DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 427 603 HE 031 794

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TITLE Student Activism in an Age of Cultural Diversity. ASHE Annual Meeting Paper.
PUB DATE 1998-11-00
NOTE 44p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education (23rd, Miami, FL, November 5-8, 1998).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Activism; American Indians; Blacks; Case Studies; College Environment; *College Students; *Cultural Pluralism; *Diversity (Student); Higher Education; Organizational Change; Trend Analysis
IDENTIFIERS *ASHE Annual Meeting; Chicano Studies; Homosexual Rights; Michigan State University; Mills College CA; Pennsylvania State University; Rutgers the State University NJ; University of California Los Angeles

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the organizational context in which student protest is currently enacted and finds a new generation of campus activism organized around multiculturalism. Qualitative methods are used to analyze five case studies of student protest: (1) the Mills College (California) strike of 1990; (2) the Chicano studies movement at the University of California (Los Angeles) in 1993; (3) gay rights demonstrations at Pennsylvania State University from 1991 to 1993; (4) African American student resistance at Rutgers University (New Jersey)in 1995; and (5) financial aid protests involving American Indian students at Michigan State University from 1994 to 1996. Data collection involved 110 interviews with students, alumni, faculty, staff, and community members and analysis of documents and other artifacts of campus incidents and student organizing efforts. Each case study is presented in terms of a general description of the particular movement and its relationship to identity concerns, the precipitating events that escalated to highly visible campus demonstrations, the student response to the precipitating events, and organizational outcomes associated with a particular student movement. The study finds that all five cases were fundamentally linked to issues of multiculturalism and identity struggle. (Contains 46 references.) (DB)

STUDENT ACTIVISM IN AN AGE OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY

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Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Miami.

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November 1998

ASHE *Association for the Study of Higher Education*

Headquartered at the University of Missouri-Columbia • College of Education • Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis • 211 Hill Hall, Columbia, MO 65211 • 573-882-9645 • fax 573-884-5714

This paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education held in Miami, Florida, November 5-8, 1998. This paper was reviewed by ASHE and was judged to be of high quality and of interest to others concerned with higher education. It has therefore been selected to be included in the ERIC collection of ASHE conference papers.

STUDENT ACTIVISM IN AN AGE OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY

INTRODUCTION

The mid-1990s saw the release of two films, "PCU" and "Higher Learning," both of which relied heavily on stereotypes of contemporary student activists and their corruption of the academy through what has often been described as "political correctness." In both of these films the message is clear: The university of the 1990s is besieged by students who have replaced dispassionate and objective pursuit of knowledge with political correctness and identity politics. Unfortunately, simplistic treatment of contemporary students is not left entirely to the film industry. Sacks (1996), in his book Generation X Goes to College, assails the "postmodern Balkanization of knowledge and power" in which students are part of a "broadside attack on modern institutions" (p. 141). For Sacks, the "postmodern student" is one who "knows the value of learning but expects to be entertained. He has a keen sense of entitlement but little motivation to succeed. That is the essence of Generation X" (p. xiii).

The criticism of contemporary students by no means has been limited to the popular media for the attack has been waged on a variety of intellectual fronts as well. For example, D'Souza (1991) assailed campus identity politics for, in his words, supporting "the victim's revolution." Likewise, Schlesinger (1992) attacked what he described as the "cult of ethnicity" for rejecting "the unifying vision of individuals from all nations melted into a new race" (p. 16). For Schlesinger and D'Souza, as well as other notables such as Lynne Cheney and William Bennett, identity politics of the 1990s threatens the foundation of a common national identity. In Schlesinger's words, "It belittles *unum* and glorifies *pluribus*" (p. 17).

Moreover, student activists engaging in identity politics are often described as a threat to the very fabric that holds the United States together, as Schlesinger maintained: "The cult of ethnicity has reversed the movement of American history, producing a nation of minorities--or at least of minority spokesmen--less interested in joining with the majority in common endeavor than in declaring their alienation from an oppressive, white, patriarchal, racist, sexist, classist society" (p. 112).

All of this is to suggest that perceptions of the fragmentation of the academy as a consequence of campus multicultural initiatives during the early and mid 1990s had achieved near mythical proportion despite strong evidence suggesting otherwise. For example, Astin discussed findings from a national study, part of which focused on student outcomes associated with institutional commitment to multiculturalism: "The fact that a strong emphasis on diversity enhances the student's commitment to promoting racial understanding is of special interest, given that some critics have alleged that emphasizing issues of race and multiculturalism tends to exacerbate racial tensions on the campus. Quite the opposite seems to be the case" (p. 46).

Resistance to multiculturalism however is not limited to voices from the Right. Attacks also derive from liberal leaning social critics who have grown impatient and mistrustful of what they see on today's campuses. Perhaps the most astute criticism derives from Gitlin (1995), who, interestingly enough, was one of the young Leftists contributing to the rise of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) back in the early 1960s. Now a professor at NYU, Gitlin has adopted more of a centrist position in his criticism of identity politics and multiculturalism. While Gitlin assuredly agrees with the democratic vision of

educational opportunity for all, he sees identity politics as a detour and a new kind of orthodoxy enforced through institutional policies. Gitlin's apprehension largely concerns the breakup of the Left: "The cultivation of difference is nothing new, but the sheer profusion of identities that claim separate political standing today is unprecedented. . . . What is a Left without a commons, even a hypothetical one? If there is no people, but only peoples, there is no Left" (p. 165).

But the research undergirding this article suggests that the "separate political standing" that Gitlin alludes to is not nearly so separate as he believes it to be. The identity struggles described throughout this article are hardly the unbridgeable domain of isolationism Gitlin and others rightfully fear. Their fundamental mistake may be more a matter of attribution error than the actuality of culturally diverse others who have supposedly closed the door to communication with White males and any other human manifestation of power and privilege. Even the most strident students of today's "culture wars" are more than willing to join arms with others who support more participatory forms of democracy. Perhaps the "common dreams" that Gitlin speaks of as part of the vision of the Left, are not so distant after all but hidden in the daily muck of misunderstanding. Instead of seeing multiculturalism as the "vexatious balkanization of America," we may be far better off, as Takaki argues, "responding to our diversity as an opportunity to open American minds" (1993, p. 3).

