer left the city spiritually spent, embarrassed, and in search of paths toward reconciliation. The Conklin Hall Liberators were kids when they saw what can happen when a city disrespects a huge swath of its residents, when it allows its law enforcement officers to misbehave along racial lines, and when it threatens, bullies, and lies to its residents.

A few words about the actual takeover: The students of BOS were seemingly influenced at the time by the Black Nationalist element of the Black Freedom Movement, but their rhetoric was economical and larger without rant. There were those who wanted the Liberation crushed by force if need be. But there were also supporters of the black students and their demands. In the days following the takeover, a group in support of the BOS' demands formed, calling for open admission for students with high school diplomas, for the hiring of minority faculty and for a recruitment and educational enrichment program that would later take form as EOF. In short, although the Liberation of Conklin Hall was a black student protest, it received support from a cross section of students. Perhaps more than anything during that period, the joining of forces and the joining of aspirations and ideals surrounding the Liberation of Conklin Hall, marked the beginning of Rutgers Newark's future as the most diverse campus in the United States.

The takeover was well organized and disciplined. There was no vandalism; the students were disciplined in their comportment and in the propriety of their writings. And they launched their protest with adult consultation, most notably from Bessie Hill, then the only African American member of the Board of Governors.

Conklin Hall was strategically chosen because the campus switchboard was located within the building. That was a smart decision, enabling the students to voice their demands, to rally their supporters, and to negotiate with the Rutgers administration. The negotiations that began during the takeover were sufficiently productive to enable the students to end their protest. No one was hurt, though it is fair to say that the protest had a resonance in the lives of the black students who took over the building. Joe Brown fundamentally committed himself to the Black Liberation struggle, so much so that his undergraduate career suffered. It took the longest time for him to graduate, finally, from Rutgers. He then went to Law School here and reemerged over the years as a much admired icon of the University's transformation to one of the most diverse campuses in the world. Many other Conklin Hall Liberators, perhaps ennobled by what was in fact one of the nation's most remarkable

<<It has been called the bloodless coup because the changes it fostered came about rather peacefully. Many of the students went on to live productive lives.>>

and successful student protests of that era, went on to become activists and servants in public life, seemingly drawing inspiration from their youthful protest at Conklin Hall.

At the February 24, 2004 Commemoration of the Conklin Hall Takeover, Rutgers University President left us with these words: "Today we honor the courageous men and women, then students at Rutgers-Newark, who expressed their outrage and their determination to change a racist institution by occupying Conklin Hall 35 years ago today. Rutgers had not caused the fundamental racial and economic inequalities that characterized American life, but prior to February 24, 1969, neither had Rutgers done very much to address those inequalities. These young men and women wanted Rutgers to serve them and their communities, too, and they were right."

And then President McCormick said this: "Although the Rutgers Board of Governors, faculty and administration ultimately got the message, it is fitting today to offer, on behalf of the institution, an apology to the students of Liberation Hall and those who came before them. It should not have required a building takeover, and all the risks involved in that, to make Rutgers recognize its responsibility to the African American community in this city and throughout the state."

Here are the remains of the day: As it turns out, the Liberation of Conklin Hall was the defining event of the University during the 1960s, when so much changed in the nation, in Newark, and New Jersey. It has been called the bloodless coup because the changes it fostered came about rather peacefully. Many of the students went on to live productive lives.

The Liberation of Conklin Hall fundamentally changed Rutgers. It set the stage for the creation of the EOF Program; it set the stage for an African American Studies Program that matured into a Department; it enabled the naming of the campus center in honor of Rutgers alumnus, Paul Robeson. And in its daring and strategic mindedness, the Conklin Hall takeover established a powerful narrative in the history of Rutgers that has as its center educational opportunity, justice, and an appreciation for honorable discontent. During this commemorative and celebratory season, we honor that extraordinary narrative and the students who created it.

Reflections on the Emergence of the Black Organization of Students (BOS)

A PRECURSOR TO THE “STUDENT TAKEOVER” OF RUTGERS-NEWARK’S CONKLIN HALL BY RICHARD W. ROPER



In 1967, Black students had only recently begun to embrace the word “Black” as our identifier. We were Black and proud and determined to make clear to the world that a new birth of freedom was being claimed by the young men and women on white college campuses throughout the

north. Our brothers and sisters at Black colleges in the south had shown what could be done to change the social order and we northerners wanted a piece of that action. No more was this true than on the Rutgers-Newark campus when that year the Black students there—all 20 or 25 of them—decided that the campus chapter of the NAACP was no longer relevant. It was not the vehicle through which we could voice our dissatisfaction with the status quo. We were ready to move and to make a big noise in the process.

In the second semester of the 1966–67 academic year, I was elected president of the campus NAACP chapter and immediately, with a small group of like-minded colleagues, began to push for a new direction for the group. Big hair, dashikis, and unsmiling faces were in; integration, quietude, and thankfulness were out. The NAACP was all about the latter, we had already embraced the former and the dissonance this produced was palpable. Before the school year ended we had returned the chapter’s charter to the organization’s New York headquarters and had launched a new organization, the Black Organization of Students (BOS). Interestingly, the Rutgers-Newark Dean of Students pulled me aside shortly after the

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new group was announced and said the organization’s name was a grammatical mess but it had impact. That was exactly what we wanted.

The 1967–68 school year began with BOS petitioning the Rutgers-Newark administration to tear down the fence that surrounded the slowly emerging campus between High Street and University Avenue and Warren and Bleeker Streets. The fence was to us a symbol of the university’s desire to separate itself from the Newark community in general and the local Black neighborhood that surrounded it, in particular. Soon added to our list of grievances was the lack of a welcoming environment for Black students, a lack of interest in and engagement with Newark and its people, a lack of Black faculty and staff (there were none before 1968), and an appallingly small number of enrolled Black students. We felt that, at a minimum, the university should make an effort to use its intellectual resources to address some of the social, economic, and educational needs of Newark’s residents.

University Vice President Malcolm Talbott, the most senior official at Rutgers-Newark in those days, politely received our concerns. He was always willing to meet with us but said that he could do little to address our concerns, that only officials in New Brunswick at the University’s main campus could resolve them. Moreover, Talbott told us we had to take our case to the University’s Board of Governors, if we really wanted action. He said we’d probably have some support on the Board in the form of Bessie Hill, the first and only Black member of that august body. He was right. Bessie Hill advised us about how to approach the board and how to make our case. She invited the leaders of BOS to her apartment and gave us the benefit of her considerable knowledge about the workings of the Board: who would likely welcome our presentation and who would not, how the President, Mason Gross, would react to our appearance and how the Chancellor of Higher Education, a member of the governor’s cabinet, would view us.

