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“Antagonistic Describes the Scene:” Local News Portrayals of the New Left and the Escalation of Protest at the University of South Carolina, 1970

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"Antagonistic Describes the Scene:" Local News
Portrayals of the New Left and the Escalation of Protest at
the University of South Carolina, 1970

by

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Abstract

Throughout the social upheaval of the 1960s, television news and dissident social movements developed a salient relationship. News coverage of campus movements and protests not only informed audiences of what protest looked like, but shaped the actions and reactions of both the protestors and those who opposed them. How national media outlets, particularly televised newscasts, affected the social movements of the 1960s on a national level has been well documented. However, media, specifically local television newscasts, also helped to shape movements on a grass roots level. Looking at local television news footage from Columbia, South Carolina, this paper will seek to reveal how local media aided in the reshaping and escalation of New Left student protest at a traditionally conservative Southern university.

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Chapter One: A Sharp New Success for the Communists

In October of 1965, South Carolina's Senator Strom Thurmond sat patiently at his desk, waiting to address one of South Carolina's local CBS affiliates, WBTW. His hands were folded together in contemplation, and a steely resolve glinted in his eye. Over his right shoulder, a clear view of the White House was peeking out of the window, and an American flag stood poised against the wall. An imposingly large globe crowded the left side of the frame, screaming Thurmond's nationalistic priorities. "The civil disobedience campaigns against the War in Vietnam," Strom confidently espoused, "...mark a sharp new success for the communists." Thurmond went on to decry that the communists were operating through the popular front campaign tactics they had used in the 1930s. Except this time, they did not need a front. Thurmond asserted that communists were gaining ground through leftist groups such as Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). With the camera zoomed in tight on his stern face, Thurmond assured that "ridged

enforcement of the laws can stem this tide, and should be demanded by every responsible American.”¹

Despite the urgent and biting tone of Thurmond’s address, the first antiwar protest would not appear on the University of South Carolina’s (USC) Columbia Campus until the spring of 1967, and SDS would not make an official appearance until 1968. However, Thurmond’s 1965 address would set the tone for local media interpretation of New Left groups and student protestors on the USC campus throughout the remainder of the 1960s and early 1970s. Cold War ideology and fears would serve to guide campus administrative actions, local law enforcement, and the lens of local news cameras. Despite Thurmond’s call to arms for “responsible citizens” to call on the law, and outspoken administrative fears of outside agitators, campus protest politics proved to be much more nuanced and complicated than local media rhetoric.

While small protests erupted and dissident voices echoed throughout the pages of the campus newspaper, *The Gamecock*, and reverberated into a plethora of underground newspapers throughout the decade, largescale mass dissent

¹ “WBTW 5013: Thurmond on Anti- Vietnam War Protests” Moving Image Research Center, University of South Carolina, 1:20, October, 1965. <http://mirc.sc.edu/>.

did not occur on the University of South Carolina campus until the spring semester of 1970. Triggered by the closing of a local GI coffee shop, exacerbated by cries for academic freedom and the loosening of rigid *in-loco-parentis* laws, and finally ignited by concerns over Vietnam and the massacre of four student protesters on the Kent State University campus, 1970 welcomed a complex chain of student unrest, which mimicked the student rebellions exploding throughout the nation. However, the University of South Carolina's protest movements were reflective of highly localized issues, and represented an amalgamation of student groups inclusive of various New Left organizations, the Inter-Fraternity Council, the Association of Afro American Students, the Student Union, the Student Senate and even various members of faculty. Local news broadcasts told a different story.

Although USC's student movement was more concerned with campus rights and freedoms than it was with national movements, rhetoric surrounding the student movement served to emulate national media portrayals of protestors, distorting the framework in which the students were working within.² The over simplification of student's demands

² Sociologist and former New Left activist Todd Gitlin Suggests that extensive media coverage of the New Left led to the demise of SDS, as

presented a one sided view to local audiences, not providing them with the full context of the movement. Those who were interviewed about student protests were often quick to observe that protestors were comprised of a minugia of the student body.³ However, contradictory camera shots were positioned to portray large gatherings of campus "agitators". Moreover, despite the reiteration of the small size of the dissident population, media coverage, both print and television, made the students seem like a large threat.

Local school and government officials fought to separate USC from the national picture of student protest, emphasizing the small size of those involved and virtually disowning those students who were native southerners. Local news broadcasts reasserted those claims, while simultaneously providing sensationalized and exaggerated coverage of the protests and protest groups. Local footage often espoused repetitive calls for law and order and

media attention enacted a policy of "containment" of New Left groups, mimicking rhetoric and ideology of the previous decade's communist witch-hunt. Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left*, Berkley: University of California Press. 1980.

³ In a letter responding to an editorial in the state, university President Thomas Jones even claimed that "Incidentally, many of the activists are not students. They are virtually vagrants- but that's not against the law anymore!" Letter from President Thomas Jones. December 31, 1968. Box 5, 1968-69. Thomas Jones Papers, South Carolinana Library, University of South Carolina.

continual reassertion of lawful engagement by the police on campus, mirroring Senator Thurmond's request for "ridged enforcement of the law."⁴ Ironically, unlawful acts by local law enforcement often proved to be the key provocation for student dissent and lawlessness. By the late 1960s the USC mass student protest movements were no longer an organic amalgamation of localized frustrations, but rather they were, in a part, an escalated response to media exaggeration of subsequent actions taken by campus administration and local law enforcement.

Throughout the social upheaval of the 1960s, both nationally and locally, television news and dissident social movements developed a salient relationship. News coverage of campus movements and protests not only informed audiences of what protest looked like, but shaped the actions and reactions of both the protestors and those who opposed them. How national media outlets, particularly televised newscasts, affected the social movements of the 1960s on a national level has been well documented.⁵

⁴ "WBTW 5013: Thurmond on Anti- Vietnam War Protests" Moving Image Research Center, University of South Carolina, 1:20, October, 1965. <http://mirc.sc.edu/>.

⁵ For further reference on the effects of media on the social movements of the 1960s, please see: Aniko, Bodroghkozy, *Equal Time: Television and the Civil Rights Movement* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2012); Aniko Bodroghkozy, *Groove Tube: Sixties Television and the Youth Rebellion* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001); Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New*

However, media, specifically local television news, also helped to shape movements on a grassroots level. Examining local television news footage from Columbia, South Carolina, in conjunction with student and local actions and reactions, reveals how local television news played a role in the escalation of student protest at The University of South Carolina.

Left (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); Penny Lewis, *Hardhats, Hippies and Hawks: The Vietnam Antiwar Movement as Myth and Memory* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2013); Jane Rhodes, *Framing the Black Panthers: The Spectacular Rise of a Black Power Icon* (New York: The New Press, 2007); Brian Ward, *Media, Culture and the Modern African American Freedom Struggle* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2001); Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool: Business, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism*, (Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 1997); Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff, *The Race Beat: The Press, The Civil Rights Struggle and the Awakening of a Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006).

Although student movements, specifically those associated with the New Left, were typically small on Southern campuses, they took on regional issues and affected tangible change on campus.⁶ However, as reflected by local Columbia television coverage, regional Southern news reports misrepresented the size and goals of New Left student movements, purposely creating a dichotomous tension between protesting students and television's perceived audience. By isolating protestors as a small minority of students, and often claiming they were from out of state, media representation flattened the goals and accomplishments of groups, as well as the various allegiances between activist student groups and the larger, more conservative, student body. Media misrepresentation also helped to feed into administrative, local, and federal overreaction. Pushback by administration and law

⁶ Doug Rossinow describes the New Left as "a movement of white, college-educated young people, few of whom ever had known poverty. Material deprivation provided neither their main explanation of insurgency nor their prime argument for social change. In fact, new left radicals launched what many have called a "postscarcity" radicalism, directing their basic criticism at the 'affluent society' itself, which they, along with many liberals and conservatives of the 1950s and 1960s, considered an achieved fact. Under the influence of Mills's writings and the civil rights movement, the New Left from its start viewed students and African Americans as the two groups most likely to stimulate radical social change in the United States. For a time, the new left viewed the poor- a category they differentiated sharply from the working class, for new left radicals endorsed the widespread belief that the US working class was comfortable and conservative- as the agent of social change. Doug Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America* (New York: Columbia University Press 1998). 2.

enforcement, in turn, created larger protests, which came to a boiling point in April and May of 1970, following the Kent State Massacre. By examining local Columbia news outtakes and broadcasts scripts from 1970, it becomes apparent that local television news fed into and helped accelerate the overreaction to, and escalation of, student protest in Columbia, South Carolina.

Chapter Two: New Left, New Media

Historian and former SNCC communications director Julian Bond remarked that "until historians unravel the complex links between the southern freedom struggle and the mass media, their understanding of how the Movement functioned, why it succeeded, and when and where it failed, will be incomplete."⁷ Understanding how historians have used and interpreted mass media, particularly televised news, is a significant thread in unraveling this complicated relationship. While historians frequently depend on newspaper articles, nightly news outtakes and televised broadcasts to reassemble pieces of the past, comprehension of what was covered, what was not, and why, remains an essential component of understanding protest movements and their accomplishments.

