

# Disrupt, Defy, and Demand: Movements Toward Multiculturalism at the University of Oregon, 1968–2015

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## **Abstract**

This essay explores the history of activism among students of color at the University of Oregon from 1968 to 2015. These students sought to further democratize and diversify curriculum and student services through various means of reform. Beginning in 1968 with the Black Student Union's demands and proposals for sweeping institutional reform, which included the proposal for a School of Black Studies, this research examines how the Black Student Union created a foundation for future activism among students of color in later decades. Coalitions of affinity groups in the 1990s continued this activist work and pressured the university administration and faculty to adopt a more culturally pluralistic curriculum. This essay also includes a brief historical examination of the state of Oregon and the city of Eugene, Oregon, and their well-documented history of racism and exclusion. This brief examination provides necessary historical context and illuminates how the University of Oregon's sparse policies regarding race reflect the state's historic lack of diversity.

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“Black lives matter! Black lives matter! Black lives matter!” Those three words reverberated across the University of Oregon’s campus on November 12, 2015 as hundreds of students gathered outside Johnson Hall, the university’s central administration building. Students held signs proclaiming, “None of my professors look like me” and “We need equity” (Daily Emerald, 2015, 0:44). At times students chanted in unison; at other times students wielded megaphones to share their lived experiences as students of color attending a predominantly White institution. Together, those students demanded better representation and institutional support on behalf of marginalized groups on campus.

After the rally, Black student leaders gathered in a lecture hall and planned their next steps. As they discussed the problems they endured on campus, one of the students began to make a list. Not long after, the group of students had created an action plan that included 12 demands for the university’s administration. These 12 demands captured key obstacles they regularly encountered: (a) There were too few Black students and faculty; (b) financial aid and scholarships for Black students were paltry; and (c) every day many Black students attended class in Deady Hall, a building named after the University of Oregon founder and staunch slavery advocate, Matthew Deady. Four days after the rally, a group of 10 Black student leaders, who became known as the Black Student Task Force, sent the list of demands to the university’s president, Michael Schill.

After the list of demands became public, the Black Student Task Force received a call from an alumnus, Johnny Holloway, who attended the University of Oregon in 1968 and served as president of the Black Student Union (Matsumoto, 2016). Holloway told the Task Force that in 1968 he, too, wrote a list. This list, which the Black Student Union sent to then-President Arthur Flemming, was strikingly similar to the list written in 2015. After retrieving the 1968 list from the university’s archives, one of the members of the Task Force, Kena Gomalo, stated, “The experience of going to the UO [University of Oregon] . . . was eerily similar or dare I say the same because the list of demands they created is essentially the same to ours” (Matsumoto, 2016, p. 22).

The lists, which I will discuss in depth, do vary in their specific demands. Despite these differences, their similarities are undeniable and raise an interesting question: How much, or rather how little, has changed for students of color at the University of Oregon between 1968 and 2015? The answer is unquestionably complex. However, over the course of nearly 50 years, student activists of color at the University of Oregon were agents of change. Initiatives spearheaded by Black student activists in 1968 created a foundation for coalitional activist work among student activists of color in the following decades, specifically among groups such as Students of Color Building Bridges (SCBB), *Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan*, and later forms of the university’s Black Student Union. As a result, students of color have altered educational policies and curriculum, developed new institutional structures, and exposed a hostile campus climate that condoned racism. Instrumental in pushing for progress, these students’ activism and advocacy helped build a safer and culturally pluralistic learning environment.