The Voices

TUESDAY JANUARY 20, 2009



GEORGE HAMPTON
BOS TRIUMVIRATE CO-CHAIR
RUTGERS-NEWARK, 1970

Today is January 20, 2009. On THIS day, in THIS time, at THIS defining moment in history, Americans: Hispanics, Asians, Blacks, whites, Protestants and Catholics, Jews and gentiles all got together and elected a Black man as President

of the United States. The election of Barack Obama exemplifies change, hope, and for some, perhaps, redemption . . . or does it?

About forty years ago, after months of failed negotiations, black students and supporters chose to protest the lack of diversity at Rutgers Newark by chaining the doors of Conklin Hall, picketing and protesting, boycotting classes and generally preventing the university administration from doing business as usual. Simply put; there were few Blacks, almost none, on the Rutgers' Newark campus: not as employees, not in the faculty, not as administrators, not as vendors and especially not as students. Yet, in 1969, Rutgers-Newark was surrounded by a predominantly Black resident population in a significantly Black city.

Even today people continue to ask why? Why, in 1969, would almost every Black Rutgers' student, most who were the first in their family that were able to go to college, especially at an all "white" college, risk so much for others? Were we just reckless and abandoned our personal responsibilities? Why would we risk our education, careers, going to jail and bodily harm for other Black people that we didn't even know? The answer is easy, in our heads we heard our ancestor's voices, chants, and songs that were saying "we were sick and tired of being sick and tired." We were sick from centuries of discrimination, and we were tired of being excluded from mainstream society. We were sick of reading schoolbooks and watching television or movies where Blacks were nonexistent or were depicted as second-class and second-rate, as buffoons, criminals or derelicts of society. We were tired of text books that failed to tell us of our abundant contributions to this country, and that our struggles for freedom were the sparks that move this country towards becoming a more perfect union. At our parents' knees we learned about the Tuskegee Airmen and the 761st Tank Battalion, who gained distinction in this country's world war against Nazism. Even though they had been denied the nation's highest honors, their deeds could not be denied. Yet, we were warned by our parents about this country's inhumanity committed against our people in the Tuskegee Experiments and the 1920s white race riots in Rosewood, Florida and Greenwood, Oklahoma. We knew that justice and the law was not the same thing, while J. Edgar Hoover, the FBI Director,

spied on civil rights leaders and treated them like modern day terrorists. We admired great orators like H. Rap Brown and Stokely Carmichael; and cried when we watched with horror as we experienced the assassinations of our heroes; men like Malcolm X, Martin Luther King and the Kennedy brothers. These were the infamous 60s, the era of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the Civil Rights movement, the Vietnam War, the Draft, and President Nixon who eventually was impeached.

In 1967, the year of the Newark race riots, I had been a super honor roll student and student council president at the predominantly Black Newark's South Side High School. A woman by the name of Bessie Hill had met me, dissuaded me from accepting any of the scholarships that were offered to me from the Historically Black Colleges, and decided for me that I should come to Rutgers-Newark. This was a defining moment in my life. At Rutgers I took the hardest freshman (four credits each) courses in mathematics and English Composition. I almost failed out of school. But the VOICES would sing to me that "we fall down, but we git up." I learned that the white students were not more intelligent than I, but that they had received more academic preparation prior to entering college. This made me more determined to achieve my goals and realize my God-given potential. By the time I graduated I was on the dean's list.

My freshman and sophomore years (1967–1969) seemed so surreal and yet, transformative. In some ways I felt trapped in a racial, cultural, philosophical purgatory: I'd be damned if I do, or damned if I don't. There was a constant struggle, set upon me by others, to claim my cultural identity. The white power structure didn't think I was American enough, and the emerging black cultural/intellectual elite didn't think I was Black or African enough. In fact there were great debates about proper nomenclature: should we be called Negroes, Coloreds, Afro-Americans, Blacks, or African-Americans? I understood why millions of Black people established their own sense of self-identity by embracing the Pan-African movement. However the VOICES told me that "I am somebody", and thanks to many mentors, family and friends, I didn't succumb to the pressure of the psychological back to Africa movement.



H. Rap Brown

Instead, I simply accepted the fact that (like my parents, grand parents, and great grand parents) I identified with this city and country, rather than a distant village and continent. Don't get me wrong, I did respect that I and my ancestors had our origins in Africa, with its rich history of culture, art, science, philosophy, and its rightful claim to be the cradle of civilization. Indeed, the sacrifices and spilled blood that



Stokely Carmichael

our ancestors gave to this country guaranteed our right to claim this country as my home.

So, I never changed my name from George to Raheem and never strayed from Christianity to Islam. I didn't drop Christmas for Kwanza. I did try to grow an Afro but the Caesar prevailed. I didn't switch my Alpaca sweaters and iridescent Mohair suits for dashikis, or my white stitched Stacey Adams for sandals. Throughout this period of personal growth, I learned to accept/respect myself, just as the VOICES told me to accept/respect others according to the "content of their character rather than the color of their skin".

I met many peers and colleagues at Rutgers; several of them remain my best buddies for over 40 years. I learned a great deal from them. I remain impressed with their determination to achieve; and their strength to withstand the many challenges before them. The BOS leaders were idealistic pragmatists; I admired Joe Brown's fearless insight, Marvin McGraw's inspiring oration, Pete Jackson's brilliance, Vickie Donaldson's impassioned eloquence, Art Bowers' paternal strength and Vivian King's irrepressible spirit. However, I am most endeared to my "homeboys," the "Brothas," primarily from Newark, East Orange and Jersey City. They were an oxymoron: smart and smooth, and down to earth. Claude, Doug, Tom, Greg, John and especially James "Pookie" McGill were cool quiet iconoclasts. Several of my "Brothas" had graduated at the top of their high school classes, and were the first in their entire families to go to college. We came from the poorest neighborhoods and had lived in multifamily tenements and even public housing. Some of us had single parents and had been living on public assis-

<<My freshman and sophomore years (1967–1969) seemed so surreal and yet, transformative. In some ways I felt trapped in a racial, cultural, philosophical purgatory: I'd be damned if I do, or damned if I don't.>>

tance. We carried a quiet anger and a burning in the belly. We were poor financially, but not poor in spirit or in our determination to change the world. We were, in fact, the strongest people we knew personally and intimately. The VOICES told us that in "unity there is strength". We could count on each other, and were each other's comrades in arms.