⁷ Julian Bond, "The Media and the Movement: Looking back from the Southern Front". In *Media, Culture, and the Modern African American Freedom Struggle*, ed. By Brian Ward, (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2001). 16.

In recent years, strides have been made to assemble a more complete understanding of media and civil rights history. However, although tangential, exploration of the media and local student protest movements, particularly of the New Left, has been limited. Regional studies of news broadcasts, and how they affected community politics and campus policies are also scarce. Localized studies of how broadcasts reported, and subsequently shaped, campus protest movements in the 1960s and 70s will provide a better understanding of the larger role that media played in creating and dismantling social movements. Using local Southern news broadcasts as a gateway to understanding southern student activism and the New Left will also contribute to the historiography of New Left student movements, which are primarily focused in the North and West.

Reflecting on white Southern student activism, David Farber has noted that student radicals "sought not pragmatic changes in public policy or even the overthrow of the government as much as they wanted to find a way out of the atomized, alienated, and hyper-individualist way of

life that, they believed, characterized the United States.”⁸ Although students, inclusive of those who identified with the New Left and those within the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, championed progressive causes, they did so within a deeply paternalistic university atmosphere. Undeniably, universities in the South endured the same growing pains of the “multiversity” which enveloped all of American higher education.⁹ However, the South offered unique and separate challenges to both black and white students who inhabited its campuses. Exploring these differences, and similarities, offers a key into understanding the successes and failures of the New Left, and the impact they were able to make on individual campuses. Moreover, exploring the Southern New Left helps to shed light on an area of radical student politics, which has been largely overlooked by leftist and movement historians until recent years.¹⁰

⁸ David Farber, “Afterward”, In *Rebellion in Black and White: Southern Student Activism in the 1960s*. ed. by Robert Cohen and David J. Snyder, (Baltimore: The Hopkins University Press, 2012). 314.

⁹ The term “multiversity” was coined by University of California president Clark Kerr to define his vision of the university as a knowledge factory; a machine whose primary function was to produce knowledge for consumption.

¹⁰ Robert Cohen notes that “what is not addressed in 1960s historiography is what became of this campus world after Jim Crow got was kicked off campus... when we move to the mid- and late 1960s and the early 1970s, we see a southern campus world being transformed by egalitarian social movements of the Vietnam era.” He goes on to state that “considering all the obstacles student radicals faced on predominantly white campuses in the South during the 1960s, it is

In the past two decades the study of Southern student activism, and the Southern New Left, has received notably more scholarly attention. Books such as Jeffery Turner's *Sitting in and Speaking Out: Student Movements in the American South 1960-1970*, and *Rebellion and Black and White: Southern Student Activism in the 1960s* have asked readers to reconsider Southern student activism and the impact it left on Southern campuses and communities. A myriad of local studies, such as Doug Rossinow's *The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America*, and William Billingsly's *Communists on Campus Race, Politics and the Public University in Sixties North Carolina*, imply "that the North and South are just points on a map; that with the arrival of sixties-style student politics, Southern distinctiveness melted away; that the once-hegemonic conservatism of southern campuses was as dead as Jim Crow."¹¹ Yet, the historiography often does not address how southern activists made the leap from regional advocacy, to a movement that mimicked their Northern counterparts; a gap which the media helps to bridge. While localized campus studies of the New Left and

little wonder that historians of the New Left have for decades depicted the student movement as a mostly northern phenomenon. Books devoted to the southern student left have been few and relatively recent." Cohen, *Rebellion in Black and White*, 13, 20.

¹¹ Cohen, *Rebellion in Black and White*, 15.

radicalized student movements in the South have helped to distinguish the regional flavors that student activism obtained, a major disconnect still ensues between the historiography of the New Left and media studies scholarship.

Reflecting on the use of television during the 1960's sociologist and former member of SDS, Todd Gitlin quipped, that journalism was not just "holding up a mirror to reality'... It was, in part, *composing* reality."¹² The power of the national news media and its ability to make and break social movements has long been acknowledged and explored within movement scholarship. In 1980 Todd Gitlin's *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media and the Making and Unmaking of The New Left* offered an introspective analysis of the role of the mass media in shaping the New Left and the symbiotic relationship between the mass media and revolutionary figures in the movement. Gitlin argued that the mainstream media organized their stories around "media frames" which deluded and distorted dissenting voices and twisted it to fit within their own frames. Media frames are the "persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation of selection, emphasis and exclusion by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse, whether

¹² Gitlin, *The Whole World Is Watching*, XIV.

verbal or visual. Frames enable journalists to process large amounts of information quickly and routinely; to recognize it as information, to assign it to cognitive categories and to package it for efficient relay to their audiences."¹³ Gitlin's analysis of frames offers a useful understanding of the development of national and local television portrayals of protesters. However, it does not explain how television news developed specific ideologies in the postwar period, which would be extended into interpretation of the social movements of the 1960s.

At the dawn of the Cold War, television quickly became a fixture in American lives and households. By the early 1960s, 92 percent of American households owned a television. By 1968, television news had exceeded newspapers as American's primary news source.¹⁴ Television news programs, both network and local, played an indelible role in shaping American's perceptions and opinions of the world around them in the postwar period. Televised news "emerged from the war on the heels of experiences involving the dangers and injustice of fascism, state oppression, colonialism, and Soviet premier Joseph Stalin. Newsreels,

¹³ Gitlin, *The Whole World Is Watching*, 7.

¹⁴ Bodroghkozy, *Equal Time*, 2; Craig Allen, *News is People: The Rise of Local TV News and the Fall of News from New York* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 2001). 208.

documentaries, and broadcast news infused these mores into postwar American culture."¹⁵ With these mores came the language and ideologies of the Cold War; a major factor in the shaping of both postwar television programming and politics; two entities where were closely tied together. Anna McCarthy suggests that television became a tool for shaping citizens and ideas of citizenship. McCarthy asserts that television's

...most revealing contradictions emerged when the citizenship struggles of black Americans entered the picture, especially after the Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision made desegregation a matter of national moral leadership. A broad array of racial rationalizations found expression in the visual and organizational culture of governing by television. Sponsors advocating corporate "rights," for example, pursued legitimacy by referencing civil rights, while broadcasters' policies of balance and fairness hampered the programming strategies adopted by liberal campaigns for racial justice. In part, such practices of racial containment reflected the economic and infrastructural relations between local television stations and networks, as advocates of integration within the liberal establishment mainstream discovered when they sought airtime for their programs in the South."¹⁶

The struggle for desegregation became America's first major televised news story, and a major point of contention for Southern television stations and their viewers. In *Equal Time: Television and the Civil Rights Movement*, Aniko

¹⁵ Tom Mascaró, *Into the Fray: How NBC's Washington Documentary Unit Reinvented the News*, (Washington DC: Potomac Books, 2010). 21.

¹⁶ Anna McCarthy, *The Citizen Machine: Governing by Television in 1950s America*, (New York: The New Press. 2010). 4.

Bodroghkozy explores how network television news helped to shape both perception and reaction to the Civil Rights Movement through news broadcasts. Bodroghkozy observes that in the quest for ratings, "network television both created national audiences and needed to appeal to such audiences in order to sell attention to national advertisers."¹⁷ However, while network news helped to shape a national response to desegregation, local television stations embodied localized reactions. In *Changing Channels*, Kay Mills examines a local Mississippi television station, and its struggle with Civil Rights coverage, and representation. Mills observes that most southern televisions stations "failed to provide balanced coverage of the civil rights movement."¹⁸ Instead, local television stations stuck with the "standpat white point of view."¹⁹

When the Civil Rights Movement did receive Southern media attention, Civil Rights leaders were often referred to as "outside agitators," and accused of being a part of a communist plot. Yet, this language did not only apply to Civil Rights activists, but also to the burgeoning social movements of the 1960s, which were inspired by them. In Thurmond's 1965 address to WBTB he lumped SNCC, SDS and WEB

¹⁷ Bodroghkozy, *Equal Time*, 7.

