

**Kent State University**

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# Filling in the Gaps: Using Outreach Efforts to Acquire Documentation on the Black Campus Movement, 1965-1972

Lae'l Hughes-Watkins, *Kent State University - Kent Campus*



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# FILLING IN THE GAPS: USING OUTREACH EFFORTS TO ACQUIRE DOCUMENTATION ON THE BLACK CAMPUS MOVEMENT, 1965–1972

BY LAE'L HUGHES-WATKINS

**ABSTRACT:** From 1965 to 1972, the United States was in the grip of a new wave of black student activism through protests and demonstrations at college and university campuses from coast to coast. Academic institutions were deluged with demands for increasing black faculty hires, developing black studies programs/departments, and increasing the number of black student admissions. Kent State University was one of the thousands of colleges and universities challenged to address the demands of a demographic who felt their civil rights were under siege within the walls of academic establishments. This article describes the attempts by the Department of Special Collections and Archives to acquire and strengthen materials documenting the black campus movement at Kent State University. The author includes a brief historical background, an assessment of current holdings, an overview of the documentation plan, a review of the outreach strategy, and the acquisition of a collection highlighting the black campus movement and black student life. Ultimately, the article aims to provide an understanding of the value of archiving the full spectrum of history.

One of our challenges as we build and extend democracy is the need to ensure that our youth know where we come from, what we have done to break the shackle of oppression, and how we have pursued the journey to freedom for all. . . . This is what archives are about.<sup>1</sup>

—Nelson Mandela, 2009

## *Introduction*

Themes of race, class, and gender commonly infiltrate academic discourse, especially in an institution that specifically collects and provides a re-presentation of history. Consequently, archivists from underdocumented communities may find it nearly instinctual to wonder about the contextualization of the experiences of their communities within the walls of their institutions, though it would likely be the same for any individual striving to provide a rich and complete illustration of history. In 2013, Kent State University hired its first African American female archivist and began to focus

more sharply on the critical question: what is the documented history of diversity at the university?

One of the most important developments of the black student experience at US colleges and universities was the evolution of the black campus movement (BCM) of the 1960s. The BCM is an important segment of history's narrative because it shows that black students and their various supporters insisted on an education that provided a "relevant learning experience."<sup>2</sup> The BCM demanded a validation of the black experience through educational development, the creation of cultural centers, diverse student programming, and an increase in black students, faculty, and staff. It is imperative that all universities and colleges identify and preserve documentation of how the BCM formed within their institutions. At Kent State University, such documentation will highlight how the historical development of the Pan African Studies Department, the Cultural Center, the Institute for African American Affairs, integrated housing, the various offices and initiatives devoted to cultural awareness, and the present diversity in faculty and staff evolved, in part as a result of civil unrest promulgated by student activists. Black students and their supporters protested against the policies they saw as impeding the progress of the black student experience. The BCM initiated an undeniable transformation within academic institutions and changed the trajectory of higher education in the United States.

The archival community has historically underdocumented the experiences of African Americans and other marginalized groups, so this is not a new predicament for academic institutions or repositories. A preliminary assessment of Kent State University's repository, an annual review of the collection development policy, and research inquiries regarding the BCM revealed gaps in the historical record of various underdocumented communities that were integral to the evolution of the university's history. More specifically, significant gaps existed in the documentation of the BCM at Kent State University, making it imperative to devise a strategy to address a critical period in the history of the university and its growth, and in a larger context, American history. Fortunately, this lapse in the department's collection development was partially recognized, and all stakeholders welcomed strategic outreach efforts to acquire documentation of the BCM at Kent. As a result, one of the objectives of the university archivist was to establish the Black Campus Movement Project, with the mission to acquire and document the social activism of black students from 1965 to 1971.

