M. Biondi (2012) The Black Revolution on Campus. Berkeley: U. California Press.

CHAPTER 4

Brooklyn College Belongs to Us

The Transformation of Higher Education in New York City

Black student activism exploded in the spring of 1969. It was the high-water mark of the Black student movement, with militant actions and mass confrontations at campuses across the country, most notably at the University of California, Berkeley; Cornell University; Harvard University; Rutgers University; and Howard University. Coinciding with the community-control-of-public-schools movement, the Black student movement in New York City aimed to redefine the relationship between universities and Black communities. Like students in San Francisco, Chicago, and other cities, students in New York wanted some form of open admissions in public institutions of higher education. But as elsewhere, the struggle over higher education in New York was hardly over a single issue: it encompassed admissions, faculty hiring, curriculum, and overall mission. In the spring of 1969, students at every single division of the City University of New York (CUNY) rose up in protest. The two-week occupation of City College in Harlem precipitated a political crisis in the city and ushered in a major shift in public policy; as a result, the protest received extensive local and national media attention, but strikingly it has garnered little attention from historians. Similarly, the struggle at Brooklyn College has been virtually forgotten, even though it was pivotal in reshaping the admissions policy, the university's relationship to communities of color, and the curriculum. As one observer noted, "The integration of CUNY has been the most significant civil rights victory in higher education in the history of the United States."[1]

Yet the Black student movement in New York City has been left out of most narratives of the Black freedom struggle, a striking elision in light of the fact that much of the post-civil-rights backlash has focused on ending affirmative action in college admissions.[2] The quest for open admissions, and the articulation of higher education as a social right of the working class, has been either vilified or erased from movement history. Black students in New York had an enormous impact on university policies, structures, and cultures. These students may have read *Quotations from Chairman Mao,* but they won reforms that dramatically opened up public higher education and opportunity structures in the region, paving the way for the expansion of the Black middle class. While they achieved a great deal, they inspired formidable opposition, previewing the political conservatism that would later gain wider ascendancy in urban, state, and federal governments.

This story, like the stories of other campuses, complicates the widely held view that Black nationalist politics of the late 1960s blocked multiracial alliances, moved class issues off the radar, muted Black women's voices, and alienated and drove away white allies. In fact, this generation had a flexible and dynamic conception of so-called identity politics: they forged alliances with Latino and Asian American activists and kept socioeconomic issues front and center. African American female students, moreover, fought for Black studies and affirmative action as much as their male peers, notwithstanding the prevalence of male leadership. And the students won considerable support from elders in the community. Yet, as elsewhere, the emphasis was not on interracial organizing but on Black student assertion. Black and Puerto Rican students on CUNY campuses took the lead in shaping the tactics and goals of antiracist activism, while radical or liberal white students organized support efforts separately.

Black and Puerto Rican students had long gained entry to tuition-free City, Brooklyn, Hunter, and other colleges under the prevailing admissions standards. Affirmative action, meaning programs and policies aimed at admitting "minority" students who did not meet the prevailing entrance criteria, began with the Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge (SEEK) program enacted by the legislature in 1966. Reflecting the new clout of a growing block of Black and Puerto Rican legislators in Albany, as well as the efforts of Black professors Kenneth Clark and Allen Ballard in allegiance with enlightened white administrators, SEEK provided promising graduates of city high schools a college education and the extra academic support, counseling, and remediation

their own direct action. One tactic they used in order to overcome Black students' sense of isolation in the classroom, especially in the face of offensive or insensitive racial remarks, was to get groups of Black students to register for the same course. In 1969, five or six Black student activists plus several more nonpolitical Black students enrolled in an introductory literature course taught by Robert Fitzhugh. The first day, Askia Davis recalls, Fitzhugh walked in and saw "this sea of Black faces. He was shocked." "We were polite," he remembers. "We wanted to learn." Orlando Pile asked Fitzhugh why there were no Black writers on the syllabus, and he even presented the professor with a list of important Black writers. One imagines that James Baldwin and Richard Wright were probably on this list. Fitzhugh retorted that these writers were "social activists, not major novelists." A "personal confrontation" ensued. Fitzhugh asked Pile why he didn't leave the class if he didn't like it, and Pile replied, "Why don't you?" "And then," says Pile, still incredulous many years later, "the professor walked out!" BLAC leaders arranged with the dean for the Black students to withdraw from the course, and the activists did, but the nonpolitical Black students chose to remain. A couple of weeks later, they had changed their minds and told Pile that Fitzhugh was grading all of their work poorly, and had "disrespected them" when they brought it up. Number eleven on the list of eighteen demands called for the dismissal "of all White professors who have demonstrated racist tendencies," specifically, Robert Fitzhugh of the English department.[10]

The "18 Demands" illustrate the students' political sensibilities and vision. The demands are bold and wide-ranging, yet at the same time, specific and pragmatic, suggesting the students' complex sense of their role. The first demand called for the admission to the college of all Black and Puerto Rican high school graduates who applied.[11] The second demand called for "a free tutorial program" and "basic skills courses" to enable students "to fulfill their scholastic potential." While the first goal seems to reject all entrance criteria, the second one illustrates that the students still took academic success seriously. Even though students were challenging prevailing definitions of who was qualified to enter college, they were not rejecting academic culture or excellence. On the contrary, they wanted to benefit from it.[12] Most significantly, the demands show the students' desire to have Brooklyn College serve the educational needs of the population of Brooklyn, not only of those whose test scores were the highest.

The students called for Afro-American and Puerto Rican institutes to be "controlled by Black and Puerto Rican students with the help of the Black and Puerto Rican faculty and the community." The wording of this demand suggests that the students did not trust the college to set up the institutes, and so claimed this role for students of color and their faculty and community allies. At many campuses, student activists had a conception of Black studies as a social movement—seeing it as a bridge between Black students and Black communities, in addition to its transformative intellectual potential. The thirteenth demand called for a special course that would give academic credit for field work in the community, reflecting this generation's desire to make their college educations "relevant" to community needs, and their desire not to wall themselves off in an ivory tower. Indeed, Brooklyn College set up an entirely new college—the School for Contemporary Studies—that incorporated many of these goals. Echoing a similar demand at City College, the fifteenth demand asserted that students majoring in education—future public school teachers—should be required to take courses in Black and Puerto Rican studies. This reflected the students' sense of obligation to use their position inside the college to affect the education of Brooklyn youth of all ages. The students also demanded the hiring of Black and Puerto Rican professors in all units of the college, showing their desire not to let the creation of the new Afro-American and Puerto Rican institutes create an excuse for the other departments not to diversify.[13]

By early 1969, student activists had engaged in extensive organizing on campus and had gained considerable support. The BLAC faculty advisor was Professor Craig Bell, but all among the small number of Black professors on campus supported them, as did several white professors, "especially and very vocally" Bart Meyers.[14] Reflecting the movement's turn toward self-determination, it was important to Black and Puerto Rican students to organize and lead their own struggle. The largely white Students for a Democratic Society chapter on campus supported the citywide push for open enrollment, and they were engaged in a range of campus actions that spring. Pile said that their support was fine, but "they could not be part of us."[15]

In mid-April, frustrated that neither the administration nor the faculty had yet considered the eighteen demands, a group of Black and Puerto Rican students took over the microphone at a faculty meeting and commanded the professors not to leave. "Militant" students disrupting

normal campus procedures and making "demands" to a "frightened" faculty became the archetypical sequence of events at American campuses in 1969. "We want the 18 demands presented now," Askia Davis declared. "You will not shut your eyes any longer," he told the faculty. "Brooklyn College belongs to us, not you."[16] The president subsequently participated in a forum of two thousand people, but the administration, according to the student-radicals, took a "rigid stance."[17]

Student demonstrations culminated in a mass demonstration at the end of April. One hundred and fifty students from BLAC and the Puerto Rican Alliance, as well as forty white students, "squeezed into" the president's office in Boylan Hall, where a meeting among administrators and student representatives over Black and Puerto Rican issues was in progress. They dramatically presented the eighteen demands, but the president was actually out of the office. Some students engaged in minor vandalism, and someone spray-painted the words *power* and *revolution* on walls inside and outside the building. In the meantime, some white students took over other campus buildings, and unknown persons set small fires on the campus. The students stayed in Boylan Hall for a couple of hours and left when they heard that the police had been called.[18] In early May, one hundred students led by SDS held a demonstration inside the dean's office, and acts of arson and vandalism continued, alongside daily and increasingly large rallies. On May 6, President Peck alleged that a hundred, mostly Black and Puerto Rican students blocked firefighters from entering the administration building to douse a small fire, reportedly the fifth small blaze of the day.

