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# Black Power in a "Lily-White" School: The Black Campus Movement at Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota

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BLACK POWER IN A “LILY-WHITE” SCHOOL: THE BLACK CAMPUS MOVEMENT AT  
CONCORDIA COLLEGE IN MOORHEAD, MINNESOTA

by

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Bachelor of Arts, Concordia College, 2014  
Master of Arts, University of North Dakota, 2016

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts

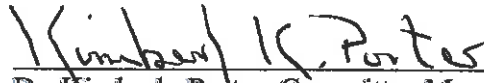
Grand Forks, North Dakota

December  
2016

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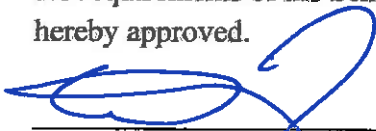


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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BCM	Black Campus Movement
BPM	Black Power Movement
CC	Concordia College
CRM	Civil Rights Movement
OIA	Office of Intercultural Affairs

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To my loving family



## ABSTRACT

Between the mid-1950s and through the 1970s, higher educational institutions throughout the United States underwent reforms in the name of what they termed “integration.” For the colleges and universities in the upper Midwest, these reforms included minority student recruitment and the creation of programs oriented towards diversity. Over time, a number of minority students began to act and react to the actions and attitudes of the various administrations, the campuses, and the community, resulting in a demonstration directly connected to the national phenomenon of “The Black Campus Movement,” (BCM) itself a sub-movement of the larger United States’ Black Power Movement of the mid-twentieth century.

The historiography of the BCM has failed to examine more minor instances of the movement, instead focusing on larger institutions, violent demonstrations, or ones with a large proportion of black students compared to white students. This study expands that historiography by introducing a case-study on a BCM demonstration at Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota. Concordia was and still is a small, four-year liberal arts college with strong ties to Norwegian heritage and the Lutheran religion. In 1976, Concordia underwent a BCM demonstration when more than half of its very small black student population boycotted their classes and presented a list of demands to the administration. This study how and why this demonstration occurred, places Concordia within the larger historiography of the BCM, and provides a narrative account of how two cultures clashed at a small, predominantly white, Lutheran college in the upper Midwest.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

At 10:00 AM on April 5, 1976, an estimated thirty black students marched into the daily chapel service at Concordia College, led by an individual carrying a large red, green and black flag. Having spoken with the group of black students before the demonstration, the campus pastor turned to the assembly and announced a new topic of discussion for that day's service. The black students addressed racial issues that they had heard about, seen, and experienced while at Concordia, and subsequently announced that they would be conducting a boycott of classes that would last until the administration agreed to a list of seventeen demands. This list included performing investigations into racist faculty, establishment of a department of minority studies, appointment of more black personnel and professors, a wider recruitment of black students, and most damning, a call for the Lutheran institution's administration to "abandon its façade of Christianity and face the reality of its corruption." After publicly declaring these demands, the students left the chapel service to a round of light applause and made their way outside to begin the protest.<sup>1</sup>

Concordia College's April 1976 black student demonstration was only one instance in the larger "Black Campus Movement," (BCM) a phenomenon coined by historian Ibram X. Kendi.<sup>2</sup> The BCM emerged primarily out of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, which

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<sup>1</sup> *The Forum* (Fargo, ND-Moorhead, MN), "Thirty Black Students Protest at Concordia," April 5, 1976, 9.

<sup>2</sup> Ibram H. Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement: Black Students and the Racial Reconstitution of Higher Education, 1965-1972* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 3.

opened up institutions of higher education. The movement affected colleges and universities in different ways depending on their location or cultural context. In the southern United States, there was a push for forced desegregation, while in the northern United States, there were often institutionally led pushes for integration and black student recruitment. Before 1967 and 1968, many of the black students on campus attended college either due to athletics or because their parents had a college education, and therefore had a middle-class lifestyle that encouraged the children to attend.<sup>3</sup> Federal policy accelerated this push, resulting in the admission of thousands of black students to traditionally white campuses. Many of these black students came to these institutions with a desire to learn about their heritage and culture as black Americans; instead, they found something completely different. While the administrations of northern institutions wanted to “integrate” their campuses, this meant little more than bringing black students into their colleges and universities and allowing them to use the existing systems in furthering their education.

Black students saw the college’s policy of “integration” as nothing more than a program of assimilation and began to bring forth new ideas that attempted to redefine integration. Instead of assimilation, it would be more akin to pluralism, where the history and culture of black Americans stands equal to others, specifically white history and culture and a place where black voices were treated the same as white voices.<sup>4</sup> In this push for redefinition, black students initially attempted a dialogue with administrators in the creation of these new programs or policies. However, once the administration ignored the initial demands or began to revoke ones they had already made, black students then felt the best course of action was to confront those administrations, with the most extreme of these demonstrations resulting in death such as at

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<sup>3</sup> Martha Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 4.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

South Carolina State and Jackson State.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the BCM was a movement dedicated towards bringing the black power principles of cultural pride, racial solidarity, and black self-determination onto college and university campuses. By the mid-1960s, the BCM began to emerge on historically black colleges and universities, most often in the southern part of the United States. In 1965, black collegians protested against the undue influence that the predominantly white administrations and governing boards had over the various institutions.<sup>6</sup> It did not take long for those same ideas to transfer over to pre-dominantly white institutions.

By the end of the 1960s, the movement had become a national phenomenon. The BCM reached its peak in 1968 and 1969, as nearly two hundred different campuses experienced a black student protest.<sup>7</sup> Three events in 1968 increased the number of BCM protests around the United States. First, a BCM demonstration at South Carolina State University led to the death of three black men, two who were protestors and one high school student who was waiting for his mother to get off of work, an event later termed the “Orangesburg Massacre.”<sup>8</sup> Second, the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. acted as a catalyst for the upsurge in BCM demonstrations, as increasing numbers of black students hoped his death would leap to a catalyst for the introduction of black studies programs. These two events helped solidify the belief that many individuals within white society would not allow blacks to become equal to whites; therefore, it would require black power in order to fulfill that dream. Lastly, the student strike at

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<sup>5</sup> DeVere Edwin Pentony, Robert Smith, and Richard Axen, *Unfinished Rebellions* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1971), 53. According to historian Ibram H. Rogers, the total number of students killed within the Black Campus Movement was thirteen.

<sup>6</sup> Ibram H. Rogers, “The Black Campus Movement: The Case for a New Historiography,” *The Sixties: A Journal of History, Politics and Culture* 4, no. 2 (December 2011): 177, doi:10.1080/17541328.2011.625195; For more information on how the BCM affected historically black colleges and universities, see the chapter entitled “Toward a Black University: Radicalism, Repression, and Reform at Historically Black Colleges,” in Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus*, 142–173.

<sup>7</sup> Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus*, 1.

<sup>8</sup> Ibram H. Rogers, “The Black Campus Movement and the Institutionalization of Black Studies, 1965–1970,” *Journal of African American Studies* 16, no. 1 (2011): 25, doi:10.1007/s12111-011-9173-2.

San Francisco State College, as the first major BCM demonstration, provided an example for black students at other campuses to follow.<sup>9</sup> On these campuses, black students issued demands to the administration. These demands most often included the introduction of black studies departments, increased black recruitment and enrollment, the hiring of more black faculty, more efforts on easing racial tensions, a push for black community support, and the creation of black student centers on campus.<sup>10</sup> This last event provided the largest impetus for the growth of the BCM, as black students now had an example to follow that resulted in changes.

After 1969, the BCM began to rapidly decline. By the opening of the fall semester in 1970, most of the demonstrations had ended, either resulting in massive changes or failure.<sup>11</sup> Many institutions began multicultural programs or black studies departments, accelerated black student recruitment efforts, and provided additional resources for black students already on the campus. However, some institutions experienced little administrative or policy changes that stemmed from a BCM demonstration due to administrative backlash. This backlash often exacerbated existing tensions between the administrations and black students who called for change. Instead, most of the students were in a defensive stance, attempting to sustain the programs and policies from budget cuts or administrative backlash that their demands had created.<sup>12</sup> Other institutions experienced BCM demonstrations after 1973, including Concordia College in 1976. Some of the last protests occurred in 1980, when black students at Purdue and Northwestern issued a list of

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<sup>9</sup> William H. Orrick, *Shut It Down!: A College in Crisis: San Francisco State College, October 1968-April 1969: A Report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), 2.

<sup>10</sup> William H. Exum, *Paradoxes of Protest: Black Student Activism in a White University* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1985), 125–126.

<sup>11</sup> Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement*, 103.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

demands to their respective administrators.<sup>13</sup> Still, it is important to understand the impact of the black students who decided to demand changes at their colleges and universities. According to historian Ibram X. Kendi, around 25% of the total black student population actively participated in the demonstrations, while another 25% of the black student population were sympathetic to the protestors or their ideas, supporting them in word or deed.<sup>14</sup> Of the various strains of the Black Power Movement (BPM), such as the Black Arts Movement or any particular organization, it has been argued that the BCM had the largest impact on society, since it helped create the vast majority of multicultural classes/programs and black studies departments in the United States.<sup>15</sup>

The historical study of the BCM first emerged in the wider study of the Black Power Movement (BPM). For most Civil Rights and Black Power scholars before the 1990s, the BPM represented the antithesis to the Civil Rights Movement (CRM). In this historiographical phase, scholars characterized the CRM as being full of peaceful demonstrations, compromise, and a movement based in love ending in success. When they referenced the BPM, scholars often characterized the movement with violent actions, separatist attitudes, and as a movement based in hatred and defeat.<sup>16</sup> This history hinged itself on one-dimensional, caricatured symbols of the movement, including Stokely Carmichael's initial call for Black Power, the gun-toting and beret-wearing Black Panthers, and some of the more frightening phrases from Malcolm X's speeches and written works. Although some BPM and BCM scholars operated outside this

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<sup>13</sup> Exum, *Paradoxes of Protest*, 3.

<sup>14</sup> Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement*, 85.

<sup>15</sup> Ibram H. Rogers, "The Marginalization of the Black Campus Movement," *Journal of Social History* 42, no. 1 (2008): 176.

<sup>16</sup> For some of the more prominent examples, see the following: Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (Toronto; New York: Bantam Books, 1987); Hugh Pearson, *The Shadow of the Panther: Huey Newton and the Price of Black Power in America* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1995).

framework, it was not until the publication of William L. Van Deburg's *New Day in Babylon* in 1992 that the modern phase of BPM historiography commenced, and subsequently allowed for the later emergence of a distinct BCM historiography.

Whereas before 1992 the primary focus of BPM historiography had been on the political, *New Day in Babylon* encouraged scholars to view the movement more as a cultural phenomenon. For Van Deburg, the only way to accurately define "Black Power" was as an umbrella term that connects the vast amount of applications within a cultural format.<sup>17</sup> In his definition of Black Power as a cultural movement, Van Deburg broadened the research scope of the BPM away from just political histories of the events, organizations, and individuals. For Van Deburg, the most profitable research was situated within the realm of cultural expressions.<sup>18</sup> These expressions included language, arts such as literature and theater, and other cultural markers of African American identity.<sup>19</sup> In addition, *New Day in Babylon* changed the historiographical relationship between CRM and the BPM. For Van Deburg, the effects of the CRM were present in the passing of legislation focused on black integration into existing white systems, while the BPM had the effect of building and strengthening an intangible and distinct black culture.<sup>20</sup> Most importantly, *New Day in Babylon* showed that the most important aspect of the BPM and a burgeoning black culture was that it challenged the long-standing and dominant white American social and cultural value system.<sup>21</sup> It is due to *New Day in Babylon* that a nuanced and intensive historical study of the BCM is possible.

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<sup>17</sup> William L. Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and American Culture, 1965-1975* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 9–10.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>20</sup> Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon*, 304.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 308.

BPM scholars utilized Van Deburg's ideas to further the historical understanding of the movement, which created a distinct subfield that historian Peniel E. Joseph termed "Black Power Studies."<sup>22</sup> This new subfield focused heavily on local and regional studies at first, which helped turn it from a one-dimensional field fixated on national figures into a more nuanced and complex area of study. By first exploring the more regional and localized movements, historians were able to form a new definition of black power. Instead of viewing it as the antithesis to the CRM, scholars saw the BPM as a movement that supported three main ideas: racial solidarity, cultural pride, and the right to black self-determination.<sup>23</sup> Later, nationalized studies on the movement thrived alongside more local studies, and the spectrum of studies soon ranged from the political and economic, to the social and the cultural. Most importantly, these localized studies allowed historians to understand exactly how individuals modified the idea of black power to fit their geographic and cultural circumstances, while also allowing the reactions to black power be understood in all of their complexities.<sup>24</sup>

The surge in Black Power Studies did not immediately translate into a swell of scholarship on the BCM. As BCM historian Ibram X. Kendi found, the historiography on the BPM marginalized the actions and effects that students had on influencing society in the 1960s

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<sup>22</sup> Peniel E. Joseph, "The Black Power Movement: A State of the Field," *Journal of American History* 96, no. 3 (2009): 752. Joseph, who is the foremost scholar in the field of Black Power Studies, provides within this article a detailed exploration of major works and themes in the historiography.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 755.

<sup>24</sup> For examples of these more localized studies, the author recommends the following: Peniel E. Joseph, ed., *Neighborhood Rebels: Black Power and the Local Level* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); William Henry Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981); Robyn Ceanne Spencer, "Engendering the Black Freedom Struggle: Revolutionary Black Womanhood and the Black Panther Party in the Bay Area, California," *Journal of Women's History* 20, no. 1 (2008): 90–113. For even more examples, see the footnotes from: Joseph, "The Black Power Movement."



and 1970s, if it mentioned it at all.<sup>25</sup> Instead, the majority of research on the black campus phenomenon was published in studies dedicated solely to understanding how black students attempted to change the higher education institutions they attended. In order to fully understand how black power was utilized in the 1960s and 1970s, it requires additions to the historiography. To be even more specific, it requires the investigation of how students took up principles of black power in order to enact changes on their campus.

The historiography that deals specifically with the BCM revolves around two main types of works: single-institution and generalized. As it stands currently, the historiography of the BCM consists mostly of these single-institution studies. These works examine how a specific BCM movement unfolded on a particular campus, often exploring how the black students utilized notions of black power in their attempt to remake the campus. These sorts of studies first emerged in the wake of the black student protest at San Francisco State College in 1968-1969.<sup>26</sup> Similar case studies were undertaken throughout the rest of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but often focused on the more violent demonstrations or unique instances, like the demonstration at Cornell.<sup>27</sup> The second type focuses on more generalized studies of the BCM. A number of these works emerged quickly after the height of the BCM in 1969, but the amount dwindled down by 1980, with only a few studies undertaken until the 2010s. However, these generalized works, most notably *Black Power and Student Rebellion* by James McEvoy and Abraham Miller and *Blacker than Thou* by

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<sup>25</sup> Rogers, "The Marginalization of the Black Campus Movement," 175; The following works consist of some of the works on the BPM that Rogers lambasts for marginalizing the BCM: Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2006); Komozi Woodard, *A Nation Within a Nation: Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) and Black Power Politics* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar, *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).

<sup>26</sup> For instance, see: Dikran Karagueuzian, *Blow It Up! The Black Student Revolt at San Francisco State and the Emergence of Dr. Hayakawa* (Boston: Gambit, 1971); Orrick, *Shut It Down!*

<sup>27</sup> Cornell had an extremely violent demonstration, resulting in an armed takeover of a campus building. For more information see: Donald Alexander Downs, *Cornell '69: Liberalism and the Crisis of the American University* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999).

George Napper, set the foundations of the BCM historiography, even if the works were more journalistic than historical.<sup>28</sup>

In the 2000s, the scholarship on the BCM began to flourish again due to a variety of reasons. First, the individuals situated in the academy were both able to and interested in performing rigorous study on the various movements. This included a number of individuals who had either participated in the movements, or benefited from the movement and its demands. Second, Van Deburg's ideas on the BPM being a cultural movement had become widely disseminated, argued, and cemented within the field of BPM historiography.<sup>29</sup> Lastly, the first of the BCM movements had occurred over thirty years before, and it seemed to historians to be removed enough to examine not only what happened in the BCM, but also measure and understand its outcomes. With these new circumstances, scholarship on the BCM expanded dramatically particularly in the matter of single institution case studies.

These BCM works from the 2000s did little to advance ideas or arguments within the field; instead, they created a framework where historians could create high quality case studies on the events at a single institution. Three works established this framework: Joy Ann Williamson's *Black Power on Campus*; Wayne Glasker's *Black Students in the Ivory Tower*; and Stefan Bradley's *Harlem Versus Columbia*. Williamson's *Black Power on Campus* investigated the black student protest at The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Overall, the work focused on understanding how the black student demonstration forced the institution to enact

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<sup>28</sup> James J. McEvoy and Abraham Miller, *Black Power and Student Rebellion* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1969); George Napper, *Black Than Thou: The Struggle for Campus Unity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1973).

<sup>29</sup> For examples of the importance of Van Deburg's work, see: Ogbar, *Black Power*; Woodard, *A Nation Within a Nation*; Joseph, *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour*. Woodard's work on the Black Arts Movement provides some of the closest work to Van Deburg's, but both Ogbar and Joseph can clearly be seen incorporating the cultural aspects of black power in their works, each of which are important to the BPM historiography.

changes in order to appease the protestors. More importantly, Williamson examined how the student protestors began to debate the principles of black power in the course of their endeavors, including racial solidarity, cultural pride, and self-determination.<sup>30</sup> For Williamson, black power was not naturally embedded in the minds of black students; instead, students fiercely debated black power amongst themselves before acting upon those ideas.