¹⁸ Mills, *Changing Channels*, 15.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Du Bois Clubs into one singular communist threat. While SNCC and SDS shared foundational roots, and a wide overlap of social advocacy goals and causes, communism was not one of them. William Billingsley has observed that in the wake of *Brown v. Board of Ed* and the dismantling of Jim Crow "the decline of the tattered ideology of white supremacy left a vacuum for a new political trajectory."²⁰ That trajectory pointed to a staunch anticommunist stance. Billingsley observes that "anticommunism was an amazingly flexible signifier that could be used to explain or exploit any number of concerns."²¹ The language of anticommunism, as reflected by Senator Thurmond, was used "as a vehicle of political repression," and represented a "reaction to democratic insurgency and change."²² Analyzing the uses of anticommunist language and fear mongering, Anna McCarthy observes that:

... we must understand this language as a language of conflict. Reframing antagonisms as interests and attacks as forms of rebalancing, centrist rationality set the terms for mounting any kind of challenge to the period's economic and political; common sense. Although it derived from the accommodationism of postwar liberalism, this language provided a general

²⁰ William Billingsley, *Communists on Campus: Race Politics and the Public University in Sixties North Carolina*, (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1999). 238.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Billingsley, *Communists on Campus*, 230.

vocabulary in which all kinds of political positions claimed their legitimacy and marginalized others."²³

In the South, the same marginalizing language applied to the Civil Rights movement, was adeptly used to discredit New Left movements, which arose in the wake of the African American freedom struggle.

Film and Research Methodology

While local television broadcasts offer insight into regional feelings, political climates, and events, they have not had wide scholarly interpretation or representation. This is partially due to the lack of available archival materials. What is primarily available when local news footage is saved, is not the broadcast itself, but outtakes and raw footage.²⁴ These materials are just as salient, if not more so, than broadcast footage. Outtakes and raw footage offer insight into what cameramen were trying to capture, what they purposely avoided, and how. Historian Aniko Bodroghkozy has noted that "news reporting whether print or television, is obviously not a neutral mirror reflecting reality. Reporters have to select, categorize and package events and details in some

²³ McCarthy, *The Citizen Machine*, 22.

²⁴ Raw footage is footage that has remained unedited. That sometimes means that part of the clip was used during a broadcast. Outtakes are recorded material which was been left out of the program. Outtakes can provide insight into what the camera was specifically aiming to capture or leave out, as well as give further context into the specific cinematography employed by the cameraman,

sort of patterned manner...[however] television newsfilm presents a "web of facticity" that tends to militate against seeing news film as a representational system with its own imposed rules and penchant for defining and redefining social reality."²⁵ Outtakes and raw footage provide a vehicle to examine what has been selected and packaged, without the web. In this light, evaluating outtakes and raw footage allows the viewer to observe exactly what was being framed, and the technicalities of how each story was framed. This provides knowledge of the mechanics of news production, as well as a deeper grasp of regional interpretations and understandings of newsworthy events.

All of the film research for this project was conducted at the University of South Carolina's Moving Image Research Center (MIRC). MIRC is the home of several collections of outtakes from local news stations in South Carolina. MIRC also offers the unusual and advantageous source base of broadcast scripts. In the early years of local television news broadcasts, once a program was aired it was not saved. Therefore, outtakes and remaining broadcast scripts help to fill in the gaps of what was reported and how. While analysis of the outtakes provides

²⁵ Bodroghkozy, *Equal Time*, 42.

insight into what news stations were specifically looking to focus on, broadcast scripts help to piece together how stories and camera shots were framed. MIRC's collections of WIS broadcast scripts, although not complete, offers an invaluable understanding into which shots were used, how stories were presented, and what details may have been left out.

Films selected for this project were determined primarily by availability of what had previously been referenced in MIRC's catalog. Because the collection of outtake reels is so vast, not all film reels have been cataloged. Often, when going through reels to find a specific outtake, uncatalogued footage would be found, offering a different reference base than originally anticipated. Due to these limitations, it is impossible to claim that this represents an exhaustive study of protest portrayals of Columbia in 1970. However, the films selected for this project are characteristic and reflective of local Columbia broadcasts of that particular year. Corresponding broadcast scripts from WIS provided further guidance into which films were most appropriate and what they were trying to portray. Availability also helped to dictate the timeframe of this project. While sporadic films or scripts that discussed New Left student movements were found

between 1966-1969, the majority of materials revolved around the spring semester of 1970. It is not a coincidence that this particular time, which received the most extensive amount of coverage, is when the University of South Carolina's student movement turned into a Movement.

Chapter Three: The Beginning of a Movement

The 1960s represented a decade of social upheaval and change within the South and throughout the nation. College campuses often seemed like testing grounds for new ideas, new forms of dissent, and new ways to push social and political boundaries. In the wake of the GI Bill, which provided World War II veterans with the means to attend college and earn their bachelor's degree, college campuses across America exploded.

An increase in college enrollment, coupled with a Cold War emphasis on education and research, prompted what University of California President Clark Kerr referred to as the "great transformation." Throughout the 1950s and 1960s many state schools, inclusive of the University of South Carolina, morphed from small, intimate campuses to large "multiversities," with an emphasis on graduate education, research production, and attracting top rated faculty.²⁶ At the University of South Carolina, the rapid growth of both the student body and the administration left

²⁶ Henry H. Lesesne, *A History of the University of South Carolina 1940-2000*, (Columbia: the University of South Carolina Press, 2001). 135.

students feeling frustrated, overlooked, and without rights.

As Southern colleges and universities expanded their size and their goals, they experienced growing pains in more ways than one. Universities strove to expand their programs, and "an increasing number of southern universities sought admission into the upper echelons of American higher education. Institutions making this transition had to adopt the values that dominated American higher education during the 1960s, including an emphasis on academic rigor and intellectual freedom and an acceptance of individual merit as a core principle. Segregation was incompatible with this milieu."²⁷

At the start of the fall semester of 1963, the University of South Carolina became the last major university in the country to integrate. USC administration and government representatives prided themselves on a quiet, peaceful integration process, unlike its Southern sisters the University of Mississippi, and the University of Alabama, among others. The ability to keep the peace was due, in part, to USC President Thomas Jones's keen sense of media awareness and censorship. Jones had issued a memo

²⁷ Turner, *Sitting in and Speaking Out*, 9.

that previous summer stating his intention to "control media coverage," along with public pleas for calm and rationality. Students and Columbia residents headed Jones's request. Noting the subdued atmosphere of the event, newspaper editor Paul Turk commented that "apparently, no violence means no coverage."²⁸

The media silence that accompanied USC's integration set the tone for much of the remainder of the decade. Although the student body was not featured in nightly newscasts, it was still undergoing great change. Historian Robert Cohen notes that :

...the University of South Carolina protests actually emerged against a backdrop of profound institutional change as the university was transformed from a parochial Jim Crow school into a racially integrated cosmopolitan university and major international research center. South Carolina students, ending their regional isolation, were influenced by powerful national trends: resistance to in loco parentis rules, the civil rights and antiwar movements, and the rise of the counterculture.²⁹

With integration came the introduction of a biracial student body for the first time since Reconstruction, as well as the ushering in of new ideas and frustrations. While USC was home to a small faction of dissident students, their appearance in local television broadcasts remained virtually nonexistent until the end of the

²⁸ Lesesne, *A History of the University of South Carolina*, 147.

²⁹ Cohen and Snyder, *Rebellion in Black and White*, xx.

decade.³⁰ However, a lack of coverage often meant that students and administration could deal with campus based issues on their own terms. While USC and President Thomas Jones were by no means liberal, actions and repercussions tended to be less repressive in the mid-sixties than they were by 1970.

Still finding its footing only two years after integration, by 1965 the USC campus was no stranger to political polarization. 1965 would become a significant year both nationally and locally. Evidenced by Senator Thurmond's address, 1965 saw the first major anti-Vietnam War protests in major cities and college campuses across America. Students for a Democratic Society became a national organization in 1965, opening offices and attracting student membership, and advocating for a plethora of social causes across the country. At USC, 1965 marked the growth of the free speech movement, which was

³⁰ All film-based research was conducted at the University of South Carolina's Moving Image Resource Center. Major source bases were archived news film outtakes and WIS broadcast scripts. Cataloged news film was carefully combed through to find evidence of student protest footage. While I was not able to find any footage before 1969 that does not necessarily mean that it wasn't covered, as not all the film has been cataloged. Broadcast scripts were composed primarily of sportscasts from 1963-1967, and did not offer any further hints into that day's news. While I cannot say definitively that student protest was not covered, it is abundantly clear that if it was mentioned it was brief and fleeting.

sparked by a campus speaker ban reflective of McCarthy era policies.³¹

In April of 1965 a group of students invited Carl Braden, a member of the National Committee to Abolish HUAC, to give a speech on campus. The ensuing speech resulted in administrative interference. Thomas Jones, president of USC, canceled the event three days before it was scheduled. In its place, he developed a policy, which stated that "no person who advocates for the overthrow of the constitutional government and violence can make a university appearance." The ban also gave him the right to cancel all talks given by outside visitors, employing the trope that "outsiders" brought agitation and disturbed the South Carolinian way of life.³² The controversy caused alarm both on campus and off. The President's office was flooded with angry letters from parents and alumni, which Jones often answered personally. In one response he retorted "please be assured we are trying to do all that we can to develop in our students understanding of their responsibilities to the American way of life, and so far we have been fortunate in havening no leftist-inspired

³¹ Craig Keeney, *Resistance: A History of Anti-Vietnam War Protests in Two Southern Universities, 1966-1970*. MA Thesis, University of South Carolina. 2003. 3.