In contrast to City College, where administrators negotiated with student activists, at Brooklyn College they turned to law enforcement to quell student protest. They got an injunction barring students from "congregating in or near buildings, creating loud or excessive noise, or employing, inciting or encouraging force or violence." Students fought the injunction with attorneys from the Emergency Civil Liberties Commission and the New York Civil Liberties Union, who argued that it was an unconstitutional restraint on freedom of speech and assembly. It should be noted that there were many white students who had been advocating and engaging in aggressive forms of protest—and this was well known to campus authorities. Indeed, some Brooklyn College officials, like administrators at many American colleges, saw radical whites, especially those in SDS, as more destructive than Black student activists. Some even viewed white radicals as instigating Black student revolt. Peck later testified before a U.S. Senate committee investigating campus riots.

Montana senator Lee Metcalf asked him, "So you think that SDS in spite of the fact that they were not part of this black revolt, spurred it on and encouraged it, and, using your phrase, masterminded it?" To which Peck replied, "All they could." He added that he did not think SDS had the same emotional commitment to "the cause of blacks" but used it to advance general social destruction. Interestingly, though, this worldview did not prevent Peck from targeting Black and Puerto Rican students—and no white students—for arrest that spring.[19]

Shortly before dawn on May 12, 1969, police officers raided the homes of seventeen Brooklyn College students, all of them either African American or Puerto Rican, including Orlando Pile and Askia Davis. They arrested the students and even arrested Pile's mother, Blanche Pile, for interference. Another two students were also indicted. Because they were college students with no criminal records, and they had strong family and community ties, the fifteen-thousand-dollar bail for each student was widely seen as excessive. The students spent four days at Riker's Island. They were each charged with eighteen felonies and five misdemeanors, including inciting riot and arson, which together carried a sentence of 228 years. The allegations had come from an undercover police informant who had infiltrated BLAC and befriended the students. "He looked the part," given his big Afro, dark skin, and beard, Askia Davis notes. "He had the rhetoric, but he was really a cop." In Pile's view, the allegations by the police informant were a form of retaliation: they represented the administration's attempt to thwart the Black student movement and block their demands to change Brooklyn College. The day after the raids, the prosecutor claimed to have found in various homes "a revolver, a sharp-edged spear and clubs," as well as batteries and gasoline, which he called "material used to manufacture firebombs."[20]

The eighteen-year-old Davis was a member of the Black Panther Party and had actually been named on the original warrant for the New York "Panther 21," but had been in California when the police made those arrests. "It was meant to be the Panther 22," he says, which likely explains the overwhelming force they used to arrest him that morning in May. He remembers his thoughts when he heard a knock on the door early that morning. "A young lady lived next door. I was basically trying to seduce her. She used to knock at my door; we used to tease and flirt, but nothing ever happened. So I get this knock at five o'clock in the morning, and I said, 'Wow, she finally gave in.'" Nine police officers came to make the arrest. Three came through the door. "They threw me

to the floor; put a gun to my head, and cocked the trigger." When the officer finally pulled the gun back and saw the very youthful-looking Davis, he said, "God, you're nothing but a kid." They searched the house and found nothing unlawful. Riker's was a "rough experience," but it made him feel he could endure hardship and prevail. He believed that authorities were trying to punish and intimidate them for their activism.[21]

The media gave an inflammatory account. The *New York Post* reported that the students were in possession of "The Writings of Che Guevara," "Quotations from Mao Tse-tung," and a "typewritten document entitled 'Blueprint for Campus Revolt,'" which the district attorney said referred to the "strategy at San Francisco State College."[22] *New York Daily News* readers were given an over-the-top account designed to stoke fears of communism: "Brooklyn District Attorney Eugene Gold revealed that 122 detectives making pre-dawn arrests in four boroughs found inflammatory writings of Chinese and Cuban Communists."[23] This media frame exacerbated the already powerful stigma of criminal prosecution in the eyes of the broader public. But closer to home, the arrests backfired, generating greater support for BLAC from both the campus and community.

Black leaders in particular stepped up. "The black community really got together" to support us, Davis says. Attorneys George Wade and Ray Williams argued before Judge Dominic Rinaldi that the bail was punitive. Williams also pointed to the racial bias in the arrests, noting that "there were S.D.S. students involved but they were not brought in because they are white." Outraged at the assertion, the judge warned him against "using the courtroom as a vehicle for racist statements." But the Appellate Division ordered the bail reduced to sixty-five hundred dollars. U.S. Representative Shirley Chisholm, herself a Brooklyn College graduate, raised the bail money. She convinced Dr. Thomas W. Matthew, the president of the National Economic Growth and Reconstruction Organization, to put up his share of Interfaith Hospital, a drug treatment clinic in Queens, as collateral. And she got Reverend William A. Jones of Bethany Baptist to put up his church.[24] As it turns out, the case never went anywhere—the state never produced any evidence. After about a year of delay and negotiation, the attorneys and judge reached a deal in which the students accepted a short probationary period, and the charges were dismissed and the students' records ultimately expunged. The *Kingsman* editorialized that the probationary period "seems suspiciously like a move to repress dissent on campus, since the 19 are not guilty enough to be prosecuted."[25]

After the arrests and the stationing of one hundred police officers on campus, a large group of students and faculty went on strike. Their demands were: drop the charges against the "BC 19," implement the eighteen demands, and get the police off campus. Askia Davis says he didn't realize how much support they had from the majority white campus until this point. The *Kingsman* editorialized in support: "The 20 arrests on Tuesday morning were conducted in a manner that heaped disgrace on the American legal system and added to many students' hatred and distrust of the New York City Police." It demanded that the administration remove police from campus, reporting that an officer had arrested a student for spitting, which had led to a bloody clash.[26] The relentless pressure finally induced the college to make concessions, and President Peck and the faculty went on record urging the Board of Higher Education, the governing body of CUNY colleges, to enact a new open admissions policy. They passed a resolution urging the board "to offer a college education to every high school graduate in the city, particularly needy Negroes and Puerto Ricans."[27] Clearly, the students' efforts to bring the Black liberation movement to Brooklyn College had an effect. An even more epochal story unfolded in Manhattan.

Student activists at the City College of New York (CCNY), too, had engaged in a long series of escalating tactics before two hundred of them took over the buildings of south campus on April 22, 1969, and renamed it the "University of Harlem." This was preceded on April 16 with a boisterous march through campus by Black and Puerto Rican college and high school students and their left-wing white supporters, who chanted the popular Black Panther refrain: "The Revolution has come, time to pick up the gun." As at most colleges, the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. sparked a new determination, even a sense of obligation, to accelerate the pace of change. "The movement really began in 1968," recalls south campus occupier Robert Feaster, who later took the name Sekou Sundiata.[28] The struggle at City was led by "the Black and Puerto Rican Student Community"—a name that richly signifies the politics of the era by emphasizing the collective over the individual and asserting a Black-brown partnership in a Black nationalist era that was moving toward "Third Worldism." The left-wing W.E.B. Du Bois Club also contributed to the formulation of the "five demands," having presented President Buell Gallagher in November 1968 with a petition

of sixteen hundred signatures titled "End Racism at CCNY." This evidently motivated students of color to launch their own effort. "We were indignant," Sundiata says, "that the Du Bois Society was circulating those kinds of demands which really articulated our interests, and that we had not moved on them ourselves."[29]