In addition to Williamson's work, Wayne Glasker added to the creation of a high quality BCM case study framework. In *Black Students in the Ivory Tower*, Glasker investigated the BCM protest at the University of Pennsylvania. Heavily influenced by Van Deburg, Glasker's study focused heavily on how black students pushed for the cultural pride component of black power at the university. According to Glasker, black students initially came into a system demarcated by integration and assimilation at the university; over time, those same students became increasingly aware of how the institution both purposefully and inadvertently ignored black culture in their classrooms and black ideas in their programming. Therefore, what is important to understand for any BCM case study is not only how black students utilized black power principles, but also to know how the institution attempted to fulfill its new mission of black student integration while simultaneously keeping the more radical ideas of the BCM protestors under control.<sup>31</sup> In essence, Glasker's work demonstrated that any case study needs to understand the role the administration played in a BCM demonstration.

Lastly, in *Harlem Versus Columbia*, Stephen Bradley explored the BCM demonstration on Columbia's campus. In his study, Bradley followed many of the same conventions that Glasker and Williamson did earlier in the decade. In addition, he also provided an important expansion to

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<sup>30</sup> Joy Ann Williamson, *Black Power on Campus: The University of Illinois, 1965-75* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 1–35.

<sup>31</sup> Wayne Glasker, *Black Students in the Ivory Tower: African American Student Activism at the University of Pennsylvania, 1967-1990* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), 1–9, 173–174.

the BCM case study framework by including a heavy focus on black student-white student relationships.<sup>32</sup> Through his exploration, Bradley argued that one must understand how the ideas and actions of white students on campus affected the BCM demonstration at an institution. These three works created the basic framework for any future BCM single institution case study to follow: it must explore how black students understood and utilized the ideas of black power, understand the beliefs and actions of the administrations, and it must investigate how white student reactions affected the demonstrations, as well as their aftermath.

Generalized studies on the BCM returned to the historiography with the publication of two different works in 2012: Martha Biondi's *The Black Revolution on Campus*, and; Ibram X. Kendi's *The Black Campus Movement*. Biondi's work took from a variety of case studies in her compare-and-contrast approach to understand how the various black student protests affected the institutional culture.<sup>33</sup> Meanwhile, Kendi's work brought together existing research with massive amounts of original research in order to find trends and patterns within the larger BCM phenomena. For Kendi, it was important to understand specific similarities between the demands and actions of the students as well as the institution's actions.<sup>34</sup> Most importantly, Kendi's work was one of the first to provide an examination on how the BCM operated at rural liberal arts colleges and institutions in the northern Midwest, however cursory that treatment may have been.<sup>35</sup> Even though Kendi's work is the first to delve into these sorts of institutions, the work is too broad. In creating a generalized work, Kendi provided limited information on the smaller

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<sup>32</sup> Stefan M. Bradley, *Harlem vs. Columbia University: Black Student Power in the Late 1960s* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009).

<sup>33</sup> Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus*, 3.

<sup>34</sup> Ibram X. Kendi (formerly Ibram H. Rogers), *The Black Campus Movement: Black Students and the Racial Reconstitution of Higher Education, 1965-1972* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 1-4.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 6. Although it makes no mention of Concordia College, the work does reference the University of North Dakota multiple times, an institution that is situated only seventy miles north of Concordia College.

campuses, even though researcher Anthony Orum found that the BCM was more extensive in counties with a small number of black residents.<sup>36</sup> As it stands currently, there is a gap in the historiography that needs to be investigated.

When compared to the other campuses in the BCM historiography, the events at Concordia College are rather unique, and thus stand apart from the rest in some regards. As Nella Van Dyke has observed from researching black student protests, a BCM demonstration was more likely to occur at institutions where there was a large student body, where the requirements for admission made the institution more selective, and where the college had a history of student activism.<sup>37</sup> While Concordia met Van Dyke's second condition of selectivity, it did not fulfill the other two major reasons for causation. For one, the institution had a small student body, especially when considering the amount of black students at the campus and in the wider community. At Concordia in the year of the demonstration, the institution had only fifty-seven black American students within its student body of nearly 2,400.<sup>38</sup> Scaling back further, the institution is located in Moorhead, Minnesota, which itself is situated across the state boundary from Fargo, North Dakota. At the time of the demonstration, the two cities had a very small black population. In 1970, the census found the black population composing only .8% of the population in Fargo, and only .9% of the total population in Moorhead.<sup>39</sup> Lastly, the institution itself is a four-year, liberal

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<sup>36</sup> Anthony M. Orum, *Black Students in Protest: A Study of the Origins of the Black Student Movement*, Arnold and Caroline Rose Monograph Series (Washington, D.C.: American Sociological Association, 1972), 13.

<sup>37</sup> Nella Van Dyke, "The Location of Student Protest: Patterns of Activism at American Universities in the 1960s," in *Student Protest: The Sixties and After*, by Gerard J. De Groot (Oxford; New York: Routledge, 1998), 27–36.

<sup>38</sup> "Black American Students, 1975-1976," File 2, Box 10, Student Lists, 1971-1981, Student Affairs, Record Group 17; Office of Intercultural Affairs, Series 2; Subject Files, 1968-2005, Subseries 3, Concordia College Archives, Carl B. Ylvisaker Library, Concordia College, Moorhead, Minnesota (hereafter referred to as Subject Files, OIA Collection).

<sup>39</sup> United States Census Bureau, *U.S. Census of Population: Characteristics of the Population: North Dakota* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1973), 35; United States Census Bureau, *U.S. Census of Population: Characteristics of the Population: Minnesota* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1973), 64.

arts school, which had a strong relationship and affiliation with the American Lutheran Church, now part of the larger Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. The question then arises on how and why a BCM demonstration occurred in such a strange location.

As Shirletta Kinchen noted, the BPM is not a “monolithic movement” where the actions and results can easily be seen through one specific lens.<sup>40</sup> The same should be said about the BCM. Every BCM demonstration was unique for each took place in a specific culture, context, institution, student body, and community; however, there are similarities and generalizations that connect them all as well. In order to advance the historiography, the field requires an injection of localized research, best formatted as case studies. A localized study allows a historian to investigate how local issues, geography, and cultural context shaped both the black students’ demonstrations and the administrations’ responses. Additionally, it permits the historian to see how individuals and institutions understood and utilized various principles in their actions, whether this was black power or religious belief. Lastly, a localized study results in an in-depth analysis of a particular BCM event, which in turn can be utilized more efficiently by future historians or social movement scholars who wish to find trends between campuses.<sup>41</sup>

Although the primary focus of the research is to fill a gap in the historiography, it also means to highlight the power and influence a small group of students can have on a campus. Before the influx of black students to Concordia in 1967, the college had very little contact with students of a different race. However, after 1967, these newly arrived individuals began to challenge a system that they saw as discriminatory and racist, and, in some ways, succeeded greatly. Even though this particular study only focuses on a single institution in northwestern Minnesota, it

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<sup>40</sup> Shirletta J. Kinchen, “Reviewing the Revolt: Moving Toward a Historiography of the Black Campus Movement,” *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 7, no. 1 (June 2014): 120.

<sup>41</sup> Joseph, *Neighborhood Rebels*, 1–12. Joseph provides a lengthy discussion of the importance of local studies.

does not diminish the impact that these students had on their campus. Due to the actions of these passionate black students, Concordia's administration and student body were shown a culture rather different from their own, and got to know people with different life experiences and ideas. This in turn resulted in Concordia becoming a more progressive institution, one that expanded on its previous notions of what education meant. This push towards multiculturalism and pluralism is something to be acknowledged and applauded.

In order to fulfill these purposes, the research utilizes a case study approach to understand how Concordia College embraced the ideas of integration, and how the subsequent BCM and black power ideas in turn affected their structures and their identities. Since there is very little current scholarship on the events, any in-depth study on this topic will require including a narrative history of the events. At its core, however, the research is a social history project. It heavily focuses on showing the creation, actions, and consequences of a black, student-led social movement on the higher educational institutions and their pre-dominantly white administrators and student populations. When necessary, the work also incorporates intellectual history, as it is essential to understand how these black students understood and debated the ideas of black power, pluralism, and integration at Concordia. Educational history is fundamental to understanding the phenomenon as well, for it allows one to see how these various institutions operated in an increasingly turbulent time for higher education, as well as how these same institutions attempted to keep their core identities intact while also moving towards a more student-driven system.

The project utilized various sources in the investigation of the background to and events of Concordia's BCM protest. The most important of these came from Concordia's archives. These sources were rather diverse: letters, college records, syllabi, student works, institutional

publications, proposals, speeches, and reports to name the most common types. Critical to the research was the institution's student newspaper, *The Concordian*. The work also includes various government documents and contemporary publications, many of which helped evolve or modify the ideas regarding integration and identity at the time. Lastly, there are a few secondary sources that give necessary and useful information about the institution, either in general terms or on the lives of black students in particular. These include historian Carroll Engelhardt's *On Firm Foundation Grounded*, which is an institutional history of Concordia College from its founding until 1991.<sup>42</sup> In addition, Arnold Cooper wrote an article for *Minnesota History* investigating a recruitment program run by another higher educational institution in the town, Moorhead State College.<sup>43</sup> While these two works were valuable in opening new avenues of research and providing community context, they understandably pay little attention to the events at Concordia that led to the black student protest of April 1976.

The research organizes itself into four chapters, with an additional introduction and brief conclusion bookending the work. The second chapter sets up the context of Concordia, beginning at its origins and quickly continuing through the arrival of its first black student in the late 1950s. By the 1960s, national changes in educational ideas and trends pushed colleges and universities to bring increasing numbers of black students onto their campuses, all in the name of integration. Although internal factors began the push for integration, Concordia's push for the recruitment of black students came after a number of events in 1968. The large influx of black students in the fall of 1968, coupled with the large-scale crusade of BCM protestors at other campuses, led to an outbreak of racial tensions at the campus. Faced with black student dissent

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<sup>42</sup> Carroll Engelhardt, *On Firm Foundation Grounded: The First Century of Concordia College (1891-1991)* (Moorhead, MN: Concordia College, 1991).

<sup>43</sup> Arnold Cooper, "Beyond the Threshold: Black Students at Moorhead State College, 1968-1972," *Minnesota History* 51, no. 1 (Spring 1988): 22-33.



and the possibility of a BCM demonstration on their own campus, Concordia administrators implemented a number of programs and resources to make newly arrived black students feel more welcomed at the campus.

The third chapter focuses on the growth of black student discord at Concordia, which grew in the years following 1969. This resulted in the development of more racial tensions between black students and the college administration, as well as between black students and some white students at Concordia. In the fall semester of 1973, black students became the victims of harassment and threats by a small number of white students on campus. Once again faced with racial tensions on campus, the administration failed to act sufficiently, or at least that was the perception of its black students. These attacks, coupled with dwindling support from the administration, caused many of Concordia's black students to take up the self-determination, racial pride, and black solidarity principles of the BCM and BPM in order to enact changes on their campus. This push for black power on Concordia's campus resulted in the black student strike of April 1976.

A narrative account of the strike constitutes a majority of the fourth chapter. It examines how the strike began, how it unfolded, and how it ended only a week later. Additionally, the chapter characterizes the strike compared to other BCM protests, with a particular focus on the purpose of the strike, the demands presented, and the structure of the strike. Although a relatively short chapter, it firmly entrenches the demonstration at Concordia into the wider phenomenon of BCM protests, most of which ended nearly seven years earlier.

The fifth chapter picks up the narrative after the protest, directing the attention away from black students and onto the administration. The chapter revolves around the idea of "counterrevolution," or the push against BCM demands and issues. The administrators of

Concordia College, directed by the president of the institution, reacted to these demands immediately after the protest began. The institution balanced the demands of the students with their ideas of what the institution should provide, which effectively created a system where only small-scale or diluted changes occurred at the campus. Administrative reaction to the black student strike of April 1976 resulted in only minor changes to the campus, many of which safeguarded the institution from undergoing a similar demonstration in the following years.

In essence, the research into Concordia and its black student population fills a gap in the historiography of the BCM. Whereas many prior studies focused on large institutions, institutions with a large black student population, or those with particularly violent demonstrations, Concordia College provides an example of a peaceful BCM protest at a small, predominantly white, liberal arts institution in the northwest corner of Minnesota. At the same time, it shows that the BCM is not solely tied to the demonstrations and protests; instead, it must be understood as an evolving phenomenon, where black students and administrators clashed over time, ultimately resulting in a coordinated act of student defiance. There are also numerous secondary purposes to the research. The project explores why the higher educational institutions of the predominately white areas located in the northern Midwest decided to spend resources to integrate their campuses. It also explores how newly arrived black students responded to their new environment, as well as how white students responded to these newly arrived black students. Between 1969 and 1976, many black students on Concordia's campus began to see deeper issues with the institution, and began to take up certain black power principles in an attempt to change the system. When these students began to perceive that the administration of Concordia did not care about its black students anymore, the protest erupted. At its core, the research is an

exploration in the clashing of identities, whether it is black student identity, collegiate identity, or white student identity.

The April 1976 black student protest ended a week after it began, with the black student protestors unanimously voting to end the strike. Harold Pope, the spokesperson for the strike, stated that the administrators of Concordia had “shown good faith” in their dealings with the students, and that the next step was to put trust in the administration keeping their promise.<sup>44</sup> The demonstration’s length or intensity is unremarkable when compared to the violent, months-long protests of other institutions. Instead, its significance comes from the fact that the protest came years after the height of the wider BCM, and that it provides an example of how black power principles emerged in such an unlikely spot. Most importantly though, is the fact that the black students’ push for pluralism at Concordia deeply affected the lives of the people and the collegiate culture for years to come.

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<sup>44</sup> *The Forum* (Fargo, ND-Moorhead, MN), “Black Students End Strike,” April 13, 1976, 1-2.

## CHAPTER II

### CONCORDIA'S PUSH FOR INTEGRATION, 1968-1969

In 1969, Paul E. Wisdom and Kenneth A. Shaw argued that the majority of American colleges and universities did not understand how their institutions actually operated. The two argued that most institutions could only provide students an experience in white education, one “based on white history, white tradition, white culture, white customs, and white thinking.”<sup>45</sup> In order to combat this bias, institutions would not only have to heavily recruit black students, but also modify the curriculum to include more opportunities for students to learn about different histories, traditions, cultures, customs, and patterns of thinking. Concordia College, originally a haven for the preservation of a white culture, began implementing programs in order to recruit black students. Beginning in 1957, the push for increased black student enrollment at Concordia was on an incredibly small scale. This push came mainly from national events, especially the events of the Civil Rights Movement in the southern United States. In 1968, forces outside of Concordia’s campus put more stress on the importance of integration, and Concordia responded by bringing in increasing numbers of black students. At the same time, other institutions began experiencing a push by black students to include more curriculums, programs, and resources that are relevant to or needed by the minority populations of the college. When the administrations of those institutions refused or worked too slowly on meeting those requests, black students began

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<sup>45</sup> Paul E. Wisdom and Kenneth A. Shaw, “Black Challenge to Higher Education,” *Educational Record* 50, no. 4 (1969): 352–353.

to protest, resulting in the widespread BCM phenomenon. Concordia officials, aware of these BCM demonstrations as well as racial tensions on their own campus, began advancing programs and policies that the black students claimed were necessary to create a more pluralistic campus environment. By the end of 1969, the institution had instituted changes on campus that would attempt to make black students content with their life on campus, as well as passed regulations that would safeguard the institution from a radical or violent BCM demonstration occurring later at Concordia.

Concordia College originally began as an institution designed to preserve a culture that was seen as being under attack by more mainstream institutions and ideas. Norwegian laity and pastors founded the institution in October of 1890 and situated the campus in the growing community of Moorhead, Minnesota. Originally a private academy, the school's purpose was to be an institution that would sustain Norwegian culture and Norwegian-Lutheran ideas. This move was deemed necessary to defend the continued existence of their culture in what they saw as an educational system being increasingly controlled by "Yankees," who wanted to assimilate immigrants into the American system.<sup>46</sup> Consequently, from the very beginning, Concordia had identified itself as an institution where different cultures and histories were able to survive, if not thrive. The school continued its mission to educate, and finally received formal accreditation in 1927.<sup>47</sup> Over time, the institution moved further and further away from its sole purpose of preserving Norwegian and Lutheran culture, often by enrolling students that did not fall into these categories. By the 1950s, Concordia was recognized as a prominent higher educational institution in northwest Minnesota, and followed suit when other, similar institutions began to push forth measures that would integrate the campus by inviting black students to attend.

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<sup>46</sup> Engelhardt, *On Firm Foundation Grounded*, 21.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

The push for integration practices emerged during the 1950s and 1960s, largely due to the advances of the Civil Rights Movement in the fight against desegregation. Before the 1950s, black students were a rare occurrence on pre-dominantly white college or university campuses, including in the northern United States. In 1939, less than 5,000 black students attended a predominantly white institution outside of the south. Fifteen years later, the number had reached 45,000, and by the 1970s, that number reached 95,000 students.<sup>48</sup> The reason for this increase in the black student population was the turn towards integration. Historian Martha Biondi found that most institutions saw integration, or the bringing of black students to white campuses, as a benefit, no matter the type or structure of the institution.<sup>49</sup> Integration policies would not only let black students receive an education, but it also made the institutions more appealing to students who wanted to meet individuals of different cultures and learn from them, and in turn made the institution look better in the public eye. In addition, federal policy encouraged the increased enrollments of black students, especially with the passing of the Higher Education Act of 1965, which created the Work Study Program, Education Opportunity Grants, and the Guaranteed Student Loan Program.<sup>50</sup> Armed with both the ways and means, institutions could now begin processes of integration.