### **Motivations and Purpose**

A primary motivation for writing this essay is to center the lived experiences of students of color whose activism transformed the University of Oregon. These students

demonstrated unyielding determination and strength as they fought societal and institutional challenges, and their work deserves to be recognized and celebrated. Despite being Oregon's flagship university, the existing histories about the University of Oregon—in particular the histories of students of color who attended the university—is shockingly scarce. This scarcity reflects an established trend in historical writing and archival work where dominant groups' perspectives, stories, and memories are often prioritized, validated, and widely distributed (Powell, Smith, Murrain, & Hearn, 2018). Historians and archivists play an active role in shaping history and collective memory by choosing what to document, communicate, or make accessible to the public. Therefore, it is essential to closely examine which stories are being told, how they are being told, and by whom they are being told, because there are profound negative consequences of absence and misrepresentation in mainstream media and archives (Caswell, Migoni, Geraci, & Cifor, 2017).

In recent years, the University of Oregon's libraries, special collections, and archives have made noticeable efforts to document and disseminate university history. The *Documenting UO History Project*, which launched in 2014, is the primary vehicle for this endeavor. The project acknowledges that previous university archivists, historians, and faculty have documented various aspects of the University of Oregon's history through books, ephemera, and online projects, with major works focusing on the documentation of the campus' architecture (University of Oregon Libraries, n.d.). However, the project also acknowledges that “much of the major historical events and milestones remain hidden in a variety of resources and lesser known events and individuals are buried in a multitude of collections” (University of Oregon Libraries, n.d., para. 2). In addition, the university lacks a comprehensive historical timeline and online presence regarding the university's history. To address the paucity of literature and documentation about traditionally underrepresented students and diverse communities, the university libraries launched the online tour site *Untold Stories: The Hidden History of the University of Oregon*. Through this platform, historians and librarians seek to feature the histories of the university's diverse student leaders and groups, which are rich in stories of heroism, activism, and defiance (University of Oregon Libraries, n.d.). This essay, which is grounded in primary source analysis, is a contribution to the University of Oregon's commitment to documenting diverse university history. Before delving into the rich history of activism among students of color at the university, it is necessary to situate that history within the context of Oregon and the city of Eugene's history. By providing a broad overview of state and local history in the following sections, it becomes evident as to how a toxic, inhospitable campus environment developed at the University of Oregon, and why student activists of color demanded institutional change.

### **Location, Location, Location: A History of White Supremacy and Racism in Oregon**

To better understand the University of Oregon's history and the activism among its students of color, it is essential to provide context on the state of Oregon and discuss how White supremacy and racism shaped the social, political, and economic climates of the state. Present-day Oregon is often considered a liberal bubble, a blue state, the land of hippies, LGBTQ rights, and legalized marijuana. As liberal as Oregon may appear, the state is still rife with racism and has a well-documented history of racial intolerance and

hate-motivated violence toward people of color. This history of racism and exclusion explains why vast sections of the state continue to have little to no residents of color (Semuels, 2016; United States Census Bureau, 2019). This disturbing history also demonstrates how the University of Oregon's sparse policies regarding race reflect the state's historic lack of diversity.

The racial makeup of Oregon can be attributed to an extensive history of legislation and policies that excluded Black people and other racial groups from having the same rights and protections as White people in the state. Several congressional land acts and failed treaty programs from the 1830s to the 1860s forced indigenous communities from their lands and authorized the government to give away millions of acres to Euro-American settlers (Buan & Lewis, 1991). Throughout the mid-19th century, settlers, ranchers, miners, and the United States Army massacred many Native Americans and forced survivors to flee (Buan & Lewis, 1991). The discovery of gold in Oregon in 1858 also emboldened White miners to force indigenous tribes from their communities and establish mining towns in their place (Buan & Lewis, 1991). White miners hired Chinese laborers to build the mining towns, but due to discriminatory taxes and exclusionary policies they were excluded from mining (Lowenstein, 1987).

Although slavery was never legally institutionalized in Oregon, from the 1840s to the 1860s, numerous state laws discriminated against early Black settlers and Native Americans. These laws—including an anti-miscegenation law that was not repealed until 1951—regulated and restricted the behavior of people of color in Oregon for decades (Oregon History Project, 2018). When Oregon gained statehood into the Union on February 14, 1859, the state included Black exclusion clauses in its constitution. These clauses made it unlawful for Black people to reside, own property, and make contracts in Oregon, with exceptions for those already living in the territory (Nokes, 2018). It was the only free state in the Union to constitutionalize exclusion laws, and the clauses were not officially repealed from Oregon's constitution until 1926 (Nokes, 2018).