City College, located in the heart of Harlem, was only 4 percent Black and 5 percent Puerto Rican.[30] As a CCNY professor put it, "There City College sits, smack dab in the middle of the largest Black community in the country, and only 9% of its daytime students are Black or Puerto Rican. And 5% of that 9% came through the SEEK program."[31] Like Brooklyn College, City's faculty and students were predominantly Jewish, a composition that reflected, in part, the legacy of anti-Semitic admissions and hiring practices at private universities. City College had developed a reputation as the proletarian Harvard, as a bastion of educational excellence for the sons and daughters of immigrants. The students relied on research by CUNY economics professor Alfred Conrad to ascertain the racial composition of area high schools, and as a result, they called for a student body that was 43 percent Black. "The racial composition of all entering classes should reflect the Black and Puerto Rican population of the New York City high schools," was the most controversial of the five demands. It envisioned an enormous change in enrollment and suggests that students had embraced a radically new conception of a public university's responsibility to its community. As the students put it, "We are committed to make this college more relevant to the community."[32] In some respects, though, this was an approach steeped in City College history. CCNY had been founded as a free college to serve the children of the poor and, from 1900 to 1925, had required only a high school diploma for entrance. A minimum grade average was then introduced, but open admissions returned for World War II veterans.[33] Kenneth Clark, a City College psychology professor, often reminded New Yorkers that the policy of open admissions "is as old as the history of the college itself. . . . We are not developing something new," he said; "we are returning to the historic purposes of the city colleges, the basic rationale upon which they were set up over 100 years ago, when the deprived groups were immigrants from southern and eastern Europe."[34]

Students in SEEK developed a distinct consciousness that helped forge the unity and discipline that were at the heart of successful Black student organizing. A series of rules differentiated SEEK students from others at City College and made them feel like outsiders: they were barred from

playing on athletic teams, for example, and from participating in student government. As a result, the Onyx Society, the City College Black student organization originally formed in 1966, shifted away from a social focus toward a more political orientation. A "Committee of Ten" emerged within Onyx, and these students became the leaders of the south campus takeover in April. As on other campuses, these budding revolutionaries did not just pick up megaphones and shout slogans—they immersed themselves in the contemporary literature of Black radicalism. They read and debated Malcolm X, Frantz Fanon, Nathan Hare's *Black Anglo-Saxons*, Carmichael and Hamilton's *Black Power*, and Harold Cruse's *Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*.[35]

During the 1969 protest, three students played leading roles as negotiators: Charles Powell, who was also a member of the Black Panther Party, Serge Mullery, and Rick Reed, who had formerly worked with SNCC. Reed was reportedly "the visionary and the strategist." According to one student, he "had great insight and inspired the belief that we could change the admissions system." Henry Arce and Luis Reyes Rivera were key Puerto Rican student leaders. During the two-week occupation of south campus, Arce's mother organized the delivery of food from the community, and prominent politicians and activists visited "the University of Harlem," including Kathleen Cleaver, Betty Shabazz, Adam Clayton Powell Jr., and James Forman.[36] "Members of the community are constantly coming onto the campus to examine what we are doing and to give support," the Black and Puerto Rican Student Community (BPRSC) announced. These visitors sometimes joined student-led classes offering "political and social analysis of what is happening in this country."[37]

After admissions, the second-most controversial BPRSC demand was for a School for Black and Puerto Rican Studies. According to the students, the curriculum at City College offered "virtually nothing" on Africa or African Americans. In the words of Toni Cade, author of the groundbreaking feminist text *The Black Woman: An Anthology*, and a highly regarded mentor to the students, the English department clung to "the deeply entrenched notion that Anglo-Saxon literature is The Literature."[38] The leadership of SEEK professor Toni Cade is worth elaborating on, especially since the Black liberation movement from the late 1960s has been framed—and not without some merit—as a quest to restore Black manhood.[39] Still, Black women played critical roles in the campus uprisings. Cade penned an open letter to students encouraging them to seize control of their educational destinies. Steeped in the

vernacular of the era, it offered both guidance and solidarity and conveyed the humanism propelling radical activism. It bears quoting at length. "Dear Bloods," she wrote, "There are two traditions within our culture that are worth looking at, for they tell us a great deal about our responses. One, we have been conditioned to turn off, short out, be cool; two, we have often been pushed to make something from nothing. The first response is a negative one. We did it, or do it, to survive surely—but at great cost to ourselves. We've learned how to bottle up anger, put our minds in a jar, wear a mask. The second is a creative urge. It too comes out of the need to survive. . . . Out of which bag do you dip?" she asked. "Something out of nothing is so much better than blowing a fuse," she advised. "On the assumption that all of you mumblers, grumblers, malcontents, workers, designers, etc. are serious about what you've been saying ('A real education—blah, blah, blah'), the Afro-American-Hispanic Studies Center is/was set up. Until it is fully operating, *the responsibility of getting that education rests with you in large part.* Jumping up and down, foaming at the mouth, rattling coffee-cups and other weaponry don't get it. If you are serious, set up a counter course in the Experimental College. If you are serious, contact each other." She closed with: "Serious, Miss Cade."[40]

Cade was not only an adviser to the students, but she also formulated and publicized a model for a Black and Hispanic studies center at City College. "At least 90% of the several hundred rebellions that have taken place on the American college campuses and in the American high schools in the last six years," she wrote in a campus newspaper, "were propelled by and revealed a gross dissatisfaction with the curriculum (its premises, its omissions, its presentations, its designers)." Struggles over knowledge and learning had moved to the forefront of Black activism. This essay was composed before the takeover of south campus, but Cade saw it coming: "We can safely assume that an explosion is imminent," she declared. "The students have already indicated that they are weary of being lied to, tired of playing games, damned if they'll be indoctrinated, programmed, ripped off any longer." Cade proposed that the center be "a course-offering agency, a research agency, a buttress, a skills bank, [and] a conference center." Doubtless the most controversial idea in Cade's proposal was for the center to be "controlled by Black and Latin students and faculty who will have the power to hire using their own standards, and to design courses considering their own needs." She appended a list of courses that the center might offer, including "American Justice and the Afro-American," "Negritude," "Revolution," and "Trends in Western Thought." Her eventual goal, which in light of the demographics of City College constituted a radical departure, was that "the Center would lead ultimately to a Black University."[41]

In February 1969, the college had hired Barbara Christian, a Caribbean-born literary scholar who would produce pioneering scholarship on Black women writers during her long career at Berkeley, and Wilfred Cartey, a Trinidadian-born literary scholar, to design a Black studies program. Both were also affiliated with Columbia University; Christian completed her doctorate there with honors in 1970. According to Christian, the call for a School for Black and Puerto Rican Studies was "a very controversial demand." Initially, she wrote, "the students were primarily concerned with their own culture—Black, African, Afro-American, West Indian, Puerto Rican culture." But the involvement of Asian American students in the struggle at City College encouraged them to broaden their vision. "The students then took a look at how many courses were offered on Latin America, how many courses on Asia. And there were very few." This desire to address the needs of all "minority" groups on campus induced Christian and Cartey to propose a School of Urban and Third World Studies, but the faculty senate rejected their proposal late that spring.[42] As we shall see, the college administration resisted the proposals designed by Black professors and moved instead to implement a very different vision.

Paradoxically, as the students were struggling to radically expand the size of CUNY colleges, the already existing SEEK program was slated for drastic cuts, a development that foreshadowed worrisome things to come. In his February 1969 budget proposal, Governor Nelson B. Rockefeller slashed SEEK funding. This sparked a spring mobilization on New York campuses, which all sent busloads of students to Albany to save SEEK. CCNY alone sent thirty-five buses. Still, despite their staunch support for SEEK, the BPRSC rejected paternalist aspects of its structure. Most bothersome was that SEEK counselors were required to be clinical psychologists, a requirement that helped make them mostly white. SEEK students felt this stigmatized them as "psychologically flawed." The only counselor of color was Betty Rawls, who became a strong ally and mentor to the student activists, and who participated in the spring negotiations with administrators. Thus, the BPRSC demanded "a voice for SEEK students in setting guidelines for the SEEK Program, including the hiring and firing of all personnel." And in their list of five demands, the students, like their counterparts in Brooklyn, stipulated that courses

in Spanish language and Black and Puerto Rican history be required for all education majors.[43]

The response to the protest was sharply polarized. On the one hand, the students received considerable support from many Black and Puerto Rican New Yorkers, who provided the students occupying south campus with supplies, solidarity, and legal protection. These community members viewed the sit-in as part of the civil rights movement's quest for inclusion. But the students also faced substantial criticism and, they felt, misunderstanding. They were accused of lowering standards, supporting racial exclusion, and pushing an agenda that was more political than academic. In response to such criticism, the students issued press releases offering careful elaboration of their positions. They explained that, yes, white students could take courses in the School for Black and Puerto Rican studies; it was not a "racial" project, but one meant to teach and research the history and culture of "80% of the world's population." Moreover, "the school is not a vehicle for political indoctrination." It "will not have a watered down degree," they emphasized. Students had to meet all the regular requirements to graduate. And the admissions demand—to offer graduates of area high schools a proportionate place at City—"will not lower the standards of the college. Students would be given supportive services on the model of SEEK and would not be allowed to move on through the college unless they fulfilled the standards for graduation at CCNY."[44]