³² Anonymous Memo, April 26, 1965, Box 9, 1964-1965, Thomas Jones Papers, South Caroliniana Library, The University of South Carolina.

uprisings. Needless to say, the widespread activities of other campuses have made us skittish."³³

Frustrated with the overt administrative censorship but eager to distance themselves from the "wild-eyed, radical free speech movement," students and faculty formed *The Carolina Free Press*.³⁴ *The Free Press* was an independent newspaper "published by the interested faculty, staff and students of the University of South Carolina as an indication of their distress over the amount and degree of suppression of news both on and off the USC campus."³⁵ Efforts to remain separated from the "wild eyed" free speech movement, which had exploded at the University of California Berkley just the year before, demonstrated the localized nature of protest at the University of South Carolina. While dissent was present, it existed within a dynamic of both overwhelming student apathy and a traditionally conservative campus.³⁶ An effect of this

³³ Letter from Thomas Jones to Mr. JJ Campbell, May 19, 1965, Box 9, 1964-1965, Thomas Jones Papers, South Caroliniana Library, The University of South Carolina.

³⁴ *Carolina Free Press*, May 19, 1965, Box 9, 1964-1965, Thomas Jones Papers, South Caroliniana Library, The University of South Carolina; Keeney, Areli Allene Herring, MA thesis, pg 31.

³⁵ *Carolina Free Press*, May 19, 1965, Box 9, 1964-1965, Thomas Jones Papers, South Caroliniana Library, The University of South Carolina.

³⁶ By the 1950s, USC had gained a reputation as a large party school where students focused attention on socializing and sports. In a 1955 speech to the student body, Historian Daniel Hollis reprimanded students for their "anti-intellectuality." Despite the arrival of the turmoil of the 1960s, this feeling continued to be echoed throughout the decade. In a letter to the editor in *The Gamecock* one student wrote

dichotomy of power and protest was a "tendency for student activism to flow into established channels such as student government or officially sanctioned programs. This process moderated the tone of southern campus activism, even as national movement leaders won media coverage with heated, often violent rhetoric... Speaker bans and censorship of student publications were potent issues that could and at times did mobilize large numbers of students across the political spectrum.³⁷

Examining the University of North Carolina's 1963 speaker ban, William Billingsley observed that the enactment of the McCarthy era inspired speaker ban had the ironic effect of prompting greater student activism, rather than quelling it.³⁸ At USC, the speaker ban and campus censorship did not initially cause mass protest, but it did coax the campus's first New Left inspired group into existence. In 1966 the campus group AWARE was formed in reaction overt campus censorship, and a lack of academic freedom. In a memo to President Jones the newly formed

"The student body at USC is the laziest, most apathetic group of people that I ever hope to be associated with. This indifference is characterized not only by nonparticipation, but by criticism of the other people, various groups and programs or policies that they know nothing about... The average student on this campus simply vegetates." Lesesne, *A History of the University of South Carolina*, 104; Letters to the Editor, May, 1966, Box 4, 1965-1966 Thomas Jones Papers, South Caroliniana Library, The University of South Carolina.

³⁷ Turner, *Sitting in and Speaking Out*, 8

³⁸ Billingsley. *Communists on Campus*.

group stated that "AWARE's purpose is to promote the dissemination of ideas which will lead students into an awareness of the full spectrum of political and social thought; and to consider and act on matters entertaining to the intellectual and physical well-being of the University.. We strongly believe that these activities will help to combat the intellectual complacency at Carolina ."39

Although AWARE claimed no political affiliation, they quickly became the campus's moving force behind free speech advocacy. By November of 1966 USC's free speech movement had amassed a small following and students pressed the administration to clarify the University's stance on outside speakers and publish the new policy in *The Gamecock*. However, AWARE was not the only group pushing for more administrative transparency in their censorship policies. While AWARE made efforts to involve the local ACLU chapter in removal of the speaker ban, the Student Senate issued an objection to the policy, using the student newspaper to voice their concerns over censorship.⁴⁰ As a result, President Jones would form a Committee on Free

³⁹ Memo to the Faculty, USC, June 22, 1966, 1965-1966, Box 4, Thomas Jones Papers, South Caroliniana Library, The University of South Carolina.

⁴⁰ Letter from the Dean of Students to President Thomas Jones, Box 4, 1966-1967, Thomas Jones Papers, South Caroliniana Library, The University of South Carolina; Lesesne. *A History of the University of South Carolina*, 202.

Speech, as well as print the visitor policy in *The Gamecock*.

Campus concerns over free speech and the growing antiwar movement would begin to boil over in April of 1967. A campus visit by General William Westmoreland marked the first major antiwar protest on the USC campus. On Wednesday, April 26, 1970, General Westmoreland, commander of US forces in Vietnam, was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of South Carolina. During his ceremony, Dr. Thomas Tidwell, a chemistry professor at the University, silent stood up and help up a sign, which read "Protest: Doctor of War!" Tidwell had been approached by AWARE to participate in the antiwar protest, and members made the sign for him.⁴¹ Outside Rutledge Chapel, where the ceremony was held, 35 students peacefully picketed American involvement in Vietnam. Although the picketers were peaceful, they were met with forceful resistance from students who supported Westmoreland. Students held signs that read "We'd Rather Fight Than Bitch," booed, and chanted "Cops, go get them!" Ultimately, police asked the

⁴¹ Tidwell, Thomas, Interview by Author, Email Correspondence, March 2015.

antiwar activists to leave the area, while the students provoking the conflict were allowed to stay.⁴²

Ironically, USC's first threat of violence surrounding the antiwar and free speech movements were provoked by conservative students rather than those advocating for change. Following the rally, AWARE held a number of meetings with administration, as well as a rally for free speech on the Horseshoe that May. In the weeks following the protest, Trina Sahil a graduate student involved in AWARE, sent Jones multiple memos, alerting him of AWARE's planned actions, and asking permission to host a rally.⁴³

AWARE's actions sparked a flurry of discussion on campus on both the left and the right. *The Gamecock* featured multiple op-ed pieces both decrying and defending the student's actions. Debate also took a physical form.

⁴² Lesense, 203; "Viet Commander Gets Degree", *The Gamecock*, April 28, 1967, 1.; *The State*, April 27, 1967.

⁴³ On May 1, Sahil and James Tugeson, representatives of AWARE's Free Speech Committee, sent Jones a memo that instructed him that on May 3, 1967 the committee will "hold a demonstration for freedom of speech and student rights, Our demonstration will be conducted in a lawful and orderly manner. I would like to request that the administration provide the demonstrators a place to demonstrate and police protection." Jones responded stating that he could not guarantee police protection, as the force was small and had obligations. This point would become ironic by 1970, when an overabundance of police presence became a major campus issue to students who felt that their rights were being infringed upon. Letter to President Jones, May 1, 1967, Box 5, 1966-1967, Thomas Jones Papers. South Caroliniana Library, The University of South Carolina; It is also of note that although Westmoreland's convocation ceremony was covered by local media, no broadcast scripts could be found from that particular day. Footage of the student protests was also unavailable, although footage was found of Westmoreland.

AWARE sponsored campus speakers such as Julian Bond and Dick Gregory. USC's Student Senate also took a part in the conversation with the "Student's Speak Out" and "Great Issues" series of lectures. The senate, although representative of a largely conservative student body, took a self-described "middle of the road" approach to social change. 1970 student body president Mike Spears claimed that the senate was "absolutely anti-violent but permissive of free speech."⁴⁴

Conservative and radical students often agreed on issues of academic freedom and free speech, as evidenced by the 1968 "Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities" published in *The Gamecock* by the student senate.⁴⁵ However, issues of race, social justice and a progressively large drug culture on campus ushered in increasingly complicated alliances, and new student factions.

In 1968 AWARE voted to affiliate themselves with both SDS and the Southern Student Organizing Committee (SSOC). Although the affiliation brought no internal change or shift in mission, the group was condoned by the local media as well as by the administration, raising campus

⁴⁴ Grose, "Voices of Southern Protest During the Vietnam Era," 3.

⁴⁵ "Statement of Rights: What Does it Say?" *The Gamecock*, November 8, 1968. 1.

suspicious. In a 1968 memo to Dr. Jones, university
publicity director Zane Krauss stated:

At the present time I think that it would be unwise to force AWARE to request recognition as an SDS affiliate as this would only provoke confrontation. The confrontation would be in their interest, not the university's. Although very few of our students sympathize with AWARE and its aim, a vast number of them would immediately become sympathetic if they thought "student rights" were being disregarded. A considerable number of faculty would also be provoked.⁴⁶

Zanes' memo indicates a large student and faculty base of support for campus issues of free speech, which would ultimately be lost in the local news by accusations of radicals encompassing an extreme minority of students. However, Zanes' astute observances also points to an awareness of media presence and manipulation within South Carolina.