Clearly, the term "identity politics" often has been used in a pejorative manner to condemn student struggles linked to race, gender, and sexual orientation. However, in this article I argue in favor of a counter-interpretation: That the efforts of diverse students to

forge their own place in campus life through organized demonstrations may also be understood as a form of participatory democracy. Thus, identity politics represents not so much the coming apart of a democratic republic, as Schlesinger (1992) maintains, but instead may be understood as democracy playing itself out as diverse students seek to build a truly multicultural society through the colleges and universities they inhabit.

In suggesting a counter-interpretation, I am not simply playing the "devil's advocate." I truly believe that in addition to abuses of identity politics, as have been so frequently cited, there have been and continue to be constructive multicultural reforms enacted through political strategies organized around identity concerns. And while some scholars of higher education may question the relevance of such reform, many others point to the pressing need to diversify the academy (García, 1997; Hurtado, 1992; Tierney, 1993).

Thus, the goal of this article is to capture the tenor of a new generation of campus activism organized around multiculturalism. To accomplish this goal, I focus on the organizational context in which student protest is enacted. I utilize qualitative methods and organize my discussion around five case studies of student protest (protest is defined here *as a form of activism primarily intended to create organizational disruption as a means to raise public awareness and force institutional change*). Specifically, I discuss the Mills College strike of 1990, the Chicano studies movement at UCLA culminating in 1993, gay rights demonstrations at Pennsylvania State University from 1991 to 1993, African American student resistance at Rutgers University in 1995, and financial aid protests involving American Indian students at Michigan State University from 1994 to 1996.

CONTEMPORARY STUDENT PROTEST IN PERSPECTIVE

Throughout the 1990s, a number of U.S. colleges and universities have witnessed their share of campus unrest as a new generation of student activists have come to populate institutions of higher learning. Although the extent of campus unrest is difficult to ascertain, there are a number of analysts who suggest that there certainly is an increase in comparison to the previous two decades (Levine & Cureton, 1998; Levine & Hirsch, 1991; Loeb, 1994). Apathy is alive and well, but there is nonetheless evidence that student protest and a commitment to campus and social change has once again surfaced, at least among a significant body of students.

While it is likely that career-minded students are still the majority (Astin, 1998; Dey, Astin, & Korn, 1991; Levine & Cureton, 1998), and the "slacker" image of Generation X may apply to many (Sacks, 1996), amidst the most diverse population of college students in U.S. history there has emerged a sizeable group of students who have little interest in maintaining the status quo. And perhaps it is far more than coincidence that among this most diverse population of students it is *diversity* itself that lies at the heart of much of their protestations. From efforts to forge a multicultural curriculum (Leslie & Murr, 1993; Princeton University, 1995), to complaints about the lack of commitment to underrepresented minorities in college and university enrollment practices (Guernsey, 1996; U. of Mass., 1997), to student responses to racist, sexist, or heterosexist behaviors (Hurtado, 1992; Rhoads, 1994, 1995; Sidel, 1994; Students Rally, 1996), issues of diversity undergird so much of the campus tension of the 1990s that both conservative and liberal scholars have pointed to these occurrences as evidence of the fragmentation of American society (D'Souza,

1991; Gitlin, 1995; Glazer, 1997; Hunter, 1991; Schlesinger, 1992).

Getting a handle on the extent of the 1990s student movement is difficult in that identifying and gathering meaningful statistics about student protest is next to impossible. Even the research conducted on student activism of the 1960s leaves much disagreement about the extent of protest during what most believe to be the highest period of campus activism in U.S. history (Baird, 1970; Lipset & Altbach, 1967; Peterson, 1966). Certainly, the 1990s is far removed from the measure of activism occurring during the "decade of unrest." And there is perhaps some agreement that the decade of the '90s has witnessed an increase over the previous two decades. Despite the general limitations of the data, what do we know about this decade?

There are a number of indications that protest indeed has returned to many campuses around the country. For example, there is evidence to suggest that student activism has increased throughout the late 1980s and into the early 1990s (Levine & Hirsch, 1991). Volunteerism, although obviously not the same phenomenon as political and social protest, nonetheless provides evidence of an increasing social consciousness. The growth in the early 1990s of campus volunteer organizations such as Campus Compact, which by the early part of the decade had recruited over 250 campuses (and over 500 by 1997), and Campus Outreach Opportunity League (COOL), which was working with more than 600 colleges by 1992, provides support (Rhoads, 1997). The sense that students of the early 1990s were exhibiting a renewed commitment to community and social concerns led Levine and Hirsch (1991) to describe a new wave of activism on American college campuses. Additional support comes from the environmental movement. For example, the first national student

environmental conference, called Threshold, attracted over 2,000 students to the campus of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill in 1989. The next year, 7,000 students attended the event at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. More recent research from the UCLA Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) headed by Astin (1996) confirms high rates of service involvement among incoming students: Three out of four first-year students report volunteering "frequently" or "occasionally" during the previous year.

There have been a few large-scale data gathering efforts to assess student activism. Again, research from HERI revealed that 37 percent of in-coming freshmen in 1989 reported that they had participated in a demonstration of some kind the year before going to college. Three years later the figure was even higher as it rose to 40 percent (Astin, 1993b). Contrast these figures with the 15.5 and 16.3 percent indicated back in 1966 and 1967, years which are believed to be near the peak period of student activism (Astin, 1993b). The point of the HERI data is that they indicate the potential for a rising tide of involvement in protest among college students. Also, Levine and Cureton (1998) conducted an extensive study of U.S. campuses and noted that 93 percent of campuses they visited had experienced student unrest within the previous two years. Based on surveys of undergraduates conducted in 1969, 1976, and 1993, Levine and Cureton also note the following: In 1969, 28 percent of undergraduates reported participating in a demonstration; in 1976, that figure had dropped to 19 percent; by 1993 the percent involved in demonstrations had risen to 25 percent, only a few percentage points from the level reported in 1969. And Loeb (1994) offered rich qualitative evidence of a high level of commitment to political and social change among contemporary students, but as he explained, their efforts may be drowned out by higher

levels of student apathy.

The preceding paragraphs provide a context for situating the 1990s within the larger landscape of student protest. However, my primary concern relates to contextualizing the central theme of student unrest during the 1990s and providing insight into how students make sense of their participation in contemporary campus demonstrations. With this said, I turn now to a discussion of method before introducing my findings.