Although the idea of integration resulted in the increase of more black students on college campuses, institutions differed in their approaches to increasing the black student population on their respective campuses. Marvin W. Peterson, a scholar of higher educational administrations, found that institutions fell into one of six main categories when analyzed in terms of integration

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<sup>48</sup> Christopher J. Lucas, *American Higher Education: A History*, First Edition (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 240–242.

<sup>49</sup> Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus*, 275.

<sup>50</sup> Noliwe M. Rooks, *White Money/Black Power: The Surprising History of African American Studies and the Crisis of Race in Higher Education* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), 14.

policy. A school's category depended on where it landed on a two-axis grid, with one axis referencing the scale of recruitment and the other axis referencing the catalyst for the integration process. First, some schools were adaptive, where the administration decided of their own volition to work towards increased black enrollment on a large scale at their respective institutions. Responsive institutions, the second type, referred to schools that independently began small-scale integration of the campuses. Third, reactive institutions undertook large-scale recruitment of black students primarily because of pressure from outside sources. The last type of schools on the axis were evolutionary institutions, who saw outside forces create the push for black students, but the process is done over a long period of time. Furthermore, some schools could exist outside this model, namely if they rejected any changes.<sup>51</sup> The question then arises: in what category does Concordia College fall?

Initially, Concordia College took a responsive approach to integration, where the push for increased black enrollment came from forces inside the institution, but only on a small-scale. This was largely because of its governance structure. As Arnold Cooper found, private colleges and universities had an advantage in enrolling black students to attend their pre-dominantly white campuses since those institutions had more local control over the policies and programs.<sup>52</sup> The private, religious, liberal arts colleges of Minnesota had spent a large part of the 1960s attempting to tie modern ideas with the traditional ideas that created the identity of the college. In this push to modernize their campuses, and backed by the idea of "Christian Love," these

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<sup>51</sup> Marvin W. Peterson, *Black Students on White Campuses: The Impacts of Increased Black Enrollments* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Survey Research Center, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, 1978), 131–132.

<sup>52</sup> Cooper, "Beyond the Threshold: Black Students at Moorhead State College, 1968-1972," 24.

institutions began creating and initiating diversity programs in the 1960s.<sup>53</sup> Concordia was no different in this regard. Joseph L. Knutson, who held the presidency of Concordia from 1951 to 1975, believed that there were two main reasons why the college's administration and student body should and would bring more black students to the campus: a combination of the love of Christ and his ideas, and white guilt for both past and contemporary actions against black Americans.<sup>54</sup> This resulted in the admission of the first black student at Concordia's campus in 1957, Richard Green.<sup>55</sup> At the same time, the size of Concordia also affected its integration policies. Concordia was a small college, with the student body population of around 2,000 individuals at the time. Therefore, it did not have many internal resources to put towards the large-scale recruitment of black students, who often came from the Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota area or even further. Without additional resources, the process of integration at Concordia would remain at a trickle.

The process of integration at Concordia remained responsive for almost the next decade, but federal government policy changes in the mid-1960s allowed the college's administration to accelerate these programs. The college did not drastically increase its black student enrollment for nearly a decade after 1957. From 1957 to 1967, the first decade of the college's push for integration, Concordia enrolled only eleven black students.<sup>56</sup> However, the passage of the Higher Education Act of 1965 provided a large amount of federal aid to institutions in order to enhance their services, especially those geared towards minority students. Under Title III of the act,

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<sup>53</sup> Merrill E. Jarchow, *Private Liberal Arts Colleges in Minnesota: Their History and Contributions* (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1973), 150.

<sup>54</sup> Joseph L. Knutson to Concordia Student, October 23, 1973, File: Demonstrations/Petitions, Subgroup: Topical Files 'D & E', Concordia College Topical Files, Concordia College Archives, Carl B. Ylvisaker Library, Concordia College, Moorhead, Minnesota (hereafter referred to as Demonstrations/Petitions, Topical Files).

<sup>55</sup> Engelhardt, *On Firm Foundation Grounded*, 241.

<sup>56</sup> "Revised Summary of Enrollments, Black Students, Concordia College, 1953-1975," File 2, Box 10, Student Lists, 1971-1981, Subject Files, OIA Collection.



Concordia created an exchange program with two other institutions that would allow both students and faculty to spend a year at a different institution.<sup>57</sup> The exchange program included Concordia College, a pre-dominantly white, rural institution; Virginia Union University in Richmond, Virginia, which was an urban-situated historically black university; and Ft. Lewis College in Durango, Colorado, which had a large Native American student population.<sup>58</sup> However, by the fall of 1968, Concordia changed its integration policy, with the forces for integration increasingly coming from outside the administration.

By 1968, forces outside of Concordia's administration began to stress the importance of higher educational integration, which in turn moved Concordia away from being a responsive institution into a reactive one. Whereas before the federal government simply provided funds for institutions which wanted to integrate, the publication of the Kerner Report signaled that the federal government would now actively push for integration. The Kerner Commission, created by United States President Lyndon Baines Johnson in 1967 and headed by Illinois Governor Otto Kerner, spent a year investigating the causes of black rioting in various cities over the past two years. The commission's findings, published as the *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*, or more colloquially as the "Kerner Report," argued that the reasons for the rioting revolved around white racism. The report stated that it was the "insidious and pervasive white sense of the inferiority of black men" that led a large number of black individuals to begin violent actions in the cities of Newark, Los Angeles, and Detroit.<sup>59</sup> In addition, the report found that the reasons for the rise of black power ideas, specifically black self-determination, was because black individuals felt alienated by the institutions and by the overwhelmingly white

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<sup>57</sup> Jarchow, *Private Liberal Arts Colleges in Minnesota*, 221.

<sup>58</sup> Engelhardt, *On Firm Foundation Grounded*, 273.

<sup>59</sup> United States National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders and Tom Wicker, *The Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (New York; Toronto: Bantam Books, 1968), VII.

society that many black individuals felt controlled them.<sup>60</sup> In order to avoid any possible future outbreaks of violence or rioting, the commission pushed for changes throughout society, including in the postsecondary educational system; what was needed would be increased federal funding in order to get over the financial obstacles that limited many qualified black applicants.<sup>61</sup> While the commission's recommendations went unanswered, the ideas of the report influenced many administrations in the collegiate system.

In addition, the arguments for increased integration came from the religious element of Concordia's system, which placed even more stress on increasing the black student population on campus. In April of 1968, the American Lutheran Church, the religious organization affiliated with Concordia, created "Program: Summer Hope." The program asked pastors to speak on the state of race relations and minority concerns in the both the United States and in their own communities.<sup>62</sup> With this proclamation, the American Lutheran Church made a statement that it was concerned about the state of race relations in the United States, and that it would work towards fixing those issues. By the end of the year, ordained minister in the United Church of Christ and scholar in religious ethics Joseph C. Hough, Jr. published a work that tied together black power, civil rights, and protestant belief. *Black Power and White Protestants: A Christian Response to the New Negro Pluralism* argued that white Protestants had long felt that race relations in the United States ought to improve; however, those same individuals had done little to address these issues. His work pushed Protestants to become more active in the fight for not only civil rights and integration, but also in the fight for a more pluralistic society.<sup>63</sup> Concordia

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 205.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 452–456.

<sup>62</sup> *The Concordian*, "Program Roots Out Injustice, Racism," April 5, 1968, 4.

<sup>63</sup> Joseph C. Hough, Jr., *Black Power and White Protestants: A Christian Response to the New Negro Pluralism* (New York; London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 201.

followed the national trend in the late 1960s, recruiting and enrolling more black students while simultaneously creating resources for newly arrived black students. By the fall of 1968, the institution had twenty-six black American students enrolled in classes, along with black admission representatives, a student scholarship committee for non-white students, and a modified faculty-advising program for newly arrived black students.<sup>64</sup>

The increase of the black student population on Concordia's campus often resulted in tensions between black students and their new environment. As Martha Biondi, historian of the BCM, found, there was a common misconception that the north was more racially tolerant than the south; often, black students came to northern institutions and found widespread discrimination and racism.<sup>65</sup> Concordia attempted to make sure black students were aware of this phenomenon. Jim Hausmann, who was the Vice President of Admissions at Concordia during this time, later stated that he regularly told prospective black students that "Concordia is a lily-white school in a totally white community and you will be subjected to discrimination and treated as an oddity or novelty."<sup>66</sup> Most of the white students at Concordia came from areas with little or no black populations, with their only connection with black society being through books or other media. When these white students finally came to college and came face-to-face with someone of a different race and different culture, they often brought with them ideas that were discriminatory and outright racist.

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<sup>64</sup> Engelhardt, *On Firm Foundation Grounded*, 273.

<sup>65</sup> Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus*, 15.

<sup>66</sup> Jim Hausmann, interview by Lee Goldstrand, [1993?], quoted in Lee Goldstrand, "Concordia's Recruitment of African American Students," 1993, Box 34, Student Publications, Record Group 16; Miscellaneous Student Writings, 1939-2010; Writings about Concordia, 1959-1960, 1971, 1994-1997, 2010, Concordia College Archives, Carl B. Ylvisaker Library, Concordia College, Moorhead, Minnesota (hereafter referred to as Writings about Concordia).

In 1968, a number of stories in the school newspaper revealed to the newly-arrived black students and their allies that racist ideas clearly existed on Concordia's campus. *The Concordian* published a study of Concordia College freshman and found that 12% of those surveyed, or about one-in-eight, believed that marriage between two people of different races was not only wrong, but "against God's will." In addition, the study found that the more intimate somebody was with a person of a different race, the more likely that the sample population saw the relationship as unacceptable. On the other hand, the study found that people's ideas on race were more progressive or tolerant the more a person interacted with people of a different race.<sup>67</sup> Another story appeared in September, lambasting the students of Concordia for their racist beliefs. Having heard fellow classmates make statements such as "I'm not prejudiced, but I'd just as soon not have them coming up here," or "Whenever three or four Negroes get together, they revert to their tribal instincts," the students who had gone to Virginia Union on the exchange program believed that Concordia students were close-minded, if not outright racist.<sup>68</sup> In the same issue, one of the students who had gone to Virginia Union the previous spring, Terry Hokenson, wrote a letter to the editor noting that he felt like an outcast at Concordia now, as his experiences in Richmond radically changed his perspective on life. Upon returning to Concordia, he was disappointed to see that most people at the college did not feel the same way, leaving him with a sense of alienation and isolation.<sup>69</sup> To black students and their allies, the environment at Concordia was not what they had expected nor wanted.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Beth Baily, "Survey Reveals Surprising Attitudes," *The Concordian*, February 16, 1968, 1.

<sup>68</sup> Colleen Myers, "Cobber Inertia Invokes Returnees' Hostility," *The Concordian*, September 13, 1968, 8.

<sup>69</sup> Terry Hokenson, letter to the editor, *The Concordian*, September 20, 1968, 2.

<sup>70</sup> An interesting question to ask is who these black individuals were that came to Concordia, especially in terms of religion. As mentioned in the text, Concordia had a large emphasis on Lutheran ideals, but no archival sources exist that illuminate the religious beliefs of Concordia's black students. The same question exists for a number of different characteristics, including gender and class, not to mention those black individuals who were not

Concordia's newly arrived black students quickly realized that the administration was not going to easily submit to the introduction of curricular changes and new programs. What these students found was that their ideas of integration were completely different from those of the administration. As Wayne Glasker argued, it did not take long for black students and their allies to realize that when white administrator's used the term "integration," what they really meant was assimilation.<sup>71</sup> Nationwide, a large number of black students began to believe that white institutions, such as colleges and universities, helped strip black society of their cultural identity; therefore, the best way to remedy this was to begin offering classes that highlighted black culture.<sup>72</sup> Harold Cruse, who published *Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* in 1967, publicized this idea that black society had to take control of cultural institutions like schools in order to provide an avenue for the growth of black consciousness.<sup>73</sup> Very few historically white colleges and universities had courses that black students felt a direct connection to, since a large number of scholars believed that black Americans lacked a distinct culture.<sup>74</sup> This was the case even though black consciousness had been growing ever since the work of post-Reconstruction Era black historians, as well as cultural movements such as the Harlem Renaissance and the ideas of Marcus Garvey. However, the 1960s had seen another push towards legitimizing black culture, especially with the work of Amiri Baraka and the Black Arts Movement. Armed with black culture and history that they wanted to learn, black students began to petition higher educational institutions to start offering classes that would be more relevant to them.

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American, but foreign exchange students. Further research into the BCM at Concordia and at any other institution needs to address these ideas.

<sup>71</sup> Glasker, *Black Students in the Ivory Tower*, 179.

<sup>72</sup> Julie A. Reuben, "Reforming the University: Student Protests and the Demand for a 'Relevant' Curriculum," in *Student Protest: The Sixties and After*, by Gerard J. De Groot (Oxford; New York: Routledge, 1998), 157.

<sup>73</sup> Peniel E. Joseph, "Dashikis and Democracy: Black Studies, Student Activism, and the Black Power Movement," *The Journal of African American History* 88, no. 2 (2003): 193, doi:10.2307/3559065.

<sup>74</sup> Kendi, *The Black Campus Movement*, 89.

The BCM attacked a variety of issues that black students found to be problematic in their assessment of college campuses. Ibram X. Kendi argued that the BCM was an attack against four different trends at these sorts of institutions. The first, the struggle against what Kendi termed as moralized contraptions, was effectively a struggle against the rules and regulations of the institution; this most often occurred at historically black colleges and universities that had predominately white governing boards. Second, black students struggled against the standardization of exclusion, or more efficiently stated, black marginalization on campus. This included the low levels of black student recruitment, but also included the lack of black faculty or staff in non-traditional roles. The third trend was against a normalized mask of whiteness. This was the push for more black-oriented courses, or at least a movement away from a Eurocentric curriculum. Lastly, there was the opposition against what Kendi calls “ladder altruism,” or the facilitation of black students being removed from the larger black community.<sup>75</sup> At Concordia, the push for increased black student recruitment (fighting standardization of exclusion) and the creation of courses on black culture and heritage (a part of attacking normalized mask of whiteness). These ideas dominated the discussion on campus for the first few years after 1968. However, by 1969, this clamor for radical change on campus had reached a large number of institutions.

In November 1968, San Francisco State became the first major instance of a BCM demonstration when the institution shut down its campus due to black student protests. Students at the institution had had enough of the administration and its policies of assimilation and decided to strike. As sociological historian Fabio Rojas found, many institutions did not have to experience black student protest in order to enact changes on campus; instead, those institutions

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 147–156.

saw what was occurring at other institutions and took the initiative in order to stave off such activities on the campuses, especially if they could be violent.<sup>76</sup> Concordia College administrators understood that the rise of BCM rhetoric and actions that were occurring at other institutions could possibly happen at their own. The same week of the San Francisco State strike, the administrators of Concordia were in the midst of reviewing the number and quality of minority programs at the campus. Dr. Paul Dovre, then the college's Vice-President for Academic Affairs, echoed the findings of the Kerner Report when he stated that the college had a commitment to creating and sustaining minority programs because there was a "white problem" in America. Therefore, it was in both the white students and white community's best interest to be exposed not only to black students, but also to black culture.<sup>77</sup>

The beginning of 1969 brought BCM demonstrations much closer to Concordia's campus. In January, black students at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities campus walked into Morrill Hall and stated that they would remain in the building until their demands were met. Within a day, the students had left the building, with many of their demands met by the administrators of the University of Minnesota.<sup>78</sup> These demands included the establishment of an Afro-American Studies department with independent control, funds for an annual, national conference of black students on the campus, and putting a minority student scholarship fund in the hands of black

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<sup>76</sup> Fabio Rojas, "Social Movement Tactics, Organizational Change and the Spread of African-American Studies," *Social Forces* 84, no. 4 (2006): 2159–2162.

<sup>77</sup> *The Concordian*, "College Reviews Minority Programs," December 6, 1968, 3.

<sup>78</sup> For more information on the University of Minnesota BCM demonstration, see: Jared E. Leighton, "A Small Revolution: The Role of a Black Power Revolt in Creating and Sustaining a Black Studies Department at the University of Minnesota" (M.A. Thesis, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2008), <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/historydiss/49>.

community members.<sup>79</sup> With a BCM demonstration occurring only a few hundred miles away, the possibility of a black student revolt coming to Concordia's campus seemed to be increasing.

As a response to both the demonstrations at the University of Minnesota and nationwide, Concordia administrators brought what *Concordian* journalist Roger Gruss labeled as the largest number of college staff and administrators together with students in a discussion on race relations early in February 1969.<sup>80</sup> At the next meeting, campus officials decided to create a committee to study if there were instances of institutional racism occurring on the campus, and to devise a plan of action for eliminating any confirmed instances. In order to make the process as open as possible, the committee was a place for any student, whether black or white, to formally file complaints if they had experienced any acts of discrimination at the college.<sup>81</sup> On February eleventh, Concordia President Joseph Knutson, five vice-presidents, personnel deans, academic deans, the Committee on Minority Students, numerous department chairs, and student government leaders discussed a variety of issues brought forth by some black students on Concordia's campus. As student Elaine McMullen proclaimed at the meeting, the administration of Concordia focused too heavily on assimilating black students into a white culture rather than supporting the ideas of cultural exchange, much to the detriment of black students who were in the middle of building their identity. At the meeting, the topics of discussion revolved heavily around getting more black artists and lecturers to the campus, encouraging individual professors to be more experienced in black culture in order to better teach it, and a discussion regarding the creation of a system that would make it easier for black students to communicate with administration if issues arose. However, at least one black student at the meeting argued that this

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>80</sup> Roger Gruss, "Committee Formed to Study Racism," *The Concordian*, January 17, 1969, 6.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.



was not enough. Gene Poole stated, “There is an attitude that they (the white student body and the administrators of Concordia) are doing us (black students) a great favor by letting us come here. There has to be a definite change in attitude.”<sup>82</sup> As a result of the meeting the college, under the direction of chairman of the Committee on Minority Students, Marc Borg, stated that there would be more input from black students when selecting campus speakers, the library would spend most of its budget for the year in the obtainment of black literature, and a cultural exchange center would be created immediately.<sup>83</sup> In addition, Vice-President of Academic Affairs Paul Dovre began an investigation into seeing which courses and which departments already had some aspect of black culture or heritage being taught, and which courses could possibly begin incorporating these elements.<sup>84</sup> As Van Dyke showed, the administrations that took charge in enacting changes on campus often did so because they wanted to limit the influence students may have on the process, or they were defending the institution from being changed too radically.<sup>85</sup> The same occurred at Concordia.