Many Jewish leaders in New York City vocally opposed the new Black and Puerto Rican radicalism, seeing it as an unwise rejection of time-honored liberal assimilation strategies and a possible conduit for anti-Zionism or even anti-Semitism. The years 1968 and 1969 saw many flashpoints of Black-Jewish conflict in New York City, as well as various efforts to articulate the source of tensions. The Black and Puerto Rican student struggles at City and Brooklyn Colleges took place in this context. "The rhetoric of the Black Power movement," wrote a New York rabbi, "has made Negroes less willing than the youngsters of previous ethnic groups to demonstrate the patience required for the laborious step-by-step ascent up the economic ladder. . . . The belief that special advantages are due him—now being impressed upon the young Negro by militants—is disastrous and should be exposed for the crippler it is. Jews, at least, had the advantage of knowing how difficult their advance would be and therefore plunged into the task of self-preparation with enormous self-sacrifice and without the self-delusion being instilled in young Negroes."[45] This kind of approach, which presumed to know the best interests of African Americans, and which failed to acknowledge the significance of skin color in comparing Black and Jewish experiences, was being roundly rejected by African Americans. SNCC activist Julius Lester offered this response to the rabbi: "I think that black people have destroyed the previous relationship which they had with the Jewish community, in which we were the victims of a kind of paternalism, which is only a benevolent racism. It is oppressive, no matter how gentle its touch. That old relationship has been destroyed and the stage is set now for a real relationship where *our* feelings, *our* view of America and how to operate has to be given serious consideration."[46]

Students leaders won support from the Black and Puerto Rican Faculty group and the integrated but predominately white Faculty for Action.[47] As white SEEK professor Fran Geteles remembers, the student activists were savvy organizers who understood that both groups had something to offer. Some historians of the civil rights movement have lamented that the rise of Black Power politics led to an emphasis on slogans and speeches at the expense of grassroots organizing.[48] But Geteles's memory complicates this interpretation. She feels that "the students were very smart politically. They adopted Black nationalist ideas but didn't behave in an exclusionary way. They were shrewd organizers."[49] A Brooklyn College professor had a similar recollection. Carlos Russell, an Afro-Panamanian educator and activist who directed SEEK before becoming dean of the School for Contemporary Studies at Brooklyn College, described Black student activists there as committed, idealistic, and skilled organizers.[50]

The BPRSC gained considerable support from white students, notwithstanding a visible and aggressive band of white opponents. SDS, the City College Commune, and the Du Bois Club organized white support. In a broadside, "The Stake of Whites in the Struggle," the latter group declared, "Right now, it is Black and Puerto Rican youth who are in the main fighting for this right—because it is they who have been most excluded. But, is it not in everyone's interest to fight for the right to go to college? Shouldn't white people join their black and Puerto Rican brothers and sisters in this fight and demand an education for all?" After the protest, southern civil rights leader Floyd McKissick praised this support as a shift from previous patterns: "This support can signify the beginning of a truly useful coalition—not the kind of coalition advocated by so many white labor leaders and their Black flunkies, the kind that leaves Blacks to rely on the decisions and leadership of whites, but

FIGURE 14. "Support the Five Demands" was the rallying cry for students at City College of New York during the occupation of south campus in spring 1969.

the kind of coalition which is led by Blacks—especially when dealing with issues which most directly affect the Black Community."[51]

After the seizure of south campus, President Buell G. Gallagher closed the college and began an intense period of round-the-clock negotiations with student leaders. But an array of critics swung into action. City College alumni held influential positions in the city, and many clamored for a police response. Mayor John Lindsay's policy was to bring in police only if requested to do so by the college president, and Gallagher did not want a police raid. And Wilfred Cartey had stirred his faculty colleagues with moving arguments against calling the police to south campus, in favor of "conciliation with black students." Also influencing administrators was CCNY's location in Harlem, an African American neighborhood whose community leaders had aligned themselves with the students. Askia Davis thinks this is the main reason arrests were not made at City, but were made at Brooklyn College, which

is located in an area that was affluent and white.[52] A year earlier, when protesting students at Columbia University had taken over several buildings on the upper Manhattan campus, city police had evicted the Black and white students with different methods, in part because of the fear of a Black uprising in nearby Harlem. Police clobbered many of the white students at Columbia as they forcibly evicted them, while they arrested Black students without violence.[53]

The occupation of south campus at City College occurred shortly after a photo had circulated around the world, of heavily armed Black students at Cornell exiting a building after the administration had agreed to several of their demands. In the eyes of some, Cornell became Munich—and denunciations of liberal "capitulation" to threats of armed violence proliferated. Buell Gallagher took to the radio in New York City, declaring, "Both incidents [CCNY and Cornell] illustrate graphically the failure of student extremists to understand what a university stands for." At this juncture, Gallagher revealed his distance from Black students: "The student militants' rejection of personal accountability, regardless of whether their background is privileged or ghetto, stands at the heart of the campus revolution across the country. Tyranny, whether exercised by the majority, or a minority, is still tyranny." He also echoed a widely held view among college officials that student radicalism would strengthen conservatism. "With each forcible takeover, each ransacking of administration files, each disruption of classes for the majority of students, the hands of the ultraconservatives in the legislature are strengthened."[54] Yet at the same time, as Gallagher began negotiations with the students, he came to respect their sincerity and the seriousness of their mission. A week later he was asked to defend his decision not to call the police when he had called them several months earlier to quell a largely white antiwar protest. "The circumstances are not the same," he explained. "They were causing extensive damage . . . smoking pot and fornicating in public," but the Black and Puerto Rican students occupying south campus "are behaving in an orderly manner." And as he got to know Black and Puerto Rican student activists that spring, this view solidified.[55]

The upcoming fall election turned the CCNY sit-in into a citywide political controversy and foreshadowed the way in which racial backlash politics would dramatically shape electoral discourse in the ensuing decades. State Senator John J. Marchi, who was opposing the liberal Lindsay for the Republican nomination, attacked the mayor "for not taking swift police action" at City and other CUNY campuses.[56] Actually, there had been at least one police officer on south campus—an

undercover agent, whom the students had discovered, interrogated, and released.[57] Another candidate took the matter to court. City Comptroller Mario Procaccino, who was seeking the Democratic nomination for mayor, obtained a Supreme Court injunction directing the college to open on May 5, precisely the point at which students and administrators believed they were making substantial progress. It is important to stress that there were many liberal administrators at CCNY and CUNY who favored negotiation rather than strong-arm tactics. Still, as ordered by the court, police opened the campus and occupied it for the rest of the term as a wave of fires, vandalism, and violent attacks on Black students followed. The protest leaders and their faculty supporters responded with a continued boycott of classes. And the college lost its president. Gallagher, who had been president for seventeen years, resigned on May 10.[58] He said that "politically motivated outside forces" had made it "impossible to carry on the process of reason and persuasion."[59] Indeed, that same day a *New York Daily News* editorial called for the House Internal Security Committee to probe charges that "Red Cuba and Red China are helping to finance some of the worst campus troublemakers." It called for a "Hayakawa for City College," referring to the authoritarian president of San Francisco State College who was willingly doing the bidding of conservative California politicians, most notably Governor Ronald Reagan. Their wish seemed to come true with the selection of Joseph Copeland, a sixty-one-year-old botanist, as acting president, whose commencement address equated the occupiers of south campus with the Ku Klux Klan, sparking a walkout by graduating Black and Puerto Rican students.[60]

More than sixty students walked out of the commencement ceremonies at Madison Square Garden about midway through Copeland's speech when, after denouncing the old and new left, he went on to assail "racial extremists, both white and black, who seek to impose a new apartheid or racial separatism on American society at a moment when for the first time in three centuries the promise and possibility of racial reconciliation have at last appeared on the horizon." Forces on the left, he said, "exploited every grievance, real and imaginary," in order "to create disorder and disruption." He garnered a combination of boos, hissing, and applause while the students departed. He moved on to pillory "racial quotas" declaring that "no real contributions can be made by lowering standards to the level of performance of the ghetto high schools." One young man replied to a query about why he had walked out: "Did you hear the speech? You had no choice."[61]