Prior to the takeover on February 24, 1969, less than 30 black students and supporters met in one of the classrooms of Conklin hall. We were told by Joe Brown and other BOS leaders that after months and months of intense negotiations with the Rutgers administration, all efforts to get concessions had failed and we were left with no other recourse than to disrupt classes by "liberating Conklin Hall." About half the students chose to stay inside the building and the other half chose to stay outside to protect the perimeter and serve as the outside liaisons. I stayed and froze with the Brothas outside in the winter's cold. For the next 4 days and 3 nights, we napped in Claude's jalopy and stayed on guard duty, securing the front, back, and sides of the building, on the plaza, and in the street. At night we watched snarling white vigilantes, who were off duty Newark cops, cruise by shouting insults and profanities. During the day we picketed, ran errands for the Insiders, and thwarted an impulsive angry mob from using a log as a battering ram on the front doors. For the most part we waited; waited and prayed that the Insiders would soon come out and not be harmed. Finally, on the morning of February 27, 1969 the Insiders slowly came out. They were free at last. I heard the VOICES say "thank God almighty they're free at last". For me it was an overwhelming experience. The university had listened, acknowledged and (somewhat) conceded to the B.O.S. demands. Over the next 40 years, Rutgers Newark has been transformed from being one of the least integrated colleges in the nation to the most diverse campus in the nation. As Steve Diner, the Rutgers' Chancellor, has stated "At Rutgers Newark there are no minorities, because there are no majorities".

On THIS day January 20th, in THIS year 2009, at THIS moment in history - the most multicultural, multiracial, multiethnic society ever, elected a Black man as President of the United States. It is difficult for me, a frustrated revolutionist of the 60's, to comprehend the significance of this event. Is this redemption? Obama has managed to bust a hole in the glass ceiling: but will every child now have the chance to reach through it to touch the stars? Can every child chase his dreams and not be held back by bigotry and racial hatred? Will a newly empowered and diverse population mean that ignorance, exclusion, and cultural prejudice are problems of a by-gone era? I don't know, but I too have hope. Frankly I don't know what course others may take, but as for me, I hear the VOICES say it loud. "I'm Black and I'm proud". Say it loud, "I'm BLACK and I'm PROUD". Say it loud, "I'M BLACK and I'M PROUD to be . . . AMERICAN"!



40 Years Later: To Remember is to Live

Doug Morgan

In the fall of 1967, I entered Rutgers Newark along with several graduates of Newark high schools. George, Claude and I all graduated from what was then known as South Side high school. Like others who have contributed their recollections to the journal, I was also the first in my family to attend college. Because there were so few of us black students, we spent much of our free time in the campus center. We all participated in the campus chapter of the NAACP. Yet this was the late 1960s. The summer before, Newark had experienced one of the worst riots that were plaguing the nation. The riot grew out of the frustration and anger building in the black community who made up the majority of Newark residents.

I remember that we had been talking about becoming more involved as activists on the campus of Rutgers Newark. We were not satisfied with what was then the campus chapter of the NAACP. We wanted to establish a black student organization as a vehicle to address our growing unhappiness about the college's response to the needs of blacks, especially those in Newark.

We voted to disband the NAACP chapter and moved to establish the Black Organization of Students, BOS. Soon after the establishment of BOS, the membership expressed the need to undertake actions that would make the university listen to and respond to our demands for increased enrollment of Black students and faculty on the Rutgers Newark campus. I am

not sure who came up with the suggestion, but the idea of a building takeover was a bold and aggressive move. Although the general organization knew of the concept, once it was decided that this action was the one we would take, a small group of the membership was involved in the detailed planning that resulted in the occupation of Conklin Hall.

Although many of us didn't know, exactly when the takeover would happen, I know that I was excited and pleased when I arrived on campus that morning in February to find that BOS had indeed Liberated Conklin Hall.

Like many who have provided their recollections, I too was pleased and excited that we were moving toward achieving our goal. I joined George, James, Tom, Claude, Greg and many other members of BOS who established a picket line in front of the University Avenue entrance to Conklin Hall. I remember how the local FBI, the Newark police and the campus police, watched us. I also remember how Tony Imperiale's boys would drive by frequently trying to intimidate us. It was cold that week in February and I remember that we all took turns on the picket line and consoled ourselves with the fact that our contribution was just as important as those who actually occupied the building. Indeed, as I try to recall some forty years later, I think all the members of

BOS were drawn closer together as a family of young black students in that hostile environment. We resolved that our task was to protect or shield those inside from the angry students



outside who threatened to try to enter the building. Like others, my parents were not happy with my participation in the takeover. I too can remember my father being angry that I was involved in that “mess” and that I had better not get kicked out of college.

However, what I remember most was the response from one group of the Rutgers community. I was a chemistry major and the chemistry building was located way off the main campus on Rector Street at McCarter Highway. I left the picket line to attend one of my chemistry classes. I’m not sure what I expected when I went to class, probably resentment and anger directed at me and my fellow black students for our actions on the main campus.

What I experienced was complete indifference to our actions and what was happening on the main campus. It was as if the chemistry department didn’t care, perhaps the term “benign neglect” is more appropriate. They were in their own world, one that ignored and seemed indifferent to what was happening on the other side of downtown Newark. I think it was then that I made up my mind that if this was what it would be like being a chemist, I no longer wanted to be one.

What I did resolve to be because of my involvement in the takeover of Conklin Hall was to become more active and involved in what was happening in my community. My interest in politics was sparked, and like other Rutgers students, I volunteered to work on the campaign of Ken Gibson who ran for mayor of Newark. This started my continued interest in government both personally and professionally.

Harrison Snell

The takeover of Conklin Hall at Rutgers University seems vague after forty years. The immediate events leading to the building takeover began in the fall semester of 1968, with the entrance of the new black undergraduate students at Rutgers Newark. A lot of the black upper class men at that time at Rutgers University—Newark had graduated from suburban high schools, attended private schools or had come from out of state. The black students who entered Rutgers University—Newark in 1968 were few but larger than any prior group and a good number of them came from the public school districts of Newark and East Orange. These students unlike their predecessors felt more isolated and antagonized by the university’s white environment. These black students had direct knowledge of and had experienced the

carnage of the Newark riots and based upon that event were less timid to challenge the system by acts of civil disobedience.

Every since my freshmen year in 1966, minority enrollment had been a perennial issue presented to the administration at Rutgers University, where meetings were held and statements issued that attempts had been made by the administration to increase the minority student population. The Black Organization of Students “hereinafter referred to as “BOS” demands of February 6, 1969, which directly lead to the Conklin Hall takeover reflected the resolve that the enrollment of black students at Rutgers University-Newark should reflect the same percentage as that of the black population of the city of Newark and its surrounding communities by the next entering class of September 1969 or there would be no university in Newark.

