The Black Studies Controversy at Reed College, 1968–1970

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IN A RETROSPECTIVE published in 2012, a group of scholars described some of the accomplishments of the discipline of Black Studies during its first four decades:

With a beginning remarkably different than conventional academic disciplines, Black Studies emerged on the American college campus amidst Black Power protests and student demands. Now more than forty years old, Black Studies exists as an established discipline constituted by a robust scholarly discourse, an ever-expanding body of innovative interdisciplinary literature, hundreds of collegiate programs at the undergraduate level, a growing number of graduate and doctoral programs, and some of the world’s most well known intellectuals.¹

Proponents of the new discipline, which had its origin in the struggle for racial justice in the 1960s, could take justifiable pride in its successful establishment in academic institutions around the county. In some places where Black Studies programs were instituted, however, including at Reed College in Portland, Oregon, initial success was not sustained, and the program failed to take root.

Many people experienced the 1960s as a time of disorienting changes, but in large part those changes resulted from processes that had been at work since the end of World War II. The economic boom that had fueled the building of suburbs and freeways was approaching a climax. Memories of the privations and sacrifices associated with the Depression and World War II had faded, and prosperity was generating problems of its own. One trend that was disturbing the social fabric was the emergence, beginning in the 1950s, of a youth culture, propelled by technological and economic innovations such as the transistor radio, which facilitated the emergence of youth-oriented radio stations; the growing ubiquity of television; the increasing affluence that allowed adolescents to retain their own earn-

ings and purchase age-specific clothing and recorded music; and access to automobiles. The process was converting young-adult producers in a family-based economy into individual consumers known as “teenagers.”²

This transformation was an international phenomenon, but in the United States it was overlaid by the twin crises that color Americans’ perception of that era: civil rights and the Vietnam War. Differences about those issues were replacing the anticommunism of the McCarthyite era at the center of foreign and domestic affairs, and injecting a sense of increasing impatience into the nation’s political debates.³

Nowhere was discontent with the status quo articulated more energetically than in America’s colleges and universities. As the baby boom generation flooded the higher education market, institutions all over the country — at first reluctantly, and then with breathtaking speed — abandoned traditions dating from the nineteenth century and earlier. Single-sex colleges became coeducational, freshmen discarded beanies and earlier standards of dress, and much of in loco parentis was swept away.⁴ At Portland’s Reed College,
as elsewhere, standing pat began to seem like it might not be the best bet, or even a bet that could find a taker. David Sweet, a student who arrived at Reed in 1967, recalled:

_the feeling that the world was about to change in very significant ways, and we could make it happen. . . . A wonderful, empowered feeling! . . . We thought we were going to change the world — what incredible optimism! . . . [We were going to] stop the war and make everybody see about justice. And it only seemed right to pick that up and apply it right where we were, at Reed College, and change the world right there too._3

So, it was not surprising that the status quo at Reed faced a challenge when it did, but the form that challenge took was less predictable. Contending visions of the institution’s mission, size, structure, governance, and curriculum, as well as the scope of academic freedom and the role (if any) of students in decision-making were all disputed in those years, sometimes bitterly. But when dissension turned into revolt, the issue was the demand for the creation of a Black Studies program.

**FOUR FACTORS** particular to Reed and its development provide historical context for students’ efforts to change the world “right there”: the prominent role of the humanities program, which dated from the 1920s; still-fresh memories from the 1950s of the McCarthyite Stanley Moore affair; a restructuring that Reed President Richard Sullivan proposed during the later years of his presidency (1956–1967); and, beginning in the mid-1960s, a grant received from the Rockefeller Foundation to bring Black students to Reed. For older faculty members, an awareness of this history was inescapable; for newer faculty members, and for students, such awareness was generally less compelling or nonexistent.

The program in the humanities, begun during the 1920s under the leadership of Reed’s second president, Richard Scholz, originally consisted of “broad courses in history and world literature, to run on parallel time lines.”4 According to John Sheehy, author of *Comrades of the Quest: An Oral History of Reed College*, Scholz did not follow either the widely used Western Civilization model or the “overriding metaphysics” of the University of Chicago’s Great Books model. “Humanities at Reed was primarily an exercise in inquiry and in the discovery of a student’s critical reason, emotional sensitivity, imagination, and judgment.”5 In the 1940s, the college combined its literature and world history courses. All freshman students were required to take Humanities 110. While the curriculum varied slightly from year to year, in 1965–1966, the first semester was devoted to ancient Greece, the second to early Christianity and to medieval and Renaissance Europe.6 Burton Clark, in his 1970 study of Reed and its early history, described the humanities course, in the minds of both students and faculty, as “the expression of Reed ideals.”7

But Reed was not entirely free to express its ideals in a vacuum. During the 1950s, the outside world intruded in the form of an attack on the college by the House Un-American Activities Committee, commonly known, from the name of its chairman, as the “Velde Committee.” This episode has been recounted at length by Michael Munk in this journal and in Sheehy’s book. Here, we need only note that the outcome included the termination of one staff and two faculty members, including tenured political science professor Stanley Moore, and resulted in the forced resignation of president Duncan Ballantine. A shaken faculty emerged from this assault, resolved to resist any future attacks on its academic freedom.8

In 1956, Richard H. Sullivan was hired as president, and during his eleven-year administration, the wounds inflicted during the McCarthy era began to heal. Sullivan’s initial goals were to rebrand the college as an asset to the nation in the post-Sputnik phase of the Cold War and to achieve financial stability. Registrar Ellen Johnson described Sullivan as “intelligent, thoughtful, and kind, but at the same time no easy pushover.”9 According to history professor Richard Jones, Sullivan’s leadership was responsible for “a complete reversal of the suspicious, fearful adversarial relationship that had prevailed more or less since . . . the early 1940s.”10 The unusual length of his administration was facilitated by a happy combination of his personal qualities and professional skills.

During his final years at Reed, Sullivan turned his attention to the challenges posed by the looming arrival of the baby boom demographic bulge on college campuses. During the 1963–1964 academic year, he proposed the addition of a graduate school, a notion he persuaded the trustees to support; the faculty was another matter. Jones saw the proposal as a watershed: “For the first time in Reed’s history, the graduate school controversy had divided the faculty on the matter of the college’s major objective and its principles.”11 That proposal failed, but two years later, in response to a financial crisis, Sullivan proposed another drastic innovation: that Reed reconfigure itself as three colleges — a traditional liberal arts college with 935 students, a public affairs college with 375, and an arts college with 300.12 Sullivan put the matter to an ad hoc Committee on the Future of Reed College (the “Committee of 42”), which included faculty, students, and some staff members.13 Although this second Sullivan proposal was also scuttled, the college nevertheless found the idea of growth attractive.14 In 1966, the board of trustees accepted a recommendation of the Committee of 42: that the student body be increased from 900 to 1,200 by the end of the decade, with a commensurate increase in the size of the faculty and the physical facilities.15
Faculty members who were hired in the 1960s did not share the institutional memories of their older colleagues, and some were less inclined to regard the humanities program as sacrosanct. Students and younger faculty alike questioned the curriculum’s “relevance.” Literature professor Jon Roush, for example, argued that “the real problem is that the typical curriculum in the humanities . . . is intended as an initiation into the living mysteries. . . . For most undergraduates now, however, the house of the humanities seems not a sacred temple but a museum.”

Political science professor Kirk Thompson diagnosed Reed’s malaise as the convergence of two tendencies: “One is that our rate of innovation seems to be decreasing, and the other is that the velocity of forces to which we ought to respond is increasing.” Tenured philosophy professor Marvin Levich, however, argued that the value of education is independent of any “external justification.” “What I do think is that there are no changes of [the kind suggested by Roush, Thompson, and others], large or small, that can at once satisfy what is demanded by the ideology of relevance and preserve the intellectual integrity of the material presented.”

The resistance of more senior faculty members to calls for innovation, as literature professor Roger Porter put it, “was extremely demoralizing to a lot of young faculty.”