To be sure, many administrators at CCNY applauded the student movement. In May 1969 George Paster, the dean of students at City College, resigned in protest over what he viewed as the hidebound nature of academic institutions. "People who want to change such institutions," he said, "have to grab them by the scruff of the neck and yell: 'please listen to me' if they are ever to be heard. I honestly don't know any way you can break through the rigidity of the institution other than the way the blacks and Puerto Ricans have done it." He felt that students used force "to be heard not really to destroy." Moreover, in a point echoed by administrators at other campuses, Paster felt that, "once they had been heard, we sat down to some of the best and most productive discussions ever in the college—they have taught us so much."[62]

It was not just college administrators, alumni, political conservatives, or white ethnic politicians who found fault with the Black and Puerto Rican student movement. Several Black leaders did as well. These critics included many from the integrationist old guard, like Roy Wilkins, the longtime executive director of the NAACP, and social democrats, like Bayard Rustin, for whom the identity politics of Black Power was anathema. But since their target was Black nationalism as much as Black studies, they sometimes invoked an inaccurate or superficial conception of Black studies. "In their hurt pride in themselves, and in their outrage, they have called retreat from the tough and trying battle of a minority for dignity and equality," Wilkins said of student militants. "They don't call it retreat, of course. They have all sorts of fancy rationalizations for their course." Wilkins was particularly aghast at any proposal that seemed geared for Black students only, calling this "black Jim Crow studies" or "black academic separatism."[63] Bayard Rustin, a longtime civil rights activist and key adviser to Martin Luther King, echoed this concern over separatism and added two others. Black studies, he wrote, "must not be used for the purpose of image-building or to enable young black students to escape the challenges of the university by setting up a program of 'soul courses' that they can just play with and pass." And it must not become "subordinated to political and ideological goals" or used to "train cadres of ghetto organizers."[64]

But the BPRSC at City College also had important supporters among the citywide Black and Puerto Rican leadership. Louis Nunez, executive director of Aspira, a Puerto Rican educational advocacy organization, and an alumnus of City College, expressed his support for the five demands to the Board of Higher Education. City College, he argued, must do in the 1970s "what it did so well in the 1930s, namely, raise up

from poverty, in one generation, an entire group." He endorsed open admissions, but cautioned that "CUNY cannot blandly assume that mere admittance meets the problem." The curriculum would have to be updated, faculty-to-student ratios reassessed, and the qualifications for faculty reconsidered.[65]

The student uprisings across the city induced the Board of Higher Education to accelerate and broaden an open admissions plan slated to begin in 1975. The original plan was to assign most high school graduates to community colleges rather than four-year, or senior, colleges, but student protest won a much larger number of slots at the senior colleges and moved up the launch date of the admissions plan to 1970. Of course, the students had not led the call for open admissions, but their support for quotas to increase the Black and Puerto Rican student population had inspired intense opposition. Allen Ballard, a Black CCNY professor, director of SEEK, and scholar of Black education, argued that, "by moving from a quota arrangement specifically designed to serve the needs of Black and Puerto Rican students to a position of open admissions, the board both diverted the thrust of the Black and Puerto Rican demands and gained a white middle class constituency for the program." Ballard, it should be noted, was the first Black director of SEEK, and he implemented the BPRSC demand to permit the hiring of social workers, rather than solely clinical psychologists, as SEEK counselors. Still, the impact of open admissions on Black and Puerto Rican educational opportunity was substantial. "I don't know, as of this writing," Ballard wrote in 1973, "whether open admissions will be a success or not. However, it has opened vistas for Black and Puerto Rican high school youth previously condemned to a life of poverty because their averages and SAT scores did meet the requirements of the City University of New York."[66] Indeed, the activism of 1968 and 1969 irrevocably altered the character and mission of the CUNY colleges. For their part, alumni saw open admissions as the death knell of a great university, and donations plunged.[67]

The impact of open admissions was stunning: thirty-five thousand freshmen entered CUNY campuses in 1970, a 75 percent increase from 1969. One-quarter of these entering students were Black or Latino. According to *New York Post* columnist Murray Kempton, "The proof is not in, but there are grounds for real hope that the deprived can compete. . . . For the first time, a student at Benjamin Franklin can believe it when his counselor tells him that, with work, he has a chance to go to college, and not just any college, but City College."[68] After open admissions, 75 percent of New York City high school graduates attended college, a rate well ahead of the national average. According to historian Conrad Dyer, two-thirds of these students would have been ineligible to attend college, even community college, under the old admissions standards. In 1975, five times as many Black and Puerto Rican students were enrolled in the senior colleges than in 1969. The Black community struggle for greater access to public higher education also created many new administrative positions for African Americans. Just as Charles Hurst became the first Black college president in Chicago during this time, Richard Trent achieved that status in New York in 1970, when he became president of the newly created Medgar Evers College, a four-year CUNY institution located in Bedford-Stuyvesant.[69]

The quest for Black studies encountered much greater difficulties. To the extent that there was a Black revolution on campus, it was often followed by a counterrevolution, an administrative attempt to contain or delimit the expansive vision of student activists and their faculty allies. This is precisely what happened at City College. Over the summer, the Board of Higher Education had rejected the demand to establish a separate school of Third World studies, but it authorized CUNY colleges to set up urban and ethnic studies departments. Without consulting the BPRSC or Black and Puerto Rican professors, including the two—Christian and Cartey—that City had hired to design such a program, acting CCNY president Joseph Copeland announced the creation of a new Urban and Ethnic Studies department and appointed Osborne E. Scott, a former Army chaplain and current vice president of the American Leprosy Missions, as chair.[70] Wilfred Cartey called the two-course department "an insult not only to the black and Puerto Rican community, but to City College itself." This move by a college president to grant a Black studies program and then turn around and contain or undermine it was not unique to City College. Most colleges around the country failed to finance or build the kinds of innovative, large, and comprehensive African American studies units that Black student activists and their faculty allies had envisioned. At City, this development was transparent, as Copeland had been hired as a revanchist president. His quest found blunt expression when he publicly called Professor Cartey "shiftless." Calling it an "insidious and malicious" remark, Cartey threatened a lawsuit, declaring, "I'm not seeking an apology. I'm seeking redress for a group." For his part, Copeland claimed to have "never associated that word in my understanding with any racial group." But this supposed naïveté is contradicted by his evident awareness of the

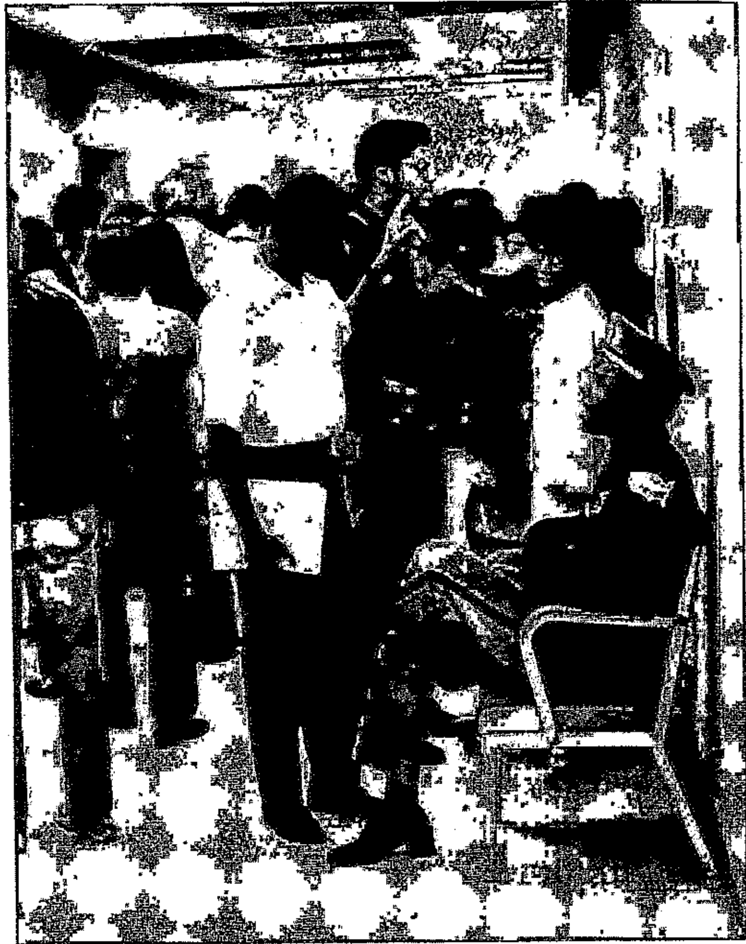

FIGURE 15. The new open admissions policy quickly changed the demographics of City College, making it better reflect the racial composition of local high schools.