On February 24, 1969, when the university failed to respond to the “BOS” demands a group of students covertly entered Conklin Hall, requested the security guard to vacate the building and locked the doors. Ackerson Hall across the street from Conklin Hall became the command center for both the Rutgers University administration and the students during the takeover, since it had a clear unobstructed view of the front of the building. There were long hours of meetings with Malcolm Talbott, Bessie Nelms Hill, a black member of the Rutgers University Board of Governors and Mason Gross, the President of Rutgers University. During this time a myriad of groups converged on the command center some showing support and others disapproval to the takeover among them were: Students for Democratic Society, Black Panthers, local hispanic groups from campus, students from nearby colleges, community activists, Newark political leaders and Rutgers University students who were unable to attend classes. The university’s administration under Malcolm Talbott and Mason Gross have to be commended in keeping the building takeover peaceful by not intimidating the students inside as to reprisals or trying to retake Conklin Hall.



Malcolm Talbott



Mason Gross

Conklin Hall was vacated when written communication was forwarded to the student's inside the building by Bes-sie Nelms Hill that the administration had accepted their demands. Upon vacating the building, the students and the university administration began an arduous process of resolving the issues of the particulars of the students demands as to whether admissions would be limited to just black students in the Newark community, the criteria for such students to be admitted and the number of students to be admitted. These issues are chronicled in Richard Patrick McCormick's book, "Black Student Protest at Rutgers University," (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1990)

The details in the establishment and creation of the Urban University Program, which was the eventual program established by the Rutgers Board of Governor's to admit disadvantaged minority students in response to the "BOS" demands, was much more difficult for the students than the Conklin Hall takeover. There were constant meetings and the drafting and reviewing of documents, which was impossible for full time students to perform while maintaining academic requirements.

During this time Joe Brown, the newly installed President of "BOS" and others students delayed their graduation by dropping out as full time students in order to work out the details in establishing the Urban University Program

The takeover of Conklin Hall was just the tip of the iceberg as to student commitment to increase minority enrollment at Rutgers University. Although students who occupied Conklin Hall were courageous, recognition has to be given to those students who furloughed their educational dreams to a later date to ensure that other minority students did enter Rutgers University.



Claude Singleton

When George (Hampton) asked me for my recollections regarding the Conklin Hall takeover, I thought about the conversation I had with my dad after he had heard about it on the news. Needless to say, my mother was upset, but he was pissed. After all, it was a privilege to attend college: She had made it to the 11th grade; he had made it to the 6th. Evidently, my making it to college wasn't enough. I just had to upset the white folks.

My dad had taught me his version of how to survive (avoid the spotlight), not how to be great (seek the spotlight). Being from the south of the 1940's, my parents were my role models. I had survived the Newark school system (1954-1967), the Stella Wright projects (1961 -1966) and the Newark riots (1967). By the time February 1969 had arrived, we had lost Malcolm X and Dr. King. There was the draft (my number was under 100), the Vietnam conflict was in the foreground and J Edgar Hoover lurking in the background. How was I to explain to my parents the difference between H Rap Brown and Joe



Brown? My oldest grandson still cannot convince me of the difference between rap music and hip-hop music...

My first choice was to attend NCAS, but I missed the boat (application deadline). I was accepted at Union College in Cranford, NJ. During my first visit there, the expression on my face must have been priceless. Their admissions officer listened to my story, called his colleague at NCAS, the next day I'm enrolled at NCAS.

I was happy to be at NCAS. However, some of the white faculty was less enthusiastic: After one of my academic bumps in the road, my assigned advisor told me that I wasn't college material; that I should quit and join the army. He said it was in my best interest. I have to admit, the white students appeared to be a little more open-minded. I even pledged one of the white fraternities.

I recall there was a BOS meeting in Conklin Hall, maybe Friday, before the takeover. Joe Brown revealed to us, to some of us for the first time, the planned action. He took a vote, a show of hands as to who will be going inside with him. I was among the group that did not raise their hand. Joe asked us to remain after the others left the room. Before he could begin his talk (the one that goes—if not us, who; if not now, when; if not here, where); we reminded him that an outside force was essential to protecting the perimeter. The consensus among the group was that we were that force. I think he was relieved that he had misunderstood our intentions.

Monday morning, I arrived on campus for my first class. What do I hear one white student hurriedly telling another, "The black students, the black students, they've taken over Conklin Hall." I spent the rest of the day there . . . marching, chanting and adjusting to the dirty looks. There were a few incidents: A couple of white students had to be chastised by Pookie McGill for tampering with the chained front main doors. As darkness fell, it got colder and colder. Good thing I had the old grey Plymouth Valiant, aka "second gear," to keep us warm.

The following days and nights have been blurred over the years:

- I missed a few photo opportunities, including the one of the telephone pole incident: I was returning from a short visit home when it happened.
- Rumors spread that the following gentlemen were about to descend upon us: NJ State Troopers, Newark Police Swat Team, NJ National Guard, Anthony Imperiale, Snipers, thugs and the FBI.
- Rumors also spread that the Black Panthers and other activist were on the scene for our protection.
- Tuesday night was particularly cold. While guarding doors of the plaza level entrance, me and George got to talking about our predicament; considering the previous two bullets. We passed the time talking about how the *Star-Ledger* would report our deaths, and if we didn't die, would our families feel the pain of our being expelled from college and/or incarceration. Maybe we should have joined the inside group. We actually took turns eulogizing each other. Ever hear of a rhyming eulogy? I don't think I feared that someone would take a shot as much as I feared that someone could take the shot, and get away with it. We were standing ducks.
- During the last night of the takeover, Joe Brown sent word that he needed a ride to Piscataway. He needed Mason Gross' signature agreeing to demands. Me, Joe Brown, James Flowers and James McGill (I think) took the ride. It was a time of reflection. All of us were weary. I remember thinking that the few "white friendships" I had started were gone. But, my gains were greater than my losses. I have no regrets.
- Going to the President of Rutgers' mansion was like going to the mountain top. Someone, perhaps the help, let us into the study. It had to be around 11:00 PM. In came the man himself, dressed in an expensive robe and smoking a pipe. Perhaps Daddy Warbucks with hair: He seemed to be the embodiment of power. Joe stepped forward and handed him the paperwork to sign. They talked. The way they

talked to each other, they sounded like they were of equal status. Maybe both were relieved that the confrontation was over, for now.

By-the-way, I finally graduated NCAS in 1978.