When Sullivan resigned in January 1967, divisions within the faculty were beginning to harden into factions that were often characterized as “Old Guard” versus “Young Turks.” Not long after a new president, Victor Rosenblum, was installed as a permanent replacement for Sullivan at the beginning of the 1968–1969 academic year, those existing divisions were exacerbated by a demand for the creation of a Black Studies program, which provoked a crisis that would develop into a general challenge to the institutional culture at Reed.

Part of the growth in the student body recommended by the Committee of 42 was intended to be supported by a three-year grant from the Rockefeller Foundation to provide financial aid for minority students — another Sullivan proposal that had been initiated in 1963. According to an interview conducted in that year by a staff member of the Rockefeller Foundation, Sullivan says that over the years Reed College has had only a trickle of Negro students, mostly from the West. He is not specifically informed but believes there are usually from one to four Negro students in the student body. These come through normal channels, presumably through influence of Reed alumni. Reed has never objected to Negro students but also has never made any special effort to attract them.

Sullivan believed that the time had come to make that special effort. He was primarily responsible for organizing a group of six liberal arts colleges to join Reed in applying to the Rockefeller Foundation for substantial grants to recruit Black students. The other original applicants were Antioch, Grinnell, Occidental, and Swarthmore; Carleton and Oberlin were added later.

The preface to the proposal Sullivan submitted to the Rockefeller Foundation in February 1964 argued that improved access to education for Black students, including higher education, would be essential in consolidating the gains that were hopefully being made in civil rights, housing, and employment. “Enlarged opportunities and increased encouragement for qualified Negro students to benefit from the best that our systems of higher education have to offer will be of special importance.” The grant itself stated that “it is hoped that these programs . . . will create enduring institutional patterns which will multiply and ultimately make equality of educational opportunity a reality.” According to the terms of the grant, the foundation expected Reed to match Rockefeller’s contribution from its own or other resources. The grant agreement allowed Reed to solicit additional funds from individuals or corporations.

The initial funding, in 1964, was intended to bring ten to fifteen new African American students to Reed each year for three years, principally as freshmen but in some cases as transfers, and then to cover their expenses for the remaining years of their education. After a slow start in the 1964–1965 academic year, when Reed admitted only two Black students, the number of students coming to Reed under the terms of the grant closely matched projections. In 1967, the grant was extended for another three years, and by the fall of 1968, there were thirty-five Black students on campus.
For the Rockefeller students, being present and feeling welcome were different matters. As Lolita Burnette (Lolita Duke at the time) commented later, Reed’s curriculum tended to have nothing to say about, or to, people of color, and the humanities program was unapologetically Eurocentric. Rather than focusing narrowly on European history and culture, Burnette argued, Reed needed to expand its perspective to include global culture and politics, by selecting art and artifacts that better represented the diversity of the human enterprise and approaching European civilization in a way that took into account the damage colonial empires had inflicted on subject peoples.35 Judy Thomas, who arrived at Reed in 1965, remembered feeling a sense of isolation at Reed. Her field of study was European history, so she found Reed’s offerings to be sufficient to meet her academic requirements, but she believed that the absence of any acknowledgement of what non-Whites had contributed to history implied a devaluation of their experiences. She remembered T.C. Price Zimmerman, who taught Renaissance history, remarking that in 5,000 years of history, Black people had accomplished nothing. She had the sense that non-Whites were faced with a choice: assimilate or be seen as an enemy.36 Another Rockefeller student, Ron Herndon, who came to Reed to study economics and political systems after growing up in Kansas and serving as a VISTA volunteer in Harlem, was very disappointed with what he found. “It was just as racist as any institution I had encountered in my previous twenty-three years. . . . My two years there were spent in protest, constant protest, and I still feel cheated in terms of having an opportunity at that point in my life to sit down and do nothing but study.”37

It is interesting that Richard Jones, who was described by literature professor Charles Svitavsky as running the humanities course (along with Marvin Levich) “with an iron fist,” later took a very similar view to that articulated by Burnette and Thomas:

Recipients of the Rockefeller awards were expected to be fully assimilated into the campus society, and to benefit from the same curriculum . . . as other students. But assimilation into the Reed society ceased to hold any attraction for most of them. They could not avoid recognizing that no blacks held positions on the faculty or in the administration. The curriculum contained no courses dealing with the special concerns of black citizens.38

In response to the sense of isolation they felt at Reed, on November 28, 1967, thirteen students signed and published a notice announcing the formation of a Black Student Union (BSU). Its charter was registered by the Faculty Senate on November 30.39 Calvin Freeman was elected its first president.

### THE FORMATION

of a Black Student Union at Reed did not, of course, occur in an ideological vacuum. Beginning in June 1966, the civil rights movement, personified by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and his longstanding commitment to nonviolence and integration, was faced with a growing challenge from what Stokely Carmichael called “Black Power,” a term he introduced into the national vocabulary that summer. Carmichael, whose tireless and charismatic advocacy for Black self-reliance created a strong counternarrative to King’s vision of the civil rights movement, was firm in repudiating support from White sympathizers.36 In his account of the rise of Black Power, William Chafe writes:

The young people in the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) learned quickly how intransigent, brutal, and pervasive were the forces of resistance. Increasingly, they came to question the credibility of the government, their alliance with older, more moderate leaders, and the desirability of “integrating” into a white society that at every turn seemed to betray and subvert them. . . . In a more basic sense . . . the Black Power movement was a direct outgrowth of the civil rights experience itself, not a repudiation of it.36

In such an atmosphere, White supporters of Reed’s BSU found that they had little to contribute to its decision-making process. As Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) member Maurice Isserman put it: “Those of us in SDS were junior partners. . . . They [the BSU] welcomed our support but I don’t think they took it seriously.”39 Calvin Freeman described the situation from the BSU perspective: “The militancy of the Students for a Democratic Society, created primarily by white students, was rising on a parallel track, but with very little coordination or cross-fertilization with African American students and our form of militancy.”38

In response to the Eurocentric orientation of the humanities program, in September 1968, the BSU proposed the addition of a Black Studies Center (BSC) at Reed that would provide a forum for other points of view. When the BSU introduced the proposal, the reaction was generally positive. According to Mark Stanley, writing in the Quest, the Educational Policy Committee (EPC), which included both faculty and students, “voted to recommend the establishment of such a program, and established a subcommittee to set up two or three tentative models” for consideration by the faculty.39 Thirty years later, EPC member and American studies professor John Tomsich recalled:

I had been appointed chair of the Educational Policy Committee during my year away from Reed; when committee meetings resumed, black studies were on the agenda almost from the first. Our discussion of the subject was framed by thinking
about whether black studies at Reed could be modeled after American Studies here. Because I had set up the AS program in 1964 and had been teaching in it since then, I was well acquainted with it and saw no reason why the earlier program could not provide a model for the latter. At this stage, in September of 1968, discussions between the EPC and the black students appeared to be moving along. Over Thanksgiving, however, several of the black students spent their holiday consulting with black students elsewhere, and came back with the belief that they had not understood how central the power to appoint and to terminate black faculty was. From then on, that was the key issue in the dispute.40

Also at issue were who would determine the curriculum and how the courses offered by the BSC would be integrated into the overall Reed curriculum, with its already rigorous general and departmental requirements. That debate over power was defined not only by national debates over control of Black Studies on college campuses but also by the Reed faculty’s prickly commitment to its own notion of academic freedom.

As negotiations with the faculty proceeded during the fall of 1968, the condescension toward Black history and culture already felt by Black students was compounded by the sense that the faculty did not share their sense of urgency. Having progressively lost faith in the prospect of realizing their objectives through traditional bureaucratic channels, BSU members resolved in early November to provoke a crisis. They broke off negotiations with the EPC and presented a list of five nonnegotiable demands:

I. The consultants [to be hired to design a Black Studies program] will provide a fresh view of Reed College. We want a commitment to a Black Studies program in some form.

II. We want funds to bring Black consultants here to confer with us, the BSU, to develop a workable satisfactory curriculum. We want funds enough to keep them here long enough to develop this curriculum.