connotations of the word in his original statement. "He's too goddamn shiftless—and you can use that word in your story there—shiftless," he had declared.[71]

Students at City College shunned the department, kept up a battle, and finally won a Black studies department three years later. In the fall of 1972, at the urging of a Black faculty and student panel, the college

made an offer of tenure to Leonard Jeffries, a 1971 CUNY PhD in political science who had been teaching Black studies at San Jose State College.[72] He served for more than two decades as chair before stepping down as a result of controversy generated by a televised speech that traded in generalizations and pandering—a speech that called whites and Blacks, ice and sun people, respectively, and singled out Jews, from the broader category of whites, as perpetrators of racism. As a rule, a long-serving chair is not a sign of departmental vitality. Jeffries left the academic research track early and became active in a grassroots circle of Afrocentric educators and community members. In the context of intense demand for Black studies scholars and limited supply, Jeffries exemplified a phenomenon of graduate students and newly minted PhDs hired into senior leadership roles very early in their academic careers. But the arc of Black studies at CCNY is instructive: a comparative, expansive model was replaced by an administrative shell, and what finally emerged was a unit known for narrow nationalism and disconnected from either scholarship and research or a broader social movement.

The tendency by many to credit—or blame—the City College protest with the onset of open admissions has, along with the legacy of the criminal prosecution, worked to suppress an acknowledgement of the significance of the struggle at Brooklyn College. But the students there achieved a great deal. "We were responsible for changing the climate of the campus," says Orlando Pile, now a physician.[73] After open admissions, the number of Black and Puerto Rican students rose significantly, but as Askia Davis acknowledges, "it wasn't just Blacks and Latinos who benefited from open admissions—a lot of working-class whites had been shut out too." Other reforms included the establishment of the Afro-American Studies Institute and the Puerto Rican Studies Institute, which later became departments; significant changes in required courses; and more Black and Puerto Rican counselors.[74]

A significant, though controversial, outgrowth of the protest was the creation in 1972 of a new division in the college called the School for Contemporary Studies (SCS), whose mission was to be "present oriented, concerned primarily with the social problems that are engaging our contemporary world." Faculty included Eli Messenger of the New York Marxist School and the prominent political economist Sumner Rosen. Until its demise in 1976, the school was in downtown Brooklyn, quite a distance from the main campus, and it offered a unique field studies requirement: students did internships in legal services agencies,

health service organizations, and penal institutions. "A special feature of the program," according to the SCS dean Carlos Russell, "will be an attempt to blend theory and practice towards the creation of a 'scholar-activist.'" As a two-year program, it also required students to have an additional major in another division of the college. As Dean Russell recalls, the program exemplified the call for relevance raised in the 1960s by bringing "the streets and classrooms together."[75]

But at least one student leader was "ambivalent." Askia Davis "was of two minds about" the School for Contemporary Studies. "I was anxious about it," he recalls. He saw the circumstances of its location "as putting Blacks and Latinos at this extension campus downtown and off the main campus." He felt this undercut their mission of reimagining Brooklyn College as a whole. "We were just beginning to transform the main campus," he notes, "and that was very, very important to us." The student activists debated these issues. They respected Russell but were not responsible for his hiring.[76]

An evaluation in 1976 found that "some students appear to have been profoundly affected by their experience in field study." But the report cast light on an ironic outcome of the student movement. The SCS, the evaluation committee felt, had been designed for the "bright, activist students of the late 1960s," but it had come to serve the "open-admissions students"—working-class Black, Puerto Rican, and white students whose educational needs were different. The students needed remediation and skills development, and they were "not being sufficiently prepared" at SCS for the transfer, after two years, to the main Brooklyn College campus in Midwood. The report called for more counseling and tutoring and a greater focus on writing and the development of academic skills. It lamented that Brooklyn College faculty seemed to view the SCS curriculum, faculty, and students as beneath the standards of the college, and it concluded that racism shaped their judgments. Evidently, a majority of the students at the SCS were Black, and whites on the main campus commonly referred to it as "the black school." "Midwood faculty should not describe the SCS as a dumping ground for unwanted students," the committee warned, "nor should they describe it as the 'black school' nor should they commit the serious educational error of cruelly and publicly pre-judging the ability of the School's students not on the basis of their ability or performance but merely on their attendance at the School." Adding to this problem were internal rifts between Russell and his faculty, and concerns about effective school leadership. The SCS did not survive the city's fiscal crisis.[77]

Critics of open admissions always remained, arguing that high admissions standards had made City and Brooklyn top schools. "Only at CUNY," a SEEK professor wryly observed, "were those standards viewed as fixed, immutable and exempt from social and political realities."[78] Albert H. Bowker, former chancellor of CUNY, thought racial resentment drove the attacks on open admissions. "There's been a lot of white flight from City College," he observed. "And most of the people who write about this are City College graduates who are mad."[79] In a fateful conjuncture, open admissions coincided with the New York City fiscal crisis of the 1970s, and the sharp drop in funding seemed to make the discourse of failure shrouding open admissions a self-fulfilling prophecy. The severe budget cuts climaxed in the "retrenchment of 1976," when the State of New York took over the City University of New York, laid off many faculty, and imposed tuition for the first time.[80] The case load of SEEK counselor Fran Geteles doubled from fifty to one hundred students. "Class sizes also grew sharply," she says, "which made it much harder to help students as before. Remedial classes had been no more than twenty; now some had forty students."[81]

At Brooklyn there was a similar surge in enrollments, and a failure to add the necessary resources and services for the new student body, prompting a high dropout rate. According to one estimate, in 1970, thirteen hundred students entered Brooklyn College who would not otherwise have been eligible. This included several hundred minority students in the older SEEK and EOP programs. But the majority of open-admission students hailed from the white working class. They were "not welcomed with open arms" but faced stigma. The tracking arising from the need for remediation was expected but reinforced their separation from the rest of the college. By 1974, a significant portion of the first open admissions class had dropped out, while the share of open admissions students in succeeding classes had grown to constitute one-half of the entering class. Then the fiscal crisis hit, sinking the whole experiment. Large numbers of remedial teachers lost their jobs, and some entrance requirements were reintroduced. "We have come full circle," a student said.[82]

As a result, an increasingly negative view of open admissions took root. One observer summed up the prevailing view by the early 1980s: it "shuffles its poor students through four years of over-crowded and under-taught classes—then pushes them out the door with a worthless diploma."[83] Still, those "worthless" diplomas brought thousands of Black and Puerto Rican graduates into the middle class. But the attacks

took their toll. By 1990, some of the creators and proponents of open admissions were lamenting that the college had made such a radical change with too little resources and planning. Allen Ballard thinks CUNY should have implemented "a well articulated, gradually phased in, well funded operation aimed at a saveable number of Black and Puerto Rican students in the high schools." Former SEEK Professor Leslie Berger feels similarly: "It was almost criminal to let them come in and let them fail because of the lack of service. We knew what we needed. It was no mystery."[84] In 1998, Republican Mayor Rudolph Giuliani declared that "open enrollment is a failure," and the CUNY Board of Trustees replaced it with standardized tests for admissions and eliminated all remedial courses from the senior colleges. As a City College student wrote, "The avenue for education for many NY high school students has been closed."[85]

This discourse of failure obscures the fact that a generation of lawyers, civil servants, teachers, artists, and social workers in New York City got their start through open admissions, notwithstanding its severe underfunding and other flaws. Black and Puerto Rican college students in the late 1960s rejected market-driven approaches to higher education. They insisted upon the right of working-class African American and Puerto Ricans to receive the benefits of public higher education in New York City. As Barbara Christian put it in 1969, a "much overlooked factor is that City College is supported by taxes. And Black and Puerto Rican people pay taxes just like everybody else. Yet they are not in any way represented in the ethnic make-up of the College."[86]

Inspiring this generation was the conviction that seniors at poorly funded and poorly performing public high schools should not be punished for society's failure to provide high-quality secondary education for all, but rather, should be rewarded for their determination and desire to gain a college education. These student activists understood that college was critical to social mobility, especially since workers of color in New York City had already been hit hard by deindustrialization and automation.[87] It's important to appreciate that the struggle for affirmative action, open admissions, and Black and Third World studies was centered at public universities as much as, if not more than, at private ones. This was a struggle not of elites but of the children of migrants and immigrants. Even with the restoration of stricter admissions requirements and the increased tuition in the 1990s, CUNY campuses still felt the legacy of the 1960s. The student struggles brought an irrevocable change to urban higher education and opened doors that were difficult to entirely shut. A related but different kind of student movement was taking place at the same time on campuses of historically Black colleges and universities. All of these diverse campus struggles shared the fundamental goal of using higher education to advance the economic security and social status of African Americans in the United States.