Greg Morton

Coming from a predominately Black High School (East Orange) I was somewhat unfamiliar with so many white students, faculty and staff, that seemed oblivious to our existence at the university. I felt that many saw us like the brother that was a custodian in the library, I believe his name was Mr. Hightower. You know we were there but only a minor contributor in the overall scheme of things. Being a part of the Black Organization of Students gave me additional personal strength, courage, insight, consciousness, and a sense of purpose. I was on the basketball team with a few other brothers but had a difficult time relating to the head coach & some of the white players. Walking to and fro on campus passing all the white only frat houses, was also a weird feeling in the heart of majority Black New Ark NJ. I was impressed with brothers and sisters that showed leadership, courage, smarts, and skills in the face of troubling times. I remember Joe Browne in a meeting with Talbot and a few other white folks, jumping up and standing on the table to make his point. I remember Pete Jackson being one of the chief negotiators hammering out the agreement between BOS and the administration. I remember Tony Imperiale coming down with his goons to try and intimidate us. I can never forget the feeling of PRIDE when WE stood tall to face them down and then later the telephone pole chumps. Pete Jackson had a great observation at that moment. he said " If they got both hands on the pole, their jaw is exposed and ready to be punched!" I remember watching a few months earlier that the brothers at Harvard had their own building take over and the were strapped with 12 gauge shotguns. Those and other take overs influenced me a great deal during those times. I saw those pictures again in *Ebony* and *Jet* magazines and got inspiration from that event. The demands that were important to me were more Black faculty and students. Financial aid and other resources were also very important. I also saw how everything in life is negotiable and that power comes in many forms. There is power in institutions and numbers; but there is also power in knowledge and collective spirit. We had collective spirits for that period and time. I was and am so proud that I was a part of that revolutionary time. You may remember that the brothers on the basketball team agreed not to play against Ron Kornegay and the Monmouth College team that week. There were 3 Blacks on the Varsity at the time. Mel Graves, Jim Credle, and myself. We were all starters too! When the takeover ended and things began to go back to somewhat normal, one of the demands was that no Black students be prosecuted or punished for their participation in the aftermath. During the next basketball game against Newark



State, the three Blacks were kept on the bench at the beginning of the game. That night more than usual, a lot of Black students and parents came to the game and when we didn't start the game, the crowd chanted "we want the brothers, we want the brothers". It took the coach until the second quarter to get us all in the game. I was the last Black player to get in. To have that kind of crowd support was a great feeling and one that I will always remember.

There are other things I remember about Art Bowers, Clem Price, Bob Curvin, Aaron Thomas, Marvin (Fanon) Magraw, Bob Byers, The Kinchlow twins, many of the fine sisters like Ivy Davis, Vicky Donaldson, Janice Morrell, and others and having my memory jogged so that I can I even remember the events of the first "Black Solidarity Day" at Robeson Center that followed the next year. WOW what an experience that was!

During that time my parents were really afraid for me and the rest of the Black students. Both my parents were from Virginia where Black folks often times in the 40s and 50s and still in the 60s had a great deal of fear of white folks. My parents, as I'm sure others were really afraid of what could possibly happen to us individually or collectively. They remember stories about Emmitt Till, and the Scottsboro Boys. There were many other stories that never made it to national news print. A cousin of mine was hung in the town of Manassas when my mother was a young child. I like many of you was the first in my family including many cousins to ever go to college. So my parents worried that I would get kicked out, lose my chance & not finish college too. Both my parents had to drop out of school before the 9th grade; so me going to college was a real big deal that they were so proud of; and may have even bragged to other family members about it. So I knew that I didn't want to let them down & had to finish somehow. The Conklin Hall takeover put all that on front street. My parents waited every evening during those 3 days for me to come home at night and question me about the wisdom of our actions. They weren't sure we were doing the right thing? After all didn't Rutgers let us in? Why were we making such a big deal about Black studies and other issues. There weren't any jobs you could get teaching or studying Black Studies they thought. They saw the news coverage that painted us as radicals without a cause. You all remember how powerful the news media was to black folks back in the day. If it was on the news it was damn near gospel! In addition to us I saw Black Power in its raw form. Captain Carl Nichols and the Jersey City Black Panther Party came to our aid. Where was Leroi Jones. I missed him? Was he or any of the Black Cultural Nationalist there? They must have been or should have been there. But I didn't see them. Those Black Panthers from Jersey City represented one hell of an image and struck fear in the eyes of white students in the Law Center building. Every time a panther went into the Law center a handful of whites came running out! :-). That was something I had never seen before; the most rudimentary form of Black Power.

"On a lighter side, all the parties at Pookie McGill house in the after math were so important to the cohesiveness of BOS at



the time. He must have had a party every month during those days of Conklin Hall & after. I remember riding with McGill & Tom Roberts to another party in Tom's car. It broke down on a cold winter's night in late February or March. The fuel line was frozen and the car wouldn't start. So what did Pookie and Tom do? They sacrificed their favorite beverage (A pint of Old Granddad) and poured some of it in Tom's carburetor and started the car. Now that is genius and sacrifice all rolled in one!"



Gloria Lewis Brown

I've spent some time thinking about my experiences at Rutgers Newark. This was a whole new world for me. I grew up in the suburbs of Montclair and attended Montclair High School. Don't remember too much racism going on in Montclair. But I'm sure that that's because of some naïveté on my part.

I was the second person in my family to be accepted at and to go to college. What a privilege and an honor to do so. My parents were strictly blue collar, my late father was a baker with Ward Baking Company which made Tip Top Bread, and my mother was a Licensed Practical Nurse. Their mantra was "hard work pays off." I come from a West Indian household, a very strict household. No TV during the week, only radio and that was only after your homework was done. Education was paramount. My parents would not put up with nonsense. Montclair was an integrated town. There were Blacks at Montclair High School, but there definitely was a separation between the sons and daughters of black "professionals" on the South End side of town and the "blue-collar" on the other side of town. Jack and Jill and cotillions vs the Boy and Girl Scouts.

I really didn't know what to expect when I entered Rutgers. But what a great surprise to enter the Student Center cafeteria and find James, George, Peter, Claude, Tom, Vicki, Pat and others. I would venture to say that going to a commuter school hinders the development of friendships, but such was not the

case. It was easy. There weren't that many of us. That gave us time to really get to know one another. Upper classmen were great about showing us the ropes. We really became a close-knit group. We helped each other acclimate to college life. We did our best to make sure that no one flunked out. We studied together and we laughed together. I even remember learning and playing chess in the Student Center. It was so nice to belong. I remember fondly, Wednesday afternoons when we all would take a break from studies and go down to the YMCA on Broad Street with our little radio and just dance and have fun.

But we also had a serious side. I remember becoming involved in the campaign for Kenneth Gibson, the former Mayor of Newark. Some of us even got a chance to meet Bill Cosby, walking down a Newark side street, on his way to perform at one of the rallies. I remember being in the midst of Amiri Baraka and the Black Panthers. Serious times, thrilling times. I look back now on what transpired at Conklin Hall. I didn't keep a journal. Perhaps I should have. Cause now I'm relying on a 50+ year old brain. This was a monumental moment in my life. As I read over what others have written I understand more fully the sacrifice we all made for the betterment of others. I also understand that I could have been seriously hurt, fighting for my convictions. Being inside Conklin was not all fun and games. I remember running the switchboard. Connecting calls we wanted to get through to Joe and disconnecting others. No one knew how long we would be there, but we were there for the duration. And we were so glad to have friends and supporters watching our back on the outside. Don't remember what story I made up for my parents about my being away from the house overnight for several days. I told them about the takeover much, much later. They were just terribly concerned about my welfare. I don't remember any lectures.