Throughout 1968 and 1969 tensions continued to mount as the campus was sent reeling by 1968's Orangeburg Massacre, in which four unarmed black students were shot from behind during a peaceful night rally held at South Carolina State College in Orangeburg. The year also saw riots and a brief campus closure, which ensued after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., various

⁴⁶ Memo from Zane Kraus to Thomas Jones, November 21, 1968, Box 5, 1968-1969, Thomas Jones Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina.

antiwar rallies and marches which connected the campus with the outside Columbia community. In February of 1969, tensions continued to mount.⁴⁷

In commemoration of the one year anniversary of the Orangeburg Massacre, AWARE scheduled a week of commemoration events. AWARE member and SSOC student traveler Brett Bursey called the event "White Awareness Week." In a letter to Dr. Jones Bursey stated that: "In realizing that white unawareness is the most serious barrier in the struggle to ease racial crisis, we are organizing a week of workshops with a central focus on White awareness of Black Power."⁴⁸ White Awareness Week featured lectures on Black Power, the war in Vietnam, and the roles that white students could play in alleviating the plight faced by black students on an overwhelmingly white campus. The event ended with a commemoration of the Orangeburg Massacre, as well as the demand that the University of South Carolina cease to fly and Confederate Flag, and ban the playing of the song "Dixie."⁴⁹ Although the demand was originally put forth by the Afro American Association of Students (AAAS), AWARE soon joined in. Brett

⁴⁸ Letter from Brett Bursey to Thomas Jones, February, 1969, Box 5, 1968-1969, Thomas Jones Papers, South Caroliniana Library, The University of South Carolina.

⁴⁹ Lesesne, *A History of the University of South Carolina*, 207.

Burse, an active member of AWARE took the matter one step further by burning a confederate flag; an act which he would later be suspended for.⁵⁰

The Dixie incident represented a complicated amalgamation of student frustrations. In one simple demand, and subsequent refusal, it drew together issues of free speech, academic and intellectual freedom, and the stymied frustrations of a growing Black Power movement on an overwhelmingly white campus. Although WIS covered the event, they did not offer the complete story. Jane Rhodes has noted that in the mid and late sixties, as the entertainment value of television became readily apparent, attention became more focused on style and holding audience attention than it was on delivering a quality news story. In this light, "pacing, format, packaging similar stories together, the use of charismatic anchors, and avoidance of complex ideas were pressed into service."⁵¹

Coverage of USC's Dixie incident was highly reflective of these styles. While the event and its outcomes were featured on WIS's daily broadcasts for approximately a week, the reports were packaged into bite-sized stories, that avoided the complexity of the situation. WIS's first

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Jane Rhodes, *Framing the Black Panthers: The spectacular Rise of a Black Power Icon*, (New York: The New Press, 2007). 63.

mention of the incident proclaimed, "a group of negro students at the University of South Carolina asked the school to ban the playing of "Dixie" and the displaying of the confederate flags at sports events. The Afro- American Association says such actions are a tribute to a movement that set out to destroy the union. University officials have accepted the petition, but so far no action has been taken."⁵² Although it was mentioned that a white student burned the flag, AWARE is not explicitly identified as culpable in the situation. Broadcasts also fail to mention that the request was made as a part of the commemoration for the students who lost their lives in Orangeburg.

Coverage of the flag burning was also significant in that it was linked with the "Black Student Rebellion" at Duke.⁵³ Emulating Rhodes's observed style of "packaging similar stories together," AAAS's peaceful request for the banning of an offensive symbol was lumped together with the violence and rallies occurring at Duke University. Although black students at Duke were protesting for fair representation on campus, their outcries were immediately categorized as a "rebellion." Linking the two stories together serves to stretch the rebellion as a blanket

⁵² 1 PM News, WIS, February 12, 1969, Moving Image Resource Center, The University of South Carolina.

⁵³ Ibid.

categorization to the viewer, associating a request with violence.

Coverage of the 1969 flag burning incident would provide a foreshadowing of the year to come; both on campus and on camera. With the advent of antiwar and student's rights issues on campus, New Left protest at the University of South Carolina still remained more liberal than it did radical. Students sought system reforms instead of all out revolution, and utilized established methods of dissent, such as the campus newspapers, and polite letters to the administration. However, by the end of the 1960s, the amalgamation of campus issues and student frustrations had turned the University of South Carolina into a virtual tinderbox, which media coverage would aid in igniting.

Chapter Four: Mass Mediation and Escalation

In a 1970 report from the Committee to Investigate Communist Activities in South Carolina, New Left groups were identified as a threat to college campuses, communist in nature and described as an "abusive force [that] represents militant, nihilistic, and anarchistic forces... which threaten the orderly process of education as the forerunning of a more determined effort to destroy our economic, racial and political structures."⁵⁴ The committee's report emulated the feelings of local law enforcement, campus administration, and members of the board of trustees. This cold war line of political thinking would be funneled into the media throughout the 1969-1970 academic school year.

⁵⁴ Grose, "Voices of Southern Protest", 159.

The committee's, and in turn, the media's, assessment of New Left groups was quick to label participants as militant. The guise of militancy blanketed intricate campus nuances and alliances, which had been building throughout the previous decade. Although protests and small disturbances had occurred on campus often, they had rarely been brought up during daily television newscasts. However, media coverage throughout the winter and spring of 1970 did much to sensationalize the campus disturbances. Beginning with the closure and trial of Columbia's UFO coffee house, viewers of the local media were bombarded with stories of campus unrest, in conjunction with reports of campus incidents throughout the nation.

In January of 1968 the antiwar movement on the USC campus and within the city of Columbia, became irreparably intertwined. The UFO Coffeehouse, an establishment meant to provide an entertainment alternative to the USO for GIs who were against the war, opened at 1732 Main Street. The first of a chain of five coffee shops to open across the country, the UFO was established and run by members of Chicago based activist group, Summer of Support (SOS).⁵⁵ GI coffeehouses were created to provide a cultural center and safe space for members of the Army who were against the war to voice

⁵⁵ "Coffee for the Army," *Newsweek*, 26 Aug. 1968, 51.

their opinions and discuss the war with a likeminded community. It was an outlet which was welcomed by a growing number of dissatisfied and frustrated GIs based in Fort Jackson, and distained by a majority of the Columbia community.

Serving only coffee, tea and soda, the UFO often featured concerts and poetry readings, and even welcomed author and noted antiwar activist Normal Mailer in 1968. Despite the coffee shop's subdued nature, it quickly became a target of local law enforcement and was brought under federal investigation. The UFO not only challenged political norms in its appeal to peaceniks and antiwar activists, but it also defied traditional racial standards. Former USC student Craig Keeney astutely observed the precariousness of the UFO when he identified it as "a marginally integrated establishment in a still largely segregated community."⁵⁶ To Columbia law enforcement officials, and nearby business owners, the UFO represented a haven for cultural misfits, outside agitators, and traitors to the United States. Columbia detective John Earl acknowledged that, "the type of people it draws may be good people, but they are different. Their attire is strange. There are tables for seating, but sometimes they sit on the

⁵⁶Keeney, *Resistance*, 49

floor, holding hands. It's a terrible situation. We really have got our hands full with this."⁵⁷ Over the course of two years, the UFO often welcomed more undercover police, than it did activists.⁵⁸ In January of 1969, five UFO operators (Duane and Merle Ferre, William Balk, Leonard Cohen and Christopher Hannafan) were charged by Richland County for keeping and maintaining a public nuisance, and the UFO was shut down.⁵⁹

The UFO was based off campus but still held strong student body ties. Its closure sent a ripple effect throughout the entire student body. Various members of AWARE frequented the coffee shop, aided in its antidraft counseling and rallies, and even helped edit the underground newspaper, *The Short Times*, which was distributed at the UFO. Enraged by the closing, which students believed was due to the political persuasion of the clientele and not because of actual actions, former members of AWARE organized a march in support of the UFO. On January 18, 1970, a crowd of approximately 100 students and supporters marched from USC's Russell House, down Sumter Street, over past the State House and ended in front

⁵⁷ Donald Johnson, "Antiwar Coffeehouse Delights G.I's but Not Army," *New York Times*, August 12, 1968, L-41.

⁵⁸ Brett Bursey, Interview with Dorothy Giles, 1987, South Caroliniana Library. The University of South Carolina.