METHOD

The goal of this research study is to advance understanding of contemporary students in general and campus protest in particular. I chose case study as a methodology because of the need to adapt research strategies to the particular organizational context. This, as Yin (1989) points out, is one of the strengths of case study research. For example, Astin, Astin, Bayer, and Bisconti (1975) used case study research to contextualize their national findings of student involvement in campus protests in the early 1970s. Zald and Berger (1978) offered support for situating analyses of social movements within organizational contexts when they suggested that organizations are primary vehicles for social change.

In order to conduct case study research, one must be clear about the kind of phenomenon to be studied. In the case of this project, the primary concern is identifying the nature of student protest (as a form of activism) as it is revealed on contemporary college and university campuses. Therefore, appropriate cases must be identified in order to conduct in-depth analysis. The early challenge in framing the study then was to select representative cases that might yield understandings of contemporary student protest as a social movement.

A first step in developing a helpful sample of cases was to get an idea of the terrain of student protest during the decade. This was accomplished through an analysis of reported incidents of student demonstrations as described in national and regional newspapers such as the *New York Times* and the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. After an extensive search, over 200 major incidents of student unrest were identified. These incidents were then analyzed to identify possible themes. The vast majority of campus incidents (nearly 60%) were associated with racial and ethnic struggle, women's concerns, or gay rights activities and represent what recent scholars have described both affectionately and pejoratively as "culture/cultural wars," "campus wars," "multicultural unrest," or "identity politics" (Arthur & Shapiro, 1995; D'Souza, 1991; Gitlin, 1995; Hunter, 1991; Rhoads, 1994, 1995; Sidel, 1995). The remaining examples of student protest concerned funding (including tuition concerns), governance, world affairs, and environmental causes.

It is worth noting that Levine and Cureton (1998) also identified multiculturalism as the primary source of campus protests in the 1990s noting that 48 percent of the campuses they visited had experienced student demonstrations tied to multicultural concerns. This figure likely would have been significantly higher had Levine and Cureton included gender issues (the fourth highest source of campus protests in their study--37 percent) and gay/lesbian issues (the fifth highest source--15 percent) as part of their definition of multiculturalism as I have done in this article.

After confirming my initial hypothesis that multiculturalism, typically enacted through identity politics, was indeed the central strand of contemporary student unrest, the next step was to select various cases for in-depth study. Accordingly, I selected five cases covering

the key identity struggles highlighted by the broader analysis and focused on issues of race, gender, and sexual orientation.

I relied on data collection tools commonly recommended in conducting qualitative case studies (Yin, 1989). Specifically, data collection involved 101 formal and 9 informal interviews with students, alumni, faculty, staff, and community members. A general interview protocol was developed and later adapted to each institutional context and to the particular set of individuals being interviewed (ie., faculty, students, community members, etc...). Documents such as memos, letters, newspaper articles and editorials also contributed to the data base. Additionally, artifacts such as films and audio recordings of campus incidents and student organizing efforts were collected.

The Mills, Rutgers, and UCLA sites were visited at least two times within a two-year period and are what might be termed "retrospective" case studies in that the demonstrations had already taken place when data was collected. The first visit took place in year 1 of the study and involved establishing initial contact and identifying key informants through informal conversations and preliminary document analysis. Although a few formal interviews occurred during year 1, the majority were conducted during the second site visit and after I had achieved greater familiarity with the specific case of student unrest and the key participants involved. Students who had already graduated were contacted through their alumni/alumnae office and many were interviewed over the telephone. In terms of the Michigan State and Penn State case studies, I was employed at these institutions during the student protests and thus was able to collect data over the course of the demonstrations.

The formal interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. The interview

transcripts along with the documents and field notes from observations formed the body of data that was analyzed. Interpretation of the case studies involved coming to terms with the meanings campus constituents gave to various student actions and their organizing in general. In analyzing the data, I employed content analysis as I sought to identify themes related to the key research questions: What meaning do students give to their participation in campus demonstrations? And, What significance does multicultural student protest have for understanding the collegiate experience during the 1990s? Member checks were employed by sharing initial drafts of the case studies with students and faculty who provided feedback for subsequent rewrites (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

FINDINGS

In what follows I describe the five case studies by first offering a general description of the particular student movement and how it was connected to identity concerns. I then describe "precipitating events" that in effect served to escalate the level of student commitment and ultimately contributed to highly visible campus demonstrations. I go on to delineate the "student response" to the precipitating events by describing key demonstrations students enacted. Finally, I highlight organizational outcomes associated with the particular student movement.

The Mills College Strike of 1990

As the last decade of the twentieth century opened, nowhere was the power of student protest more vivid than in the spring of 1990 on the campus of a small liberal arts college

nestled in the hills of west Oakland. During the academic year 1989-90, officials at Mills College debated the future of the college and whether or not Mills should admit male undergraduates as a way of increasing student enrollment. When the decision to admit men was made in May of 1990, the women of Mills immediately called for a strike to shut down the college.

From early on it was clear that the strike, which lasted two weeks, was linked to the larger struggle for women's equity and that preserving Mills as an all-women's college was more about promoting women's achievement than it was about denying males the right to a liberal arts education. The fact that the strike was linked to the larger struggle of women in the United States was made obvious by those involved: "This strike is a dam stemming the tide of closings of women's colleges across the country. Our struggle will not end with this strike. It goes on into next week, next year and until all women of every kind are represented equally in this society" (Curtis, 1990, p. 1).

An alum of the college who had been involved in the strike made a similar point as she spoke of the advantages of Mills: "Mills provides a setting where women are more apt to take risks. They're more apt to speak out in class. They're more apt to take leadership roles. I just think that it really prepares women to go out in the world and do what they want to do. It's a four-year kind of haven." Another former student involved in the strike commented: "Mills is not so much about escaping sexism. You can't ever escape sexism--if you're a woman, you're a woman, and you don't get away from gender issues just because you go to a women's college. In a way they are even more present. But at Mills, you don't have to deal with whether you're male or female as much. You're simply a student."

That the Mills College strike was primarily tied to issues of women's identity was also apparent in symbolism employed by student strikers. Posters appeared around the campus depicting a woman standing tall, with arms raised to the sky as if celebrating a momentous victory. Written on the posters were the words, "Strong women, proud women." This simple statement became the students' mantra and the driving vision behind their commitment to preserving a women's space in higher education.