III. We want ABSOLUTE control in the selection of the Black faculty for Black Studies. Their qualifications will be not only on academic credentials but also on knowledge in the field. All professors should receive at least the minimum Reed salary for beginning professors and should receive higher salaries as their experience, academic credentials, and knowledge of the field dictate. No Black professor will be removed without BSU permission.

IV. We want control of the curriculum until there are enough Black professors to take over the job.

V. No courses dealing with the peoples of African descent will be taught at Reed without BSU permission.47

Before a November 25 faculty meeting, members of the BSU were present to answer questions about the five demands. The faculty’s position was that “the sticking point in these demands is student control over professors. The question of whether or not the students are black is irrelevant.” The discussion was summarized in dialogue form as an appendix to the meeting’s minutes:

Question: Has any student group on any campus in the country, to your knowledge, been given the power to hire or fire professors?

Reply: There is no adequate Black Studies program on any campus in the country, and that is why. There have been troubles on other campuses over this very issue. This safeguard is the only one that can prevent political decisions being made about black professors by a white faculty. We want to assure the success of Reed’s program at the outset by establishing this essential basic principle. . . .

Question: Does point five apply only to courses originated and taught under the auspices of the BSU?

Reply: No, to all courses taught in the college which deal with people of African descent.

Question: Were any promises made to you when you came to Reed that such things as you propose might be possible?

Reply: Only the promise implicit in the establishment of all educational institutions: that the education we get here would prepare us for the world in which we will have to live upon graduation. It does not now do that. . . .

Question: Why are you and you alone qualified to make the decisions you ask the right to make?

Reply: If the faculty were qualified to make these decisions, there would already be a black studies program at Reed.

Question: When the program is operating, who will have the final decision-making power: the black students or the black faculty?

Reply: We can work it out with them, for the greater viability of the program.

Question: Why can you then not work it out with us? Are we not educable to your needs?

Reply: Being black is an essential condition to understanding fully black people’s needs. You do not know how you are uneducated in this area and are thus not qualified to set up a program to educate yourselves or others.48
Many faculty members who supported a Black Studies program, in principle, found the last three demands unacceptable. The nonnegotiable nature of the demands also raised the issue of whether it was appropriate to discuss substantive proposals while Eliot Hall was under occupation.

At that November 25 faculty meeting, Howard Waskow, a member of the EPC subcommittee delegated to negotiate with the BSU, offered the view that points 3, 4, and 5 of the BSU demands may have been formulated as a result of Ronald Herndon’s recent trip to a Black Power conference in Washington, where other Black Student Union delegations reported the difficulties programs have been encountering at their schools. In particular, a common experience has been that black professors were fired over the protest of the BSU. The sudden intrusiveness of the BSU might be explained by a desire to apply this lesson to Reed rather than by dissatisfaction with progress in his [Tomisch’s] subcommittee.43

Speaking during the meeting, Maure Goldschmidt favored a rejection of demands 3 through 5, accompanied with an explanation to the Black students “that all professional groups insist on the right to judge the qualifications of their members.” John Pock argued that the five demands were inseparable: “separating them, altering them, or attempting to dilute them would be seen by the BSU as just another example of the ‘wet-noodle’ tactics ‘whitey’ always uses to blunt the thrust of black proposals.” The faculty adopted a motion by Tomisch that sidestepped the five demands by reaffirming the readiness of the faculty to discuss personnel and curriculum matters with the BSU through its relevant committees, the Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC) and the EPC, and to bring consultants to Reed to aid in discussion of the BSU’s proposals.44

BLACK STUDENTS were not alone in feeling a sense of dissatisfaction with Reed’s “outmoded . . . scholastic pedagogy” and the rigidity of the humanities program.45 Among many newcomers, both students and faculty, there was a growing sense that it was time to take a fresh look at the curriculum. Classes were cancelled on December 5 and 6 to make time for a college-wide convocation. At the convocation, students expressed a variety of opinions, but in general they supported a position that “students be given freedom (i.e., a wider variety of choice insofar as his [sic] program was concerned) and that students have an effective voice in administrative matters (i.e. hiring and firing of faculty),” including representation on the FAC.46

After the convocation ended, the BSU continued to press its demands, pushing into the background the convocation’s broader focus on reforming the humanities program. In a faculty meeting on December 9, Tomisch reported that, in the absence of faculty approval of the five demands, the BSU had declined to proceed with inviting consultants to Reed. To a question of whether faculty action on the five demands would restart discussions, Tomisch replied that the BSU was already aware of the faculty’s attitude and would only view rejection of the demands as a pretext for a confrontation. “[Owen] Ulph objected that if the BSU knew the Faculty’s attitude, they knew more than he did. He proposed that a committee be appointed to draft a reply to the Five Demands; in his view, it might merely state that the Five Demands were absurd, the idea of Black Studies absurd, and the continuation of discussion of the matter asinine.” In reply to the suggestion that the EPC proceed by consulting outside experts, Tomisch recommended delay, because no program could be instituted without the cooperation of the Black students.47

Two days later, on December 11, the BSU further escalated the confrontation by occupying Reed’s administrative offices on the second floor of Eliot Hall and calling for a student boycott of all classes. Two BSU members, Jose Brown and an unidentified woman, are pictured here camping out on the floor during the protest.

ON DECEMBER 11, 1968, Reed College Black Student Union (BSU) members took over administrative offices in Eliot Hall and called for a student boycott of all classes. Two BSU members, Jose Brown and an unidentified woman, are pictured here camping out on the floor during the protest.
JACK DUDMAN (RIGHT), dean of students, stands with a student, Catherine Allen, inside Eliot Hall in 1968 during the Black Student Union takeover of the Reed College administrative offices.

issuing checks, while the occupation continued.) Rosenblum opposed seeking police assistance in removing the occupiers. His temporizing strategy was facilitated by the calendar: when the occupation began, only a few days remained until the beginning of the winter break. Some faculty members and students saw the occupation as a violation of the “honor principle,” which regulated interpersonal relations within the college community. In retrospect, Rosenblum expressed mixed feelings about his actions. He was pleased that no acts of violence were committed on campus during the BSU sit-in or at any of the era’s other protests. But he was sorry that he had not taken a stronger leadership role by making clear to the faculty that he supported a Black Studies program, which he believed was essential to the college’s ability to recruit a more diverse student body.

In its coverage of the BSU occupation of Eliot Hall, the Oregonian on December 13 commented that “the confrontation at Reed continued as probably the most peaceable college disturbance in the country.” It is interesting to compare events at Reed with those occurring contemporaneously at San Francisco State, where its president, S.I. Hayakawa, directed (and even partici-\pated in) a “massive police action” in response to a student strike supporting demands from Black students. The violent repression in San Francisco resulted in indiscriminate beatings and arrests and dramatically escalated the scale and duration of the strike. (Hayakawa later rode the notoriety he obtained by his hard line into the U.S. Senate.) At Reed, however, “the mildness of tension on campus was suggested by a woman in the Reed information office. When asked whether black students were maintaining their stand on the floor above, she declared: ‘We assume they are; I don’t think anyone has looked.”

The nonviolent outcome at Reed appears to have resulted from a combination of Rosenblum’s judicious leadership and the BSU’s discipline and focus.

At a special meeting on December 11, the day the occupation of Eliot Hall began, the faculty started a search for a way out of the impasse. The faculty defeated a proposal to postpone the final week of the semester and essentially close the college; as Tomsich noted, “closing the campus would constitute formal consent that the school be shut down by a handful of dissidents.”

Circumstances under which the police might be called in were discussed but not resolved. Disciplinary actions were set aside as the province of the Faculty Senate. The full faculty adopted four resolutions: rejecting demands 3 through 5; supporting the establishment of a Black Studies program and giving the BSU two positions on a search committee; affirming the faculty’s interest in bringing consultants on the program to Reed; and stating that “The Faculty regards physical interference in the educational process as a severe violation of academic freedom and as contrary to the principles of Reed College.”