⁵⁹ Doris B. Giles, "The Antiwar Movement in Columbia, South Carolina, 1965-1972," Unpublished Paper. 14.

of the UFO. The march was peaceful, reasonably small, and contained.⁶⁰

However, film shot by local NBC affiliate WIS, displays contradictory footage. Panning the line of marchers from a side angle, the camera displays a seemingly unending crowd, screaming anti-war chants. When the camera reorients itself to the front of the line it zooms in in a tight shot, so the viewer is left staring at a sea of bodies. When the protesters reach the UFO the camera drops its angle so the viewer is level with the back of people's heads, giving the viewer the impression of being stuck in a dense crowd.⁶¹ Although interviews shot in April of the same year would repetitively reinforce the fact that protesters made up a sliver of the student population, actual protest footage was artfully filmed to make viewers feel threatened by the inundation countercultural rebels. Accusations and threats made by Carolina Fifth Circuit Solicitor General John Foard would do the same.

⁶⁰ By 1970 AWARE had been censured by the USC administration and forcibly disbanded; "Howard Levy to Attend Coffee House Rally." *The State*, January 18, 1970. 35.

⁶¹ "WIS 70-93(A): UFO March/ Rally," Moving Image Research Collection, University of South Carolina, 1:67, January 18, 1970. <http://mirc.sc.edu/>.

The closure of the UFO set into motion a chain of student actions and administrative reaction, which would ultimately be exacerbated and exaggerated by extensive news coverage. After the shuttering of the UFO, a small group of activists previously affiliated with the establishment moved their operations to Russell House under the guise of the "UFO in Exile." The appearance of the group on campus, as well as increasingly vocal complaints launched by AWARE and countercultural and drug advocacy group FREAK (Freedom to Research Every Aspect of Knowledge) sparked the suspicion of local law enforcement, particularly of Columbia's fifth circuit solicitor general John Foard, who had led the charges against the UFO. Foard viewed the university handling of antiestablishment activists as too "weak," and put pressure on President Jones to increase university police presence around campus, or threatened to place the Columbia Police Department there instead.⁶² The increased pressure from local government officials, as well

⁶² Claudia Smith Brinson, "UFO Coffeehouse Typified Clash of Wills in the 1960's," *The State*, September 28, 1988. A-1. Foard believed the UFO suspicious for its leftist ideals, and labeled it a hotbed of communist thought. Although he had no evidence of any wrong doing at the UFO, including a lack of drugs found on the premises, Foard made it his own personal mission to see the coffee house shut down and arrested five of its owners under misdemeanor charges. Foard was also determined to go after members of AWARE who were connected with the UFO and thus launched drug raids across campus in an effort to catch them. Foard criticized President Jones as being too lenient with activists and publicly criticized the administration, leading to harsher and unwarranted punishment for many of the campus activists. ; Lesence, *A History of the University of South Carolina*, 213.

as angry citizens, caused the USC administration to tighten their already strict outside visitor policy. The administration "consequently banned all unapproved nonstudents, including former UFO personnel, from campus. In addition, campus police stepped up patrols and randomly checked student's identification cards to curb the alleged influence of "outside agitators" from manipulating the student body."⁶³

In an effort to quell campus dissidents, Solicitor Foard began randomized drug raids. Foard sent in local police with blank warrants, referred to as "John Doe" warrants by students, to conduct searches and subsequent arrests.⁶⁴ In early April, three students were arrested and suspended on drug charges, which many on campus found deeply suspicious.⁶⁵ The arrest, following well-founded suspicions of narcs among the student body, caused a protest of 250 students, organized by FREAK. FREAK student leader Wayne Hembree "charged that law enforcement officials were abusive in their treatment of students and that political influence from the legislature in an

⁶³ Gose, "Voices of Southern Protest," 159.

⁶⁴ Lesesne, *A History of the University of South Carolina*, 213.

⁶⁵ Michael Ball, "3 Students 'Busted' on State Drug Charges, *The Gamecock*, April 10, 1970. 1.

election year was pressuring the board and the administration to harshly discipline them."⁶⁶

In response to student dissatisfaction, President Jones agreed to meet with the angered students. The students presented him with a list of demands, which was signed by "Carolina's Subculture."⁶⁷ According to University historian Henry Lesesne, Jones told the students that he understood their point of view but also stressed a stringent dedication to law enforcement, "stating that USC was not a sanctuary for lawbreakers."⁶⁸ Despite Jones's reaction, Foard accused the administration of not being tough enough on leftward leaning students and faculty, and forcibly placed SLED officials in Russell House and barred UFO affiliates from entry. Student body present Mike Spears responded by forming the Student Emergency Coalition for Academic Freedom at USC, and challenged the ethics of Foard's actions by declaring them a violation of academic freedom.⁶⁹

Despite the tangled influence of law enforcement and general student outrage, Columbia's local television

⁶⁶ Lesesne, *A History of the University of South Carolina*, 213.

⁶⁷ Release by "Concerned Students of Carolina," Box 6, 1969-1970. Thomas Jones Papers, South Caroliniana Library, The University of South Carolina.

⁶⁸ Lesesne, *A History of the University of South Carolina*, 213.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

station WIS captured a different story. Footage from the month of April reveals two common trends: students interviewed about the campus unrest are caught off guard and unprepared, and off campus reaction to the protests are provided by older white males who decry protesters as unwelcome outsiders. Moreover, cameramen and reporters seem eager to capture the response of Jones, and other administrative officials. However, student protest leaders are ill represented, creating a perspective which leans in the favor of administrators. In May of the same year, WIS would televise a press conference held by members of Young Americans for Freedom, while they would grant no air time to a similar press conference held by liberal student activists. Television footage and broadcast coverage of New Left actions were extensive throughout April and May of 1970.

On Thursday April 9, 1970 three students at the University of South Carolina were arrested on charges of drug possession. A faction of students at USC believed these charges stemmed from an unlawful search without a warrant, and undercover narcotics officers, which had been enrolled as students. The arrests stirred up student unrest and resentment regarding issues of academic freedom and the unjust persecution of students that had been stirring

throughout the 1960s. On Tuesday, April 13, a coalition of students, led by members of FREAK held a private meeting with Dr. Jones. The meeting was meant to address student dissatisfaction with police presence on campus and the arrest of the three students. The students presented Jones with a list of demands, which were rejected.⁷⁰ Unsatisfied by the meeting, a group of 300 students marched to President Jones's house that evening. The students stayed until approximately 9pm, when they decided to march to the Russell House and hold a peaceful overnight sit in.

Footage of the April 13 protest displayed an acute media awareness on the part of the students. Although WIS made no mention of the student's protest or peaceful Russell House takeover, on April 13 or 14, their cameras were still rolling. While protestors were gathered outside President Jones's campus home, cameramen attempted to capture the rally. However, a hand was placed over the camera lens so the viewer can only see glimpses of the crowd shot through fingers. A student can be heard saying "Want an interview man? Well we don't have one. We don't

⁷⁰ "Russell House Remains Open," *The Gamecock*, May 8, 1970. 1.

want to have a movie camera, that's exactly what we don't want!"⁷¹

The final two shots of the film focus on FREAK student leader, Tony Bright. Reading off of a piece of paper for the entire shot, Bright lists student demands, which are primarily related to narcotics usage and police persecution of students. Bright lists perceived problems inclusive of suspension, and administrative allowance of police engaging in "free and unlawful access to campus." Finally, Bright is interviewed by a single reporter and states that the group is waiting for a reaction by the university administration and until then will take no further action.⁷²

The sequence of shots is primarily focused on student action, as opposed to local or administrative reaction. This paints a lopsided picture, which does not fully represent why the students were protesting, and the administrative overreach, which ensued. WIS's lack of reporting on the event, both that night and the following day demonstrates a lack of regard for the student's grievances. This would stand in stark contrast to the crowded press conference held with Jones only two days

⁷¹ WIS 70 561: USC Protest Demonstrations," Moving Image Research Collection, University of South Carolina, 2:06, April 13, 1970.
<http://mirec.sc.edu/>

⁷² Ibid.

later. The students who refused the interview were mindful of their distorted portrayal.