The fact that the Mills College strike was linked to women's concerns contributed to resistance from traditional-minded critics who complained of a double standard. They pointed out that there was much resistance to military academies such as The Citadel and VMI enforcing their long-standing policies of only admitting men. Supporters of Mills College and its commitment to women were quick to counter that Mills was a private institution and that the military academies in question received federal and/or state aid. Mills' supporters also argued that the career and educational opportunities for men and women were still quite unequal and that this alone might justify all-women's institutions such as Mills (Hartman, 1990).

Precipitating Event(s): Of course, the key event triggering the Mills strike was the announcement by the president and board of trustees in the spring of 1990 that the school would begin admitting men in the fall of 1991. The decision primarily was based on financial concerns linked to the stock market crash of 1987, and a desire to reposition the college to take advantage of the changing social and technological context of the 1990s. The announcement followed months of rumors and denials that college officials were seriously considering admitting men. As one alum, who attended Mills at the time of the strike,

explained: "Everyone was afraid the announcement would be about going coed, but the board had down played it. A big deal had been made about the fact that they had three or four options. But I did not feel that they were completely straightforward with us, that going coed was their top option. We heard over and over, 'Oh, it's only one of the choices.'"

Student Response. Within hours following the official announcement by President Mary Metz and Board Chair Warren Hellman, the women of Mills blockaded every administrative entrance at the college and for the next two weeks effectively shut down the operations of the school. Mills College alumnae came out in support of the student strikers as they made pointedly clear their intention to withdraw financial support to the college if it went ahead with plans to admit men. During the two-week long strike, the campus witnessed a media barrage as the students' story was televised throughout the country and included an appearance by Mills women on the Phil Donohue Show. In the end, the pressure of the student strike, lack of alumnae support for the decision, and national opinion were too much, for the board reversed its decision and Mills remained an all-women's college.

Organizational Outcome(s). The outcome of the two-week long strike was a complete reversal by the board of trustees and a renewed commitment to women's education. President Metz was replaced by Janet Holmgren McKay, who, in short time, made her commitment to women's education known by announcing that the issue of coeducation was dead at Mills. Charged by their success, the women of Mills continued to exhibit high levels of campus activism, much to the consternation of more than a few officials. As one explained: "One of the fallouts of the strike that is not so great, is the students got their way. They overturned the board's decision and now sometimes they say, 'We did it once and we

can do it again.' They think they can get whatever they want. Protesting is a way they see to get what they want." This individual went on to point out that recently students at Mills were once again demonstrating, but this time it was over the lack of diversity among the faculty. "They want more faculty of color. They want to have some kind of power over how the affirmative action statement is written."

Gay Liberation at Penn State

In October of 1992, approximately 30 lesbian, gay, and bisexual students stood together on the steps of Pennsylvania State University's school auditorium and fought off years of tears and the pain of "the closet." The event was part of National Coming Out Day and the students shared their experiences with an audience of roughly 200 students. "Lesbian, gay, and bisexual people have two choices: Come out or stay in your closet and continue hating yourself," exclaimed one of the leaders of the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Student Alliance (LGBSA). "Coming out is better than hating yourself. . . . It's about celebrating yourself."

For nearly two years, LGBSA staged a variety of public events and open forums as a means to pressure the university to add a sexual orientation clause to its official statement of non-discrimination. Coming out during events such as National Coming Out Day were more than individual acts of identifying with one's same-sex attractions; it was about claiming a public identity, becoming visible, and offering support to the larger struggle for lesbian, gay, and bisexual liberation and equal rights.

The efforts of students at Penn State to advance gay liberation hinged on constructing

a public identity in response to conservative resistance to equal rights for lesbian, gay, and bisexual people. This was most apparent by the way in which several students discussed visibility and the role of coming out. A student explained that, "Heterosexual culture is very set on making gay and lesbian people invisible, whether they use physical violence or institutional violence. Coming out is a way of battling back." Another student added, "My ultimate goal would be for someone to be walking around and someone else call them a name like 'fag' or 'queer' and have it sound as silly as me calling someone straight." And a faculty member commented as well: "What we have learned. . . is that our best defense against bigotry is visibility, our greatest hope for change is neither assimilation nor silence, but identifying ourselves as a people."

As part of their commitment to visibility and to identity politics in general, many students openly embraced what they described as "queer" identity. Reclaiming the term "queer" was part of an assertive strategy to pursue gay liberation. A student elaborated:

> I use the term "queer" to make people aware that I'm not excluding bisexuals and lesbians. It's not even in vogue yet among some queers. It's more of an activist, assertive term. It connotes pride in being a homosexual or bisexual. "Gay" possibly used to imply the same thing. It's adopting a term that was used in a negative way and conveying a different message, a message of pride, happiness, celebration.

A second student added, "Queer to me is different than gay. Not just because it includes lesbians and gays but it's more of an attitude. There is a political aspect of being queer. You have to be political to be queer but you don't have to be political to be gay." In

elevating a highly visible and politically oriented form of identity as a social change tactic, LGBSA students at Penn State evidenced their belief that the struggle for gay liberation necessarily involved the politics of identity.

Precipitating Event(s). No singular event triggered increased activism on the part of LGBSA in the early 1990s. Instead, a series of occurrences dating back to the early 1970s set the stage for increased political activity by lesbian, gay, and bisexual students of the 1990s. The first major event was the university's attempt in the early '70s to deny official organizational status to the Homophiles of Penn State (HOPS), a student organization comprised of lesbian, gay, and bisexual students. On February 11, 1972 HOPS filed a law suit against the university alleging that their First (right to free speech) and Fourteenth Amendments (right to equal protection) had been violated. Eventually, the case was settled out of court and HOPS was granted official status as a student organization. However, the university was not finished with its battle against "homosexuals" as it attempted to deny Joseph Acanfora his Pennsylvania Teacher's Certificate because of his membership in HOPS (Acanfora was one of the student plaintiffs named in the law suit). This case ultimately went before State Education Secretary John C. Pittenger who approved the certification and saw no basis for the actions taken by the university.

More recently, two events served to increase political organizing by lesbian, gay, and bisexual students, who by the early 1990s had changed their organizational name to LGBSA. The first event took place in 1989 and involved a computer-generated message created by a Penn State student which offered a rationale for "killing homosexuals." The second key event was a comment by the head coach of the women's basketball team, who told a national

newspaper that she would not permit homosexuals on the team.