52. Frank de la Cerna, acting chairman, Black Student Congress, to "Brothers and Sisters," October 1968, Standish Willis personal collection, copy in author's possession.

53. Willie Calvin, "What Black Students Want," *Phoenix*, c. 1968, Standish Willis personal collection, copy in author's possession.

54. Willis, interview.

55. English, interview; Willis, interview.

56. "Distributed by the Student Senate to Students of Crane College, May 8, 1968," Standish Willis personal collection.

57. Memorandum from Ad Hoc Committee on Student Demands to All Faculty and Students, May 31, 1968, Standish Willis personal collection; English, interview.

58. Willis, interview.

59. Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, "Report for Malcolm X College," May 24, 1971, 2, in Photograph Collection, "Charles Hurst" Folder, offices of the *Chicago Defender*, Chicago.

60. Ibid., 3.

61. *Student Handbook, 1970–1971*, Standish Willis personal collection.

62. English, interview.

63. Alex Poinsett, "The Mastermind of Malcolm X College," *Ebony*, March 1970, 30.

64. Willis, interview.

65. "Malcolm X," *Jet*, June 18, 1970.

66. Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, "Report for Malcolm X College," 7–12.

67. Willis, interview.

68. Ibid.; Robert Rhodes, interview by author, Chicago, August 9, 2009.

69. Adam Green, *Selling the Race: Culture, Community, and Black Chicago, 1940–1955* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

CHAPTER 4. "BROOKLYN COLLEGE BELONGS TO US"

1. "CUNY contains the largest number of Black and Latino scholars ever to attend a single university in the history of the United States. The importance of CUNY as a source of opportunity for non-white students and their communities is highlighted by the fact that CUNY traditionally awards the largest number of Master's degrees to Black and Latino students of any institution in America. Last year CUNY conferred 1,011 Master's degrees to Black and Latino students, while the State University of New York ('SUNY') awarded only 233." Ronald B. McGuire, "The Struggle at CUNY: Open Admissions and Civil Rights," 1992, http://slamherstory.wordpress.com/2009/09/28/the-struggle-at-cuny-by-ron-mcguire/, accessed December 15, 2011.

2. Much has been written about open admissions; see for example David E. Lavin et al., *Right Versus Privilege: The Open Admissions Experiment at the City University of New York* (New York: Free Press, 1981). But scholars of the civil rights and Black power movements have neglected or ignored it. For examples, see Harvard Sitkoff, *The Struggle for Black Equality: 1954–1992* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993); and Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting 'Till the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Henry Holt, 2006).

3. According to professor of psychology Kenneth Clark, the idea for SEEK and open admissions first emerged in a series of breakfast meetings with himself; CUNY chancellor Albert Bowker; Gus Rosenberg, the president of the Board of Higher Education, and Ray Jones, the African American leader of Tammany Hall. Clark said the four quickly agreed upon the injustice of "a policy and practice of free tuition in the city colleges when the most economically deprived groups were being denied the benefits of free higher education." Kenneth B. Clark, "The Advantages and Disadvantages of Open Admissions—and Some History," in *Open Admissions: The Pros and Cons* (Washington, DC: Council for Basic Education, 1972), 45. In contrast, former CCNY professor and administrator Allen B. Ballard called SEEK "my idea" and reportedly wrote up the plan for it in 1964–1965. See Ballard, *Breaking Jericho's Walls* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2011), 216–217.

4. According to Conrad M. Dyer, CUNY's motive in authorizing open admissions was "to appease an explosive urban youth population." Dyer, "Protest and the Politics of Open Admissions: The Impact of the Black and Puerto Rican Students' Community (of City College)" (PhD diss., City University of New York, 1990), 193.

5. Bart Meyers, "Radical Struggle for Open Admissions at CUNY," *Kingsman*, February 27, 1976; in 1968, 192 Black students entered as part of the new Educational Opportunity Program. Others came through SEEK, which by early 1969 comprised 470 students. Another new 1968 initiative was the "One Hundred Scholars" program, where the top 100 graduates of each high school were automatically admitted to college. Forty-five of these students chose Brooklyn College. Still, according to one student who entered that year, Black enrollment in the liberal arts college was only 1 percent. Barnard Collier, "Police Break-Up Sit-In in Brooklyn at College Office," *New York Times*, May 21, 1968, 1; Duncan Pardue to Franklin Williams, February 5, 1969, IBW Papers, Box: Survey of Black Studies Programs, Folder: Brooklyn College, Schomburg Center.

6. United States Congress, Senate Committee on Government Operations, Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, *Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorders*, 91st Cong. 1st sess. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1969), 5193.

7. Meyers, "Radical Struggle for Open Admissions at CUNY."

8. Duncan Pardue to Franklin Williams, February 5, 1969.

9. Askia Davis, interview by author, New York City, July 19, 2005.

10. Orlando Pile, telephone interview by author, June 30, 2005; Davis, interview; the president said he "deplored racism but procedures of academic freedom must be maintained." Only the Board of Higher Education, he said, could take action on specific evidence of racism. Meyers, "Radical Struggle for Open Admissions at CUNY."

11. Students at City College advocated for admitting Black and Puerto Rican students in proportion to their presence in local high schools. They also called for access for poor whites as well, and said they should constitute 20 percent of the freshmen class, reflecting their presence in the local high school population.

12. At City College, SEEK professor Fran Geteles said that the students there "were very sensitive to the issues of underpreparedness and were not asking for indiscriminate entrance." Frances Geteles, telephone interview by author, August 29, 2007. Conrad Dyer found that many former student activists reiterated this point in interviews. See Dyer, "Protest and the Politics of Open Admissions," 103.

13. United States Congress, Senate Committee on Government Operations, Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, *Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorders*, 5197–5199.

14. Pile, interview.

15. Ibid.

16. *Kingsman*, April 23, 1969, special edition.

17. Meyers, "Radical Struggle for Open Admissions at CUNY."

18. Ibid; Murray Schumach, "Vandals Disturb Brooklyn Campus," *New York Times*, May 1, 1969.

19. United States Congress, Senate Committee on Government Operations, Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, *Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorders*, 5203.

20. Emanuel Perlmutter, "20 Indicted in Brooklyn College Arson," *New York Times*, May 14, 1969; *Kingsman*, May 12, 1969, special edition; Davis, interview; Pile, interview.

21. Davis, interview.

22. *New York Post*, May 13, 1969, Five Demands Conflict Collection, Box 2, University Archives and Special Collections, City College of New York (hereafter CCNY).

23. *New York Daily News*, May 14, 1969, Five Demands Conflict Collection, Box 2, CCNY.

24. Perlmutter, "20 Indicted in Brooklyn College Arson"; *Kingsman*, May 16, 1969; Davis, interview. Ironically, Dr. Matthews also went to jail in 1969—for refusing to pay federal income tax. An outspoken advocate of self-help and Black capitalism, Matthews, the first Black neurosurgeon in the United States, said he gave his taxes to his organization, National Economic Growth and Reconstruction Organization, rather than pay for welfare programs. President Nixon commuted the six-month sentence after sixty-nine days. *New York Times*, April 2, 1973.