### *Historical Background*

The Society of American Archivists approved a list of core values in 2011, encouraging members of the archival community to adopt them as part of their professional practices. One of the values underscored is diversity—seeking “to document and preserve the record of the broadest possible range of individuals, socio-economic groups, governance, and corporate entities . . . to build connections to under-documented communities to support: acquisition and preservation of sources relating to these communities' activities . . .”<sup>3</sup>The act of archiving historically underrepresented communities has been a challenge for decades, as generations of immigrants transformed

once homogenous neighborhoods to multicultural epicenters burgeoning with various languages, traditions, and new social mores. Ethnic studies of the mid-1960s focused on predominately white ethnic groups, but, by the end of the decade, a shift began to emerge.<sup>4</sup> The civil rights movement (CRM) brought forth demands for humane treatment and the establishment of organizations such as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). The Chicano or Mexican American movement also highlighted areas of inequality within the arena of education and labor. These cultural revolutions caused academia to slowly shift focus from white ethnic groups onto ethnics of color.<sup>5</sup> During the same period, the women's liberation movement pushed for women to gain more influential roles in government, diverse positions in the labor force, and better wages. As these previously historically underrepresented communities pushed for progress, questions relating to their historical evolution within the context of American history began to arise. Brian Keough wrote in "Documenting Diversity: Developing Special Collections of Under Documented Groups" that the onslaught of these particular communities wanting access to records regarding their development within society highlighted the inability of the archival community to handle requests from ethnic and racial minorities, women, and the working class.<sup>6</sup> In 1971, historians Howard Zinn and Sam Bass Warner elaborated on the need for a shift in the practices surrounding the representation and archiving of history during a Society of American Archivists meeting. Zinn noted that the "existence, preservation, and the availability of the archives, documents, records, in our society are very much determined by the distribution of wealth and power."<sup>7</sup> Warner went on to argue in his presentation that historians and archivists "made themselves comfortable with the classic concerns of famous politicians, leading families, reformers, and the patronage of high culture. . . ." <sup>8</sup> Racial and ethnic minorities and other underdocumented groups were not considered to represent these ideals, and therefore their accounts were rarely incorporated into histories or archives. As more progressive attitudes toward history began to challenge the appraisal practices of archives, a new charge for archivists was established that demanded a reassessment of previous policies. Capturing the black campus movement is one way Kent State University is balancing the documentary record.

### *Black Campus Movement*

The era of the civil rights movement reached its apex and began its decline in 1963.<sup>9</sup> The CRM initially was established with the objective of influencing the moral compass of white America using the platform of nonviolence, desegregation, and unification with white liberals.<sup>10</sup> As the CRM continued to suffer heinous acts of violence and fatalities involving its leaders, such as the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, and the murder of the National Association of Colored People's (NAACP) field secretary, Medgar Evers, some of the youth within the CRM began to identify with black power, a philosophical approach that veered sharply from what the stalwarts of the CRM espoused. This philosophy centered on principles of black unity, power, and solidarity.<sup>11</sup> During the mid-1960s, as the leadership of SNCC

introduced the term “black power” into the national consciousness, its core principles soon garnered supporters on campuses across America in the form of the black campus movement.<sup>12</sup> In the 1961–1962 school year, students at Central State University in Ohio established the reform action movement, which took on a “black nationalist, student rights” slant.<sup>13</sup> During the same period, study groups transformed themselves into pockets of political activism, such as UHURU in Detroit.<sup>14</sup> However, the BCM did not begin to coalesce until after a few seminal events like “Bloody Sunday” in 1965.<sup>15</sup> On March 7, 1965, six hundred protesters in Selma, Alabama, attempted to march across the Pettus Bridge in response to Dallas County’s persistent attempts to block voting rights of black residents. An army of state troopers and the Selma police met the protesters with tear gas, clubs, and whips.<sup>16</sup> The televised events of “Bloody Sunday” inspired many students to respond with great urgency the following day. At Howard University, students delivered a petition to US president Lyndon Johnson demanding an end to the brutality against blacks in Selma.<sup>17</sup> As tensions continued to mount, student activists at the University of Arkansas “demonstrated inside and outside the president’s office, demanding abolishment of segregation in Greek organizations and housing.”<sup>18</sup> By the late 1960s, it was commonplace to hear soaring oratory from African American speakers whose goal was to further radicalize/politicize black students. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke at Occidental College in Los Angeles in April of 1967 about the “illegal and unjust war in Vietnam,” and, in the same year, activist H. Rap Brown of SNCC campaigned for black studies at New York’s City College.<sup>19</sup> Muhammad Ali also became a political figure, visiting many campuses during the same period, including Kent State University in 1969, where he discussed black power and the struggles of African American men.<sup>20</sup> Many of these speakers addressed campuses during weeks dedicated to the exploration of black culture and issues which were usually organized by Black Student Unions (BSUs) or Black United Students (BUS). These organizations were the nation’s first chain of politically and culturally progressive Black Student Unions, who served as pressure groups to pursue a wide range of alterations meant to transform higher education.<sup>21</sup> The scheduled events by the BSU and BUS groups included films, panel discussions, and social events. The black power movement (BPM) created a new wave of black student activists ready to challenge the oppressive system that they believed existed in academia across America. Black students were ready to become agents of change through the black campus movement, the academic arm of the BPM.<sup>22</sup>