After the meeting, these debates on racial issues moved from the administration to the newspaper. The administration began to address the issues they had first discussed at the February eleventh meeting. Students now dominated the conversation of racial issues at Concordia. Minnie E. McMullen, a black exchange student from Virginia Union, wrote a letter confessing how she felt on Concordia’s campus. She found the campus to be unwelcoming to black students, repeating claims that black culture on the campus was frequently ignored by the

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<sup>82</sup> Muriel Heard, “Blacks, College Discuss Cobber Racial Situation,” *The Concordian*, February 14, 1969, 1-2.

<sup>83</sup> Muriel Heard, “Minority Grievances Provoke Action,” *The Concordian*, February 21, 1969, 1.

<sup>84</sup> Paul J. Dovre to Chairman [various departments], February 12, 1969, File: Students, Minority, Subgroup: Topical File ‘S’, Concordia College Topical Files, Concordia College Archives, Carl B. Ylvisaker Library, Concordia College, Moorhead, Minnesota (hereafter referred to as Students, Minority, Topical Files).

<sup>85</sup> Van Dyke, “The Location of Student Protest,” 162.

administration and that she had yet to meet a black student who felt themselves to be a member of the “Concordia family.” Instead, she argued that her purpose on campus, which she thought flew in the face of the administration’s plan for assimilation, was to “show this white society that the black has an identity now.”<sup>86</sup> In the same issue, student Ron Sunsted espoused ideas of pluralism and multiculturalism, and attacked ideas of color-blind integration. Instead of treating black students and white students the same, individuals must see and appreciate the difference between white culture and black culture. Without this, there would be no easing of racial tensions, either on the campus or in the wider community.<sup>87</sup>

White students responded to the new ideas of multiculturalism in a variety of fashions, ranging from allying with black students to defending their previous behaviors. White student allies were plentiful at the college. William A. Stahl, the Student Exchange Commissioner for the Title III program, believed that the administration must become more responsive to black ideas and wants, or else they would chose more activist or violent methods in order to make their voices heard. For Stahl, the push by the institution for a “Concordia family” made it so all people, not just black students, had to fit into a certain Lutheran, white, Midwestern mold in order to feel included as member of the student body.<sup>88</sup> Elly Haney agreed with the ideas in McMullen’s letter, but also stated that it was important for white students to undertake the same process black students needed to and build or explore their identities.<sup>89</sup> Trisha DeGroot wrote to the school newspaper and stated that she had never understood how her attitude of passivity affected how black students felt on campus. She wrote: “...by ignoring the situation and leading

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<sup>86</sup> Minnie E. McMullen, letter to the editor, *The Concordian*, February 21, 1969, 2.

<sup>87</sup> Ron Sunsted, letter to the editor, *The Concordian*, February 21, 1969, 2.

<sup>88</sup> William A. Stahl, letter to the editor, *The Concordian*, March 7, 1969, 2.

<sup>89</sup> Elly Haney, letter to the editor, *The Concordian*, March 7, 1969, 2.

normal Concordia lives, we may just as well be signing a bill for segregation and discrimination.”<sup>90</sup>

Black students also found valuable allies in the editorial office of *The Concordian*. As early as the spring of 1968, *Concordian* editor Thom Speckenbach argued that the college was failing the black students on campus, and that the administration needed to recruit more black students and faculty while also creating more classes that addressed black culture.<sup>91</sup> Chris Ward, the editor of the newspaper from the fall of 1968 to the spring of 1969, wrote an editorial that stated a person who truly lived a Christian lifestyle must also be supportive of interracial socializing, whether that meant friendships, dating, or marriage; otherwise, they are not a true Christians. For Ward, the notion of “Christian Love” meant that a person’s love for humankind cannot be restricted due to a person’s skin color, and if it was, that person is not truly a follower of God.<sup>92</sup> Ward wrote another editorial in March as a response to the administration’s actions, stating that implementation of programs needed to occur on campus, but it could not end there. Instead, there needed to be a radical change in attitudes on campus, for otherwise, true pluralism would never come to Concordia’s campus.<sup>93</sup>

These white student allies often utilized ideas of identity in their arguments. Stahl, Haney, and Ward all referred in one way or another to the role the institution had in shaping and challenging its students’ identities. Speckenbach and Stahl believed that radical changes had to occur on campus, or else black students would have to resort to more activist methods than just sending requests to the administration. DeGroot’s comment on passivity pushed the idea that one

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<sup>90</sup> Trisha DeGroot, letter to the editor, *The Concordian*, March 21, 1969, 2.

<sup>91</sup> Thom Speckenbach, “Restructuring Concordia...,” *The Concordian*, March 29, 1968, 8.

<sup>92</sup> Chris Ward, “Racism Narrows Social Life,” *The Concordian*, September 20, 1968, 2.

<sup>93</sup> Chris Ward, “Awareness Lacks Completeness,” *The Concordian*, March 21, 1969, 2.

must go out of their way in order to change the system, invoking the idea of the guilty bystander. While black students often brought up these ideas of pluralism, multiculturalism, and racial pride at Concordia, they found some support in the white student body.

However, there were also students at Concordia who publicly opposed these new pushes for diversity and multiculturalism, often using the rhetoric of “color-blindness” to defend their beliefs. Becky Hult argued in *The Concordian* that it would be racist of her to go out of her way to talk with a black student and attempt to learn a new culture when she would never think of doing that with another white student. Hult argued that to act a certain way towards a black student, such as saying hello or sitting at their lunch table was “just about the most prejudiced thing I can do,” because she would never do that with a white stranger.<sup>94</sup> For Hult, black students should not be treated any different from white students, and echoed the ideas of color-blindness that had existed in the administration. This idea of color-blindness was a major part of what Concordia’s administration strived to have in their integration policies. From the view of the college, the administration should not treat black students any differently than they treated white students, except perhaps when it came to the recruitment, admissions, or sustainment processes. It was this sort of mentality that black students and their allies attempted to fix in the administration and white student body of Concordia College.

In their push to break this so-called color-blind mentality, black students began to utilize the black power principles of self-determination and racial solidarity in campus politics. In the student government election of 1969, a group of black students nominated one of their own to campaign for student body president. At the nominating convention, Jimmy Evans nominated Bernard Jones, and stated that his reasoning was because none of the other three candidates

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<sup>94</sup> Becky Hult, letter to the editor, *The Concordian*, March 21, 1969, 2.

addressed the racial issues that had plagued Concordia the past semester. Evans, in his nominating speech, stated that the group of organized black students “find nothing wrong with your candidate, (but) we offer you an alternative.”<sup>95</sup> A week later, the primary election resulted in Jones receiving the fewest votes. However, Jones was able to tap into a number of white student voters and received 270 votes, or almost 15% of the total votes.<sup>96</sup> Although it resulted in a loss, the nomination of Bernard Jones showed many at Concordia that the black students’ demands were not a trivial matter for them, but were based upon closely held principles and beliefs.

Events at Moorhead State College had the potential to compromise the progress made in the struggle for black power on Moorhead’s collegiate campuses. The President of the Student Senate at Moorhead State, who originally hailed from across the river in Fargo, received calls from individuals around the area stating their hatred of the black recruitment program of the institution. In the middle of April, a scuffle occurred between six black students and “twenty to thirty” white students over a pizza delivery. When white students began to harass the black students, one of the black students pulled out a gun filled with blanks and shot it towards the floor. A white student filed a complaint with the administration, resulting in the arrest of three of the black students. Then, three days after the pizza scuffle, a black male student was on a date with a white female student when an unknown assailant shot at the vehicle they were driving.<sup>97</sup> Although Moorhead State College was located less than a mile from Concordia’s campus, these events did little to impact what had occurred at the latter’s institution.

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<sup>95</sup> Chris Ward, “Black Candidate Offers New Election Dimension,” *The Concordian*, March 14, 1969, 1.

<sup>96</sup> *The Concordian*, “Magnusson Faces Gaetz in Presidential Run-off,” March 21, 1969, 1.

<sup>97</sup> Cooper, “Beyond the Threshold: Black Students at Moorhead State College, 1968-1972,” 28–29.

Throughout the rest of 1969, black students received many of the accommodations and changes they requested from the administration. By March, the Committee on Minority Students received a number of grievances from black students and quickly began addressing the issues. The committee decided to find a more permanent place for the cultural exchange center, ultimately placing it in the basement of Old Main, an academic building. In addition, the committee began actively pushing applicable classes to begin including discussions or readings on black heritage and culture. Lastly, the freshman-orientation book study would be on a piece of literature that discussed the racial situation in the United States and the importance of black heritage and identity.<sup>98</sup> By the fall of 1969, there was a more positive mood on campus amongst black students because of these actions taken from the previous spring. A new course on black culture came to Concordia's campus, and a number of other courses began to include black issues.<sup>99</sup> Gene Poole, a black student who had previously written the article on how Concordia's isolationism was not an excuse, wrote in a September issue of *The Concordian* that this new curriculum showed promise in both changing attitudes about race and was the foundation of a trusting relationship with the administration in properly addressing black issues.<sup>100</sup> In addition, the college created a Student Affairs Committee, which consisted of representation from the administration, faculty members, and the student body.<sup>101</sup> The college put forth a proclamation that no qualified student should be barred from admission to any institution, especially

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<sup>98</sup> Muriel Heard, "Black Grievances Produce Response," *The Concordian*, March 21, 1969, 4.

<sup>99</sup> Engelhardt, *On Firm Foundation Grounded*, 274.

<sup>100</sup> Eugene Poole, "Is Concordia's Isolation an Excuse," *The Concordian*, April 25, 1969, 6; Gene Poole, "Cognitive Dissonance," *The Concordian*, September 6, 1969, 6.

<sup>101</sup> Student Affairs Committee, "Joint Statement on the Rights, Freedoms, and Responsibilities of Concordia Students," October 20, 1969, File 1, Box 10, General, Student Affairs, Record Group 17; Office of Student Affairs, 1967-2005, Series 1; Student Affairs Committee, 1971-2004, Subseries 8, Concordia College Archives, Carl B. Ylvisaker Library, Concordia College, Moorhead, Minnesota, 8 (hereafter referred to as General, Student Affairs Committee Collection).

Concordia, because of their race.<sup>102</sup> In addition, students were allowed to invite any guest speaker that they wished, but it must be processed through the Student Affairs Committee to ensure that there was enough time to schedule the event and to make sure the content was appropriate for the campus. The committee stated its belief that speakers should “represent the spectrum of intellectual, political, and religious thought,” and that the college should not reject an individual with ideas that oppose those of the institution.<sup>103</sup> With these proclamations and changes, Concordia was becoming increasingly open to student participation in governance, or at least administration, of the campus.

Nevertheless, there were limits to this new campus environment. The college reiterated its traditional purpose with a statement that “academic institutions exist for the transmission of knowledge, the pursuit of truth, the development of students, and the well-being of society.” After all, the administration argued that it is up to an individual institution on how to achieve these purposes.<sup>104</sup> Furthermore, while students are free to support any cause that they deem to be important, their pursuits cannot obstruct the essential operations of the institution, nor can it impede another student from their studies.<sup>105</sup> Lastly, the committee stated that demonstrations would be allowed, but only if they did not disrupt the normal operation of Concordia. It is important to remember that students are learning how to be citizens, and are guaranteed their rights to free speech, peaceful assembly, and the right of petition.<sup>106</sup> Although a BCM demonstration did not occur on Concordia’s campus, the occurrence of demonstrations at other campuses made Concordia implement policies that would obstruct, or at least moderate, any

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 4-6.

possible future protests. Alongside policy changes at Concordia College, state laws and federal laws began to change as well because of the widespread campus protests. Due to the January 1969 takeover of Morrill Hall at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities campus, the state legislature began to debate whether or not student protestors should be able to receive financial aid from the state. In addition, there were numerous debates on under what circumstance students who engaged in a campus protest could be expelled.<sup>107</sup> At the federal level, the backlash against student protest came as early as 1968. Amendments to the Higher Education Act included sections that cut any financial aid for two years to any protesting individual that was convicted “by any court of record” for actions that involved the use of “force, disruption, or the seizure of property” which prevented the college or university from continuing its purpose as an educational institution.<sup>108</sup> A year later, section 411 of the 1969 appropriations bill for the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare made it so that no funds could be given to students or faculty who promoted or participated in a “riot,” however defined, and “any group activity resulting in material damage to property or injury to persons, [and] found to be in violation of Federal, State, or local laws.”<sup>109</sup> With this change, an individual did not need to be convicted to lose funding.

Concordia College, originally a haven for Norwegian and Lutheran cultures, began recruiting black students to its campus in the late 1950s. This push for recruitment often came from inside the institution, whether from its administrators or white students. The year 1968 brought increased pressure and resources from outside forces, such as federal government and Lutheran organizations, that helped accelerate the recruitment of black students on Concordia’s

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<sup>107</sup> Leighton, ““A Small Revolution,”” 73.

<sup>108</sup> *Higher Education Amendments of 1968*, Public Law 90-575, *U.S. Statutes* 82 (1968): 1062-1063.

<sup>109</sup> *Departments of Labor, and Health, and Welfare Appropriations Act, 1969*, Public Law 90-558, *U.S. Statutes* 82 (1968): 995-996.



campus. These newly arrived black students, already aware of the national push for black power, wanted to transform the campus into a more pluralistic, diverse, and multicultural institution. Black students often found white student allies in this struggle, but also found a number of students who did not agree with these ideas. When San Francisco State shut down due to a black student protest, a number of other black students began to follow suit, resulting in a widespread BCM phenomenon. Throughout 1969, nearly two hundred campuses underwent a demonstration to give more power or credence to black students or black culture. By the end of the 1969 semester, over seventy-two college presidents had resigned.<sup>110</sup> When racial tensions arose at Concordia in 1969, campus officials, led by President Knutson and Vice-President of Academic Affairs Dovre, began to institute changes that would ease those tensions and defend against a BCM outbreak. The newly created Committee on Minority Students addressed most of the issues that black students brought forth, but future events would lead to a resurgence in the struggle for a more diverse campus.

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<sup>110</sup> Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon*, 66.

## CHAPTER III

### THE PATH TO BOYCOTT, FALL 1970-SPRING 1976

Although black students were victorious in their push for curricular and policy changes in 1969, campus interest soon waned in regard toward what Concordia students began to characterize as “black issues”. In the beginning of the 1970-1971 school year, Student Association President Steve Tweed found that most of the students concerned themselves more with issues of alcohol or drug use on campus, or socializing between men and women on campus, with very few students concerned about the situation of black students on campus.<sup>111</sup> At the same time, the campus administration continued its push for black student recruitment and only continued expanding minority programs and resources when campus tensions once again came to a head in 1973. Black students on the campus perceived the rest of the campus to be disinterested in turning the predominantly white cultured institution into a multicultural one and subsequently began to utilize the black power principles of racial solidarity, cultural pride, and self-determination in their struggle. The main way the students did this was through the creation of a black student organization. Through the organization, the invitation of black speakers to campus, and in the pages of *The Concordian*, black students at Concordia defined what black power meant to them. The 1973 fall semester once again brought racial tensions to campus, but this time it was created by a small number of white students. The school’s administration responded to the crisis, and their actions resulted in an increase in programs and resources aimed

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<sup>111</sup> *The Concordian*, “Student Leaders Rap with Editors,” September 11, 1970, 7.

at black students once again. This was not to continue, as events in 1974 made black students realize that the gains they had made over the past couple of years were not permanent, which further forced them to unite against what they perceived to be an unwilling, uncooperative, and discriminatory institution, administration, and white student body.

One year after the events of 1969, Concordia's administration continued their push for integration, once again focusing more on black student recruitment than on expanded services or curriculums. Concordia officials created the Office of Intercultural Affairs (OIA) in the fall of 1971 in order to continue the work of the Committee on Minority Students.<sup>112</sup> Instead of just being a quasi-formal committee, the group was now an organized department and given more responsibilities. The first director of Concordia's OIA was Richard Green, the institution's first black undergraduate who had since gone on to receive his doctorate from the University of Louisville in chemistry. The administration tasked Green with creating proposals to bring in more funds for the OIA. His 1971 proposal contained the same arguments that the administration had made over the last three years: the recruitment and admission of more minority students was necessary to create worldly citizens from amongst both the admitted black students and the white student population of Concordia.<sup>113</sup> In addition, it would be helpful for the wider community, as those admitted minority students would travel around the Red River Valley and speak with various communities about their lives and cultures.<sup>114</sup> However, once those students came to the predominantly white campus situated in the even more predominantly white area of Moorhead, Minnesota, they began to experience feelings of alienation.

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<sup>112</sup> Dr. Richard Green, "A Proposal to Fund Special Services for Minority and Disadvantaged Students," February 9, 1972, Folder 5, Box 10, Proposals, Subject Files, OIA Collection, 1.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 4.