On April 15, President Jones agreed to meet with protesting students in the afternoon. The meeting, which Jones referred to as a "family meeting," was held with South Carolina Attorney General Daniel McLeod, and open to all students. Jones addressed questions regarding student concerns of unlawful planting of drugs on students, and illegal blank warrants, and advised students not to resist an arrest, even if they thought it unlawful.⁷³ Jones later wrote a letter to the "concerned students" of Carolina stating that he was taking their allegations seriously, and commending them on the "orderly way in which they behaved."⁷⁴ Despite the relative calm surrounding the meeting, WIS news would describe the scene as "antagonistic" during their 7pm news broadcast.⁷⁵

Raw footage from WIS depicts student and administrative reactions to the meeting, as well as input from South Carolina government officials. A series of interviews, which was partially aired on the night of April 15, displays the reactions of Richland County

⁷³ Jones meets with FREAKS to Address Nine Student Demands, *The Gamecock*, April 17, 1970.1.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ WIS 7 PM News Report, April 15, 1970, Moving Image Research Collection, WIS Box 20.

representative C. Lem Harper, student government representative Joe Usry, and USC Law student Fletcher Spignor. All three interviewees were opposed to the student protests and are unsympathetic to the students. The first interviewee, State Representative C. Lem Harper states that the students should "go wherever they want to go but not be a part of the university because they're doing it no good." The second shot is of Joe Usry, secretary of the University of South Carolina Student Government. Usry emphasizes that the students protesting represent a minority of the student body. Fletcher Spignor is interviewed in the final shot. He suggests that students should re-concentrate their efforts, and advocate for things that would be of use to the university, such as new nursing or law schools.⁷⁶

All three men, although employed in varying positions of power, echo the same language regarding student protest. Both Harper and Spignor reduce the student's requests to a search for approval of marijuana. However, this both flattened the student movement and ignored the basis of student demands. Although a more lenient policy on marijuana use was requested, the student's primary concern revolved around unlawful searches of property and a

⁷⁶ "WIS 70 573 B: Reactions to USC Protest Demonstrations," Moving Image Research Collection, University of South Carolina, 1:56, April 15, 1970. <http://mirc.sc.edu/>.

reactionary police force. Usry's comments on the small percentage of protestors were also echoed by the administration, state government, and students who opposed the protests. Additionally, that evening's broadcast repeatedly emphasized that the protesting students represented "some two to three hundred of the university's 14,000 students are protesting the drug raids on campus." While 350 was a small number of students, mentioning the number neglects to acknowledge that student government initially endorsed the strikes and protestors of the student dissenters. Although a small number of students took action, a large number of students supported their demands. Broadcasts, as well as interviewees also fail to mention the loss of individual and intellectual liberties which encompassed the "drug raids."⁷⁷

The nightly broadcast on April 15 also featured clips of President Jones, as well as students who attended the meeting. An interview with Dr. Jones was filmed immediately after the conclusion of the meeting. Jones was surrounded by multiple reporters, and the camera can only get close enough to capture him between the shoulders of two men. Jones stated that he is "deeply concerned with the illicit possession, use and sale of drugs," and goes on to state

⁷⁷ WIS 7 PM News Report, April 15, 1970, WIS Box 20. Moving Image Research Center, The University of South Carolina.

the problem as a national issue, overlooking the local context.

The group of reporters which was crowded around Dr. Jones, demonstrates a high level of interest in Dr. Jones's opinion and account of the meeting. Juxtaposed with interviews of student leader Toney Bright taken two days earlier, this provides a stark contrast. While the media is eager to capture Jones's opinions, Bright was presented on the camera as a solitary figure, with no other people or reporters around him. This indicates both a higher level of regard and interest in Jones, and more credence on the importance of capturing Jones's thoughts as opposed to the students.

Following Jones's press conference, the film focuses on the opinions of two male students who had attended the meeting with Jones. One of the students states that students will support Jones and that "we'll take our gripes to the state house." Another student reported that "they [the administration] really didn't know what they were talking about. The attorney general didn't seem to know what was happening in the state."⁷⁸ Both students are dressed casually, with long hair. While this was a popular

⁷⁸ "WIS 70 572 B: USC Protest Demonstrations" Moving Image Research Center, University of South Carolina, 1.45, April 15, 1970. <http://mirc.sc.edu/>.

look by 1970, all liberal students interviewed seem to embody this personal style, while those who do not support the protest are typically dressed in a button down shirt or a suit. The majority of students interviewed were also male.

Despite local news depictions, not all students who were against local police infractions were long-haired hippies. Students who stood against actions taken by John Foard, and subsequently by the administration, "were composed of several diverse factions of students, such as conservative groups, New Left organizations, and apolitical students that all had different approaches to political engagement."⁷⁹ In reaction to the "witch-hunt" lead by Solicitor Foard, the typically conservative Student Senate, FREAK, and coalition of other groups and individual students formed the Student Emergency Coalition for Academic Freedom. The group issued a public statement, declaring that they were "disturbed by the brazen attempts by a few ill-informed local politicians to exercise unjust and dictatorial control over the University of South

⁷⁹ Gose, "Voices of Southern Protest," 155.

Carolina."⁸⁰ While tensions bubbled on campus, events of early May would bring them to a boiling point.

On May 4, 1970, National Guardsmen shot and killed four students peacefully protesting the US invasion of Cambodia at Kent State University. Like many students across the nation, a majority of the USC student body was outraged. However, compounded with local tensions, which had already been simmering on campus, the result was explosive. A broad alliance of students and faculty called for a campus strike on May 7th which involved a campus wide class walk out. The strike committee is notable for its broad allegiance of student groups. Representing members from the student senate, AWARE, FREAK, the Association of Afro- American Students, the Student Mobilization Committee, and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), the strike committee personified the broad array of frustrations and grievances within the campus community that had been brought to a head. Although the University reported average class attendance for the day, on the afternoon of May 7, 500 protesters showed up to the horseshoe demanding that the flag be lowered to half-

⁸⁰ "The Months of May," The University of South Carolina Magazine, Summer 1970. Thomas Jones Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina.

staff in honor of the dead at Kent State.⁸¹ A smaller group of students, led by the conservative group, Young Americans for Freedom (YAF) attended in counter protest, demanding that the flag not be lowered. Ultimately, Jones ordered the flag be lowered, in an effort to maintain calm on campus. That same afternoon, approximately 400 protesters relocated to the Russell House and announced a takeover, followed by approximately 1,000 curious students gathering outside of the building. The action caused the student senate to drop their support of the protest. Later that evening the arrival of the police and SLED agents, followed by national guardsmen later that night. The tumult ultimately led to the arrest of 42 people.⁸²

From May 5 through May 7, and beyond, WIS provided extensive coverage of the unfolding of campus events. In their 10am, 1pm, 7pm and 11pm newscasts WIS provided play-by-play coverage of student actions and reactions. Newscasters initially trivialized the event by only mentioning it with the nightly national news bulletin on the evening of May 4th. However, once the campus unrest reached Columbia, coverage intensified. On May 6th, reporters conflated issues of student protest and the local

⁸¹ "Strike Planned Thursday," *The Gamecock*, May 6, 1970.

⁸² Lesesne, *A History of the University of South Carolina*, 215-216.

racial climate by announcing that "nationally, four college students were shot by national guardsmen. Locally, negroes are charged with throwing rocks and bottles at police in the Camp Fodance area. The Columbia City Council said rocks and bottles can maim and kill just as bullet from pistols and shotguns."⁸³ By no coincidence, in the same broadcast, the Columbia City Council released another statement to WIS warning that "CITY POLICEMEN WILL NOT HESITATE TO USE THEIR GUNS WHEN NECESSARY TO PUT DOWN LAWLESSNESS. The council denied the announcement was connected in any way to local or national events."⁸⁴ Racial matters would be repeatedly brought up throughout WIS's coverage by continually mentioning that many of the protestors were focused on the "plight of the Negro in America."⁸⁵

On May 7th, 1,000 students gathered at the flagpole on the horseshoe to protest the earlier arrest of the student protestors. The event also produced a petition with 723 signatures which stated the irresponsibility in the student arrests and a request for amnesty.⁸⁶ WIS footage of the rally depicts an incredibly crowded view of the horseshoe.

⁸³ 7pm News Broadcast, WIS, May 6, 1970, Box 20, Moving Image Research Center, The University of South Carolina.

⁸⁴ Emphasis is theirs. 7pm News Broadcast, WIS, May 6, 1970, Box 20, Moving Image Research Center, University of South Carolina, Box 20.

⁸⁵ 1pm News Broadcast, WIS, May 7, 1970, Box 20, Moving Image Research Center, The University of South Carolina, Box 20.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

The crowd is full of young students, and a smattering of ROTC uniforms can be picked out. In the initial shot of the scene, the camera zooms in on a student, clad in a red white and blue striped shirt, and a pair of denim cutoffs with an American flag stitched to her back pocket. As the camera lingers on the young women, it is hard not to recall the focus on the American Flag in Thurmond's 1965 television address, lending a feeling of irony to the rest of the shot.⁸⁷

The footage captures the speeches of three individuals, two in support of the arrested students, and one decrying the recent actions of students, as well as a clip of a press conference held by Governor Robert McNair. The first speaker filmed is a black student. The student passionately accuses students of doing nothing (presumably referred to students who had been arrested during Kent State protests three days before) and calls them "the new Negros." After this statement, the camera pans out over the crowd to capture the applause. Some students can be seen raising their arms with hands in fist, in support of the student. The black student's speech serves to emphasize the

⁸⁷ WIS 70 681: USC Protest Demonstrations," Moving Image Research Collection, The University of South Carolina, 2:74, May 8, 1970. <http://mirc.sc.edu/>.

racial divisions and tensions still very much present on the USC campus only seven years after integration.