On February 13, 1969, nine hundred National Guardsmen swarmed the campus of the University of Wisconsin–Madison to confront thousands of protesters with fists raised, voices shouting, and posters emphasizing nonnegotiable demands, racism, black power, black pride, and revolution—higher education was under siege.<sup>23</sup> The march of ten thousand students from the university to the capitol became known as the BCM’s largest march.<sup>24</sup>

University of Illinois students joined the fray by challenging the administration to establish a Black Cultural Center and a Black Studies Department, to employ more black residence hall counselors, and to hire hundreds of black professors.<sup>25</sup> The groundswell of activism continued until approximately a thousand colleges and universities faced demands meant to destabilize the institutionalized racism that had infiltrated

their policies and was seen as unjust and destructive to the academic experience of black students. The BCM asked for curricular changes including the development of black studies, strategies for increasing black student enrollment, campus activities that encouraged cultural sensitivity and understanding, increased financial assistance for disadvantaged students, more black faculty and staff, cultural centers, and a variety of other requirements.<sup>26</sup> Kent State University confronted similar demands from black student activists on campus and the many other groups that agreed structural changes were needed.

### **Kent State's Black Campus Movement**

Henry Austen said, "America is a vampire, a buzzard . . . a hypocritical, imperialistic country." The public relations officer for Deacons of Defense continued on by encouraging the black students at Kent State University to unite and "deal with the barriers threatening the survival of black people and frustrating their liberation."<sup>27</sup> By May of 1968, the Kent State Student Senate voted to recognize Black United Students, an organization that was the impetus for the most pivotal cultural changes that occurred on the Kent campus in the late sixties and early seventies.<sup>28</sup> African American students at Kent State University, in conjunction with other members of the BCM across the country, wanted the very nature of scholarship redefined to include black ideologies. The black student body made demands for full integration and wanted access to every level at its institution of higher education. Several revolutionary changes emerged on Kent's campus out of the BCM. Some of the more significant developments included the establishment of a Cultural Center and the Institute of African American Affairs, the forerunner to the current Department of Pan African Studies; a review of off-campus housing discrimination practices; the establishment of educational programs meant to assist first-generation college students; and a litany of other accomplishments. Regrettably, the holdings in the Department of Special Collections and Archives at Kent State University do not adequately document the groups and individuals of the black campus movement of the 1960s and early 1970s.

### ***Kent State Shootings***

During the first week of May in 1970, Kent State University (KSU) became embroiled in a series of events that soon gained national and international attention. After four days of demonstrations and protests surrounding the invasion of Cambodia, the Ohio National Guard killed four KSU students and wounded nine other students on May 4.<sup>29</sup> The shootings and the aftermath are among the most widely known historical narratives surrounding the university.

Kent State University quickly established the May 4 Collection in 1970 and initiated a massive effort to collect materials from administration, faculty members, academic units, and eventually from outside the Kent community. As a result, the collection is over three hundred cubic feet and is used by a cross-section of scholars for research projects and by filmmakers, artists, and other members of the media. Establishing the May 4 Collection was a huge and complex undertaking, and, as with any significant

event in history, several subtexts are interwoven into its narrative, although not all the subtexts are as clearly defined and as easily identified as some of the more well-known themes. The subtexts of a historical period may also seem invisible due to the lens through which the overall framework is interpreted. Thus, gaps in the historical record are often prevalent and frequently require an examination into the subthemes of race, ethnicity, gender, class, or sexuality to provide a fuller representation of history. Though the BCM was established before the Kent State shootings, an analysis of the chronology and developments surrounding the event reveal that the BCM played a role in the minute number of black students present at the Kent State shootings.