I remember going down to the police precinct Down Neck to protest about McGill being locked up. For what I can't remember now. Just caught up in the moment of avenging a friend. The reality of the moment set in when a stream of police with black jacks and bullet proof vests came streaming out of the building. We ran. I've never run so fast in my life, realizing



Anthony Imperiale

the seriousness and urgency of putting distance between me and them. These were serious moments.

I did not get to fully appreciate the impact that B.O.S. had on campus and on history. I didn't graduate from Rutgers. I kept in touch for awhile, but then life happens. I finished my undergrad and later received my MA from Montclair State College. I do believe that the events that took place at Rutgers shaped who I was to become. I've helped to form and work with various groups within AT&T concerned with the very issues of under-representation of African Americans and other minorities.



John Leonard

As I venture back 40 years to February 1969, I have so many moments that help shape my life and are in large part the culmination of who I am today, and how I choose friends and associates.

It was the best of times it was the worst of times, at this point I was not a student at Rutgers I was at the newly opened Essex Community College. I did not become a real student until September thanks to Jill however my boy Greg was at Rutgers and I played bid whisk in the student center every day. What is so clear in my mind is how young everyone was and how focused and determine this incredible group of students were. When I arrived on campus Monday morning there was chaos around Conklin Hall, white students that I passed were saying the "niggers" had taken over the building. I saw James Pookey McGill who told me that they needed help guarding the building from the outside. There was Pete Jackson a powerful and inspiring figure who provided leadership in what was for me a scary time. My parents had thought I had lost my mind, I had refused to go to seminary, I did not have a clue what I was going to do, but here I was down there in Newark making white people mad. My father all but tied me up to keep me in the house, his father had been hung during the depression because his crops were better than the other white farmers in Louisburg North Carolina yet I was compelled to return and stand vigil. I first went down to ECC and attempted to get people to come and help out, what I got mostly was blank stares and/or I have to go to class.

There are so many powerful moments I pray that when we come together that there will be a videographer who can capture the conversation that we will have. Each moment outside the building was charged, not only the incident with the log, but every rumor, snipers state police mafia gangsters, Imperiale people, yet the comfort and strength that was passed one to another. Some of the most poignant moments that come to mind immediately are Pokey McGill cussing everybody and everything out, the Kinslow brothers on the roof, Big Bob Byers wearing the chain and lock around his neck and how that spread around the State, where people were wearing "BOS Chains" and locks to show their solidarity with BOS. The brilliance of Vicky Donaldson, the sublime power

of Sekena, the Doomsday machine Arthur Bowers, the smoothness and political insight of George Hampton, the patience of Claude “Butchie” Singleton, the level head of Tom Roberts, The speeches of Joe Browne, the thoughtfulness of Doug Morgan the kindness of Ivy Davis, Marvin “Fanon” McGraw. The sacrifice made by members of the Varsity basketball team, Greg Morton, Mel Graves and Jim Credle. Black Solidarity Day Greg knocked out this dude who tried to run through the student center. My mind is racing; once again I hope we can video conversations because so much can be gather in the oral tradition. George as soon as you can provide us with a date so Greg and I can make plans to come from Georgia.

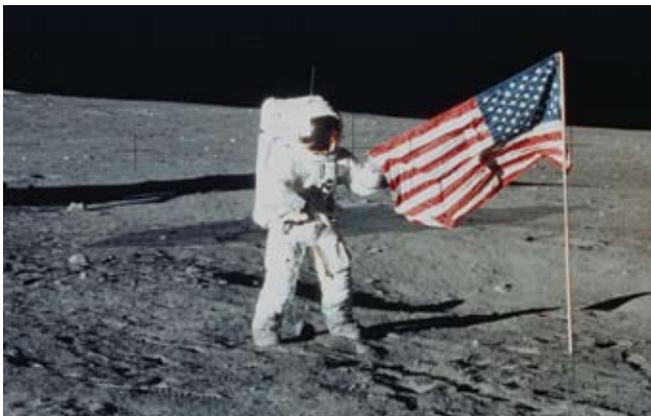


Tom Roberts

Rutgers-Newark was a primarily White campus, I believe that out of 4,000 students it was reported that 90 were Black (African-American) in 1969. I really don't remember any “upfront” White support

during the “Take Over”, except around the time that negotiations were intense between us and New Brunswick a small contingent of Whites did offer financial assistance to purchase food for the outside BOS demonstrators who would not leave their posts because of a rumor of an attack by the forces of Anthony Imperiale, the White Supremacist from Newark. (Later that year in October Mr. Imperiale did celebrate in conjunction with the Newark Police the attack on BOS members in the Eastern part of Newark outside the infamous 4th Newark Police Precinct Building).

The “Take Over” was a product of the times; one of the underlying issues was that the campus was not only located in a primarily Black municipality, but in the predominantly Black Central Ward of Newark and across the street from Central High School which was A “Black” school with an atrocious academic reputation and there was no out-reach to at least Central High from a relatively prestigious State Institution of Higher Education. This is what led to the demand that all graduates from Newark High schools would be admitted to Rutgers-Newark.



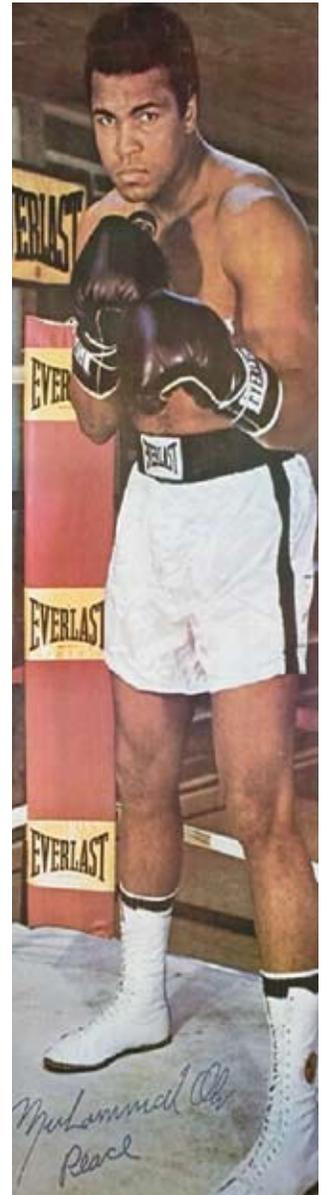
The “Take-Over” participants were high achievers in High School, who for financial or other reasons weren't able to attend or live on a campus institution. At that time there weren't the types of financial aid available to Blacks as there were in later years. Remember it was the Rutgers-Newark Take-Over that precipitated the establishment of the EOF program. We weren't in many cases informed or assisted by our High School counselors as to academic opportunities or financial assistance. And upon applying for Financial Aid at Rutgers we were misled by an insensitive (I am being kind) Financial Assistance Office. Nonetheless Rutgers-Newark offered an excellent education for which many of us could earn tuition during our summer jobs and by living at home to afford to attend.