In the early 20th century, the Ku Klux Klan was extremely active and Klan organizers appeared in Portland, Salem, Eugene, and Medford. Because of this, Oregon became the focal point for Klan activity west of the Rocky Mountains. By the 1920s, Oregon Klan leaders claimed 35,000 members across 60 local chapters and provisional Klans (Toy, 1986). The Klan attacked Blacks, Jews, and Roman Catholics and boycotted minority-owned businesses through publishing a directory that only included White Protestant-owned businesses (Toy, 1986). In the 1923 legislature, Klansmen and their allies revived controversial racial and religious issues that had been rejected in earlier years. For example, a bill prohibiting the ownership of land by aliens—targeting Japanese immigrants—passed swiftly (Toy, 2004). Other successful bills the Klan influenced included legislation banning teachers from wearing religious garb in public schools and preventing public schools from using textbooks with critical remarks about the founding fathers and American heroes (Toy, 2004).

By the 1930s, dictatorial Klan leadership alienated members and destabilized the Oregon chapters. Additionally, charges of corruption and sexual scandals plagued the Klan, which motivated most Oregon Klansmen to leave the organization. Even though some local chapters survived, attempts to revitalize the state organization failed. However, the Klan's legacy of hate and violence continued in Oregon through the

formation of skinhead groups and radical enclaves (Toy, 1986). These groups' presence, racist acts, and racist official policies suppressed the state's minority population. The 1930s U.S. census revealed that Black residents amounted to only 0.3% of the state's population (Gibson & Jung, 2005). In urban areas, such as Portland, discriminatory housing practices were commonplace, thus making it immensely difficult for people of color to secure housing. Elsewhere in Oregon, the relatively few remaining minority populations experienced de facto segregation. As a result, segregation limited property ownership and job opportunities, which continues to affect the socioeconomic status of racial minority families in Oregon.

### **Around the O: Eugene, Oregon, the home of the University of Oregon**

The University of Oregon opened its doors in the city of Eugene in 1876. Located approximately 100 miles south of Portland, Eugene was a White city where residents of color did not live until the mid-1930s, and, even then, they lived on the periphery of the city limits (Gibson & Jung, 2005). The number of people of color gradually increased in Eugene during the 1940s, but housing opportunities did not increase for them. City officials and real estate agents largely prohibited families of color—primarily Black families—from living inside Eugene city limits and confined them to the outskirts. Job opportunities were also scarce and primarily involved domestic work. Men of color briefly secured employment in the lumber and railroad industries during World War II. By the 1950s, Eugene's population was still homogeneously White with the Black population in Eugene totaling 150 people out of nearly 36,000 city residents (League of Women Voters, 1952).

By the 1960s, biracial committees formed to mount public pressure to change housing and employment opportunities in Eugene, which acted in conjunction with the Civil Rights Movement. However, it appears that these committees had little effect on changing the housing and job prospects for people of color in Eugene. In a 1971 survey entitled "The Eugene Black Community Survey," 96 Black families—representing 319 people, or half of the Black population in Eugene—highlighted the lack of job opportunities, quality education, and housing in the city (Human Rights Commission, 1971). The survey also reported that Black residents of Eugene felt alienated from city and other governmental bodies and agencies (Human Rights Commission, 1971). Clearly inhospitable to families and people of color, Eugene maintained a monoracial population. The 1990 U.S. census revealed that people of color made up few of the city's approximately 113,000 residents; Black people accounted for 1.3% of the total population, Native Americans accounted for 0.9%, Asian Pacific Islanders accounted for 3.5%, and Hispanics accounted for 2.7% (Gibson & Jung, 2005).