The feeling of alienation amongst newly recruited black students was not a phenomenon unique to Concordia College. As William H. Exum defined it, alienation referred to a variety of feelings, including isolation, estrangement, lacking purpose, and having little relevance to the larger community.<sup>115</sup> Joy Ann Williamson's investigation found this phenomenon occurring at an institution as large as the University of Illinois, but it also happened at much smaller institutions like Concordia.<sup>116</sup> Black students at Concordia felt all of these during their time at the institution. Black students at Concordia constituted only a very small proportion of the whole student body, which resulted in feelings of isolation. In addition, many of these newly arrived black students came from areas hundreds, if not thousands, of miles from Moorhead, which led to feelings of estrangement. These two ideas come across largely in black students' letters to *The Concordian*, often framed as students not feeling part of the "Concordia family."<sup>117</sup> Lastly, the lack of relevant classes made black students on campus feel like their literature, their history, and their culture were unworthy of study. This lack of a curriculum relevant to their lives and experiences only added to the feelings of alienation on campus by making black students feel like they were not relevant to the college.<sup>118</sup> Faced with these feelings of alienation, black students began to band together.

Due to these feelings of alienation, black students began to realize the power of grouping together and creating organizations that would wield enough power to enact changes on campus, as well as act as therapeutic for the students. As William H. Nelson Jr. argued, black students felt the need to bond together in order to initiate radical changes on campus, especially after a bout of

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<sup>115</sup> Exum, *Paradoxes of Protest*, 40.

<sup>116</sup> Williamson, *Black Power on Campus*, 27.

<sup>117</sup> For the most prominent example, see: Minnie E. McMullen, letter to the editor, *The Concordian*, February 21, 1969, 2.

<sup>118</sup> Once again, for the most prominent example from *The Concordian*, see: Minnie E. McMullen, letter to the editor, *The Concordian*, February 21, 1969, 2.

severe harassment by white students.<sup>119</sup> After the racial issues of 1969, black students at Concordia began to realize the necessity of a strong, black-led organization. These organizations often started as social organizations, but quickly changed into political and activist groups.<sup>120</sup> Often, it was off-campus that black students first began to organize. For example, in Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota, black students at the University of Minnesota often went to a community center in order to discuss black history and culture.<sup>121</sup> With no large black population within the community, Concordia's black students looked towards other campuses. Concordia's black students had already joined with other black students from neighboring Moorhead State College and North Dakota State University in Fargo to create the Afro-American Friendship Society in 1967, which gave students who felt alienated from the pre-dominantly white communities a place to escape.<sup>122</sup>

Early in 1970, black students decided to create a black student organization exclusively for Concordia students, likely as a response to the racial issues of 1969. These students named the organization took the phrase "Let's Pull Together" and translated it into Swahili.<sup>123</sup> This new organization, Harambee Weuse, was originally meant to promote the creation and understanding of cultural identity through encouraging multicultural programs and activities on campus.<sup>124</sup> When asked a few years later, an original member and spokesperson for the organization stated that there was an additional purpose to the organization: to create black racial solidarity.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> William E. Nelson, Jr., "Black Studies, Student Activism, and the Academy," in *Out of the Revolution: The Development of Africana Studies*, ed. Delores P. Aldridge and Carlene Young (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2003), 80.

<sup>120</sup> Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus*, 25.

<sup>121</sup> Leighton, "A Small Revolution," 46.

<sup>122</sup> Cooper, "Beyond the Threshold: Black Students at Moorhead State College, 1968-1972," 25.

<sup>123</sup> Eric F. Carter, "The Other Side," *The Concordian*, October 23, 1970, 5.

<sup>124</sup> Cloria E. Lewis, "Harambee Weuse Organizes, Grows," *The Concordian*, September 17, 1971, 3.

<sup>125</sup> Eric F. Carter, "The Other Side: Ron Conley, Revisited," *The Concordian*, October 8, 1971, 8.

Although not strictly a black student union, the organization functioned very similar to one. It served as a tool to bring all minority students together, and using that collective power to initiate change on campus. In their constitution, the membership was open to “all oppressed minorities” at the institution.<sup>126</sup> In addition, the group’s leaders consisted of five different positions based upon the structure of the Black Panther Party, at least originally: Minister of Coordination, Minister of Information, Minister of Finance, Minister of Justice, and Minister of Affairs.<sup>127</sup> For the students, the group was an expression of black power at work, especially when understood as a strain of racial solidarity. In addition, it was an expression of self-determination.<sup>128</sup> It was the hope that once black students garnered this power, those students would be able to wield it as they chose, which usually meant the expansion of minority classes and services. It was the hope of students that this organization would bring these black power principles onto campus, and help them succeed in their struggle against alienation, racism, and discrimination.

The organization ran into a variety of problems during its first few years of existence. The first was in 1970, when the administration alerted the group of problems in the organizational structure; according to Harambee Weuse’s mission statement, the organization was only for minority students, but according to college guidelines, they could not exclude members based on race.<sup>129</sup> Although this was the rule, administrators sent letters to the organization with ideas on how to avoid legal ramifications while still excluding unwanted

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<sup>126</sup> “Constitution of Harambee Weuse,” File 4, Box 10, Harambee Weuse, Subject Files, OIA Collection.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> The ideas for what Harambee Weuse was often came through in Eric F. Carter’s column in *The Concordian*, which was entitled “The Other Side.” For some examples, see: Eric F. Carter, “The Other Side,” *The Concordian*, October 23, 1970, 5; Eric F. Carter, “The Other Side,” *The Concordian*, February 17, 1972, 10. Also see: “Constitution of Harambee Weuse,” File 4, Box 10, Harambee Weuse, Subject Files, OIA Collection.

<sup>129</sup> David M. Benson to Minority Student Organization, “Recognition as an Organization,” January 30, 1970, File 4, Box 10, Harambee Weuse, Subject Files, OIA Collection.

members.<sup>130</sup> In addition, internal conflicts between members plagued Harambee Weuse, which often hampered any efforts the organization attempted. In April of 1972, a number of black students reflected upon their past year at Concordia. When discussing the impact of Harambee Weuse on campus, a number of the interviewed students found that the organization had too many internal conflicts to operate successfully. These included personal grievances and issues between individual members, but it also included arguments about what the organization should be as well as what its purpose was for the campus.<sup>131</sup> Such conflict clearly damaged the cohesion of the organization. By the beginning of the 1972-1973 school year, only two years after its creation, the group had become essentially defunct.<sup>132</sup>

In order for these organizations to operate as activist or radical agencies, they required what Ibram Kendi termed “oppositional spaces,” or places that would allow ideas of radicalism and protest to be cultivated and spread.<sup>133</sup> The Cultural (later Intercultural) Center’s purpose was to allow a space for black students to escape the white environment of Concordia’s campus when administrators moved it to the basement of Old Main after the events of 1969. By 1972, the center moved from its Old Main location to a campus-owned house largely due to the increase of minority students on campus.<sup>134</sup> With this move, black students gained more autonomy from the administration, since they were no longer confined to a well-traveled building in the center of Concordia’s campus, but had a more spacious home on the outskirts of the school’s property. This “oppositional space” allowed for students to discuss issues in a more safe environment.

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<sup>130</sup> Marc Borg, “Newsletter to Black Students-- No. 2”, March 30, 1969, File 42, Box 10a, Subject Files, OIA Collection.

<sup>131</sup> Eric F. Carter, “Black Students Reflect on ’71-72 Year,” *The Concordian*, April 21, 1972, 14.

<sup>132</sup> Gloria Hawkins, “Selecting Officers of Harambee Weuse and Campaign Letters,” January 10, 1975, File 4, Box 10, Harambee Weuse, Subject Files, OIA Collection, 1.

<sup>133</sup> Rogers, “The Black Campus Movement: The Case for a New Historiography,” 177.

<sup>134</sup> John Thigpen, Cynthia Jenkins, Richard Green, and Carole Anne Hart, “A Proposal to Relocate the Minority Student Cultural Center,” File 5, Box 10, Proposals for Minorities, Intercultural Education, Etc., 1971-1972, Subject Files, OIA Collection.

In order to fit its principles to serve their individual needs, black power activists defined the concept of black power in their own terms, often modifying its meaning depending on the environment or cultural context. At Concordia, the definition of black power hinged heavily on the academic side. Eric Carter, who authored a column in *The Concordian* entitled “The Other Side,” defined black power for students in some extremely broad terms. For Carter, black power was directly connected to self-determination: “It is relying on yourself and your group...For the rich, it is contributing your time and efforts, not just your money...For the poor, it’s striking to help yourself, your neighborhood and to bring about a better community.”<sup>135</sup> It was Carter’s belief that black students could fight for black power, since every time a black student “received a good grade on a test, or gains a bit more knowledge...,” it was a show of black power in action.<sup>136</sup> Even some white professors attempted to combat the violent or aggressive stereotype of black power by creating a new definition for the movement. Dr. David Sandgren, a professor of African history at Concordia, wrote a piece for *The Concordian* in 1971 defending and defining the principles of black power and the wider movement. In the article, Sandgren argued that black power was not a negative phenomenon, but a positive one that emphasizes black rights, black equality, and black pride.<sup>137</sup>

The growing enthusiasm for race relations and black power at Concordia was further stimulated by the numerous black speakers that the institution invited to the campus throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s. Concordia invited a number of black speakers to discuss issues of race, including Southern Christian Leadership Council Executive Director Andrew Young in 1967, historian Vincent Harding in 1968, Operation Breadbasket Director Jesse Jackson in 1969,

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<sup>135</sup> Eric Carter, “The Other Side,” *The Concordian*, November 6, 1970, 10.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Dr. Sandgren, “Black Expo Teaches Pride,” *The Concordian*, October 15, 1971, 3.



and black power advocate Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture) in 1973. In 1974, the institution invited comedian and civil rights activist Dick Gregory and activist Robert F. Williams after his return from exile to speak on the idea of race in America.<sup>138</sup> As Wayne Glasker found in his study of the University of Pennsylvania, these speeches on black power, or at least black equality, resulted in the direct transmission of ideas from figureheads and activists to the students.<sup>139</sup> These black speakers helped sustain and modify the debates of black power on campus, resulting in a particular strain of the BPM dedicated to changing the policies and guiding principles of Concordia College.

Partially because of the rise of black power ideas on the campus, racial tensions returned to Concordia's campus in the fall of 1973. At the end of the spring semester, students overwhelmingly elected Eric Fontaine as the first black student body president. Fontaine, promised to bring "a fresh perspective" to student government during his campaign, which gave him enough support to win the election by over two hundred votes.<sup>140</sup> For black students, Fontaine's election was a showing of black power. The black student population of Concordia now had an individual in power that had experienced many of the things they felt at the institution, including alienation and discrimination. With a black student now in a position of power, students believed in real and noticeable changes coming quickly in the name of black power.

However, this new birth of black consciousness at Concordia would not happen, at least during Fontaine's presidency. As William H. Nelson Jr. argued, white students often felt that the rise of black consciousness at higher educational institutions was an attack on their traditional

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<sup>138</sup> Engelhardt, *On Firm Foundation Grounded*, 284.

<sup>139</sup> Glasker, *Black Students in the Ivory Tower*, 12.

<sup>140</sup> Michelle Simon, "Personalities: Eric Fontaine," *The Concordian*, September 21, 1973, 4; Tim Kopp, "Fontaine, Rudel Elected; Pledge to Keep Students Informed," *The Concordian*, March 16, 1973, 1.

identities, and therefore must retaliate.<sup>141</sup> This push against black consciousness and black power tempered many of the changes that black students wanted to make. At Concordia, three events highlighted the retaliation of white students against the black student body. In the September 28, 1973 issue of *The Concordian*, a letter (with author's name withheld) was published which made some comments concerning the racial environment of the campus. In the letter, the author found that a flag football game between an all-white team and all-black team at the college that resulted in a scuffle was only the first step in a process that would result in violent conflict. More to the point, the author felt obligated to state the "facts" about black students on the campus:

Recently I have become aware of the 'race conflict' here at peaceful Concordia, and I find it very upsetting that more people are not aware of the fact...For instance, is it fair to expect some of the black students here to cope with a white middle class society, especially when they are brought here to fill an invisible quota that the school has set to look good? Is it fair to white students who have paid good money to go to school here to be put up against students who don't really care at all what happens here at Concordia? Is it fair to give some of these students full paid scholarships when they don't really appreciate them? ...Scholarships should be based on the need of the students and what they plan to do with them rather than on color or a quota system? ... Another sore spot is the black house, it seems silly that they need a whole house. If they are to be Concordia students without any color distinction then why do they get special privileges? It is almost getting to the point where the white people are the ones being prejudiced against and not the opposite.<sup>142</sup>

The letter ended with a plea for both the administration and black students to sit down peacefully to discuss the racial issues on campus, as well as a statement that black students are largely to blame for this situation due to their defiance of the Concordia system.<sup>143</sup> About a week after the letter's publication, a number of black students began to receive what were termed "threatening and obscene" phone calls from anonymous individuals around the campus. Within the same

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<sup>141</sup> Nelson, Jr., "Black Studies, Student Activism, and the Academy," 80.

<sup>142</sup> Name withheld upon Request, "Re-evaluation Sought," *The Concordian*, September 28, 1973, 2.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

week as the calls, a female Concordia student called the authorities after she overheard an individual threaten to “take a shotgun over to the Intercultural Center and use it.”<sup>144</sup> These three events attacked the black student body on both individual and collective levels, made the students feel emotionally and physically endangered, and showed that at least a couple of students at Concordia’s campus did not believe black students had any reason or right to be at the institution.

After the unsigned letter, the harassing phone calls, and the Intercultural Center threat, several black students at Concordia began to argue that black culture at the institution was widely ignored, if not outright suppressed, by the wider, white population of the college. Once again, questions arose about color-blind integration versus multiculturalism. Joyce McLendon, president of Harambee Weuse in 1973, found that the programs and activities at Concordia were meant to appeal to the majority of students, but since the majority of students at Concordia were white, that meant it effectively shut out the black student minority. Beyond this, while there had been systems in place to encourage black lecturers and performers on campus, support for such activities had lately waned. With black students being uninterested in the usual campus life, the only place for black students to feel comfortable and free from the paternalism of the college was at the Intercultural Center.<sup>145</sup> In addition, there was a renewal of arguments with the stance that the college ignored black culture, this time occurring in the music department. Black students contended that the music department ignored both traditional African music and more

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<sup>144</sup> Roland Mitchell and Barbara Eiden, “Racial Tensions Swell, Calming Steps Taken,” *The Concordian*, October 26, 1973, 1.

<sup>145</sup> “Cultural Shock Found to be Part of Larger Social Problem at Concordia,” *The Concordian*, November 23, 1973, 5.

contemporary music in favor of teaching the more traditional, classical canon.<sup>146</sup> In addition to these actions, black students also began to show more assertiveness in their demands for change. In a letter addressed to “The White Campus Population,” a number of black students plead for an end to all racial hostilities on campus. The letter concluded with a statement on how “someone is bound to get hurt” if the harassment against black students did not end.<sup>147</sup> Black students on Concordia’s campus started to become more and more activist, if not violent, in their push for recognition and decent treatment.

Concordia’s administration and faculty quickly began addressing the events, all while condemning the behavior of these individuals. In a response to the unnamed letter, Concordia’s Director of Financial Aid stated that no students, neither black nor white, received fully-paid scholarships at Concordia. He also mentioned that the institution did not award aid based on an individual’s skin color, but rather aid is given on need.<sup>148</sup> President Knutson weighed in on the issues multiple times. He addressed the student body at a chapel service, and stated that all individuals need to be aware of racial tendencies or racist/discriminatory behaviors, whether they were inadvertent or not.<sup>149</sup> He argued that once one is aware of these behaviors, they can then be modified or eradicated. Later, in a letter addressed to Concordia Students, President Knutson stated that the continuation of minority programs and policies were not just a passing fad or an experiment, but “a human, American, and Christian” responsibility.<sup>150</sup> In order to understand what was occurring at the institution, President Knutson created a task force in order to identify where discrimination occurred at the institution, headed by the new Intercultural Affairs Director

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<sup>146</sup> Elly Toensing, letter to the editor, “Music Department Defended,” *The Concordian*, November 9, 1973, 3.

<sup>147</sup> The Black Community, “To the White Campus Population,” *The Concordian*, October 26, 1973, 2.

<sup>148</sup> Jim Hausmann, letter to the editor, *The Concordian*, October 5, 1973, 4.

<sup>149</sup> Mitchell and Eiden, “Racial Tension Swells, Calming Steps Taken,” 1.

<sup>150</sup> Joseph L. Knutson to Concordia Student, October 23, 1973, Demonstrations/Petitions, Topical Files.

at Concordia, Gloria Hawkins.<sup>151</sup> For her part, Hawkins believed that the situation on campus could be resolved with an increase in transparency and communication between the administration and black students; therefore, she began to create ways to bolster open and honest communication between the two groups.<sup>152</sup>

In the meantime, information emerged that showed that large numbers of white students took issue with some aspect of the black student population on campus. Knowledge of some of these beliefs arose through the increasing numbers of complaints that the college's Student Personnel Office received in fall of 1973. Overall, most of the complaints stated a belief that black students received special privileges that white students did not, such as being able to use campus vehicles for personal use.<sup>153</sup> In addition, some white students also felt like black students used the Intercultural Center in order to skirt around campus policies or even governmental laws.<sup>154</sup> With the racial tensions continuing to increase, the administration of Concordia College decided that more actions needed to be taken.