Student Response. Homophobic actions during the late 1980s and early 1990s helped to galvanize not only LGBSA, but also lesbian, gay, and bisexual faculty and staff, as well as their allies. The result was a high level of campus protest as rallies, marches, and teach-ins increased. At the same time that LGBSA advanced its public struggle to achieve what they saw as "equal rights," conservative student groups upped their level of resistance and attacked what they described as "special privileges accorded to homosexuals." By 1992, it was common to see a gay pride rally on one side of a major campus thoroughfare and a counter-demonstration across the way.

In addition to the annual National Coming Out Day rally, LGBSA also organized Pride Week and offered a variety of educational programs such as "Straight Talks," which involve a group of students speaking to a class or residence hall about what it means to be lesbian, gay, or bisexual. Perhaps the most effective demonstration was one that never moved beyond the planning stage. As part of their effort to pressure the Penn State board of trustees to approve the proposed statement of non-discrimination, LGBSA students planned a take-over of the president's office. In a confidential meeting with a key representative of the board, the students revealed their plan and gave the board one last chance to approve the policy. At its next meeting the board passed the sexual orientation clause and the students of LGBSA claimed a victory.

Organizational Outcome(s). Although LGBSA was able to celebrate its contribution to getting the clause approved, their quest for equal rights and liberation would continue for years to come as new issues such as the unequal treatment of "homosexuals" in ROTC and

the university's lack of support for the partners of lesbian, gay, and bisexual faculty and staff would be issues into the mid-1990s. Additionally, in 1997 the emergence of a conservative student group known as S.T.R.A.I.G.H.T ("students reinforcing adherence in general heterosexual tradition") emerged as a major barrier to gay liberation at the university.

For the students who stood on the steps of the school's auditorium in the fall of 1992, their eventual participation in the national march on Washington, DC the following spring culminated years of struggle. For these students, reforming the climate at Penn State ultimately was part of their effort to build a more inclusive society where discrimination based on one's sexual orientation would be non-existent.

The Chicano Studies Movement at UCLA

For over twenty years, UCLA provided support to a Chicano studies interdepartmental program only to see its viability called into question on an almost yearly basis. By the early '90s, Chicana/o students had grown weary of the ongoing struggle to keep the program alive and demanded a more vigorous commitment from the university. They felt the program needed to be strengthened and granting it departmental status with the authority to hire and promote its own faculty was a way to ensure its survival. A plan for a Chicano studies department was developed by a group of faculty and presented to Chancellor Charles Young in January of 1992. Over a year later, in April of 1993, Chancellor Young announced that he would not pursue the plan to elevate Chicano studies to departmental status. The announcement launched a series of student protests beginning with a sit-in at the UCLA faculty center and ending with a 14-day hunger strike.

For the students involved in the 1993 demonstrations, Chicano studies was seen as a link between the university and a city comprised of the largest Mexican American population in the country. Building a strong department was not simply a battle over who decides curricular matters; their fight was part of a larger effort to improve the place of Mexican Americans and enable them to connect to a rich culture and history. The Chicano studies movement at UCLA offered evidence of the growing cultural identity commitments of Chicanas/os and represented a return to the identity politics (La Raza) that many of their parents embraced with the early founding of organizations such as MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan). Comments from contemporary Chicana/o activists at UCLA confirm such an analysis: "Chicana/o studies gives us intellectual space. . . . We're always fighting for our history and culture in an elitist institution such as UCLA. It's about empowering our people. . . . Basically, we are fighting for our own space in one of the most prestigious institutions in the United States." A second student also provided insight into the connection between Chicano studies and the larger struggle of Chicanas/os:

> We saw it [Chicano studies] as a cultural center where the community could come in with problems. . . . And the center would help the community to do research to solve their problems. . . . We want a place where people can get the kind of service that a university is supposed to provide. What's really important is educating our students. By that I mean not schooling them but truly educating them on their roots, on who they are. They need to graduate from the university and be more than just a doctor for the establishment. They need to go back to their communities and service our people. It's basically an

issue of education versus schooling. What UCLA offers is schooling. They train you. They train you to do things that this society needs in order for the status quo to continue. We wanted a department of Chicano studies to be something more than that.

This student's perspective reflects the early motto of the Chicano student movement in Southern California as it evolved during the late 1960s and early 1970s: "Of the community, for the community" (Gómez-Quiñones, 1978).

Leo Estrada, a faculty member who eventually helped to negotiate a compromise resulting in the creation of the César Chávez Center, described the actions of today's Chicana/o students as a "search for their roots" and compared their struggle to what Blacks went through a decade or two prior in their quest to connect to Africa. The challenge today's Chicana/o students face involves establishing a firm sense of cultural identity. As Estrada pointed out, what has emerged is the realization among many of the young that one's identity as a Chicana/o cannot be divorced from one's heritage. In this regard, the movement at UCLA reflects what has been described as "Chicanismo"--a form of racial/ethnic nationalism with an emphasis on cultural consciousness and heritage (Gómez-Quiñones, 1990).

Precipitating Event(s). While the Chicano studies movement at UCLA comprised nearly three decades of struggle, originating back in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the trigger event for the demonstrations of 1993 was the decision by the chancellor to reject a proposal to create a Chicano studies department. Chancellor Young argued that an interdisciplinary "program" would promote Chicano studies across a variety of disciplines.

Students, however, saw the matter differently and believed Chicano studies would remain a marginal area of inquiry without the ability to hire and promote its own faculty. When Young chose to announce his decision the same day as the funeral for César Chávez, antagonism among Chicana/o students eventually spilled into the faculty center.

Student Response. The initial student response was a march and a sit-in planned to culminate at the UCLA faculty center. The march was organized by a multiracial student group that went by the name of "Conscious Students of Color" and took place on May 11, 1993. However, the sit-in turned into more of a "take-over" resulting in approximately $ 40,000 in damages to art work and furnishings. Approximately 90 students and community members were arrested as the university called in nearly 200 police officers from Los Angeles and surrounding cities. The following day, some 600 students rallied in front of the administration building as they demanded that charges be dropped against those arrested. Two weeks later, and with much apprehension about the rapidly approaching summer break, Chicana/o student activists launched their most serious effort to date as six students and one faculty member began a hunger strike. The strike lasted a total of 14 days with negotiations beginning during the second week of the strike.