That day, Rosenblum appointed “a special Negotiating Committee to deal with the crisis, consisting of Professors Jones and Tomsich and Dean Dudman for the administration and Calvin Freeman, Catherine Allen, and Pat Mapps for the BSU.”

On December 14, the faculty issued a lengthy defense of academic freedom, which it described as a disinterested search for the truth that requires a barrier to protect the academy from outside pressures. The statement also noted that “minority groups have a special stake in academic freedom. They are the most vulnerable to improper pressure within and without the academy.” The statement quoted extensively from the faculty constitution and laid out the rationale for faculty control of hiring, firing, and curriculum decisions. At a special meeting on December 15, the ad hoc committee indicated it was exploring with the BSU the idea of creating a Black Studies center that would be associated with the Reed Institute, the corporate entity that controlled Reed’s physical plant, yet would be independent of Reed College and of the faculty’s control of personnel and curriculum decisions.

At a December 17 meeting of the faculty, BSU spokespersons Calvin Freeman, Catherine Allen, and Eva Griffin presented a proposal for establishment
of an independent Black Studies Center (BSC). Academic credit would be transferable between the two institutions, and the center could issue a Reed bachelor’s degree and provide draft deferments. “There was considerable discussion of precedents for the delegation of a part of a Reed education to another institution over which Reed had no control...” [Associate professor of art Willard] Midgette spoke of the joint program with the Portland Museum Art School [as] a parallel.” Lević objected to what he called “the weakness of the Portland Museum Art School analogy: Reed could choose at any time to disassociate itself from the Art School,” but no matter the formal arrangements, Reed would always remain associated with the BSC.

Lević went on to discuss the conflict at Reed in the wider context of the civil rights struggle in America, referring to Marcus Garvey and W.E.B. Du Bois and suggesting that Black activists had long been divided between two proposed solutions: separatism and integration. He opined that a “yes” vote “would have the effect of committing Reed to the separatist solutions of America’s racial ills and would have enormous influence on other institutions where similar demands are being made.” Carl Stevens, a member of the negotiating committee, replied that the creation of a Black Studies Center would meet a real and pressing need, and that Reed should not refrain from taking action merely because the consequences could not all be foreseen. “The Faculty was not swallowing anything whole by taking this first step; it certainly was not committing itself to a separatist solution of the racial problem. The Faculty must have the generosity to reply to the BSU’s distrust by a gesture of trust.” Howard Waskow “pointed out that much ground had been covered in negotiations since the Five Demands were presented; Demand 5 and student control were no longer at issue [apparently because of the independent status of the BSC]. As to the principle of favoring minority groups all other considerations being equal, the College had accepted that long ago.” (Waskow’s comment about the college favoring minority groups may be a reference to the Rockefeller funding.)

A new issue that arose concerned the practicalities of finding and recruiting qualified faculty. Eugene Genovese, author of The Political Economy of Slavery, who taught at Rutgers and the University of Rochester in the 1960s, had been asked for advice, apparently by Lević. It was Genovese’s opinion that “Reed’s chances of finding able black intellectuals to staff a Black Studies program were numerically infinitesimal” due to competition from major universities and historically Black colleges.

After two days of discussion, the faculty adopted by a vote of 53 to 50 the following motion:

The Faculty supports in principle the establishment of an autonomous Black Studies Center under the auspices of the Reed Institute. It is understood that the Center would subscribe to the standards of academic freedom as enunciated in the 1940 A.A.U.P. [American Association of University Professors] statement on Academic Freedom and Tenure. It is understood that the Black Student Union and consultants will assist in naming the first director.

This resolution allowed the faculty to support, in principle, the establishment of a Black Studies program while at the same time finding demands 3, 4, and 5 unacceptable. The actual relationship of the BSC and its faculty and staff to Reed College remained undefined. But the BSC’s autonomy, as Tomsich wrote later, clearly meant that “Black students would make recommendations about [appointments and promotions] to the President of the College and, based on them, the President would make his recommendations to the Institute. The faculty personnel committee... was removed from this process.”

It may be worth observing that the faculty that approved the establishment of a Black Studies program at Reed College in December 1968 was not merely a white male patriarchy in theory but in actual fact. The faculty included only a small scattering of minority members, none of whom were African American. Twelve percent were women (18 out of a total of 146). Based on faculty minutes for the months of December 1968 to March 1969, the participation of women faculty in the critical debates that occurred during that period was negligible (five questions asked, plus one cogent point made concerning salary discrimination against women). Within the BSU, women played a more prominent role. Their names appear frequently in newspaper coverage of events, both at Reed and in the Oregonian. They were active and prominent in the struggle, and their contribution was vital.

Although the faculty adopted a position, it remained deeply divided. Many faculty members who were inclined to support the idea of a Black Studies Center were uneasy about the BSU’s assault on their prerogatives under the doctrine of academic freedom. The occupation and the debate had stirred passions among faculty and students alike that sometimes tended to obscure rather than to clarify issues. Even more fundamentally, there was disagreement about what was in fact the “true” issue. Was it whether to establish a Black Studies Center? Was it that center’s relationship to Reed College? Was it the integrity of the BSU’s five demands? Was it the challenge to the honor principle, governing acceptable conduct at Reed, that was presented by the occupation of Eliot Hall and the boycott of classes? Was it academic freedom? Was Black Studies a legitimate subject of academic inquiry? Who would determine the priorities and set the agenda for future negotiations? Age, status (faculty/student/trustee), and race may not have been determinative but were clearly factors as positions were staked out.

At this point, students left campus for the holiday break, and the occupation of Eliot Hall was abandoned.
ON JANUARY 25, 1969, the Reed trustees issued two resolutions, the first supporting the creation of a Black Studies Center and urging that the faculty and the Black students cooperate as “equal entities,” and the second stating that “the word ‘Center’ is interpreted as meaning a program; it does not imply autonomy.” Since autonomy was a key element in the position that the faculty had adopted in December, it became necessary for the faculty committee and the BSU to resume negotiations.

Concurrently, the fissures within the Reed body politic were spreading from curriculum and the establishment of a BSC into the areas of staffing and governance. In February, the college community learned that, during the vacation break, the FAC had fired a substantial number of younger faculty members. Michael J. Lanning, editor of the Quest, called the FAC’s personnel procedures “patently unsatisfactory when compared to any intelligent standard of academic freedom through democratic means, or of academic professionalism.” This “purge” prompted students to demand the formation of a Student Advisory Committee (SAC) to counterbalance the FAC.

This proposal led to the creation of a Committee of 8, consisting of four faculty members and four students, “to advise the faculty on questions of student power.” On February 17, Svitavsky introduced a motion before the faculty to increase the number of FAC members to fifteen, “to allow for more representation of junior faculty and, implicitly, for the liberalization of the FAC’s perspective. It was defeated 59 to 44.”

On February 27, mimicking the BSU’s December action, the Reed chapter of SDS, with the support of other campus activists, mounted a second occupation of Rosenblum’s office. This new occupation of Eliot Hall attracted little support and a great deal of opposition, especially among White students whose priority was the effective lobbying of the faculty as it approached a new vote on the establishment of a Black Studies Center. After two days, the occupiers vacated Rosenblum’s office.

On the evening of March 3, as the faculty again met to try to resolve the Black Studies issue, student supporters of the BSU held a silent candlelight vigil outside the Faculty Office Building, according to Sam Schrager, who witnessed some of the debate as a student representative. Schrager recalled the meeting as extraordinarily acrimonious. Waskow, probably the most outspoken supporter of the BSU, attracted a great deal of hostility. Another professor, who had been at Reed for nearly a quarter of a century and was known to have a drinking problem, was shouted down with cries of “Drunk!” when he attempted to speak.