The second speech shows an older white male, possibly faculty or administration, in a clearly impassioned state. The man accuses the agitators of largely being from out of state and states that it seems to him that "out of state" protestors owe the tax payers of South Carolina and need to "have respect for the state and its traditions."⁸⁸ Although it is unlikely that all 1,000 students present and the 723 people who signed the petition were all from outside of South Carolina, the man's rhetoric echoed that of many of the local community and its local media. Pointedly, in an article printed in *The Gamecock* just four days later, a student observed that "of the 41 arrested, there were 32 students, and nine nonstudents. Of the students, 20 were from South Carolina, and five from other Southern states, and seven from north of the Mason Dixon line. Of the nonstudents, four were South Carolinians."⁸⁹

The last speaker on film is a young woman. The woman stated that "I just want to let you know that when you hear the news tonight that McNair met with students and got no response it's not like it was recorded..." As if on cue, the

⁸⁸ 'WIS 70 681: USC Protest Demonstrations," Moving Image Research Collection, The University of South Carolina, 2:74, May 8, 1970. <http://mirc.sc.edu/>.

⁸⁹ "Inside Agitators," *The Gamecock*, May 11, 1970. 2.

final shot is a segment of a press conference with Governor Robert McNair. The segment is silent until the last 25 seconds when McNair proclaims that he told the students, "you don't always get what you want, and in life you would find later that things wouldn't always be like you like them."

By putting pressure on the USC administration, McNair would ensure that students would not have things the way they liked. Following the rally on the horseshoe, students marched to the Russel House and staged a sit in "to show their disapproval of the university's rules regarding the restricted use of the building."⁹⁰ Although students planned for a peaceful sit in, Russell House officials mistook the student's actions as an intended take over, and reported it as such to the administration. As word of the takeover spread, the Student Government reneged on their support of the strike and protests.⁹¹ Fearful of a takeover, the administration ordered that students leave the building, as over 1,000 curious students watched the situation unfold outside of the Russell House. Eventually police were called in, and the 41 students who remained inside the building

⁹⁰ Grose, "Voices of Southern Protest," 161.

⁹¹ Ibid.

were placed on suspension.⁹² Angered by the action, the crowd outside the Russell House grew visibly upset, prompting McNair to order National Guardsmen to campus to disband the demonstration. At their arrival, protestors formed a human chain in an effort to block the National Guardsmen's entry into the building. Eventually, they forced their way in and the 41 students were arrested.⁹³ The following day, approximately 1,000 students marched to the State House and demanded a pardon for the students. Local officials refused to head the demands, but the event remained peaceful.⁹⁴

Although the University experienced a quiet weekend, the peace was broken on Monday, May 11, after the board of trustees refused to grant amnesty to the arrested students. Three hundred students gathered in front of the administrative building and the mood soon turned violent. The students demanded amnesty for those arrested the previous week, and were flatly rejected. Although accounts differ between students demanding the keys to the building and students entering and asserting the right to peacefully occupy a public space, students soon entered the first

⁹² Ginny Carroll, "Over 40 Arrested at USC Protest," *The State*, (May 8, 1970). A-1.

⁹³ "41 Arrested During Union Takeover, R.H Reopens Under Usual Policies," *The Gamecock*, May 8, 2016. 1.

⁹⁴ Grose, "Voices of Southern Protest," 162; Lesesne, *A History of the University of South Carolina*, 216.

floor of the building while members of the administration fearfully barricaded themselves on the second floor. Although the majority of the 250 students who chose to occupy the building were peaceful, some students occupying the office begin vandalizing the building.⁹⁵

Fearing the threat of a riot, Governor McNair ordered the National Guard to take control of the situation. By the time the guardsmen had arrived, the crowd had surged to over 2,000 students. The students turned riotous, began to throw rocks at the guardsmen, and vandalized property. In an effort to break up the scene, the guardsmen fired teargas at the crowd.⁹⁶ WIS, whose station is located just three blocks from the horseshoe reported that "the gas concentration was so heavy that it was impossible to leave the building."⁹⁷ Inadvertently, the gas infiltrated the ventilation systems of nearby dorm rooms, causing their occupants to run outside to escape the gas. On numerous occasions, guardsmen mistook the evacuating students for protestors and clubbed and/ or arrested them.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ "Arrests, Violence Plague Campus after Second Building Taken Over," *The Gamecock*, (May 13, 1970) 1.

⁹⁶ "Most Trouble Due to Only a Handful," *The State*, (May 12, 1970). A-1.

⁹⁷ 1 PM News, WIS, May, 12, 1970, Box 20, Moving Image Resource Center, The University of South Carolina.

⁹⁸ Grose, "Voices of Southern Protest," 163. Keeney, *Resistance*, 70.

On May 12, Governor McNair declared a state of emergency after another on campus rally. McNair again called upon the National Guard, resulting in further student arrests and serious injuries.⁹⁹ Following the declaration, a 9am-6pm curfew was imposed. The curfew, coupled with the concerted efforts of faculty and staff to provide an atmosphere of peace and open dialogue, ensured that the campus endured no more violence.

The turmoil of May 1970 became a polarizing event on a campus which was already enduring high tensions, and divisive opinions. WIS coverage played a role in furthering misunderstanding and continuing polarization. When reporting the violence that broke out from May 7-12, reporters addressed the victimization of guardsmen, but failed to discuss the innocent students who were clubbed or arrested. In each of the four newscasts on May 12 "anti-guard sentiment which [was] created by the confrontation at Kent State University," was mentioned prior to discussion of what had actually occurred on campus.¹⁰⁰ On the same day it was reported that the guardsmen "performed with great restraint and good judgement in the face of extreme provocation, abuse and sometimes injury," and that "the

⁹⁹ Grose, "Voices of Southern Protest," 164.

¹⁰⁰ 1 PM News, WIS, May 12, 1970, Box 20, Moving Image Resource Center, The University of South Carolina.

guardsmen have become trapped in an emotional wave of anti-guard sentiment."¹⁰¹

During a 12:31 news bulletin on May 11 it was recounted that "guardsmen are still firing tear gas as they encounter small bands of students who were dispersed earlier from the horseshoe area."¹⁰² The following morning, WIS announced that the teargas had been so thick that students who were ordered back to their dorms could not stay in them. However, the injured students and arrest of bystanders was omitted from the newscast.¹⁰³ Given the national youth climate, which reflected anger towards the National Guard, as well as armed forces, sympathies towards the guard were merited. However, victimizing the National Guard also refused to acknowledge the targeting of innocent students, and the fact that the appearance of the guardsmen only served to escalate student reaction and protest.

While placing a clear divide between sympathies for authority and sympathies for students, WIS coverage served to further divide the student body. Observing the achievements of Southern New Left Groups, Historian Robert Cohen has observed that "most of these achievements were

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² WIS News Bullitin, May 11, 1970, Box 20, Moving Image Resource Center, The University of South Carolina.

¹⁰³ 7pm News, May 12, 1970, Box 20, Moving Image Resource Center, The University of South Carolina.

more reformist than revolutionary. They were championed in a mostly nonviolent way by a southern New Left more able than its northern counterpart to work in coalitions with nonradicals. So, we might think of the southern New Left as a left-liberal movement, truer to the reformist spirit of the early New Left- the New Left of the Port Huron era- than to the Marxifying and Weatherizing New Left of the late 1960s in the North."¹⁰⁴ While activists at USC may have called upon militant or revolutionary language at times, their actions were often more liberal than radical. Moreover, much of the student body that supported the grievances, which erupted in May, self-identified themselves as moderates.

The vandalizing and violence which took place in May was more reflective of the radical underground New Left movements of the late 60s, than the liberal calls for free speech in the early 1960s. One student observed that "prior to the takeover, dissenters had built a larger base of support than ever before... the Thursday night that loose unity had been divided... by Friday the protestors seemed to have lost their moderate support."¹⁰⁵ While these distinctions loomed large in the minds of USC students, WIS

¹⁰⁴ Cohen, *Rebellion in Black and White*, 23

¹⁰⁵ "Time for Remedy," *The Gamecock*, May 11, 1970. 2.

reporting grouped all involved as "radicals." The lump categorization of students not only flattened the nuances of the campus crisis, but made student reactions to administrative overreaction, as well as their reasons for protest, appear militant and trivialized.

Although the 1970 protests on the predominantly conservative University of South Carolina campus may not have reflected the majority of student opinions, local media coverage exaggerated and conflated individual issues, causing a general misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the nuances of campus politics and procedure. Rhetoric captured on camera proved contradictory to images, as interviews stressed the small population of student protesters while local cameramen captured protests and marches in a way that made student protestors seem like an impending threat. Moreover, the camera also offered preferential treatment to those opposed to the protests while those involved were caught off-guard or absent all together. A rhetoric inspired by an antiquated fear communism also permeated the airwaves, accusing a student body made up of primarily South Carolinians to be "outside agitators" and calling on actions from the very law enforcement officials which served to exacerbate student disapproval and radical action.

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