The concern of targeted violence toward members of the black student population led leadership within the BUS organization to urge African American students to stay away from the scheduled events that occurred on May 4, 1970.<sup>30</sup> Echoing BUS's sentiment was Milton Wilson, the director of Human Relations, who wrote in the aftermath of the Kent State shootings:

While Black students have the same concerns as other Americans—and this includes the concerns of Vietnam and Cambodia and the large proportion of our national energies devoted to militarism—Black students are more concerned about the manifestations of racism. Indeed, I believe that our Black students were more concerned about the tragedies that followed in Augusta and Savannah, Georgia, and at Jackson State than at Kent State. . . .<sup>31</sup>

The BCM at Kent State clearly influenced several areas at the university, from the development of a black studies program to the participation of black students in the events of May 4, 1970. Kent's BCM merits further study due to its roles within the national sphere and as a catalyst for systemic, campuswide changes that reflected the transformation of the national landscape.

### *Preliminary Assessment*

Ibram Rogers's *The Black Campus Movement: Black Students and the Racial Reconstitution of Higher Education, 1965–1972* has become the authoritative text on how the movement transpired around the country. His exploration provides critical information for those seeking to understand the movement's progression, goals, objectives, and key players. Rogers's exhaustive inquiry yields key themes and subject matter that allow an archivist to understand this period and to begin identifying and selecting materials. The text can guide any special collections and archives department in the process of assessing the key people and events integral to presenting the most accurate account of the BCM.

The initial assessment of Kent State's archives included a search for documentation relating to several areas. A few of the major areas encompassed black student organizations (Black United Students, the Black Student Association, Black Student Union, Students Organized for Black Unity), the hiring of black faculty during the late sixties for departments or offices that had previously included only white faculty members or for staff posts, the emergence of departments and programs geared toward the education

of students on the black diaspora. The evaluation also targeted any materials relating to the initiatives meant to encourage cultural sensitivity through campus programming, to improve the academic success of black students, and to increase black student enrollment from 1965 to 1971.

### Available Documentation

In 2013, the Department of Special Collections and Archives held an open house announcing the digitization of the 1960s *Daily Kent Stater* (*DKS*), the student newspaper. The digitization of this decade has made the search for key dates, times, individuals, and groups of the BCM far easier. The digital archives of the *DKS* from the 1960s quickly became an invaluable resource for highlighting significant protests, demonstrations, individuals, and organizations that aided the frontlines of the BCM at Kent State. The *DKS* provides some dates and names for the establishment of the Institute for African American Affairs (IAA). Slated as an experimental endeavor for undergraduate students, the program focused on black studies.<sup>32</sup> The *DKS* also reported on the creation of the Office of Minority Affairs, a liaison between black students and the administration, which assisted in reporting on- and off-campus discrimination, engaged in educational development, and pushed for “better race relations.”<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, the *DKS* provides information on major protests, such as the walkout of more than two hundred black students in November of 1968, which started as a protest against the recruitment of students by the Oakland California Police Department.<sup>34</sup> The student newspaper also reported on a silent demonstration in April of 1970 to reiterate demands for an increase in black student enrollment, a new cultural center, and all-black faculty members in the Institute for African American Affairs.<sup>35</sup> While Rogers’s text offers a general outline of key areas to begin researching and assessing BCM materials held by any university’s archives program, the *DKS* was instrumental in providing pivotal information on how the BCM evolved explicitly at Kent State University. After utilizing the student newspaper, a more targeted assessment of Kent State Special Collections and Archives holdings revealed the documentation currently available to provide some of the more essential information. A few of the initial results were as follows:

- Presidential papers, which provided an administrative record of specific developments of various offices, departments, or programming targeted at disadvantaged students or historically underrepresented groups;
- Faculty papers, including flyers, newsletters, correspondence, and newspaper clippings on the campus disruptions pertaining to the organization Black United Students;
- The report, *Two Years Involvement: A Report on Programming in the Area of Black Student Concerns at Kent State University, 1968–1970*;
- Administrative papers, documents from other administrative offices on campus;
- University Police records highlighting organizations of interest on campus; and
- Milton E. Wilson Jr. Papers, 1965–1994.