There was community support in the person of Junius Williams and a few others, but on the whole the general community seemed to see us as leaders, if not privileged persons who did not require their assistance. Remember Newark was still recovering from the 1967 Riot and a fairly politically unstable environment.

David H. Barrett

I was in the class of '65 and in 1970 became president of the United Community Corporation (UCC). But I was in the board when the uprising occurred. In fact, I was in on the planning.

Vicki Donaldson and Joe Brown of BOS whom I got to know as an undergraduate at NCAS, called me and requested a meeting to discuss an idea they had. When they came to my apartment, they explained to my wife and me what BOS had decided to do and told us that they would need community support. I agreed to do what I could from my perch at UCC. After conferring with Amiri Baraka, whose organization I also belonged to, I decided to mobilize the people from the local area board on Springfield Ave., and keep a demonstration in front of Conkling Hall going every day for as long as necessary.



I was also the designated negotiator on behalf of BOS and was the one who met with Mason Gross when he finally came up from New Brunswick to attempt to end the occupation.

I mention these facts because none of this information is contained in McCormick's book on the event.

Though I live in Maryland, I am still connected to the school through the development office will be there and hope to share my experience with the audience.

Jerry Baranoff

Hi. I am an alumnus (NCAS'69) who lived through, witnessed, & was moved by the very disparate opinions present on the Newark Campus resulting from the occupation of Conklin Hall, then the primary academic building for teaching non-science courses. These events constituted its own three credit course in Political Science, Urban Studies, & Modern American History. I presume Norm Samuels & Rich Roper will speak. How about Harrison Snell, Vivian King, Carl Wyhopen, & some of the brothers at Glove & Stick, who as I recall it 40 years later, wanted to retake the building by force?

Memory inevitably is a frail instrument but while I recollected the EOF policy/program was a direct outcome from this takeover, I note that RU celebrated the 40th anniversary of EOF last year. Consider that a query for your panel discussion. I would suspect (litigator's instinct) that the EOF may have formally been adopted in 1968 but that it multiplied geometrically in significance (and numbers) only after Conklin Hall. Anyway, it should be a wonderful remembrance of that day.



Vicky Donaldson

I have been interested to see how the response to the anniversary of the Takeover of Conklin Hall, or the Liberation of Conklin Hall, has been so positively embraced. I plan to be there and to join in the celebration of how impacting that period was on not only education in New Jersey, but also upon the national university applications to diversity issues.

It is not coincidental that Rutgers—Newark is the number one university in diversity ranking.

I have some concerns, none of which should cast any pales upon our efforts. It is important that the worthwhile and feel good reunion will occur, but to not attempt to understand the dynamics which led to the takeover—which actually followed two prior sit-ins (Provost Malcom Talbott's office and the Board of Governor's meeting). The evolved demands had a difficult and telling history, as did the events that propelled us to February, 1969.

The history of BOS itself merits some thought and reflection. In 1967, as it was true of the previous twenty or so years prior, the African American enrollment was as routine for its numbers and sameness as it was different for those who came

from a still smoke filled community whose embers had not yet been watered down. Newark in 1967, for some, was a good place to be, culturally, politically and educationally. The NAACP Chapter that was to become BOS, the BOS charter fight, the fight for Rutgers recognition—even the naming of BOS - all came from spirited debate and very, very opposite (though hopefully reconciled) political ideology. Divergent student histories - from civil rights involvement, to militant local community involvement, to no involvement at all—came to bear in what was to become a storied history and prideful coming of age.

A typical story may be just to revisit how BOS became BOS. Some folk didn't want to be Black, or African, or African American; others didn't want to remain Negroes or colored people. In an inciteful and telling moment, I suggest that the name should be SCAAB - Student Coalition of African-American Blacks. Being southern, I did not have great familiarity with urban slang. I had no idea that a "scab" was close to what now may called a "chicken head," or today's "rat." My friend George schooled me and SCAAB was sent to the recycle bin with a never to be retrieved "delete."

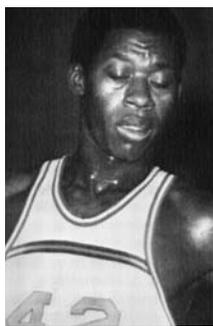
The history of the demands and their presentation makes me think back to people like Sue Perry, who worked for physical plant and was able to let us know where to go and what to secure; her vigilance outside was not diminished but pivotal to our success. There were sixteen people who locked themselves in that cold morning; it took three minutes and fifty-four seconds to chain the doors and beat the rounds made by the single security guard. There were nine people who worked on the demands, and five who sat with Bessie Nelms Hill at the Colonades to preview them before presentation to the Board of Governors. There were countless meetings with community groups (Gus at the Urban Coalition, IMAMU at Soul Session on the prior Sunday, mid-morning meeting with the elders of C-FUN and the United Brothers, energized contact with Junius and Isaac Parsee at NAPA, to name a few). It was important that a community stood vigil (and brought us some real food after that first broken window allowed them to pass it through), including the Welfare Rights Organization and Julliet Grant. It was an ideological statement that the community did not stand outside to support us; we were the community and we brought it inside with us.

There are countless stories to be told; who came in and who didn't; who did what and how it was possible; why we needed both people inside and outside; how Pete Jackson emerged from his sandle wearing, dashiki'd, bearded statement of self identify to let us know that he was just as brilliant then as he was when he stood for us in a cashmere overcoat, wing-tipped shoes and a Brooks Brothers suit; how Pete remains my hero; how we used to cringe sometimes when Joe Brown took the mike to speak beyond the essence of his message for *wayyyyyy* too long; how Ivy and Sue and Tom carried those signs to speak for us; how the Colonades B building and my basement

became centers of who knew what; how Minnie Williams and Sakena held me up and awake when I could no longer stand; how Arthur wanted to go home so badly; how Joe and I stood on Malcom's desk; how I still had to make Dean's list or my Mama would've squelched my activity and whipped my ass; how the Black Panthers stood with people like George and Pookie McGill in front of a an eighteen inch round telephone pole thrust by Imperial's goons, and said, "except through us; how Gwendy, and Carolyn and Vivian, Jerry Jackson and Greg, and Charlie Stewart, and William and Greg and Wanda—it's both sad and great that we can almost name them all—and students from Bloomfield College—were our strength; how we had to fight with someone to keep the guns out; how each time a crisis came we wondered if this was the hit; how Mason Gross had to be awakened at night during a sober hour to prove his signature had meaning; how Malcom Talbott stood down police chief Spina, and said, "this is state property, and you will not enter," when Spina and the police were ready to storm the building; how that light stayed on at the Law School with Al Slocum and Golden and the crew; and Bob Curvin being our eyes, and ears, and heart and soul without regard to who might be offended (and of course politically astute and connected enough to keep some of the dogs off); and Howard and Bill Kinchelov on top of the building.