The discussion of a number of proposed amendments caused the meeting to be continued to the following day. On March 4, the faculty approved a new proposal for a Black Studies Center by a vote of sixty to fifty-four. This version of the BSC would operate as a new department within the college, rather than as an entity separate from the college and responsible only to the trustees, as earlier envisioned. Its faculty would have the same standing as the members of other departments of the college. The normal control over hiring and firing exercised by the FAC (and guaranteed by Article III, Sec. 5, of the Reed Constitution) would be circumvented, however, with the first director to be hired jointly by the BSU, Rosenblum, and the board of trustees. The director and the faculty of the BSC, once constituted, would then assume control over their own hiring and firing, with the FAC involved only in cases of appeals. Courses offered by the BSC for credit toward a Reed degree would still need the approval of the Educational Policies Committee of the Reed faculty, which would be advised by the director and faculty of the BSC.

On March 25, the BSU voted unanimously to accept the faculty resolution. When asked whether the creation of a Black Studies Center might represent a favorable trend, a “prominent member of the BSU” commented that “it shows that a reform majority can be created, but it’s unclear whether or not this represents an actual trend. . . . The faculty may feel that they’ve done enough reforming for the time being. . . . Student control seems to go more against their grain than black control does.”

And, so, the academic year 1968–1969 came to a close.
IN THE FALL OF 1969, the new academic year began with the majority of entering Black freshmen refusing to register for the required Humanities 110 course. Their actions sparked a debate that was similar to academic disputes in the 1990s (and on to the present) about multiculturalism and the place of “the canon” in higher education. As Robert A. Rhoads framed the issue: “The hierarchical nature of the canon silences cultural diversity.”

In October, the Quest published a leaked memo written by Assistant Professor of Literature Sam McCracken, who was chairman of the Humanities 110 staff:

October 17, 1969,

MEMORANDUM
TO: Freshman Humanities Staff
FROM: Sam McCracken

Attached is an expansion of a current student-initiated proposal for reforming the Humanities at Reed College.

I spent about three hours last Monday talking with the initiators, who can be said to be earnest, and by comparison to last year’s innovators, pleasantly non-hostile, and I can report that little was said to change my mind or theirs.

While I believe the proposal at hand to be impractical in the extreme and positively undesirable were it practical, I hope you will all take the time to read it, and that we can arrange for the staff or a delegation therefrom to meet with the proposers. My own tolerance for student-generated twaddle is as low as any man’s but I believe that one of the burdens of authority is the obligation to give audience to the humble and oppressed, and that a corollary of our telling students who disrupt that they ought to have gone through channels, even when the process looks tedious and futile. Also, I suspect that as teachers we have some obligation to tell students who appear to be in the wrong just why they are in the wrong. There is finally the prudential argument that if we don’t give the proposal some serious attention, we may well hear about our dereliction later on.

I will consult with you in a week or so to gather your opinion as to what is to be done.  

The frankness was refreshing, but the condescension was palpable and probably did little to win the hearts and minds of disaffected students (or faculty).

Also in October, a report the FAC had developed over the summer was released, recommending that the expansion policy introduced in 1966 be reversed and the size of the student body decreased to 900. Although this new study was conducted in response to acute financial pressures, even the majority report admitted the cost-cutting advantages of such shrinkage were minimal. Instead, it based its recommendation on the hope of regaining a more “homogenous intellectual ethos,” a better “shared understanding” among students about “the limits of acceptable behavior,” and better communication among subgroups of the larger community. The majority report glossed over the consequences of a rapid contraction of the faculty, but dissidents pointed out that one result would be a faculty that was almost entirely tenured. This proposal could hardly be perceived as anything other than an attempt by senior faculty to regain control over an increasingly volatile situation.

On November 17, the Committee of 8, elected the previous spring, submitted majority and minority reports to the faculty. The four faculty members and one of the student members recommended that no student advisory committee be established, because it would either arouse unrealistic expectations among students or compromise “standards of professional competence.” The minority report, submitted by the remaining three student members, called for the freedom for students to design, with their advisors, their own programs; to choose pass-fail grading; to disregard divisional and general area requirements; to take up to a third of their courses “outside the scope of the courses offered in the curriculum,” including independent study, student-run courses, field work, or jobs; and to dispense with the necessity to choose a departmental major, with its associated requirements. The conclusion of Kim Spencer, writing in the Quest, was: “The Committee of 8 has been the official channel for change in the areas of student representation and faculty-student communication. It never was much and won’t be missed. But you can’t come to the burial and you probably won’t even hear about it.”

In December 1969, the FAC carried out a second purge of junior faculty. The dissenting member of the FAC was literature professor Jon Roush, who had been elected in absentia the previous year, while on leave in New York working for the Carnegie Corporation. While he was clearly among the leaders of the reformist group in the faculty, Roush projected a bipartisan and non-confrontational persona that evidently made him broadly acceptable to all parties. He later recalled the experience of serving on the committee as deeply unpleasant, describing the debate over one “tremendously qualified” applicant as a “show trial.” The vote for denial of tenure was nine to one.

Years later, in 2009, Roger Porter, one of many younger faculty members who left Reed at the time, still felt strongly about the terminations:

Between 1967 and 1972 there was a veritable massacre of young faculty who attempted the most modest reforms regarding curricular issues, the requirement structure, and the democratization of faculty governance. The evident purge included almost every nontenured member of the faculty who was known to support the proposed Black Studies Center.
The announcement of the terminations, coupled with the failure of student efforts to achieve any voice in the direction of the college, led to a tuition boycott in January 1970. Initially, around one hundred students participated; eventually, after negotiations with Rosenblum, nearly forty failed to register for spring term. As a result of his service on the FAC, Roush felt a sense of alienation from the college, but he saw the boycott as a serious threat to Reed’s financial integrity and spoke out against it at a large meeting on campus.

By the end of the 1969–1970 academic year, the college faced a financial predicament that was only made more acute by the upcoming termination of the Rockefeller grant’s three-year extension. The college advised the Rockefeller Foundation that new resources for continuing aid to minority students, as envisioned at the time that grant had been funded, would not be available and that the college would not be “able to put a significant amount into an expensive minority group program.” Believing he was the wrong person to manage the necessary fiscal retrenchment, Rosenblum tendered his resignation and made plans to return to his former position teaching law at Northwestern University.

It was becoming clear that the projected Black Studies program would face — in addition to persisting ideological objections and the departure of many of the more supportive younger faculty members — financial obstacles that could undermine its potential for success.

**Once a Black Studies Center** was approved, Rosenblum thought “the problem was turning it into something that was viable.” Before he left, he persuaded a trustee and some other individuals to provide funding for the center’s initial one to two years.

Freeman later remembered the process of establishing the Black Studies Center:

Reed ended up hiring an African-American professor, Bill McClendon, as director of Black Studies, and also an African-American professor of English, Michael Harper, who was a poet and who wrote a terrific poem that was the liner note for a John Coltrane album. But they didn’t invest in a Black Studies professor the way that they would invest in, say, a new economics professor, or even a new art professor. It was pretty much a slapdash recruitment. “Who can we get in here right away?” Although I’m not sure how happy we would’ve been at the time with a slower process.

The stability of the Black student population required to support a Black Studies center was also in question. Between the fall of 1970 and the fall of 1971, the number of Black students at Reed fell from thirty-seven to twenty-eight, with the decline continuing in subsequent years. During the 1973–1974 academic year, a total of fifteen students enrolled in six Black Studies courses offered. According to Tomsich, “when Rockefeller began phasing out its student support and black students either finished their years at Reed or withdrew, attendance fell substantially in the Center’s courses. If there is a single simple reason why black studies failed at Reed, this is it.”

By 1976, funding difficulties, the contraction of the faculty, the decline in the overall number of students and of Black students in particular, and the absence of an institutional commitment combined to undermine the viability of the program. The less-than-temperate judgments of some faculty members, as exemplified by the comments from professors Ulph and Zimmerman quoted above, have to be accorded a place in the reckoning as well. As former BSU member and later Reed College trustee Linda Howard observed in hindsight: “What we got was something they could easily let die.”

Reed terminated the Black Studies Center and folded the remaining courses into existing departments.