Robert White served as the president of Kent State (1963–1971) during this time of civil unrest at the university; his presidential papers contain some of the more significant administrative documentation illuminating the BCM there. The papers reveal administrative decisions, some documentation of the development of different



departments and offices, and the hiring of some of the black faculty on campus during the 1960s and early 1970s.<sup>36</sup> The published report, *Involvement Two Years Later: A Report on Programming in the Area of Black Student Concerns at Kent State University, 1968–1970* by Milton E. Wilson Jr., a former dean for Human Relations, provided critical insights from the viewpoint of an administrative office. Wilson’s office was charged with being an ally to disadvantaged students and served as the umbrella under which the Office of Minority Affairs resided. The Wilson report synthesized some of the more culturally significant advancements on campus and specifically addressed the involvement (or lack thereof) of black students during the events of May 4, 1970, which further demonstrates the BCM as a subtext of the May 4 narrative.

After identifying some of the groups and individuals that initiated the cultural revolutions at Kent State, it became evident that the student organization known as Black United Students played a quintessential role in shifting the cultural paradigm of the campus during the late 1960s and early 1970s. More specifically, it was the BUS leadership that urged black students on campus not to attend the May 4 rally protesting the invasion of Cambodia that led to the killings of four white KSU students by Ohio National Guardsmen and left nine with significant injuries. While some black students attended some of the activities during the events leading up to May 4, initial research shows a significant portion did not attend the activities on May 4, and some black students were even quoted as saying, “it was not their thing,” in the Wilson report.<sup>37</sup> However, the university’s archives does not have a significant amount of documentation concerning this aspect of the events of May 4, which in turn highlights the gap in the historical record regarding the overall evolution of the BCM.

While the assessment process uncovered a cross-section of records from faculty and some administrative offices referencing some institutional decisions, correspondence reflecting the administration’s concerns about black student uprisings, the advancement of campus initiatives, programming, and the emergence of academic programs, gaps remain in the historical record where documentation of Kent BCM is inadequate, making it essential to institute a documentation plan stressing key areas of acquisition for the archives.

### **Documentation Plan**

The following list identifies weaknesses found during the initial assessment of the department’s holdings. These topics were highlighted as key areas in which to acquire documentation as the department moves forward on its BCM project:

- Black United Students, with a specific focus on student and faculty leadership within the organization; activities, events, and details surrounding the historical development of the organization, such as founding members; and the acquisition of additional publications created under BUS, including a complete collection of *Black Watch* and related materials;
- Institute of African American Affairs, its historical development, faculty, staff, and programming, 1969–1971;
- Office of Minority Affairs, a chronology of development including staff and administration, documentation including reports of discrimination, educational development, notes on presentations to classes and other campus units;

- Department of Human Relations, its historical development, its relationship with BUS and other minority organizations, programming, and publications, 1960s–1970s;
- Cultural Center (Kuumba House), its development, goals and objectives, student and faculty affiliates, and activities, 1968–1971;
- Kent State University cultural student programming, a clear chronology of activities, events, and initiatives developed, 1965–1971;
- NAACP Student Chapter, including founding members, the organization’s chronology; activities, with a particular interest in the explanation of its disbandment shortly after the creation of BUS; and publications, 1960s; and
- SNCC (student chapter), its historical development, campus engagement, faculty, staff, student affiliates, and publications, 1960s.

These initially identified areas, among others, will serve as the guideline for the types of archival records and content to be targeted during the outreach process. A summary of the list will be included in the documents used to solicit potential participants.

A documentation plan should be viewed as a “fluid document.” As the outreach process begins, new areas of interest may emerge, which were either overlooked during the initial assessment or which may develop after engaging with those solicited for the project. The documentation plan should be reviewed for possible revisions every six months during the course of the outreach project.