Anyway, I'll be there and I hope that someone devotes some more time to understanding how we got there so that it will let us know why we got there. Oooh! and remember the Black Writers Conference in Newark that year, with Carolyn Rogers, and Nikki, and Sonya and Ellsworth Morgan, and Sam . . . so much memory...but I've gotta get back to work. I love you guys! If I've missed someone, please forward or hit back at me. Peace.

"If I could have convinced more slaves that they were slaves, I could have freed thousands more."—Harriet Tubman



James Credle

On that fateful day in February, 1969, I arrived on campus intending to attend classes, but was totally surprised and concerned when other students informed me that we should go over to Conklin Hall because BOS had taken over the building. I arrived at Conklin Hall with adrenalin flowing and excitement and concern making for an uneasy state of mind. But, upon hearing and seeing the massive group of Blacks, Whites and other people of color carrying signs and singing protest songs as they marched, in a large circle, near the entrance. I knew I was, we were, where we should be, supporting and given voice to the demands of the courageous students who had locked themselves inside Conklin Hall as we distributed the list of demands and urging others to support our efforts. As the day passed, more and more students from our campus, nearby campuses and people

from the Greater Newark community joined the protest. We also felt compelled to remain a strong voice directly outside the building because there was also a growing number of white students and whites from the community protesting the takeover and engaging in other threatening behaviors that had the potential for additional conflicts and violence. Some of us also assumed a vital role of obtaining food, clothing, refreshments and warming devices for the students inside the building as well as those outside.

Later in the day, I realized it was almost time for two other basketball team members and I to go to practice at the gym located several blocks away at 53 Washington Street. The other members, Melvin Graves and Greg Morton, and I comprised members of the new freshmen class who were the core players on the successful basketball team who had, to that point, stopped years of having losing seasons. Melvin, Greg and I talked and determined it was time for us to step up, boycott practice and not attend any practices or games until the demands of the BOS students were agreed and they were no longer in the building. We informed Coach Steve Senko regarding our decision. We made our decision despite the fact two of the most crucial games against Montclair State and Monmouth College were on our schedule for later in the week. We made a public announcement via interviews on several news outlets via radio station interviews and newspapers. The students and the take over were successful. We missed both games (losses), but were accepted back by the coach and team members. Our record that year was 11 wins and 7 losses, the first winning season for Rutgers Newark's basketball team in several years.

Looking back over the last 40 years, I retain an ever growing and increased pride in realizing the impact of the takeover on, first of all, my life and then, the many diverse lives of all kinds of people whom the campus of Rutgers–Newark has touched. Specifically in September, 1968, I came to the campus as a decorated Vietnam War veteran who had graduated 3rd in my class from a small high school in the East Coast of the segregated South in North Carolina. That semester, I was also among 100 new Black Students whom many of the leadership of BOS had encouraged admissions that also doubled the total number of Black students at the university. BOS also offered many support mechanisms, including a special library and social service opportunities, in order to facilitate retention needs of its members. I later graduated within four years, then attended a semester at the Rutgers School of Law before being offered the position of the Director of the Office of Veterans Affairs. In 1976, I was appointed to a deanship position which I retained until retirement more than 25 years later. To me, the action of the students during the takeover created the atmosphere and commitment toward Rutgers Newark becoming the "Most Diverse National University", a distinction now held for over ten years. This legacy, among others, is one which should bring additional pride to all, especially those who remember the contributions of Rutgers' most illustrious graduate, Paul Robeson.

Comment from The

blog

Hello. I was there. The memories are still there. The Black Panthers, Imperiale's hoods from North Newark, the Police, the FBI or whomever and the students, of which I was one. If only the social changes we professed were employed the world might be a better place.

—ROBERT DEFINIS, NCAS 71



Members of the Black Organization of Students (BOS) on the roof of Conklin Hall.



Bill and Howard Kinchelov, Marvin McGraw

Closing Thoughts

When you put your journal together, please do not limit your accomplishments to that campus; you must recognize the offsprings of that historic movement—Bloomfield, Seton Hall, Montclair State, Kean, William Patterson, Upsala, Trenton State College (TCNJ), Jersey City State College (NJCU) all benefited from the “Rutgers’ Model”. It was a new and sometimes frightening time and the Black students at Rutgers were the shining light; the “road map” to political awareness and individual courage. For it was during this struggle that started at Rutgers, that each of us learned how to truly face ourselves before we were able to stand up and defend our rights and each other. So although it may be long overdue . . . “Thanks!” Just think of various levels of leaders that were produced . . . just think of all the strong fathers and mothers that came from that experience . . . it’s all related.

I would like to state that I too, was a recipient of what was started at Rutgers. Although I went to Bloomfield College, we were aware and supported what was happening at Rutgers, but as we all know, using the language of those glorious days, the BOS at Rutgers was the VANGUARD of Black Student Organizations in New Jersey. It was the spirit started there that flowed throughout the campuses all over this state; which then flowed through out various communities. Living on campus in a predominately white town like Bloomfield, with a Gestapo-like police force, it was a combination of our “street bravado” and our “political awakening” which gave us the fortitude to emulate what was happening at Rutgers.

—Carroll Alston



I have personally witnessed and experienced an amazing transformation in my 30-plus years as a Rutgers employee, student and graduate/alumni.

The bold actions of BOS in 1969, the vision for the future and recognition of need and by Bessie Nelms-Hill, Mason Gross, Malcolm Talbott and Richard Duncan, the Chancellor of Higher Education of New Jersey was a decision to open the Rutgers experience to more than a select few. This was a critical time in Rutgers history:

- They stood for what they believed the future of Rutgers should be
- They listened to the concerns of others and took action

Today we reap the benefits of the price they paid and inherit the responsibilities and challenges of today and tomorrow

Truth is, we are at such a better place today than the 60s,70s, 80s or 90s and the sky is the limit to where this university is going. The question is can we collectively “be the change we wish to see in the world” as Ghandi stated. This includes alum, current and future students, faculty, staff and administrators. Can we remember what was, embrace who we are and see just how far we have come together?

Let us honor and remember those so instrumental in beginning the correction of educational and social injustices and inequality here at Rutgers during that critical time. It was time for change . . . and change has come . . . where do we go from here?

—Gerard Nicholas Drinkard

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