Organizational Outcome(s). The hunger strike, which was the culmination of nearly two years of student efforts to pressure the university, ended with the administration and students agreeing to the development of the César Chávez Center for Interdisciplinary Instruction in Chicana and Chicano Studies. While the Center was not called a "department," it nonetheless had the crucial ability to hire and promote its own faculty (initially, five faculty lines were granted), which by most standards gave it the authority of a

department. Fourteen days after the hunger strike began, a crowd of about 400 Chicana/o students and community supporters celebrated their victory with chants of "Chicano power!" amidst the waving of Mexican flags.

African American Student Resistance at Rutgers

In January of 1995 three devastating words spoken by Rutgers University President Francis Lawrence were made public. In attempting to explain the university's admission strategy to a group of faculty at the Camden branch in the fall of 1994, Lawrence had made the following remarks: ". . . the average S.A.T.'s for African Americans is 750. Do we set standards in the future so we don't admit anybody? Or do we deal with a disadvantaged population that doesn't have that genetic, hereditary background to have a higher average?" At first, none of the faculty in attendance were struck by the president's comments. It was only after a tape of his presentation was re-played nearly three months later, that people took offense. In fact, it was Tuesday, January 31 when The Star-Ledger of Newark published a front-page story detailing the comments from President Lawrence based on an audio tape the paper had received from the American Association of University Professors.

To African American students and their multiracial allies (who together formed the "United Student Coalition"), the comments from Lawrence represented the views of a great portion of White America and the students saw it as their responsibility to educate the larger society as well as the campus community. As a result of the comments, a strong sense of unity was forged. One of the students involved in organizing the demonstrations explained:

It was something seeing all those people pulling together no matter what might

happen. We were there because we knew what we had to do. We had that feeling of being together. . . . We were going after what we knew was right. And doing it no matter what. No matter whether President Lawrence apologized or not. Or whether the faculty backed us or not. The students were together. When it came down to it we had to do our work and we did it.

That the response to Lawrence's comments were deeply tied to identity matters was evident in how the students constructed meaning around the rallies and demonstrations following his remarks. One African American student saw the protests at Rutgers as part of the long march by Blacks towards reclaiming their heritage: "I have a theory that Blacks throughout America have an identity crisis. They're searching for an identity. They're in constant struggle to find out who it is they are."

President Lawrence, as one student explained, had touched a deep source of resentment within the African American student community: "Student activists had always been trying to get people to organize. But students didn't really see any reason. He [President Lawrence] gave people a reason to demonstrate and he made the job of student activists very easy. The day after he made the comments, the day they came out in the paper, there was a mass student meeting and about 1,000 students showed up." This student went on to explain that typically student organizers were lucky to get 100 students to a rally, even after advertising for two weeks.

In addition to the local response, Lawrence's comments and the subsequent calls for his resignation generated a national reaction as well. Prominent conservatives and media figures such as Carl Rowan and Alan Dershowitz came to Lawrence's defense at the same

time that organizations such as the NAACP offered financial assistance to a group of student demonstrators arrested for blocking traffic in New Brunswick. A faculty member commented on his perception of the media response:

> People in the media, and high ranking officials and newspapers closed ranks and supported Lawrence. . . . There was this great desire to turn Lawrence into the victim. Somehow people were beating up on this decent guy. "There those Blacks go again, being unreasonable, outrageous." There was a closing of ranks. A sense that they had to stand together against the radicals out there. The establishment will not act in a way which concedes validity to Black American protests or that empowers Black Americans by acquiescing to their demands. There was a lot of that.

Precipitating Event(s). Obviously, the three words uttered by President Lawrence and their publication in The Star-Ledger was the singular event triggering major demonstrations at Rutgers. However, feelings of racial discrimination had been felt by African American students at Rutgers for years, as McCormick (1990) pointed out in his analysis of the Black student protest movement at Rutgers: "Their common objective was to compel predominantly white institutions to change their policies and attitudes to accommodate to the needs of a multiracial society" (p. 4). African American students of the 1990s wanted some of the same things that Rutgers students had demonstrated for in the past. Once again, McCormick is helpful: "For African Americans, [their calls for change] meant not only broadening access to higher education; it meant as well the construction of an environment within which they could feel emotionally and physically secure and where their cultural

values would be respected and legitimized" (p. 4). Thus, the words uttered by Lawrence were in many ways merely the lightning rod for resentment that had been building over the years. In part, resentment was rooted in the fact that enrollment of African American students at Rutgers had declined over the past decade and a half (from 14 percent down to 10 percent in 1994), and the percentage of African American faculty had decreased from only 6 percent in 1977 to 5.7 percent in 1993 (Penfield, 1995).

Student Response. The day after the publication of text from Lawrence's Camden speech, hundreds of African American students along with a large multiracial contingent of supporters launched a series of major demonstrations as they sought to call national attention to the remarks. In a dramatic form of student demonstration, Jacqueline Williams, a junior at Rutgers, walked onto the basketball court at half-time of the Rutgers-University of Massachusetts Atlantic 10 basketball game in an effort to begin a sit-in and ultimately force the game's postponement. After a few anxious minutes, she was joined by other students and supporters as completion of the game was postponed and then rescheduled for another date. This event as much as any brought a media deluge to Rutgers and stirred national debate about campus racial climates and the state of racism around the country (Wilson, 1995). For Williams, it was time for African American students at Rutgers to assert themselves, not through violence, but through their minds: "They know we have the power in our fist. They know we can fight. We can stand up to the cops if we have to. . . . But it's time to focus on the fact that we can defeat them not only with the iron fist, but we can also defeat them with our intellect. We can use our brains for this. . . . We have to show them that we are intelligent enough to sit down and talk with them."

Organizational Outcome(s). While student demands for the resignation of President Lawrence ultimately failed, significant institutional commitments to multiculturalism nonetheless resulted. Lawrence would not resign, but he did promise to re-commit himself and the university to multicultural reform: "It's something [his comments] I'm going to have to live with. The most positive way to respond is to redouble my efforts and address issues of more minority administrators, faculty, and students. . . . I'm here to learn how we can use this as a learning experience and grow" (Kalita & Simonelli, 1995, p. 1). Perhaps, the most significant measure enacted by Lawrence in the aftermath of campus unrest was the formation of a committee of students, faculty, and staff charged with improving the general quality of student life at Rutgers. Several recommendations from this committee eventually were enacted, but to the most strident protesters of the spring of 1995, little had changed in their minds.