### **Changes in Collection Development Policy**

After acknowledging and identifying the lapses in the historical record and establishing a documentation strategy for the black campus movement, it was important to make sure KSU’s collection development policy “officially” reflects the department’s efforts to cultivate donors and collections pertaining to underdocumented groups and communities. Before engaging in outreach efforts, it was critical to strengthen the policy’s language regarding efforts to acquire archival materials of historically underrepresented people and communities. Creating a clear policy sets a tone and provides official documentation of an archives’ philosophy. Working with the head of Special Collections and Archives, the policy was revised to state specifically:

In order to more fully reflect the diversity of the people and communities that make up Kent State University history, University Archives seeks to acquire collections that document historically underrepresented groups. We are specifically interested in developing collections that document African American, Asian, Latino, LGBTQ, Middle Eastern, Native American and other historically underrepresented people and communities within the KSU family. The papers and records of student organizations, faculty and staff members, and alumni will be considered for inclusion in University Archives.<sup>38</sup>

### **Project Development**

In 2010, Kent State University’s Department of Special Collections and Archives decided to establish a collection documenting the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender organizations, literature, and people within Northeast Ohio. By partnering with the

Kent State University's LGBT Neighborhood Project, the department has been able to engage in outreach efforts aimed at acquiring correspondence, diaries, photos, newsletters, oral histories, and a variety of personal and organizational materials documenting this community.<sup>39</sup> The development of the LGBT project served as a guideline for the types of materials and documentation to be targeted for the Black Campus Movement Project. Like the LGBT model, the Black Campus Movement Project included a clear mission statement and emphasized specific goals:

Kent State University's Department of Special Collections and Archives has decided to launch the Black Campus Movement Project. From 1965–1970, university and college campuses across the country experienced the Black Campus Movement, which was in part aimed at establishing a department of Black Studies, Cultural Centers, an increase in black faculty, financial aid for economically disadvantaged students, specialized assistance to meet the academic demands of courses, culturally sensitive programming, and an overall effort by academic institutions to respect the cultural perspective and history of the African American community. Therefore, in an effort to create robust collections highlighting historically under-documented communities at Kent State University, the Department of Special Collections and Archives has launched an initiative that seeks to acquire and record the evolution of Kent State University's Black Campus Movement. The project will collect correspondence, diaries, photographs, newsletters, oral histories and a variety of personal and organizational materials documenting the Black Campus Movement from 1965–1970.<sup>40</sup>

This statement was sent to all potential participants with a summary of specific areas of interest underscored in the documentation plan and consent and waiver forms.

### **Generating a List of Potential Donors and Participants**

Outreach projects of this nature face a host of challenges, including generating a list of potential connections. Where does one start if a list of names is not immediately available? The digitized *Daily Kent Stater* and the *Involvement Two Years Later* report assisted with identifying 5 potential candidates for solicitation, but the goal was to create a list of 20 names for initial solicitation.

In 1990, Special Collections and Archives established the Kent State Shootings Oral History Project, which includes eyewitness narratives from police, National Guard personnel, administrators, faculty, students, alumni, and hospital personnel. The oral history of Edmund T. Moore generated a significant list of names. Moore was a student at the time of the Kent State shootings, and he retired as an associate professor in the Department of Pan African Studies at Kent State University in 2010. During an introductory conversation, Moore provided a list of names of individuals who were active on campus as students, faculty, and staff members from 1968 to 1970.

Between the *Daily Kent Stater*, the *Involvement Two Years Later* report, and Moore, an initial list of 20 names was generated and a list of 16 names was sent to the Alumni Office and the coordinator of the black alumni organization at Kent. Between both entities, contact information was created for 11 names. A total of 15 names was included

in the initial solicitation process. However, before moving forward with the outreach project, it was vital to comply with university regulations.

### **University Compliance: The Institutional Review Board**

Many universities require that an institutional review board (IRB) monitor research involving human or animal subjects. The IRB process is meant to protect participants. Research projects are reviewed to make sure they follow federal regulations. The IRB process requires the principal investigator(s) (PI) to receive a Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) certification.<sup>41</sup> After the PI(s) passes the online certification test, the university requires that the investigator(s) also completes an application.<sup>42</sup> Due to this project's focus on "human subjects," it required an application pertaining to human subjects. The application comprises a 15-page series of questions. The application also requires the PI(s) to attach consent forms, waiver forms, a list of questions that will be given to potential participants, and samples of correspondence that will be sent to potential participants.