Thirty years after the vote to establish a Black Studies Center, Tomsich reflected:

Black enrollment at Reed is as minuscule today as it was before the Black Studies crisis. I’ve never been impressed with white racism as an explanation for this. Reed is so overwhelmingly and tediously liberal that if we could get more black students interested in Reed, we’d break our necks to get them. But in a way people refuse to acknowledge, Reed is simply not an attractive place for blacks. There
are relatively few blacks at Reed in the first place; overcoming this threshold deficiency is fundamental to recruitment difficulties. Second, there are relatively few blacks in Portland from which Reed might draw. Third, a Reed education is awesomely expensive. . . . Fourth, there is something in fact quite insular about Portland. I’ve never minded that myself, but I think blacks might very well.36

This analysis seems to contradict the perception of white racism that Ron Herndon, for one, expressed so strongly. Yet both Tomsich and Herndon may have a point. The very ubiquity of white racism across the country serves to diminish its explanatory value in local circumstances. Black Studies programs may have found a home at institutions no less racist than Reed. In assessing the failure of Black Studies to thrive at Reed, a few brief comparisons may be useful.

ACROSS THE RIVER at Portland State University (PSU), a Black Studies program, founded contemporaneously with the one at Reed, managed to survive, despite a rocky start.37 In the fall of 1968, an office space on campus was assigned to PSU’s Black Student Union.38 In January and February of 1969, seven students (four of whom were black), seven faculty members, and one representative of the administration created and organized a Black Studies Council; the four black students plus one faculty member had veto power.39 By the end of that academic year, little seemed to have been accomplished. In May 1969, a student who had observed a recent faculty meeting published a letter in the PSU Vanguard reporting that there was no budget or staffing available. One faculty member was quoted as suggesting that the program be handed off to the history department, which could find “some competent Negro to handle the hot potato.”40 By the next fall, however, the Black Studies Council had produced a report recommending the establishment of a certificate program.

During the 1970s, PSU’s Black Studies program survived and began to grow. Beginning in the academic year 1974–1975, in order to cope with budget reductions, the infant program with its two faculty members was sheltered for a time within the Urban Studies Program in the College of Social Sciences.41 According to a 1979 “Report on Black Studies” at PSU, between 1975 and 1978, the number of course offerings increased from 13 to 26, and the number of students enrolled in the certificate program from 31 to 110. By the fall of 1978, the program had been elevated to department status, which conferred control over hiring and curriculum, and in 1979, the department had five full-time plus additional part-time faculty members. The number of students had increased from 20 in 1973 to 64 in 1978 and was expected to stabilize at 70, assuming that the university would allow Black Studies courses to fill university distribution requirements and approve the department’s plan to begin offering classes toward a master’s degree in 1980.42 According to Darrell Millner, who joined the program in 1975 and later became chair, the department consistently attempted to attract White students and White support in general.43 Despite sometimes strained relationships between Black Studies faculty and PSU administrators (over, for example, the quality and funding for the Black Studies newsletter ULIMA), personal friction between Black Studies chair William Little and dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences William Paudler, and disagreement about the role of “community service” in an academic program, the program persisted and prospered.44

While the program at PSU, like that at Reed, faced regular opposition from faculty conservatives, it had some advantages, including hard funding in the budget, the support at critical moments of key persons in the power structure, the patience to wait for a generation of scholars to be trained to staff the program, the (sometimes reluctant) willingness within the university at large to integrate the Black Studies program into the curriculum by letting its courses satisfy appropriate departmental and divisional requirements, and a leadership committed to inclusivity.45

Compared with the fifty-four courses listed in 2017 in the PSU catalog under Black Studies, offerings at other nearby universities and colleges are less robust. According to websites reviewed in summer 2017, Oregon State University offers nine courses under the label of Ethnic Studies, and the University of Oregon offers seventeen. Willamette University offers four courses labeled American Ethnic Studies, which includes African Americans. Lewis & Clark College’s Ethnic Studies program cross-lists a substantial number of
courses from other programs, as does Washington state’s Whitman College for its Race and Ethnic Studies program.

Around the nation programs in Black Studies have endured and prospered. By the early years of the twenty-first century, there were programs or departments at 400 colleges and universities, 150 of which granted degrees. Among the 27 highest-ranking universities, 23 hosted Black Studies programs, of which 15 offered degrees and 8 had departmental status. At other schools, Black Studies was subsumed under broader offerings in Ethnic and Gender Studies.

Among the seven colleges that participated in the Rockefeller grant program, the record has been mixed. Historic, geographic, and demographic factors may outweigh good intentions. Swarthmore, located near Philadelphia, a major metropolis with a large minority population, offers a broad range of courses directly through its Black Studies department as well as courses cross-listed for Black studies credit from ten other departments. Oberlin College, which was the first coeducational college in the United States and the first to admit students of all races (beginning in the 1830s), has a substantial offering in Black studies. Antioch, whose troubled recent history includes the closure of the college for five years between 2008 and 2013, retains a commitment to serving African American students that, like Oberlin’s, dates from before the Civil War. Carleton College in Minnesota has a creditable offering of courses in the field of Black Studies. But at Grinnell, located in rural Iowa, the number of persons who majored in Black Studies during the time the program was active is stated as ten, and the program disappeared by 1979. At Occidental, activists were making news as recently as the 2015–2016 academic year. For five days in November 2015, the Black Student Alliance occupied the central administrative building, presenting fourteen demands, one of which was the creation of a Black Studies program.

THAT REED COLLEGE would emerge from the maelstrom of the 1960s essentially unchanged was not inevitable. By 1970, however, doubt of the outcome was fading. The proposals for a graduate school and a three-college restructuring had been abandoned. The attack on the centrality of the humanities program and its Eurocentric focus had been turned aside. As the ranks of younger faculty members were thinned, and the decision to reduce the size of the student body took effect, it was clear that few tenured positions would be open anytime soon. Student demands for participation in the governance of the college, with little support among the faculty, were unsustainable. And the control that the Educational Policies Committee maintained over authorizing credit toward a Reed degree gave the faculty a mechanism for imposing its standards on the new department. After a period of intense turmoil and debate, the status quo ante mostly prevailed. In the 1990s, Marvin Levich applauded that outcome:

A major set of educational issues faced the College in the late ‘60s. In my view, it was a period of lots of gimmicks and fads. It was a time when lots of institutions gave up rigorous requirements and grading, when colleges became cafeterias where students could sample. For the most part, Reed remained adamant against those temptations. The College had a purpose and a mission. I think the behavior of the College and the behavior of the faculty were admirable.

Today, such certainty about the illegitimacy of Black Studies as a discipline might have become less prevalent. Stimulated by the Black Lives Matter movement, the echoes of past conflicts are again being heard on the Reed campus in an eruption of identity politics. Students have “called out” persons whose views they deemed unacceptable, as occurred in November 2016 when an ugly protest against film director Kimberly Peirce, who was a guest lecturer at the college, attracted national attention. And, “in 2016, student requests at Reed [were] still denied when they asked for interdisciplinary academic programs in Black Studies/Ethnic Studies and Gender Studies.”

The humanities program was under attack for its “whiteness,” and was once again undergoing a reassessment by faculty, but the academic bureaucracy, as ever, could not act quickly enough to satisfy student critics. During the 2016–2017 academic year, and again in the fall of 2017, students disrupted humanities lectures, reporting psychological trauma and demanding trigger warnings. Some were brought up before disciplinary panels. Faculty reported feeling intimidated. According to Mary James, Reed’s dean for institutional diversity, in a radio interview:

One of the things I said to some of the freshmen . . . was that they had come to college to grow and learn, and that there are certain eras in which students come to college to grow and learn in which their college is also growing and learning, and that’s sort of a fluke of the calendar in some ways, when you happen to turn 18 . . . . All forms of growing and learning involve what one of my colleagues in psychology calls constructive discomfort . . . . We’re definitely in such a period of disequilibrium.

The disequilibrium of the autumn of 2017 seemed to have shaken loose a proposal, under consideration by the Committee on Academic Policy and Planning since 2011, to establish a Comparative Race and Ethnicity Studies program. A faculty vote was scheduled for the spring of 2018; if approved, the program would be launched in the fall of that year.