25. "BC 19 Get Probation," *Kingsman*, February 27, and *Kingsman*, March 6, 1970; Judge Rinaldi said the indictments would be dismissed after six months "if they behaved." Things didn't turn out as well for the prosecutor or the judge. In 1983 Eugene Gold, who was Brooklyn district attorney from 1968 to 1981, admitted to "unlawful sexual fondling" of a ten-year-old girl—the daughter of an Alabama prosecutor—in a Nashville hotel room during a convention of district attorneys. And Judge Dominic Rinaldi was suspended from the bench after being indicted for perjury in 1973, although a jury later acquitted him. See "Gold Gets Probation in Fondling of Child; Agrees to Treatment," *New York Times*, October 21, 1983; and "Dominic Rinaldi Dies: A Retired Justice," *New York Times*, November 27, 1983.

26. "STRIKE!" editorial, *Kingsman*, May 12, 1969.

27. United States Congress, Senate Committee on Government Operations, Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, *Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorders*, 5191.

28. Transcript of interview with Sekou Sundiata, formerly Robert Feaster, n.d., Legacy of Struggle Collection, Box 1, CCNY.

29. "Chronology of a Crisis," n.d., Legacy of Struggle Collection, Box 1, CCNY; Sundiata, interview.

30. These statistics describe 1967. Dyer, "Protest and the Politics of Open Admissions," 64. This was the first official ethnic census conducted at CUNY schools.

31. Barbara Christian, "City College Saga, Part 2: Dual Admissions," *Inside and Outside the Plaza*, n.d., reprinted from *Harlem News*, June 1969, Legacy of Struggle Collection, Box 2, CCNY.

32. Black and Puerto Rican Student Community, "The Black and Puerto Rican Student Community to the Faculty and Students of City College," press release, April 26, 1969, Five Demands Conflict Collection, Box 4, CCNY. Conrad's spouse, the writer Adrienne Rich, also taught at CCNY and was a supporter of the student activists. Geteles, telephone interview by author.

33. Christian, "City College Saga, Part 2."

34. Clark, "The Advantages and Disadvantages of Open Admissions," 47.

35. Dyer, "Protest and the Politics of Open Admissions," 84.

36. Ibid., 117–120.

37. "The Black and Puerto Rican Student Community to the Faculty and Students of City College."

38. Dyer, "Protest and the Politics of Open Admissions," 98; Toni Cade, "Realizing the Dream of the Black University," *Observation Post* (City College), February 14, 1969, Martha Weisman Papers, Open Admissions Folder, CCNY.

39. See for example Steve Estes, *I Am a Man!: Race, Manhood and the Civil Rights Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

40. Miss Cade to Dear Bloods, n.d., Five Demands Conflict Collection, Public Relations Folder, CCNY.

41. Cade, "Realizing the Dream of the Black University."

42. Barbara Christian, "City College Saga: Lesson in Democracy," *Inside and Outside the Plaza*, August–September 1969, Legacy of Struggle Collection, Box 2, CCNY.

43. Alecia Edwards-Sibley, "The Five Demands," *The Paper*, April 2002, Martha Weisman Papers, Strike of 1969 Folder, CCNY.

44. Black and Puerto Rican Student Community, "Queries and Answers on Demands #1 and #4," May 28, 1969, Five Demands Conflict Collection, Box 7, CCNY.

45. Rabbi Jay Kaufman, "Thou Shalt Surely Rebuke Thy Neighbor," in *Black Anti-Semitism and Jewish Racism*, ed. Nat Hentoff (New York: Richard Baron, 1969), 55, 74.
46. Julius Lester, "A Response," in *Black Anti-Semitism and Jewish Racism*, ed. Nat Hentoff (New York: Richard Baron, 1969), 235.
47. There was some overlap—Betty Rawls and Barbara Christian were in both groups. Geteles, telephone interview.
48. See Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981).
49. Geteles, telephone interview.
50. Carlos Russell, interview by author, New York City, June 11, 2005.
51. "The Stake of Whites in the Struggle," Box 16, Five Demands Conflict, CCNY; Floyd McKissick, "CUNY's Quota System," *New York Amsterdam News*, June 14, 1969.
52. Meyers, "Radical Struggle for Open Admissions at CUNY"; "Notes and Comment," Talk of the Town, *New Yorker*, May 3, 1969, in Legacy of Struggle Collection, Box 1, CCNY; Davis, interview.
53. For more on Columbia see Stefan Bradley, *Harlem v. Columbia University: Black Student Power in the Late 1960s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009).
54. WCBS transcript, "Campus Disruption—II," April 23, 1969, Five Demands Conflict Collection, Public Relations Folder, CCNY.
55. *New York Post*, April 30, 1969, Five Demands Conflict Collection, Box 1, CCNY.
56. Schumach, "Vandals Disturb Brooklyn Campus."
57. Transcript of film (unfinished), Legacy of Struggle Collection, Box 2, CCNY.
58. Meyers, "Radical Struggle for Open Admissions at CUNY."
59. *New York Post*, May 10, 1969, Five Conflict Collection, Box 1, CCNY.
60. *Daily News*, editorial, May 10, 1969, Five Conflict Collection, Box 1, CCNY; *New York Post*, June 13, 1969, Five Conflict Collection, Box 1, CCNY.
61. Sylvan Fox, "60 From C.C.N.Y. Quit Graduation," *New York Times*, June 13, 1969.
62. "Dean Quitting CCNY Post Tells Why," *New York Post*, May 28, 1969.
63. Roy Wilkins, "The Case against Separatism: 'Black Jim Crow,'" *Black Studies: Myths and Realities* (New York: A. Philip Randolph Institute, 1969), 38–39.
64. Bayard Rustin, introduction to *Black Studies: Myths and Realities*, 6–7.
65. Louis Nunez to Board of Higher Education, May 1, 1969, Five Demands Conflict Collection, Public Relations Folder, CCNY.
66. Allen B. Ballard, *The Education of Black Folk: The Afro-American Struggle for Knowledge in White America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 127, 141.
67. "Fortieth Open Admissions Anniversary," *Third Rail* (CUNY, College of Staten Island) (Spring 2009): 6.

68. Murray Kempton, "Fog over City College—II," *New York Post*, May 28, 1969.
69. Dyer, "Protest and the Politics of Open Admissions," 176.
70. "Urban and Ethnic Studies Dept. Created," *The Campus*, September 2, 1969, Martha Weisman Papers, Open Admissions Folder, CCNY.
71. "A Negro Professor at C.C.N.Y. Charges Slander," *New York Times*, September 20, 1969.
72. Students at Berkeley paid attention to events at CCNY because they shared an administrator, Albert Bowker. See BSU flyer, September 26, 1972, Social Protest Collection, Box 18, Folder 9, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
73. Dr. Pile graduated in 1972, attended medical school at Rutgers University, and did his internship and residency at Martin Luther King Jr./Drew Medical Center in Los Angeles. Askia Davis is an administrator for the New York public school system. He has served as special assistant to three chancellors.
74. Davis, interview; Pile, interview.
75. Russell, interview; Memorandum, n.d., Box: Information Files, #91–021; Folder: BC—Schools—School for Contemporary Studies, Special Collections, Brooklyn College, Brooklyn, New York, University Archives; "Contemporary Studies Head Seeks New Values," *Kingsman*, October 15, 1971.
76. Davis, interview.
77. Russell, interview; "Report of the Committee to Evaluate the School for Contemporary Studies at Brooklyn College," March 1976, Box: Information Files, #91–021; Folder: BC—Schools—School for Contemporary Studies, Special Collections, Brooklyn College.
78. Ed Quinn and Leonard Kriegal, "How the Dream Was Deferred," *The Nation*, April 7, 1984, 412–414.
79. Albert H. Bowker, oral history conducted by Harriet Niathon, September 6, 1991, Regional Oral History Office, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
80. Martha Weisman, "Legacy of Student Activism at the City College," April 21, 1989, Legacy of Struggle Collection, Box 1, CCNY.
81. Geteles, telephone interview.
82. Laird Cummings and Nanette Funk, "The Closing Door of Open Admissions," *Kingsman*, February 20, 1976.
83. Frank Rich, quoted in Quinn and Kriegal, "How the Dream Was Deferred," 412.
84. Dyer, "Protest and the Politics of Open Admissions," 184.
85. *Closing the Door: The Fight for a College Education*, a film by Ellie Bernstein, c. 1999, CCNY; Kelechi Onwuchekwa, "The Truth behind Open Admissions," *The Paper*, April 2002, Martha Weisman Papers, CCNY.
86. Christian, "City College Saga, Part 2."
87. See Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).