It took approximately four weeks for the university's IRB to approve the project. However, if any changes are made to the project, another form must be submitted to the IRB, highlighting any additions/changes. The PI(s) should have a clear vision and strategy for the project before submitting the application to prevent any additional delays.

### **Solicitation**

After the Black Campus Movement Project received a stamp of approval from the IRB, correspondence was sent out to potential participants in a variety of ways depending on what information was available. Some participants were called directly if addresses and e-mail information were not available. For those who did have an address or e-mail, the following was sent:

- A description of the project (goals and objectives)
- Summary of areas of interest
- A list of the approved interview questions
- Consent forms/waiver (oral histories/interviews have the potential of being published)

Participants have the option of becoming donors by submitting collections that fit within the project's criteria or participating in an oral history/interview. The oral history serves as an eyewitness account of the participant's role within Kent State's BCM or his or her observations of the BCM from 1965 to 1970. Questions were sent ahead of time to ensure that participants were at ease with the tone and focus of the project. If participants were not comfortable with the questions, then it was best to know ahead of time. A total of 15 individuals were initially contacted from November to December of 2013.

## *Challenges*

While the project remains in its early stages, some of the initial challenges included outdated contact information; unanswered responses despite contact via e-mails, phone

calls, and letters; gaining trust of participants; and scheduling. Although initially 20 individuals were identified, some contacts were not up to date. The generous assistance of the Office of Alumni and the black alumni organization did not guarantee they had the most up-to-date information. After learning that five individuals' phone numbers and addresses were no longer valid or were unavailable, other resources were used to seek contact information, though in some cases it was to no avail. Networking with individuals who *do* respond is a complementary approach.

Similarly, social media platforms are a viable form of contact or a resource. Social media accounts such as LinkedIn can give critical information, including the most recent or latest professional organizational affiliation for a potential contact. LinkedIn accounts may reveal that a potential participant previously worked at a university/college—and some universities and colleges are permitted to give contact information for former administrators, faculty, and staff. Facebook can also yield contact information, or a general locale for some individuals. At the very least, a general Google search may uncover a news article, an e-mail address, or a phone number, especially if the subject does not have a social media account. A potential participant's information may appear in a basic/advanced Google search, which was the case with two participants in this project.

Another challenge in an outreach project of this nature is a potential participant's lack of response or an unwillingness to revisit this period of his or her academic or professional history. Three contacts whose information was up to date decided not to respond to any form of communication. Their names were permanently removed from the list.

Other challenges that remain include scheduling, especially when potential participants have varying work or extracurricular activity hours. A former member of BUS at Kent State University, now located in New Jersey, was instrumental during some of the formative years of Black United Students and would be a valuable addition to the oral history component of the project, but it has been difficult to schedule a phone conference or in-person interview with him. He is responsible for a radio podcast on political issues and is a practicing lawyer. The project will continue to correspond with the hope of finalizing a date and time for an interview with him.

Finally, gaining the trust of potential donors or oral history narrators has been one of the most challenging aspects of the outreach project. Erwind Blount, one of the former presidents of BUS, is considered to have been one of the most polarizing figures in BUS during the late 1960s. He is a self-proclaimed recluse and did not want to participate upon initial contact. Not until after a 90-minute conversation, during which the university archivist shared previous experiences as an undergraduate in student organizations geared toward the betterment of disadvantaged communities, did a rapport slowly build. Fortunately, Blount has done several phone interviews and has responded to two rounds of typed questions pertaining to his contentious relationship with the Robert I. White administration, his role as a BUS president, the Kent State shootings, and his history with the City of Kent police.