It is worth remembering that one of the principle justifications for bringing Black Studies to Reed in the 1960s was to provide a perspective on the human past that would supplement, not completely replace, the traditional curriculum. In the past half century, the academic objections (and financial obstacles) to creating a Black Studies program have lost their cogency. Black Studies has become a recognized discipline, and academicians have
been trained to profess it. Much has been learned about the Black experience in the United States and the world, but doubtless much remains to be illuminated. Unfortunately, what is not in dispute is that racial injustice remains a central issue in American life. A renewed effort to grapple with that timeless fact seems to be gaining momentum. Reed College will decide the role it will play.

NOTES


2. Tony Judt, Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945 (New York: The Penguin Press, 2005), 344–353. The global nature of student protest in the 1960s is also addressed by W.J. Rorabaugh, Berkeley at War: The 1960s (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 46. In 1968, young people were in revolt in Paris, Prague, Mexico City, and Shanghai, as well as Berkeley, Morningside Heights, Chicago, and Madison. In China, the Red Guards’ assault on their elders during the Cultural Revolution, sponsored as it was by an all-powerful state, was different, but how different? Closer to home, it is worth pondering the rioting by young Oregonians that occurred in Seaside each Labor Day weekend during the early 1960s, a tradition with no discernible political content. For an overview of the troubles in Seaside from 1962 to 1965, see Charlie Hannah, “Seaside Police Control Solves Seaside Labor Day Problem,” Oregonian, September 7, 1965, 36.

3. According to the Vietnam Memorial, 16,589 American service personnel died in Vietnam in 1968, an average of 395 each week.


5. David Sweet interview (July 8, 1992). This interview and others cited below were conducted for a thesis on a related topic submitted for a master’s degree at Portland State University in 1995. Copies of the taped interviews and summaries have been deposited in the archives at Reed College, excluding the interview of Ron Herndon cited below, which was conducted by Mark Tillman and is available at the Oregon Historical Society Research Library, Portland, Oregon (hereafter OHS Research Library).


7. John Sheehy, “Where They Came From: Voices of Reed College,” 1920–1940, Oregon Historical Quarterly 112.2 (Summer 2011), 221.


10. Michael Munk, "Oregon Tests Academic Freedom in (Cold) Wartime: The Reed College Trustees versus Stanley Moore," Oregon Historical Quarterly 97.3 (Fall 1996), 262–354. See also John Sheehy’s essential Comrades of the Quest (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2012), 222–243; and Laura Ross, "Defending the Citadel," Reed Magazine (Winter 2009), 21–27. "Academic freedom" is usually taken to mean that professional incompetence, as judged by one’s peers, or moral turpitude are the only criteria for removal from a tenured academic position. In a draft of his article that Munk provided to this writer prior to publica-

tion, he quotes Stanley Moore at his hearing before the Reed Board of Trustees as defining academic freedom as “a charter of liberties of a profession,” citing “Hearing before the Board of Trustees of Reed College in the Matter of the Charge against Dr. Stanley Moore Made by the Board of Trustees Dated August 4, 1954, Relating to His Failure to Cooperate with the Board in Respect of the Situation Presented by Hearings before the House of Representatives un-American Activities Committee” (Aug. 13, 1954), 63. As will become clear, academic freedom became a more inclusive concept at Reed in the 1960s. Ellen Schrecker in her study of McCarthyism comments that “we should not be surprised that [academic freedom] was invoked more often to defend the well-being of an institution than the political rights of an individual.” See Ellen W. Schrecker, No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 23, 237–38.


13. Richard Jones, “The Reed Community: Rise & Fall,” The Reed College Student Handbook 1957, Blake Nebel, ed., 14. Richard Jones was Richard F. Scholz Professor of History. Other key faculty members whose names appear in this article include (in alphabetical order) John Dudman, Associate Professor of Mathematics and Dean of Students; Maure Goldschmidt, Cornellia Marvin Pierce Professor of American Institutions; Marvin Levich, Professor of Philosophy; Willard Midgette, Associate Professor of Art and Faculty Fellow in the Arts; John Pock, Associate Professor of Sociology; Roger Porter, Associate Professor of Literature and Humanities; Lloyd Reynolds, Professor of Art; Jon Roush, Assistant Professor of Literature and Humanities; Carl Stevens, Professor of Economics; Charles Svitovsky, Associate Professor of Literature and Humanities; Kirk Thompson, Assistant Professor of Political Science and Senior Fellow, Humanities Research Center; John Tomisch, Associate Professor of History and Senior Fellow, Humanities Research Center; Owen Ullph, Professor of History; Howard Waskow, Associate Professor of Literature and Humanities; and T.C. Price Zimmerman, Associate Professor of History and Humanities and Senior Fellow, Humanities Research Center. All academic positions are from Reed College Bulletin 1968–1969 Catalog Issue (August 30, 1968), 115–122. Full disclosure requires noting that the author attended Reed College 1965–1969.


19. Kirk Thompson, draft of an address presented at colloquium at Reed College, December 5–6, 1968 (see below), courtesy of Kirk Thompson, author’s files. More specific objections to the humanities program by Black students are addressed separately.