At a February 18 meeting, the administration met with a small number of black students in order to discuss the racial environment on campus. The meeting resulted in a task force created by President Knutson and headed by Gloria Hawkins to further investigate and address these issues. The committee published the results of the investigation at the end of February. The committee found that minority students faced not only racial issues at Concordia, but also social and academic issues. Black students often did not participate in campus life nor did they receive grades as good as their white counterparts. In order to resolve these issues, the committee put

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<sup>151</sup> Human Relations Task Force Chairperson Gloria Hawkins to President Joseph L. Knutson, "Final Report," February 28, 1974, File 1, Box 10, Human Relations Program, Subject Files, OIA Collection.

<sup>152</sup> *The Concordian*, "Ms. Hawkins sees solution in 'respect and understanding,'" November 23, 1973, 6.

<sup>153</sup> *The Concordian*, "SPO Finds Both Races Feel Discrimination," November 23, 1973, 6.

<sup>154</sup> *The Concordian*, "College Understands Need for the Intercultural Center," October 26, 1973, 7.

forth a number of recommendations to the administration. First, it called for an expansion of services for minority students, overseen through the Office of Intercultural Affairs. Second, the report called for an increase in the hiring of minority faculty and staff. Third, it requested a study on how minority graduates fared after graduation from Concordia College, and whether or not they were adequately prepared for life after their studies. Lastly, the report stated the need for a full-time minority counselor in order to help advise black students. In addition to all of these recommendations, the report also advocated for more transparency between students and administration, an orientation program for faculty on racial issues and discrimination, and the creation of a Human Relations Committee to study campus issues.<sup>155</sup> Most importantly, the report put the culture of Concordia under scrutiny. The report realized the lack of dedication that the administration of the campus put in their minority programs or policies: “It must be understood that a real commitment on the faculty, students, and administration has to be made before any type of Human Relations or minority program can be effective.”<sup>156</sup> Within a week of the report’s publication, campus administrators, headed by Dr. Paul Dovre, agreed to enact all of the recommendations that the Human Relations Task Force had brought forth.<sup>157</sup>

Once again, Concordia faced racial tensions and came out of them with expanded curriculums and services for its black student population. Along with the recommendations of the Human Relations Task Force, Dr. Paul Dovre created a list of all classes and departments that attempted to bring black culture or black ideas into their teaching. These included some classes in economics, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology. English classes utilized black authors in their studies, including Langston Hughes, Gwendolyn Brooks, LeRoi

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<sup>155</sup> Hawkins to Knutson, “Final Report”, 2-3.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>157</sup> Dr. Paul Dovre to The President’s Council, “Discussion of Human Relations Task Force,” March 1, 1974, File 1, Box 10, Human Relations Program, Subject Files, OIA Collection, 1-3.

Jones (Amiri Baraka), and Nikki Giovanni. In the history department, black students found even more classes that dealt with black culture. Dr. David Sandgren led a number of classes on African history, himself being a scholar of modern Africa. In addition, other history courses required students to read contemporary black power works, such as the speeches of Malcolm X, Eldridge Cleaver's *Soul on Ice*, and Stokely Carmichael's (Kwame Ture's) *Black Power*.<sup>158</sup> However, for many black students, this expanded curriculum and new resources meant nothing if the racial environment of the college did not radically change.

Black students on Concordia's campus began to perceive that change would never come without radical action. Very few black students had actually attended the February 18 meeting that addressed the racial tensions on campus. When asked about why this was the case, a number of students claimed that it was because there was no passion for change anymore at the college.<sup>159</sup> At the same time, Harambee Weuse lost a large portion of its funding. Most of the funds for the organization came from federal sources, namely Title III from the Higher Education Act of 1965. Title III, the program that created the Virginia Union exchange program and provided most of the funds for the organization, was only meant to help develop new programs; by the beginning of the 1974 fall semester, Concordia's programs had lost that distinction. As a result, nearly \$30,000 was lost from the budget of the Office of Intercultural Affairs. In order to keep some sort of semblance of funding, black students of Harambee Weuse went to the college's Appropriations Board in order to secure the organization's future. However, the board denied the proposals, stating that the board was not going to fund any

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<sup>158</sup> Paul J. Dovre, "Aspects of Women and Minority Studies: Academic Programs, 1974-1975," [1974?], File 1, Box 2, General, Student Affairs Committee, 1-12.

<sup>159</sup> Susan Gruss, "The Problem...Is it Concordia, or Us?" *The Concordian*, March 8, 1974, 2.

particular group project, no matter what it may be.<sup>160</sup> This response by the administration provided black students an example of how the administration did not care about its black student population once those individuals were on campus.

Although faced with this shortfall of funds, Intercultural Affairs Director Gloria Hawkins began an election of officers for the organization, as she believed the first step to Harambee Weuse's renewal was the election of officers.<sup>161</sup> From her perspective, the return of a black student organization like Harambee Weuse would make communication between the administration and the black student population that much easier. It is in this election for Harambee Weuse officers that one can truly see the push for black power and radical change come forth from Concordia's black student body. The election saw five individuals vying for four different spots: President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Poor attendance at Harambee Weuse's first meeting to elect officers (which in and of itself shows the decline of the organization's popularity) resulted in the postponement of elections until the spring of 1975.<sup>162</sup>

The campaign for Harambee Weuse presidency pitted sophomore Tony Eythell against junior David Maggitt. Eythell touted his experience as a former member of the Student Senate throughout the campaign, and stated that the racial tensions of 1973 emerged because ignorance existed on campus, both among black and white individuals.<sup>163</sup> Maggitt, a psychology and business administration double major, took a different stance. Maggitt maintained that the racial tensions at Concordia's campus were a direct result of white oppression, and that the only way to

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<sup>160</sup> Rick Fairbanks, "Harambee Weuse Left High and Dry: Title III Slices Funds," *The Concordian*, November 22, 1974, 1.

<sup>161</sup> Gloria Hawkins to All Black Students, "Election of Officers for Harambee Weuse," November 19, 1974, File 4, Box 10, Harambee Weuse, Subject Files, OIA Collection.

<sup>162</sup> Gloria Hawkins, "Selecting Officers of Harambee Weuse and Campaign Letters," January 10, 1975, File 4, Box 10, Harambee Weuse, Subject Files, OIA Collection.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*



change the environment was to band together as black students and determine their own futures. These ideas came through most prominently in his campaign letter that circulated throughout the members of Harambee Weuse and other black students on campus.

In this letter, Maggitt utilized the rhetoric of black power in his push for the presidency. For Maggitt, the leader of Harambee Weuse needed to help the black students on campus define their own identities. Black students had not been able to do this previously because Concordia, as did other white cultural institutions, suppressed black pride and culture in order to empower whites. Due to this exploitation, black students were divided amongst themselves, and often repeated the actions of the administration by pushing their fellow black students down in their push for elite status. Instead, according to Maggitt, black students needed to remember the purpose of education: to lift oneself up in order to help other members of their community. In order to bring about the necessary changes, a strong president was needed. This president would help bring black students together in an organization powerful enough to enact changes on campus.<sup>164</sup> This black power rhetoric clearly found a receptive audience amongst the black students of Concordia. Maggitt received thirty-one votes for the presidency, compared to Eythell's eight.<sup>165</sup>

Between 1969 and 1976, black students at Concordia began to believe that the campus did not care about creating a more diverse, welcoming campus for its minority students. The administration, when not pressured to respond, did very little except push for increased black student recruitment. Faced with feelings of alienation, black students at the campus began to utilize principles of black power in order to change the campus. The students exhibited the ideas of self-determination, racial solidarity, and cultural pride by creating Harambee Weuse, a black

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> "Harambee Weuse Officers as Elected," January 1975, File 4, Box 10, Harambee Weuse, Subject Files, OIA Collection.

student organization that would pool together resources and put pressure on the administration; however, due to internal conflicts, the organization did not last long. A resurgence of racial tensions in 1973 resulted in administrative efforts to reform the campus, but this resulted in little more than superficial or minimal changes. The perception of an unwilling administration grew amongst black students, who continued their push for black power on campus, once again through a renewal of Harambee Weuse. In 1976, black students would take action against the administration when racial tensions once again arose on Concordia's campus.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE BLACK STUDENT STRIKE, APRIL 1976

A BCM demonstration finally broke out on Concordia's campus in April of 1976, nearly twenty years after the arrival of the institution's first black student and over seven years after the peak of the national movement. The beginning of the school year saw fifty-seven black American student enrolled.<sup>166</sup> By the end of the school year, over thirty of those students would be marching on campus grounds, waving signs and attacking the institution for its racist and discriminatory actions. Although the protest lasted only a week, it provides a new perspective on how a BCM protest unfolded in an unlikely location.

The swelling of racial tensions that resulted in the black student protest of April 1976 began earlier in the semester. During the semester, tensions grew due to what William Corson referred to as "the loss of a filled expectation," or the idea of losing previous gains.<sup>167</sup> Over time, black students perceived that they were losing many of the advances, programs, and resources that the institution had once given them. When faced with this loss, students started to believe that action must be taken in order to safeguard these interests. It did not matter if the students were actually losing anything; it mattered only that there was the perception that it was occurring. Black students at Concordia believed the gains they had made over the past twenty

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<sup>166</sup> "Black American Students, 1975-1976," File 2, Box 10, Student Lists, 1971-1981, Subject Files, OIA Collection.

<sup>167</sup> William R. Corson, *Promise or Peril: The Black College Student in America* (New York: Norton, 1970), 101.

years were in jeopardy, and decided to strike against the college in order to preserve those achievements.

First, black students lost what they considered an important medium to explore and expand ideas of black culture. *The Concordian* ran a poetry column entitled “Visions” in the 1975-1976 school year, a section whose content was often provided by black students. Those authors used the column to share their thoughts, emotions, and culture. In January, the editor-in-chief of *The Concordian*, Sally Evridge, cancelled the column, and claimed that the cancellation had to do with the “second-rate” and inadequate submissions.<sup>168</sup> Accusations of Evridge’s racism began to flourish around the institution, resulting in a letter to the editor from thirty-four individuals. The letters, whose signers included both students and faculty, asserted that the writing was adept and skillful, but that Evridge was either not aware of or incapable of understanding a culture different from her own. In fact, the signers saw the cancellation of “Visions” and its submissions’ characterization as “inadequate” and “second-rate” as nothing less than an attack on the black student community and black culture in general.<sup>169</sup>

At the same time, Harambee Weuse, now re-established as a campus organization, wished to open a line of communication between black students and the administration. The members of Harambee Weuse had a number of new ideas that they wanted to share with administrators of the college. With a statement desiring to “discuss issues which would create a better understanding between you and this organization,” the students of Harambee Weuse invited Vice-President of Academic Affairs Dr. Gerald Hartdagen, Dean of Admissions Jim Hausmann, Dean of Students Morrie Lanning and the newly-inducted President of Concordia

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<sup>168</sup> Sally Evridge, “From the Editor’s Desk,” *The Concordian*, January 16, 1976, 2.

<sup>169</sup> Various signers, “Letter to the Editor,” *The Concordian*, January 23, 1976, 3.

College Dr. Paul Dovre, to attend one of their three upcoming meetings in April.<sup>170</sup> In the years before 1976, most of these administrators defended or pushed for the multicultural programs heralded by the institution's black students. However, it seems like this invitation went unanswered, for black students soon decided that more radical actions were necessary to get the administration to listen.

For the third time in less than ten years, Concordia's black student population came up against the question of whether to put their trust in the administration to enact changes, or to push for changes through a demonstration or boycott. However, in 1976, white students at the college were also demonstrating against the administration, with their major grievance being the lack of student housing at the institution.<sup>171</sup> Usually, campuses in the timeline of the BCM were entrenched in multiple protests, with the main issue being Vietnam; at least one university, the University of Chicago, found itself confronting white students who were protesting university rules and the Vietnam War while also confronting black students who were employing Black Power tactics in order to change the university.<sup>172</sup> Ultimately, black students at both Concordia and nationwide realized that it was easier and safer to perform a BCM demonstration while other campus protests occurred.

With the tensions between black students and Concordia's administration at a high, the situation only needed a spark for a BCM demonstration to explode on campus. The spark came during Concordia's spring break, when a routine room inspection found an estimated six-

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<sup>170</sup> The Membership of Harambee Weuse to Dr. Paul Dovre, March 25, 1976, File 4, Box 10, Harambee Weuse, Subject Files, OIA Collection; The Membership of Harambee Weuse to Dr. Gerald Hartdagen, March 25, 1976, File 4, Box 10, Harambee Weuse, Subject Files, OIA Collection; The Membership of Harambee Weuse to Mr. Jim Hausmann, March 25, 1976, File 4, Box 10, Harambee Weuse, Subject Files, OIA Collection The Membership of Harambee Weuse to Mr. Morrie Lanning, March 25, 1976, File 4, Box 10, Harambee Weuse, Subject Files, OIA Collection

<sup>171</sup> Engelhardt, *On Firm Foundation Grounded*, 295.

<sup>172</sup> Williamson, *Black Power on Campus*, 46.

thousand to seven-thousand dollars' worth of stolen goods, including stereo equipment, leather coats, a credit card, a typewriter, and some other smaller items, as well as a small amount of marijuana in the rooms of two black students.<sup>173</sup> Following the existing protocol, the college administration held hearings on whether to expel the two students in whose room the evidence was found. An April fourth hearing for one of the students brought two lawyers from New Way, a black rights organization from Minneapolis, to act as the defense and legal counsel for the student. Once the hearing got underway, a clamor by the students attending the hearing forced officials to postpone the hearing. After the hearing was convened for the evening, a meeting between the two New Way lawyers and a number of black students led to the decision to launch an immediate protest against the college's administration.<sup>174</sup>

The organized students needed to decide exactly what this protest would entail. This required an examination of their beliefs and understanding of black power. Wayne Glasker's study of the University of Pennsylvania provided the best model for understanding how black students on college campuses approached the movement. Utilizing Van Deburg's ideas of the "Black Power paradigm-shift," Glasker argued that the students fall into one of three categories: assimilationists, pluralists, or nationalists.<sup>175</sup> For Glasker, students easily alternated between these categories, often being in multiple at a single time; however, most students were pluralists, and wanted to raise up a separate, proud, black culture at the institution.<sup>176</sup> In order to achieve this, it required the recruitment of more minority students, the hiring of more minority staff and faculty, and the creation of classes based in black culture, literature, and history. In addition,

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<sup>173</sup> *The Concordian*, "Cobbers Held over on Theft Charges," February 27, 1976, 1.

<sup>174</sup> Joshua J. Behl, "The Black Student Strike of 1976," Box 34, Writings about Concordia, 20. Behl wrote about the strike for an undergraduate research paper, but the work only provides a brief narrative account of the strike; therefore, use of his paper is sporadic, and only meant to enhance the story.

<sup>175</sup> Glasker, *Black Students in the Ivory Tower*, 18.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 14, 160–161.

pluralists wanted to create an environment more welcoming to minority students, which meant the existence and support of multicultural organizations and intercultural centers. This was at the heart of Concordia's black student protest. For the previous decade, many of Concordia's black students had pushed for increased resources, a relevant curriculum, and a sense of dignity; this can be seen in the racial events of both 1969 and 1973. When these students felt like the administration did not care anymore, it required action to encourage additional change.

Not all black students at Concordia joined the protest, nor did all agree with it. Nationally, about a quarter of all black students did not agree with the BCM and its ideas; in addition, another 25% of black students only supported the movement passively, for example by included joining black student organizations or signing petitions.<sup>177</sup> At Concordia, the percentage of black supporters of the protest was higher than the average. By the end of the protest, an estimated 52% of the black student population had actively participated in the movement, or about thirty of a total of fifty-seven enrolled. The number of passive supporters is unknown, but there is evidence that shows there was at least one minority student who disagreed with the actions of his fellow black students. David Kong wrote to *The Concordian* after the end of the protest. He criticized the reason for the protest, and stated that he had never felt discriminated against while at Concordia. Kong also suggested that the demonstrators were angry because of personal issues, such as recently losing the Student Senate elections, and not because of any real discrimination or racism on campus.<sup>178</sup> Kong fell into Van Deburg's category of assimilationist; he found no issues with the current situation at the college, and instead preferred to keep the status quo at the institution.

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<sup>177</sup> Kendi, *The Black Campus Movement*, 85.

<sup>178</sup> David Kong, "Kong Questions Black Position," *The Concordian*, April 23, 1976, 2.

Nationalists, the last of Van Deburg's categories, were at the other end of the spectrum from assimilationists, and routinely wanted to create new, separate systems for black students that would allow black students to learn. BCM nationalists are akin to the larger BPM's separatists, individuals who wanted to create a society untethered to the existing, predominantly white society, which defended its power with cultural and political institutions.<sup>179</sup> Nationalists were virtually unseen on predominantly white college campuses, instead supporting causes like the black-led Malcolm X Liberation University in North Carolina. At Concordia, nationalists were virtually, if not actually, non-existent.

It was one thing to believe in pluralism, but then the question was how to demonstrate effectively. BCM demonstration tactics at institutions ranged from mere sit-ins and boycotts to more violent tactics such as vandalism, occupation of campus buildings, and even shootouts between protestors and law enforcement.<sup>180</sup> Students needed to choose the right tactics; if they came at the institution with too much pressure, the administration might well refuse any concessions. If the students did not apply enough pressure, there would be no drastic or worthwhile changes to the college or university. On top of it all, students worried about possible future retaliation, whether by other students, administrators, the surrounding community, or even the government. In essence, students needed to find a way to protest that would provide the most benefits while minimizing possible retributions.

When compared to other higher educational institutions, the protest at Concordia was relatively tame. In order to demonstrate against Concordia's administration effectively, the

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<sup>179</sup> The most well-known of the Black Power Movement's separatists groups were the Nation of Islam, but there were also a number of lesser well-known organizations.