### *Early Outcomes*

The Black Campus Outreach Project is in its early stages, though some successes have been achieved in less than a year. In November of 2013, Lafayette Tolliver (a Kent State University alum) responded to solicitation by the project. Tolliver agreed to an in-person interview in Toledo, Ohio, where he discussed his time at Kent State University from 1967 to 1971. Tolliver was an active photographer for the student yearbook, the *Chestnut Burr*, and a member of the student newspaper for which he penned a column, in addition to serving in the capacity of an “unofficial” photographer for many black student activities and organizations on campus. Tolliver was also a member of the BUS organization.<sup>43</sup> At the conclusion of the interview, Tolliver gave a tour of his cache of negatives pertaining to black student life and images of protests relating to the Vietnam War and events surrounding the Kent State shootings, much of which has never been published. Shortly after, Tolliver agreed to donate his collection containing thousands of negatives and prints, newspaper clippings, and correspondence. Images from the Tolliver Collection will be used in the May 4, 2015, exhibit commemorating the 45th anniversary of the Kent State shootings. Tolliver’s photographs were highlighted in a photo exhibition in October 2014 during the campus homecoming festivities.

The project has also garnered a few oral histories from university faculty members, including the first chair of the university’s Institute for African American Affairs and former chair of the Department of Pan African Studies, Dr. Edward Crosby. The project has also acquired an interview from the former coordinator of minority affairs and one of the founding members of BUS, Donald Thigpen. Erwind Blount has submitted over 10 pages of text recalling his role in the black campus movement at Kent State University, which has provided enlightening insights into what transpired on campus during the 1960s.

In working with Dr. Crosby, his wife, and son, connections were made with Beatrice Mitchell. A resident of Ravenna, Ohio, Mitchell kept significant records on the development of McElrath, a predominately economically disadvantaged community in Ravenna, and the McElrath Improvement Center. During the 1960s, McElrath had strong ties to Kent State University faculty and to members of Black United Students, who were active in this community with afterschool programs, food donations, and a variety of other activities as they fought to gain water and sewage services, which did not arrive until the 1970s. Mitchell will be donating her records on McElrath to Kent State University’s Special Collections and Archives in 2014 and 2015.

This important nexus of voices continues to expand, and the department remains energized about the potential of future acquisitions.

### *Future Goals*

Future objectives for the project include a more targeted approach for the inclusion of female voices involved in leadership or supportive roles within organizations instrumental to the black campus movement at Kent State University. The male perspective has dominated thus far in the project; the next round of solicitations will focus on

gathering female contributors. The role of women in the BCM will provide another stimulating layer within the discourse of this movement; it is another subtext that has yet to receive a critical analysis and demands further investigation. Also, follow-up correspondence will be sent to those individuals who expressed interest but have yet to fully engage in the project.

Kent State University's Special Collections and Archives plans to digitize the Tolliver negatives and integrate them into the Centennial Collection, a digital collection highlighting the university's history. The project also aims to generate a considerable number of oral histories/interviews that may eventually serve as a catalyst to create a new digital collection focusing on the perspectives of black student life at Kent State University.

Special Collections and Archives will reevaluate the entire project at the end of 2014 and address the need for new strategic approaches, remedy weaknesses in the documentation plan, assess current successes and failures, and renew IRB credentials for the project.

As efforts to acquire documents emphasizing Kent's black campus movement continue, the project plans to engage in outreach efforts within the classroom by encouraging the usage of the acquired collections. The University Archives plans to develop presentations for key departments on campus that will find the latest acquisitions focusing on diversity at Kent State University applicable to their departmental curricula and will hopefully encourage students to engage in archival research on diverse issues.

### *Conclusion*

Encompassing the entirety of a system of statements, the archive, rather than representing a static space of cultural or documentary accumulation, is the site of enunciation of a multiplicity of historical, cultural, and political statements that function to defy the configuration of a singular vision of history.<sup>44</sup>

—Mario Ramirez, 2009

Defying a singular vision of history takes a concerted effort on the part of the archivist and stakeholders who are invested in cultivating the history of a university and its surrounding community. Gathering documentation on the black campus movement to create a robust historical record is a worthy venture for any university or college. Broadening the language that represents an academic institution's narrative will foster a sense of goodwill within the diverse populations that exist on a campus and within the surrounding community. Strengthening these bonds will in turn create important relationships for generations and will serve as the foundation for what is one of the most important goals of the archives community—democracy!

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