American Indian Protests at Michigan State

On the eve of the Republican primary in 1995, a contingent of college students, many of whom attended Michigan State University, participated in a demonstration at the Capitol to pressure Republican Governor John Engler to reconsider his plan to end the state's tuition program for American Indians. The Michigan Indian Tuition Waiver Program (MITWP) had evolved over the years from the Comstock Agreement of 1934--a long standing agreement between the state and its Indian population in which a school and property in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan were exchanged for free education for American Indians throughout the state. Cognizant of the waiver's history, students held signs reading "Give us the waiver or give us

the land" and "Honor your commitment."

From Governor Engler's perspective, while the waiver may have been historically tied to the Comstock Agreement, it was ultimately a legislative act subject to reversal or reinterpretation like any other form of legislation. Following the conservative rhetoric that helped Proposition 209 pass in California, Engler argued that the MITWP was in effect an "entitlement program" that excluded other underrepresented peoples and therefore should be eliminated. The March 1995 rally at the Capital was only one event in a series of student demonstrations that lasted throughout two consecutive academic years, from 1994 to 1996. In the end, the students were able to fight off the governor's efforts and for the time being, preserve the tuition waiver.

As in the preceding cases, the battle between Michigan Governor Engler and American Indian students at Michigan State was based on the struggle of a marginalized group to assert a vision of hope amongst people with a common identity. This is revealed in the following comments made by an American Indian student at MSU as he described the feelings of frustration he and others felt in reaction to Engler's initial efforts: "I would say that the attitude was one of hopelessness. Because a lot of people, including myself, were feeling like 'What can we do that would influence their thinking in the Capital?' You know. . . . What kind of contact do they have with students on a daily basis? What do they know about us? Why should they even care about the waiver program or our people's struggles?" And a second student explained her concerns and how she feared for her relatives: "Because I am the oldest grandchild in my family, my cousins look up to me. And the thing is that if they take the waiver away, my cousins will not have a way to go to college. . . . I think

most Native people will just feel like college is not for them. College is too much trouble. They don't have the resources without the waiver."

Another student alluded to the positives of attending college and how the struggle with the governor was rooted in a deep commitment to American Indian heritage:

> I know that in college you come of age and stand up more. . . . In college you start thinking more critically about the issues that are affecting your people. Like you start to realize why things are bad in your community. You start to see maybe an historical basis for it. Then you stop to realize and you start to stand up a little bit more. . . . I think that a lot of Native students our age are getting back more to their roots, as far as the language and the culture. . . . My parents and grandparents were forbidden to speak their language. Boarding schools were designed to take the Indian out of the Indian--and assimilate and things like that. . . . Today's generation of Indians is working to reclaim our roots, our heritage.

This student, went on to add that he saw the fight with Engler as part of standing up for Indian culture and identity and that the climate in the mid-1900s up until maybe the 1960s was that Indians should all be assimilated. "So I kind of think that things are looking up for us as far as going back to traditional roots. . . . We need a foundation. Otherwise we are just kind of lost in American society. Half of us have no sense of our tradition. . . . We need to push to reclaim our heritage and our identity."

Precipitating Event(s). The precipitating event arousing American Indian students at Michigan State was Governor Engler's efforts to end the Michigan Indian Tuition Waiver

Program. Of course, his efforts were arguably tied to a larger national movement to curtail what many conservatives saw as "entitlement" programs that favored one minority group over the majority, as well as over other minority groups. In fact, Engler defended his actions by arguing that the tuition waiver program for Michigan Indians was unfair to other minority groups who may lack the financial wherewithal to attend college.

Student Response. As early as the academic year 1993-94, Governor Engler had sent notice that the tuition waiver program was in trouble. Students in MSU's North American Indian Student Organization (NAISO) were slow to respond at first, but soon they gathered momentum as the fall semester progressed. In spring of 1994, NAISO participated in its first major protest as approximately 150 students and supporters marched across campus and through the main administration building. This initial demonstration was designed to call attention to NAISO's concern about the threat to the waiver and to foster support among fellow students and faculty. The second demonstration was the March 1995 rally at the capital. In the fall of 1995 NAISO launched its third major demonstration as the students targeted Governor Engler's speech to be given as part of Michigan State's homecoming parade. The speech was eventually cancelled as American Indian students and Chicana/o student allies from MEChA carried signs and chanted slogans that proved too disruptive for the governor.

Six days after the homecoming protest a group of about 30 students and staff dressed in black gathered at the center of campus to commiserate Columbus Day. One by one the demonstrators spoke about the despair that the day had come to signify in their lives and the lives of other American Indians. One student commented, "This is not a celebration day for

us. We have always been here and we resent the idea of discovery and the myth of the virgin land." This student went on to explain that it was offensive to her that the indigenous peoples of North America were misnamed "Indians." She went on to point out that the proper name for her ancestry is "Anishinabe," meaning the "original people." What angered so many gathered on this day was that the history of Michigan Natives remains unknown to most students around the state and yet Christopher Columbus getting lost in North America is a national day of remembrance.

Organizational Outcome(s). In time, Governor Engler reluctantly let go of his desire to end the program and the tuition waiver was rarely mentioned by him over the academic years 1996-97 and 1997-98. While many of the students in NAISO seemed relieved, they knew in the back of their minds that the issue could resurface again. Thus, two years later, Lula Brewer, who had played a key role in organizing NAISO's response, felt good that she had invested in the struggle and could look back fondly and say that at least she tried. Brewer believed the demonstrations had an impact because she heard students around campus talking about the concerns of American Indian students. By her thinking, NAISO had succeeded in raising student awareness and understanding of the tuition waiver and ultimately had gained enough support to resist Engler's efforts.

DISCUSSION

That the cases of student unrest presented in this article were fundamentally linked to issues of multiculturalism and identity struggle was most apparent in the manner in which students constructed meaning around their involvement. The Mills College strike was linked

to broad concerns tied to women's educational opportunities. Likewise, gay liberation activities at Penn State were linked to the larger struggle for equal rights for lesbian, gay, and bisexual people throughout the country as was most evident by the students' participation in the 1993 march on Washington. And, for Chicanas/os at UCLA, African Americans at Rutgers, and American Indians at Michigan State, racial identity and the larger struggle for equality was centermost in the way the students constructed meaning around their demonstrations.