<sup>180</sup> Nella Van Dyke, "The Location of Student Protest: Patterns of Activism at American Universities in the 1960s," in *Student Protest: The Sixties and After*, ed. Gerard DeGroot (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 1998), 182.



protestors decided upon “striking” from their jobs as students, or boycotting classes and picketing. The reason for this was simple: a violent protest would have negatively affected the students more than it would have helped. A violent protest meant the cessation of federal funds, which would have forced many of those who protested in the demonstration to leave Concordia without a degree. At the same time, many of the protestors were seniors who would be graduating within a month of the protest’s start. Any extreme measures possibly jeopardized the senior protestors from receiving their degrees.<sup>181</sup> In addition, a boycott seemed like an efficient action for furthering the group’s wishes and demands. As Joy Ann Williamson found, BCM protests often took place alongside other campus protests or issues.<sup>182</sup> Around the same time of the BCM protest at Concordia, there were demonstrations regarding the lack of on-campus housing for students. A March 1976 petition demanding that the administration fix the issue received 1,445 student signatures.<sup>183</sup> With a concurrent protest, black students at Concordia were more assured that their protest would not receive severe punishment without raising questions about racial equality at the institution. Lastly, and most important, the purpose of the protest was not to bring about any particular change, at least according to the leaders of the demonstration. Instead, they believed that true purpose of the boycott was to raise attention to the issues they felt on campus, and not necessarily to have those specific demands passed. David Maggitt, president of Harambee Weuse, explained the reason for the protest was the lack of attention by the college administrators on issues pertinent to black students; therefore, the tactics necessary for change

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<sup>181</sup> “Black American Students, 1975-1976,” [1975?], File Folder 2, Box 10, Student Lists, 1971-1981, Subject Files, OIA Collection.

<sup>182</sup> Williamson, *Black Power on Campus*, 46.

<sup>183</sup> Engelhardt, *On Firm Foundation Grounded*, 295.

did not need to be extreme.<sup>184</sup> Whether or not this was truly the case, the students decided to act against the administration on the evening of April 4, 1976.

On April 5 at 10:00 AM, around thirty black students entered the chapel service at Concordia College. The black students addressed the crowd, and spoke about how black students were both purposefully and inadvertently discriminated against at the institution. Now at the end of their patience, the black students announced to the crowd that they would be boycotting all of their classes, refusing to do homework, and march around on the campus grounds while waving signs and shouting. The strike would end once the administration agreed to, or least legitimately explored the possibility of implementing the seventeen different demands.<sup>185</sup>

The demands that Concordia's protestors put forth differed little from those that other institutions had been handed by their own black students seven years prior. Nationally, BCM demands ranged from increased black representation on campus, expanded or modified curriculums, more cultural resources on-campus, black student or faculty control of those resources, and greater community service by the institution in minority-populated areas.<sup>186</sup> BCM historian Ibram X. Kendi classified what these demands meant to change into four different categories. They included the fight against: moralized contraptions, or rules and regulations; the standardization of exclusion, or black marginalization; normalized mask of whiteness, or Eurocentric curriculum or ideas, and; ladder altruism, or the facilitation of black students being removed from the masses.<sup>187</sup> Utilizing this framework allows for more careful study and

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<sup>184</sup> "Demands," April 5, 1976, Academic Dean's Responsibilities: Black Student Strike, quoted in Joshua J. Behl, "The Black Student Strike of 1976," Box 34, Writings about Concordia, 15-16.

<sup>185</sup> *The Forum* (Fargo, ND-Moorhead, MN), "30 Black Students Protest at Concordia," April 5, 1976, 9.

<sup>186</sup> Exum, *Paradoxes of Protest*, 125-126.

<sup>187</sup> Kendi, *The Black Campus Movement*, 147-156.

understanding of the demands that Concordia's black student protestors revealed at the campus chapel service on the morning of April 5.

There were a number of demands that fell into Kendi's category of the push against "moralized contraptions," or the idea that the institution's was often regulated by white administrators.<sup>188</sup> This often expressed itself as black student autonomy. The first demand that the students addressed dealt with the Intercultural Center. The students wanted the operating hours of their safe space to be decided by black students, and not the local authorities. In addition, the third demand insisted on the establishment of a black recruitment center, which would be managed by a number of Concordia's black students. Lastly, the seventh, eighth, and fifteenth demands stipulated that the college should include more black individuals on the Social Responsibility Board and the Human Relations Department, while also calling for a revision the Student Affairs Committee's Student and Faculty Academic Responsibility Code. Some black students found these departments to be offshoots of Concordia's administration, often bending to the will of the administration rather than to students' needs. The seventeenth item on the list was a demand for clemency, for the black student protestors wanted to ensure that the administration, and perhaps the city or state governments, could not retaliate against them. All of these demands opposed the current set of rules and regulations of the college, and subsequently attempted to give black students more power and autonomy on campus.

Next, there were demands that related to Kendi's second category, a push against the standardization of exclusion. In the fight against standardization of exclusion, students fought against the perceived racism and discriminatory actions by the administration or other Concordia

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<sup>188</sup> Kendi's ideas on "moralized contraptions" relates much more closely with the historically black colleges and universities. At those institutions, it meant the end of white-dominated governing boards and paternalistic tendencies. However, it is important to understand that these sort of attitudes and phenomena occurred elsewhere.

personnel. Once again, the demand related to the Intercultural Center requested a complete remodeling and sustained maintenance of the building, which minority students thought had been ignored by the college over the past few years. The third, sixth, and eleventh items on the list demanded that the administration end the racism which existed on Concordia's campus, specifically in the athletic department, at *The Concordian*, and in various academic departments. Lastly, the eighth demand asked for the permanent establishment of a Human Relations Committee, headed by a black commissioner; this was similar to what President Knutson had created in response to the events of 1973 when he put Gloria Hawkins in charge of the group. In essence, the students wanted to create a non-threatening environment on campus for minority students, and create an organization that would seriously address any future issues.

The third category, the attack on the normalized mask of whiteness, came through in the list's demands for new multicultural programs or resources. The fourth demand argued for the creation of a Department of Minority Group Studies, which would act as a more-inclusive Black Studies Department. The fifth demand requested the establishment of a black-student publication, no doubt a response to the actions of *The Concordian* editor Sally Evridge in cancelling the predominately black-written column entitled "Visions." The tenth demand, asked for more black administrators and faculty to strengthen, or perhaps just to safeguard, all of the other demands. In addition, there were multiple demands for more multicultural events: the ninth demand called for the re-establishment of Human Relations Day; the twelfth demand insisted that Concordia establish a black history week; and the fourteenth demanded to create an orientation program that would teach all incoming freshman about black people and black culture. This attack on the normalized mask of whiteness included the fight for black racial pride, a main principle of the larger BPM, as well as pluralism and multiculturalism.

Lastly, Kendi's fourth category referred to the struggle against ladder altruism. When applied to the Concordia College black student protest of April 1976, this was the least common on the list of demands. In fact, it only appeared once. The second item on the list demanded the establishment of a black recruitment center operated by black students. The idea was simple. Black students at Concordia would travel to a number of predominantly black areas or communities, and bring in as many students as possible. These students would be expected to learn while in college, graduate, and then return to the black community in order to help empower its members. By having a black student recruitment center run by black students, those students would only admit those students who would least likely leave their fellow black citizens in the lowest rungs of society after their own graduation. After publicly declaring these demands at the chapel service, the students left the room to a round of light applause and made their way outside to begin the protest.<sup>189</sup>

Stationed on the lawn west of Concordia's main administration building, the protestors marched around and brandished signs around that displayed slogans like "Stop Hypocrisy".<sup>190</sup> From early on, the protestors realized the necessity of garnering support, first in the local community and second from powerful media and governmental individuals and organizations. To begin with, the protestors realized the need to frame their actions in a positive light. A local Fargo/Moorhead news station covered the strike, and the protestors created a number of press releases for whenever the station ran a story on the topic.<sup>191</sup> The protestors also attempted to bring institutional members to their aid, including Carrol Malvey, the chairman of Concordia's

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<sup>189</sup> *The Forum* (Fargo, ND-Moorhead, MN), "30 Black Students Protest at Concordia," April 5, 1976, 9.

<sup>190</sup> *The Forum* (Fargo, ND-Moorhead, MN), "Concordia Students Continue Protest," April 7, 1976, 14; "Black Strike at CC 1976," VCA: 00055, Subgroup: Videocassettes, Media Collection, Concordia College Archives, Carl B. Ylvisaker Library, Concordia College, Moorhead, Minnesota (hereafter referred to as Media Collection).

<sup>191</sup> "Black Strike at CC 1976," Media Collection.

Board of Regents, and Dr. Richard Green, the sole black regent of the college.<sup>192</sup> In addition, the students also attempted to gather support from black groups, such as various media outlets like Ebony Magazine and a variety of radio stations; the protestors also wrote to government officials such as Hubert Humphrey and organizations such as the ACLU for support.<sup>193</sup>

By April eighth, the protest had grown to nearly forty students protesting, including a number of white student allies.<sup>194</sup> Harold Pope, a senior from New Jersey, acted as the spokesperson for the protest. Hoping to put more pressure on the administration to change, he asked for the American Lutheran Church to intervene and to support the demands of the protestors.<sup>195</sup> After three days, the protestors received word that the president of the American Lutheran Church had debated whether to join the talks, but that the final decision was to stay out of the fray.<sup>196</sup>

On the administration's side, Concordia President Paul Dove immediately went to work on the issue, and promised the protestors that their demands would be explored if they used the proper existing channels. Within a day of the reading of the demands, Dove briefed both Concordia's faculty and its Board of Regents, and formed a committee dedicated to peacefully ending the protest.<sup>197</sup> A day after the proclamation of demands at the chapel service, Dove asked all faculty, staff, and students to listen to each other, stating that "actions and words that are obstructive to rational discussion" are unhelpful and will not result in good. Instead, Dove argued that the existing systems should and would work in addressing any issues that students

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<sup>192</sup> *The Forum* (Fargo, ND-Moorhead, MN), "Concordia Blacks Ask Help of ALC," April 8, 1976, 26.

<sup>193</sup> *The Forum* (Fargo, ND-Moorhead, MN), "Concordia Students Continue Protest," April 7, 1976, 14; "Black Strike at CC 1976," Media Collection.

<sup>194</sup> *The Forum* (Fargo, ND-Moorhead, MN), "Concordia Blacks Ask Help of ALC," April 8, 1976, 26.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> *The Forum* (Fargo, ND-Moorhead, MN), "ALC President Weighs Concordia Intervention," April 9, 1976, 24; *The Forum* (Fargo, ND-Moorhead, MN), "Church Won't Intervene at Concordia," April 11, 1976, A13.

<sup>197</sup> Engelhardt, *On Firm Foundation Grounded*, 295.

had with the institution. Lastly, Dovre stated that, at a practical level, it was nearing the end of the spring semester, and people needed to remain faithful to their responsibilities as students.<sup>198</sup>

On April 8, Dovre released a letter addressed to the “Concordia College Community” discussing each of the demands and what steps the administration was currently undertaking in order to enact those demands. The letter mentioned the administration’s commitment to a cultural center and minority programs, the existence of a system to address instances of racism, and the role that the Student Association has in these sorts of matters. Concerning the claim of the “façade of Christianity,” Dovre utilized the Christian notions of repentance and forgiveness, and stated that all individuals must transform into new beings free of our past sins. Lastly, Dovre offered a very lenient clemency policy for strikers. Students who participated in the boycott must complete all missed coursework by the last day of classes, and a grade of “incomplete” would not be given to strikers; however, any work turned in by the last day of class would have to be accepted by any professor, and those professors must evaluate those assignments by the same standards as those applied to non-strikers.<sup>199</sup>

Without support from outside sources, the administration’s insistence on using existing sources to address demands, and the end of the semester drawing closer, the protest began to falter. On April 12, one week after the initiation of the boycott, the black students who participated in the demonstration unanimously voted to end the strike and return to their classes.<sup>200</sup> Pope declared that it was the administration that made them decide to end their strike: “It’s no longer necessary to strike because the administration has shown good faith. We are

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<sup>198</sup> President Paul J. Dovre to Members of the Concordia Community, April 6, 1976, Students, Minority, Topical Files.

<sup>199</sup> Paul Dovre to Members of the Concordia College Community, April 8, 1976, Demonstrations/Petitions, Topical Files.

<sup>200</sup> *The Forum* (Fargo, ND-Moorhead, MN), “Black Students End Strike,” April 13, 1976, 1-2.

putting our trust right now in the administration living up to what they said they would do. That's all we can do."<sup>201</sup> Since the protestors had not violated any college rules, they could not be officially reprimanded for their actions. When asked about the protest, Dovre stated:

“This experience has established a number of principles which I hold to be essential in the Concordia Community. First thing was that the community will listen not to shouting or strong language, but to reasons and feeling. Second, that the community will act not on the basis of posturing for the press or intimidation, but only on the basis of right reasons considered in the due process of the college's life. And third, that while every citizen shall have a chance to be heard, we can't guarantee that the views of any particular group or individual will prevail.”<sup>202</sup>

Keeping his promise, Dovre marshaled Dean of Students Morrie Lanning, Student Body President Ann Svennungsen, and Executive Assistant to the President Dr. Loren Anderson to address the list of demands.<sup>203</sup>

Numerous factors influenced the Concordia's black student protest of 1976. Black students decided to undertake a relatively non-violent demonstration, especially when compared to some of the other BCM demonstrations from the previous years. The protesting students did not want to act in a way that would harm those who participated. By 1976, campus and governmental policies made more violent options too risky, as the activists might lose more than they could gain. In addition, the students decided to boycott in the last month of classes. While the students thought this might put pressure on the administration to quickly concede, it instead put more pressure on the students to give up their demonstration in order to pass their classes, or even graduate. The demands were similar when compared to other BCM demonstrations, especially when looking at the trends they were attacking at the campus. When the students

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Loren Anderson, Morris Lanning, and Ann Svennungsen to Members of the Concordia Community, [Mid-April 1976], Students, Minority, Topical Files.



decided to end the protest on April 12, any possibility of change now laid in the hands of the administrators, who fulfilled their promise and began the task of investigating the feasibility and necessity of the demands.

## CHAPTER V

### COUNTERREVOLUTION: THE BACKLASH, APRIL 1976-1979

On February 2, 1977, members of Harambee Weuse sent a letter to Dr. Dave Gring, the new Vice President of Academic Affairs of Concordia and member of the Minority Group Studies Committee. The letter argued that the committee, and by extension the administration, worked for five months on the creation of a new, more diverse curriculum, but nothing had truly been accomplished. Harambee Weuse members repeated statements they had overheard from the committee's members, including "Black theology isn't important," "Mexican Americans aren't important because they haven't made any great contributions to history," and "Asian Americans aren't important either." The letter ended with a question: Was Concordia serious about trying to establish minority studies, or was the whole thing an exercise in futility?<sup>204</sup> The idea that Concordia's administrators did not want to enact changes reflected what Martha Biondi referred to as a BCM "counterrevolution." For Biondi, a counterrevolution encompassed all actions undertaken by administrators or other students that attempted to suppress or impede many of the demands or changes that activists wanted on campus.<sup>205</sup> Many institutions would be willing to change only as far as it took to enhance their own survival or silence dissent; however, these institutions would not go any further, as radical changes threatened both its educational identity

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<sup>204</sup> Harambee Weuse to Dr. Dave Gring, "Minority Group Studies Committee," February 2, 1977, File 4, Box 10, Harambee Weuse, Subject Files, OIA Collection.

<sup>205</sup> Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus*, 174.

and funding support from outside sources.<sup>206</sup> At Concordia, the administration discussed the possibility and feasibility of the seventeen demands. However, those administrators often did whatever they could to minimize the potential change to campus and the institution's identity, and instead focused on accepting more of the minor demands. By the end of the decade, the administration instituted new policies that safeguarded the institution from another demonstration akin to the April 1976 black student strike.

During the protest, the administration's reaction to the protest was notably patient and collected. President Dovre, in his initial community response to the protest, defended the college and urged protestors to use existing procedures to meet the striker's agendas stating, "I believe this is a time for us to have confidence in ourselves and in our methods of decision making. We have people and processes capable of examining ourselves and our community..."<sup>207</sup> Since the end of the semester was nearing, officials only needed to wait out the protestors, for either the protest would die out due to lack of interest or end once summer break started. Furthermore, the administration understood that the situation would not escalate, for black students had more to lose than to gain if the protest grew more violent or widespread. Administrators believed the only way for reform to occur at the time was through the utilization of channels already in place. Thus, the administration offered to give due examination to all demands as long as the protestors utilized the existing procedures at the institution.

Once the students voted to end the strike, Concordia officials quickly moved through the list of demands. They mainly did this in order to both to please the students and to forestall any retribution if black students deemed the administration too slow in taking action. Within two

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<sup>206</sup> Exum, *Paradoxes of Protest*, 143.

<sup>207</sup> Paul Dovre to members of Concordia community, April 6, 1976, File 19, Box 10, Racial Problems, 1976-1981, Subject Files, OIA Collection.

weeks after the strike ended, each of the demands on the list had gone through the administration and moved to a number of different committees and personnel.<sup>208</sup> As promised, many of the investigations included black student representatives, who acted as advocates for the proposed changes.<sup>209</sup> At the same time, student participation required quick processing of the demands. By the following fall, the entire list of demands had been investigated by the administration, as well as the implementation of some changes.

As Joy Ann Williamson found in her study of the University of Illinois, campus administrators were usually willing to work with students on any issue that they considered legitimate and non-threatening.<sup>210</sup> At Concordia, the administrators worked with the students in exploring the possibility of all seventeen demands; however, the administration did little more than enact partialities of the seventeen demands. Of all of the demands, none were passed fully as pushed for by black students.