22. Sheehy, Comrades, 318.

23. "Interview of Richard Sullivan by LCD [Leland DeVinney] of the Rockefeller Foundation, October 3, 1963, Rockefeller Archive Center. Before the 1960s, Reed did not keep records of either students or alumni by race. In 1965, the alumni office at Reed, asked to compile a list of "Negro" graduates between 1930 and 1964, could come up with only three. See Florence W. Lehman to Dr. Sydney S. Spauck (March 23, 1965), Reed Archives."
25. “Proposal for an Inter-College Effort to Achieve Improvements in Education and Educational Opportunity for American Negro Students,” to the Rockefeller Foundation from Antioch College, Grinnell College, Occidental College, Reed College, Swarthmore College (February 5, 1964), Rockefeller Archive Center.
26. Ibid.
27. Rockefeller Foundation resolutions 64025–64031 (April 1, 1964), 64203, Rockefeller Archive Center.
30. Agreeing with Johnson on the number of Black students as thirty-five were Calvin Freeman, in Sheehy, Comrades, 353, and Early Deane, “Black Student Union Members Seize 2nd Floor Of Reed College Building,” Oregonian, December 12, 1968, 1, which attributed its information to the Reed information office. (The Oregonian reported the total student population at that time as 133.) For forty-six as the number of Black students, see Reed College Student Handbook 1959, Blake Nebel, ed. For thirty-eight as the number, see Todd Schwartz in “A Small Insurrection, a Great Divide,” Reed Magazine, November 2003 (accessed online, not paginated). See also Rockefeller Foundation Resolution 67059 (September 22, 1967), Rockefeller Archive Center.
31. Lolita Burnette interview (January 17, 1998). For Burnette, issues of race were not even the most serious challenge that she faced as a Black woman at Reed. In her diplomatic description of the situation, “Of especial concern to female students was whether things other than studying hard were required to get through Reed.”
33. Charles Svitakosky, in Sheehy, Comrades, 340; Richard Jones, in Sheehy, Comrades, 353. “Chater BSU” [the handwritten title was apparently added later] (November 28, 1967), Reed Archives.
34. Taylor Branch, At Canaan's Edge: America in the King Years 1965–68 (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 85–86. On page 533, Branch quotes Carmichael as writing in the September 22, 1966, issue of The New York Review of Books: “We cannot be expected any longer to march and have our heads broken in order to say to whites: come on, you’re nice guys. We have found you out.”
38. Mark Stanley, “A History of Black Studies at Reed,” Quest Extra, December 15, 1968, 5. References to student publications are given according to the name appearing on the masthead (when there was a masthead), which included “The Quest,” “Reed College Quest,” and “Quest Extra.” Other student-produced competitors to the Quest, including “the Wall Poster” and “The Campus Gazette,” made ephemeral appearances in this period.
41. “BSU Demands,” Quest Extra, December 12, 1968, 6–8. The names of the BSU representatives are not recorded in the minutes. See Judy Thomas interview. According to Judy Thomas, she and fellow BSU member Linda Howard (a later member of the Reed Board of Trustees) met during this period with groups of faculty members to answer questions and lobby on the BSU’s behalf. Judy Thomas interview. The BSU representatives who spoke at the faculty meeting on December 17–18 were Calvin Freeman, Catherine Allen, and Eva Griffin. See “Minutes of a Special Faculty Meeting, December 17 Recessed to December 18, 1968” (accessed February 12, 2018).
42. Richard Jones, in Sheehy, Comrades, 353. “Chater BSU” [the handwritten title was apparently added later] (November 28, 1967), Reed Archives.
43. “Minutes, November 25, 1968,” 1. The minutes provided summaries of the points made by participants in the discussions, not verbatim quotations.
44. “Minutes, November 25, 1968,” 2–4. The FAC, responsible for curriculum and tenure decisions, was a ten-member body, usually chosen from among a small group of senior faculty members. Rosters for the FAC for seven years between 1960 and 1968 show that thirteen professors occupied seventy-three percent of the available positions. Reed Archives.
46. Unsigned article, ibid., 2.
47. “Minutes of a Regular Faculty Meeting, December 9, 1968,” 1–2.
48. The honor principle “states that two kinds of behavior are considered antisocial and therefore unacceptable: (1) conduct that causes embarrassment, discomfort, or injury to other individuals or to the community as a whole, and (2) conduct in violation of specific rules that have been developed to meet special conditions in the community.” Cases involving alleged honor violations were adjudicated by a judicial board consisting of five student senators. Reed College Bulletin 1968–1969, 16.
49. Ibid., 8. See also Sheehy, Comrades, 358–59.
50. Jack Berry, “Reed Students Continue Siege While Faculty Debates Black Studies Program Demands,” Oregonian, December 13, 1968, 41. Calvin Freeman and Eva Griffin acted as spokeswoman for the BSU.
51. Dikran Karaguezian, Blow It Up! The Black Student Revolt at San Francisco State College and the Emergence of Dr. Hayakawa (Boston: Gambit, Incorporated, 1978), quote at 2. See also Ravich, Troubled Crusade, 211–23.
52. Berry, “Reed Students Continue,” 41.
53. “Minutes of a Special Faculty Meeting, December 11, 1968,” 4–8. Lloyd Reynolds, whose influence over student opinion was probably unique among the faculty, was conflicted about the Five Demands, which he supported at a Faculty Senate forum meeting on December 12; he then retracted that support at a faculty meeting the following day, having "become convinced that the demands did in fact violate academic freedom." “Minutes of a Special Faculty Meeting, December 13, 1968,” 5.
54. Quest, December 12, 1968, 1.
57. “Minutes of a Special Faculty Meeting, December 17 Recessed to December 18, 1968,” 4.
58. Ibid., 10–11.
59. Ibid., 11.
60. Ibid., 17.
61. Ibid., 10.
62. Ibid., 18. The votes of individual faculty members were not recorded in the minutes except by request. Four members, including Roger Porter and Howard Waskow, went on record as favoring the resolution. The twenty-two who wished to be recorded as being opposed included Marvin Levitch, Owen Ulph, Maure Goldschmidt, and T. C. Price Zimmerman.
63. Tomisch email, 5.
65. For participation in faculty debates, see faculty minutes, December 14, 1968, to March 1–4, 1969, passim (118 pages of material).
67. Michael J. Lanning, editorial, Reed College Quest, February 5, 1969, 2.
68. Gary Stonum, “Student Advisory Committee Proposed,” Campus Gazette, February 19, 1969, 8A, continued to page 2B.
70. Unsigned, “Faculty Meets,” Campus Gazette, February 19, 1969, 4A.
72. Sam Schrag interview (September 9, 1992). Schrag was a junior at Reed in 1968–1969 and a member of the Committee of 8. He later taught at The Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington.
73. Unsigned, “Faculty Approves Black Studies Center (of sorts?)” Wolf Poster, March 5, 1969. It is interesting to note Rosenblum’s reluctance to interfere with the prerogatives of the faculty, even in this crisis. Before the vote was taken, he spoke out to urge those who had “any remaining ambivalence to resolve it in favor of this experiment and to vote for the resolution,” but then, following the vote, he apparently felt it prudent to request a vote of confidence concerning his intervention, which was approved. See “Minutes of a Special Faculty Meeting, March 3, 1969, recessed to March 4, 1969,” 15–16.
77. “Rational Discourse” Quest, October 22, 1968.
82. Ibid., 12.
84. Roger Porter, Reed Magazine (Summer 2009), 4. Other younger Reed faculty members who left Reed at this time included Jon Roush, Mason Drulikman, Howard Waslew, Kirk Thompson, and Bill McLaughlin; they all participated in the foundation of the Portland Learning Community (ca. 1970–1974), an educational experiment chronicled in Martin White, “The Portland Learning Community” (M.A. thesis, Portland State University, 1995). Between 1960 and 1974 the average number of departures from the Reed faculty on an annual basis was 14, with the exception of 1970 and 1971, for which two years the total was 59. See graph entitled “Retention of Faculty 1960–1975,” Reed College Student Handbook 1991, 44.
87. “In 1971, for the third time in its sixty-year history, Reed College faced financial insolvency,” Sheehy, Comrades, 371. For the financial crisis and its resolution, see chapter 29 in Sheehy. In the late 1960s, Reed was receiving $80,000 a year from the Rockefeller Foundation. See Resolution September 22, 1967, 67369, Rockefeller Archive Center. The financial stability of the college was restored during the long presidency of Paul Bragdon, 1971–88. “Paul Bragdon snatched Reed from the brink of disaster and put it on a solid footing,” see Lena Lenczek in Sheehy, Comrades, 384.
89. Rosenblum, in Sheehy, Comrades, 369–70.
90. Ibid., 360.
91. Freeman, in Sheehy, Comrades, 360–361.
92. “Enrollment in Black Studies Courses, 1971–72” (January 14, 1972), Reed Archives; and Letter from Marvin Levich to Paul E. Bragdon (May 1, 1974), Reed Archives.
93. Tomshick email, 7. According to “Schedule II,” enclosed in a letter from Paul Bragdon to Dr. Joseph E. Black at the Rockefeller Foundation (July 17, 1973), the number of minority students at Reed (which included Hispanic and Native American students as well as African American students) was three in 1964–1965, peaked at forty-one in 1968–1969 (of whom thirty-five were African American, see above fn 29 and 1969–1970, and had declined again to three in 1974–1975, Rockefeller Archive Center.
94. Quoted in Schwartz, “Small Insurrection.”
95. Editor’s note in response to letter written by Stephen Robinson, Reed Magazine (Summer 2009), 6. In 1995, Reed expanded the humanities program by adding an elective course for sophomores called “Foundations of Chinese Civilization.”
96. Tomshick email, 3–4. According to information from reed.edu, undergraduate enrollment in the fall of 2015 was 1340, of whom seventy-two were Black.
97. Darrell Milner interview (December 11, 1997).
101. Professor Inko Usakejo to Joseph G. Blumel (May 17, 1970), PSU Special Collections.
103. Milner interview.
104. Letter from William M. Harris to Dr. Noah A. Toulan (January 24, 1971), memorandum from Noah A. Toulan to President Joseph Blumel (January 29, 1973), letter from Wayne R. Williams to Dr. Joseph Blumel (December 30, 1982); memorandum from Darrell Milner to Dr. Joseph Blumel (October 26, 1984), memorandum from William Peudler to President Blumel (November 1, 1984), all in PSU Special Collections.
105. Milner interview.
107. Information from the colleges’ websites, spring 2016.
109. Los Angeles Times, November 16, 2015. See also Owyedkowicz.
112. Anonymous Reader 2. According to Reed.edu in October 2017, of the seventy-two course offerings by the history department, two contained the word “race,” two the word “gender,” and one the word “women.”