For Khai Harley, the spring of 1995 was a period in his life when his identity as an African American took on central importance. Harley was one of the students who helped to organize African American resistance at Rutgers University, and he hoped that the protests at Rutgers would contribute to a national movement among college students to create social change. "I believe that the student protests because they gained national exposure may provide students across the country a sense of responsibility and a sense of hope. I believe it [the movement at Rutgers] may have encouraged a lot of students to stand up and do something about the situations that they're faced with. The level of emotion that existed at Rutgers during this whole event could spread across the entire country, to other campuses and other universities." Harley went on to add: "The average student doesn't realize the power and the impact that they have on the university and what they can get accomplished if they show a collective effort. . . . The comments by President Lawrence lent an immediate sense of unity and a sense of solidarity and strength."

Whether the actions of students at Rutgers and students at other schools such as Mills College and UCLA served as catalysts for increased student activism is unclear. What is

clear, however, is that across the country the 1990s evidenced a renewed commitment by students to educational equity at the same time that conservative forces won battles to eliminate programs such as affirmative action. The protests in 1996 and 1997 by college students in California in response to the passage of Propositions 187 and 209, and in Texas in response to the Hopwood decision are telling examples. When an irresistible force meets an immoveable object, tension is bound to result.

"Martyrs for Multiculturalism" was the Newsweek headline that went on to describe the case of UCLA and Chicano Studies (Leslie & Murr, 1993). The article was one of the first to link a series of student demonstrations to a larger social movement organized around multiculturalism and often enacted through identity politics. The case studies and argument presented in this article also supports the notion that a significant cultural movement has been taking place on U.S campuses during the 1990s. The movement, which elsewhere I term the "multicultural student movement," may be seen as an extension of the civil rights initiatives of the 1960s, although the contemporary movement is perhaps more culturally diffuse (Rhoads, 1998).

When we give serious thought to these matters, it should come as no surprise that college and university settings highlight so much of the cultural tension inherent in the larger society. After all, because education plays a key role in fostering and enhancing a democratic citizenry, it is logical that many of the social tensions of the democratic project will get played out in campus life. As Sidel argued, "The educational system is. . . of central importance in determining who will be able to participate fully and meaningfully in our democratic society" (1994, p. 25). And Dey (1997) noted that the socialization of

college students takes place within a context that is highly influenced by larger social issues.

Although race, gender, and sexual orientation were fundamental matters students considered in their struggle for equal rights and educational opportunity, this is not to say that students only thought of themselves as "womyn," "queer" or "Chicano." I need to be clear here. I am not saying that African American students defined their identity solely on the basis of their racial heritage, or that women at Mills College only thought of themselves in terms of their gender, or that gay students at Penn State singularly framed their lives in reference to their sexual orientation. Students bring complex and multiplicitous meanings to the identities they construct. Because the focus of this article is on the broader web of meaning connecting these students--multiculturalism and the use of identity politics--capturing the multiplicity of individual identities was not possible. Of course, one's identity is never simply the by-product of race, gender, or sexual orientation, but there certainly are times when these aspects become more psychologically salient to one's sense of self, especially for members of marginalized groups, as Goffman's (1963) work on stigma revealed.

But what of the charge that student activists of the 1990s invest so heavily in a particularized identity that there is little room for, as Gitlin (1995) writes, "a commons"? Again, the evidence from this study provides a compelling refutation. While the five movements discussed in this article focused primarily on specific campuses, they all took on a multicultural tenor as a variety of groups came to the support of the students' cause. At UCLA a leading group in challenging the administration was the Conscious Students of Color, a multiracial student group organized to advance Chicano studies. At Penn State, while the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Student Alliance led gay liberation efforts, they were

also supported by the Black Caucus, the Graduate Student Association, the Interfraternity Council, and the Commission for Women. At Rutgers University, a multiracial coalition emerged in the form of the United Student Coalition. At Michigan State University, American Indians and Chicana/o students entered into solidarity and together organized campus demonstrations. And the women of Mills College found supporters among fellow students and alumnae across racial and sexual orientation lines.

With other campus movements, a collective identity organized around multiculturalism also has been evident. Efforts on the part of Asian American students at the University of Maryland to create an Asian American studies program in 1995 involved students from a variety of groups including African Americans, Jews, women, and gays. In 1996, at SUNY Binghamton, a diverse student coalition organized in response to anti-affirmative action initiatives by the conservative student government president. The Binghamton Coalition represented a multiracial movement involving underrepresented minority students as well as progressive Whites. Demonstrations at Indiana University on the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday in 1997 were led by a multiracial coalition which demanded increased institutional commitment to diversity. During protests at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst in the spring of 1997, which included the takeover of the controller's office by 300 students, protestors were joined by groups of students from Smith, Amherst, Hampshire, and Mount Holyoke colleges in what was a multiracial contingent seeking multicultural change.

Criticism that student identity politics has contributed to "tribal isolationism" simply does not hold water when one explores the various multicultural movements around the

country, which, for the most part, are highly multiracial and multifarious. The notion that African Americans, Chicanos, American Indians, or gays are somehow isolating themselves from others as a result of separatist philosophies does not hold up when put to close scrutiny.

The multicultural tenor of contemporary student activism has significant implications for how we think about higher education and the role of students as reformers. Clearly, the cultural crises so paramount during the 1960s is far from resolved. A message is being sent by contemporary students to college and university faculty, administrators, and policy makers: There is much lacking in the curricular and organizational structures that are supposedly intended to serve a democratic society. Those of us heavily involved and invested in higher education ought to pay heed to this message and interact with student activists through serious-minded dialogues without being too quick to dismiss their passionate stances. When students are willing to risk their lives in order that they can take courses that speak to their cultural experiences, it is wise to listen to the serious commitment such actions convey. Is not this kind of passion an expression of involvement in learning?

Democracy is the great American project that gets played out in a variety of organizational contexts, and colleges and universities certainly are not immune to democratic struggle. To a degree, the 1990s has witnessed a return to campus unrest as students have once again turned their energy to protest as a means to disrupt authority and challenge what they perceive as institutional inequities. The issues faced by policy makers involve more than simply answering the question: How should we respond to student organizing and demonstration? Instead, we ought to ask a bigger question: Are there fundamental flaws with the structure of higher education to which the multicultural student movement speaks?

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