The administration enacted many small-scale changes to the campus's policies and offerings. The college repaired the Intercultural Center, scheduled a Black History Week program and a Human Relations Day, and a freshman orientation program that focused on pluralism, race, and culture was instituted.<sup>211</sup> These changes did not affect the operations of the college; instead, they were often programs or resources the college had previously funded or organized, but for some reason or another stopped. Therefore, it was not a major transformation for the college, constituting minor modifications at best.

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<sup>208</sup> *The Concordian*, "Black Demands Being Discussed," April 23, 1976, 2.

<sup>209</sup> *The Concordian*, "Actions taken on Blacks' Demands," September 3, 1976, 1.

<sup>210</sup> Williamson, *Black Power on Campus*, 4.

<sup>211</sup> *The Concordian*, "Actions taken on Blacks' Demands," September 3, 1976, 1.

Simultaneously, the college tempered many of the students' demands, finding the originals to be too radical. In his work, Fabio Rojas noted that when confronted with black student demands, institutions under attack gravitated to accepting those that agreed with their pre-existing ideas and identities.<sup>212</sup> At Concordia, this came most apparent in the debate over the demand for a Minority Group Studies Department. As mentioned above, the members of Harambee Weuse, which included a number of the protestors, felt the college was either uninterested in creating the program, or plainly ignored the idea.<sup>213</sup> Later that year, a Third World Seminar discussion resulted in students debating the conflicting ideas between Concordia's push for color-blindness and its identity as a Norwegian-Lutheran college. For a number of students at the seminar, Concordia's administration was hypocritical since they simultaneously refused the creation of a Minority Studies Department as part of their policy on color-blindness while also offering courses on Norwegian and Scandinavian culture.<sup>214</sup> The administrators ultimately decided against the implementation of a Minority Group Studies Department, instead expanding the Minority Studies program the institution already operated in conjunction with the two other major institutions in the area, North Dakota State University and Moorhead State College.<sup>215</sup>

Beyond the Minority Group Studies issue, other changes came to Concordia due to the protest. In reference to class structures, Concordia's curriculum was also altered- at least slightly.

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<sup>212</sup> Fabio Rojas, *From Black Power to Black Studies: How a Radical Social Movement Became an Academic Discipline* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 208–209.

<sup>213</sup> Harambee Weuse to Dr. Dave Gring, "Minority Group Studies Committee," February 2, 1977, File 4, Box 10, Harambee Weuse, Subject Files, OIA Collection.

<sup>214</sup> Benjamin Toso, "Minority Needs on Campus," *The Concordian*, December 2, 1977, 8.

<sup>215</sup> *The Concordian*, "Actions taken on Blacks' Demands," September 3, 1976, 1. The same debate on a type of Minority Group Studies occurred after the BCM demonstration at the University of Minnesota. Parodying the push for a Black Studies Department, students asked when there would be the creation of a "Swedish-American Studies," "Norwegian-American Studies," and "Polish Studies," as the institution enrolled a number of students from each category. For more information see: Leighton, "A Small Revolution," 103–104.

Professors and officials modified existing classes that dealt with minority issues such as the course on black history, which employed more student involvement in the class's governance.<sup>216</sup> In addition, the top-tier of the administration, which included President Dovre and the rest of the college's deans, delegated the investigations to other departments. As for the black student publication, the choice of whether or not to create one went to the Student Association. Most of the proposed committees, such as the Human Relations, Social Responsibility Board, and Student-Faculty Board, were under consideration by the college's various governance departments in the fall of 1976. Lastly, the push for increased black faculty resulted in the contacting of alumni and the placement of ads in academic publication.<sup>217</sup> Although the administration did incorporate or follow through on these demands, it was often not to the extent that the protesting students had wanted.

The investigations into the charges of racism originally exhibited an act of temperance by the administration. The committee charged Sally Evridge, the editor of *The Concordian*, with "insensitivity," a vague term that resulted in no changes at the paper.<sup>218</sup> In addition to Evridge, the group also investigated three faculty members and one administrator whom minority students had accused of making racist remarks or taking actions that were racist.<sup>219</sup> After numerous investigations from internal committees, the accusations were deemed to be unfounded; however, the administration began a discussion regarding the difference between conscious racism and subconscious racism.<sup>220</sup> While the former constituted actions based solely and

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<sup>216</sup> Sandgren and Carnegie, "The Black American Experience: Fall Semester, 1976," File 19, Box 10, Racial Problems, 1976-1981, Subject Files, OIA Collection.

<sup>217</sup> "Actions taken on Blacks' Demands," *Concordian*, September 3, 1976, 1.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> "Issue #3: Racist Professors", File 19, Box 10, Racial Problems, 1976-1981, Subject Files, OIA Collection.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

purposefully on racial criteria, the latter was much harder to define, and thus much harder to investigate.<sup>221</sup> However, in November, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare investigated the college after they received a letter that charged the institution with “discrimination against Black students as a class and against the complainant during disciplinary proceedings,” most likely a reference to the April fourth hearing.<sup>222</sup> The external investigation by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare ultimately found the existence of “possible discrimination” in the hiring practices of the college, but mentioned little else.<sup>223</sup> By the end of 1976, Concordia’s administration had implemented only the more cosmetic, small-scale changes to the campus’s policies and programs, but they now understood the sort of nuisances that arose when students began to complain and protest.

There was typically a backlash or apathy by white students on campuses where a BCM demonstration occurred and Concordia was no exception to this phenomenon. As William Exum found in *Paradoxes of Protest*, some students saw the actions and subsequent demands of black student protestors as illegitimate, especially if changes on campus came about because of violent action.<sup>224</sup> At Concordia, there was more outright apathy than backlash. The new president of Harambee Weuse, Eddie Thames, had to defend the protest against questions of the demonstration’s purpose in an interview published in a January 1977 issue of *The Concordian*. In the interview, Thames mentioned that the protest’s purpose was not to “tear apart Concordia,”

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> Paul Dovre to faculty and staff, November 10, 1976, File 19, Box 10, Racial Problems, 1976-1981, Subject Files, OIA Collection.

<sup>223</sup> Loren Anderson to All Department Chairpersons and Administrative Unit Managers, Memo, January 7, 1977, File 19, Box 10, Racial Problems, 1976-1981, Subject Files, OIA Collection.

<sup>224</sup> Exum, *Paradoxes of Protest*, 129.

but rather was a concentrated “effort to further improve it.”<sup>225</sup> Less than a month later, an article on the importance of Black History Week, written by a Concordia history professor passionate about multiculturalism and the demands of the students, emphasized the importance of Americanism, not black power or black pride: “But once again let me stress that the key word in the term ‘Black American History’ is not ‘Black,’ but ‘American,’ for without the Black, or the Indian, or the Oriental, or Chicano etc., there is no real ‘American’ history or society, for to omit or diminish any one part denigrates the whole and denies rather than affirms the American Dream.”<sup>226</sup> Lastly, an article published nearly a year and a half after the student protest found that most white students believed the strike to be a confrontation between black students and white students, and not between the general student body (which included both white and black students) and the administration.<sup>227</sup> However, the rise of black student-white student tensions may not have been extreme at Concordia, since the protestors at Concordia did not have a lengthy nor radical protest compared to a large number of other campuses with BCM protests.<sup>228</sup>

Lastly, a large portion of Concordia’s institutional reforms came not from the students’ demands, but came about because of the student’s actions during the protest. Throughout campuses that had a BCM demonstration, administrations passed repressive policies aimed at minimizing any future potential protests.<sup>229</sup> The same occurred at Concordia. In 1979, administrators at Concordia approved two new policies that would limit the effectiveness of campus demonstrations. First, the administration, through the Student Affairs Office, stated that speakers would still be welcomed on campus, as they bring an opportunity to review and discuss

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<sup>225</sup> Karen Hoisington, “Harambee Weuse President Discusses Current Status of Blacks at CC,” *The Concordian*, January 21, 1977, 4.

<sup>226</sup> Martin Lutter, “Black History is for Everyone,” *The Concordian*, February 4, 1977, 4.

<sup>227</sup> Geoff Crane, “Minority Image Cause for Concern,” *The Concordian*, November 3, 1978, 11.

<sup>228</sup> Exum, *Paradoxes of Protest*, 137.

<sup>229</sup> Kendi, *The Black Campus Movement*, 123.



whatever issues the speaker was addressing; however, the speaker could now not espouse ideas or products contrary to the stated goals and policies of Concordia College.<sup>230</sup> At the same time, the college's Student Affairs Office reaffirmed its previous stance that a student had a right to protest; however, that right was severely limited. For example, a protest could not infringe upon another's right to an education, the demonstration must be directed at ideas and not individuals, Concordia College students must make up a majority of those participating in the protest, the protest must be held outside of buildings on campus grounds, it could not be held on the President's House's lawn, and it needed to take place between the hours of 7:00 in the morning and 11:00 at night.<sup>231</sup> Most importantly, the protest must be submitted and approved by the Dean of Students, which meant that the protest must be prepared at least a week in advance.<sup>232</sup> While the purpose of the rules was apparently to defend other student's right to an education and protect the protestors from any backlash or legal retribution for their actions, it effectively stopped future radical protests. With the passage of this policy, students were restricted in their demonstrations for they now needed permission to protest by college administrations, and these rules were flexible enough to effectively show that any protest could or would violate at least one of these policies. If the students decided to protest without following one of these rules, the institution now had policies in place to discipline the students however they wanted. These new policies helped safeguard the college from experiencing another BCM-type protest.

The administrative response to the black student protest changed the institution very little. Of the changes that did occur, they were often based within the classroom, or a one-time

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<sup>230</sup> Student Affairs Office, "On-Campus Speakers Policy," May 1979, File 1, Box 2, General, Student Affairs Committee Collection.

<sup>231</sup> Student Affairs Office, "Demonstrations Policy," May 1979, File 1, Box 2, General, Student Affairs Committee Collection.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

instance, such as the updates to the Cultural Center. Although there are no available documents to prove its existence, black students on Concordia's campus may have also felt additional harassment from white students on campus, who felt that any perceived gains came from unlawful or illegitimate means; however, there was no widespread harassment that received public attention, as was the case in 1969 and 1973. This may be a result of decreased black student enrollment. After the 1976 demonstration, black student attendance began to wane at Concordia. The semester after the black student protest, the enrollment of black students reached only twenty-seven senior, junior, and sophomore students, and presumably a fair number of freshmen.<sup>233</sup> In 1978, the number of black students enrolled was under thirty.<sup>234</sup> *The Concordian* ran an article with statements by black students, most of whom believed that the declining black student enrollment was the most worrisome phenomenon on campus.<sup>235</sup> And it was a well taken concern, for by the fall semester of 1981, the number of black students enrolled at Concordia had dwindled to only twenty-three.<sup>236</sup> The call for multiculturalism had emerged on Concordia's campus because of healthy black student enrollment; when black student enrollment declined, the push for diversity did as well.

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<sup>233</sup> "Black Americans," August 8, 1977, File 2, Box 10, Student Lists, 1971-1981, Subject Files, OIA Collection.

<sup>234</sup> Geoff Crane, "Minority Image Cause for Concern," *The Concordian*, November 3, 1978, 11.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

<sup>236</sup> "Minority Students, First Semester, 1981-1982," File 2, Box 10, Student Lists, 1971-1981, Subject Files, OIA Collection.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

In September 1971, Concordia student Lynn Bruer wrote an essay that detailed the history of Concordia's institutional goals. In the middle of the essay, Bruer asked about the situation of Concordia at the time of writing as compared to its initial goals: "Then, too, the purpose of the college was to be a place of security, a place where the old familiar standards, language, habits would be maintained. Where does that leave us now---a liberal arts college in a community where the Norwegians are 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> generation, or not Norwegian at all, nor are all Lutheran or even Christian?"<sup>237</sup> Written five years before the 1976 demonstration, Bruer asked an important question for the college. In an increasingly progressive society, could Concordia remain dedicated to its initial mission? Better yet, should it remain dedicated to its initial mission?

Concordia College began to follow the national trend of increased black student recruitment in the late 1960s, and often framed the recruitment in terms of integration and assimilation. Newly arrived black students came to the campus with a desire to create their own identities, and became increasingly displeased when the administration and predominantly white student body not only ignored their pleas, but also often outright refused to accommodate these students. After the rise of racial tensions in 1969 and 1973, black students at the institution finally decided to demonstrate against the college, and presented a list of seventeen demands.

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<sup>237</sup> Lynn Bruer, "Concordia's Goals: A Historical Perspective," Writings About Concordia Collection, 3.

After a promise by the administration to discuss the demands through the existing processes, the students voted to end the protest after a week of boycotting classes. The administration then began to adopt some of those demands made by black students while simultaneously adopting rules and regulations that would safeguard against future protests. By the end of the 1970s, Concordia College had changed, but not as radically as black students had wanted.

Was the BCM a success at Concordia, or does it make more sense as a failure? From this historian's perspective, it should be understood as a success. The wider BCM phenomenon made it so multiculturalism and the push for diversity became a main part of campus life and the learning experience.<sup>238</sup> Going further, this result of "non-radical change" occurred at many of the other campuses that underwent a BCM demonstration. After the swell of protests in 1968-1969, many of the black students turned to defensive stances in an attempt to sustain any gains they may have made.<sup>239</sup> However (and this is important), it did not matter whether or not physical or tangible change came to a BCM campus; instead, a BCM demonstration provided enough impetus to create campus discussions, and eventually made diversity a worthwhile endeavor for a campus to undertake. A 2012 study by Jeffery L. Wilson, Katrina A. Meyer, and Larry McNeal found that from their sample, 75% of college and university mission statements referenced diversity as a driving principle for the campus.<sup>240</sup> In addition, increasing numbers of colleges and universities are making classes on diversity a requirement for graduation. Contemporary events, most notably the black student protests at the University of Missouri, show a resurgence of BCM

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<sup>238</sup> Ibram Rogers, "On the American Black Campus," *Peace Review* 21, no. 4 (Winter 2009): 464, doi:10.1080/10402650903323504.

<sup>239</sup> Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement*, 106.

<sup>240</sup> Jeffery L. Wilson, Katrina A. Meyer, and Larry McNeal, "Mission and Diversity Statements: What They Do and Do Not Say," *Innovative Higher Education* 37, no. 2 (August 9, 2011): 125-39, doi:10.1007/s10755-011-9194-8.

ideas and black power ideas.<sup>241</sup> To bring it back to northwestern Minnesota, Concordia College, which was once a haven for Norwegian Lutherans, transitioned into a more pluralistic and multicultural institution. This sort of transition was no easy task, for as Fabio Rojas stated, “universities are one of the most difficult institutions to change in modern society.”<sup>242</sup> This transformation began at Concordia in the late 1950s, when the institution began to push for integration at the campus.

One of the most important consequences of the BCM was the introduction of classes dedicated to understanding cultures other than the traditional, white-dominated “canon.” Following the push for black studies that characterized the BCM, there was an emergence of Hispanic studies, women’s studies, and gay and lesbian studies.<sup>243</sup> This in turn allowed for previously ignored or suppressed ideas to emerge on college campuses, often giving voice and subsequent power to those who had very little. Perhaps even more importantly, as Jared Leighton stated in his study of the BCM at the University of Minnesota, the primary beneficiaries of the new, diverse curriculums were white students, who had never before been forced to learn about a culture other than their own.<sup>244</sup> In time, this increase in multiculturalist progressively reshaped nearly every aspect of American life.

A case study of Concordia College’s BCM protest allows for an expansion of the historiography. Most of the existing single-institution studies focused on large campuses or the most violent demonstrations, and ignored movements that are more moderate or those at small

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<sup>241</sup> Although there are a large number of current news stories that address the issues of race on college campuses, one of the more brief yet incredibly thorough is Alia Wong and Adrienne Green, “Campus Politics: A Cheat Sheet,” *The Atlantic*, April 4, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/04/campus-protest-roundup/417570/>.

<sup>242</sup> Rojas, *From Black Power to Black Studies*, 211.

<sup>243</sup> Lucas, *American Higher Education*, 246.

<sup>244</sup> Leighton, “A Small Revolution,” 5.

colleges or universities. However, one case study is not enough. A true expansion of the historiography requires additional studies on smaller institutions, not to mention more comprehensive, generalized works. In addition, future research should examine particular factors or events within the demonstrations: white allies, white faculty, black faculty, and, perhaps most interestingly, black students who did not agree with the ideas of the BCM. In addition, additional studies could focus on how gender and class affected the demonstrations. At the same time, there are always more sources one can examine to better understand, even at Concordia, especially oral histories. There is no shortage to future research possibilities.

It is a strange idea to think of a black power demonstration occurring in the predominantly white, Lutheran environment of Concordia College, which is itself located in the predominantly white, rural area of Moorhead. The push for cultural pride, often coupled with racial solidarity and self-determination, created the backbone of the black power principles of the 1960s and 1970s. When black students arrived on Concordia's campus in the 1960s and early 1970s, they found themselves in a completely new environment, often subjected to racial tensions. When those thirty or so black students marched into Concordia's chapel service on April 5, they demanded that the administration treat them and their culture with respect and dignity. Perhaps the best way to describe this is to revisit the statement Jim Hausmann, Concordia's Vice President of Admissions during the 1960s, told to interested black recruits: "Concordia is a lily-white school in a totally white community and you will be subjected to discrimination and treated as an oddity or novelty."<sup>245</sup> The newly arrived black students refused to accept this, and subsequently began their crusade in changing Concordia.

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<sup>245</sup> Jim Hausmann, interview by Lee Goldstrand, [1993?], quoted in Goldstrand, "Concordia's Recruitment of African American Students," 8.

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