At the University of Oregon, trends around race and ethnicity consistently mirrored those of the city of Eugene and state of Oregon. The first student of color—a student of Japanese descent, Paul Gotow—enrolled at the University of Oregon in 1876, but little is known about his experience at the university (O'Neal & Bigalke, 2015). The first Black student, Mabel Byrd, enrolled in 1916, but she ultimately transferred to the University of Washington in Seattle (O'Neal & Bigalke, 2015). University records are not available for other demographics.

Eventually, athletes of color increased the number of students of color at the University of Oregon, and the first Black athletes were recruited in 1926. That year, Bobby Robinson and Charles Williams were signed as quarterback and fullback, respectively (Theole, 1974). Similar to the restricted housing opportunities for people of color in Eugene, Robinson and Williams, along with all students of color, were not allowed to live in university housing (Theole, 1974). There is no documentation of when university housing became racially integrated at the University of Oregon, but the civil rights legislation of the 1960s established equal access to such services.

Another result of the Civil Rights Movement was sweeping institutional introspection. In May 1964, the statewide American Association of University Professors' Research Council released a report entitled *The Negro and Higher Education in Oregon*. The report focused on the reasons for the relative absence of "Negroes" among the faculty and students, and suggested reallocating resources to make higher education more accessible to disadvantaged or minority high school students (American Association of University Professors, 1964). This report represented the first documented interest by the University of Oregon in the education of students of color and modestly set the stage for institutional change regarding racism, multiculturalism, and diversity.

### **A Tale of Two Lists**

In the midst of the Civil Rights Era, Black students at the University of Oregon created the Black Student Union in 1966 with the intent to raise awareness about racial discrimination on campus and in the surrounding community. The Black Student Union would ultimately serve as a unifying group for activism regarding these issues. Not long after the group was founded, they presented the document, "Grievances and Demands of Black Students on the University of Oregon" to the university's executive administration in 1968 (Holloway, 1968a). The memorandum—written by Johnny Holloway—addressed the all-encompassing racial inequity at the University of Oregon and established two goals to remedy that inequity: the elimination of White racism and the establishment of satisfactory academic and social conditions for the growing body of non-White students on campus.

The Black Student Union believed these goals were inextricably linked and essentially one and the same (Holloway, 1968a). To achieve these goals, Holloway (1968a, 1968b) defined five action items that aimed to rectify the curricular, staffing, and structural problems at the University of Oregon. The action items included: (a) the intentional recruitment of Black faculty and Black graduate students, (b) the reformation of the "unintended racially unequal effects" (p. 6) of the required English Composition course, (c) the need for existing departments to introduce courses that focus on Black life into their curricula, (d) the pursuit of a tutorial freshman year based on an elective and pass/no-pass alternative, and (e) the establishment of a School of Black Studies.

Establishing a School of Black Studies was particularly important to the Black Student Union (Holloway, 1968a, 1968b). As a result, the University of Oregon President's Committee on Racism, of which members of the Black Student Union were also members, drafted a proposal for a School of Black Studies that would be comprised of a "Department of Afro-American Studies" and a "Department of African Studies" (Holloway, 1968b, pp. 8–9). The committee argued that the educational experience for

Black students did not meet the “personal intellectual needs of Black students and the social and cultural needs of the Black community” (President’s Committee on Racism, 1968, p. 1). Instead, the curriculum at the time “discourage[d] the Black student from developing Black culture and the White student from understanding it, [which] injure[d] the University and the nation as much as the Black student and the Black community” (President’s Committee on Racism, 1968, p. 1). Their proposed alternative included curriculum that addressed the multi-faceted needs, interests, and cultures of Black communities in the United States. Despite concerted efforts to demonstrate the need for a School of Black Studies, the school was never approved or funded. The Committee on Racism’s vision for a School of Black Studies, however, was the first step in diversifying curriculum and introducing opportunities for multicultural understanding at the University of Oregon.

The breadth of the issues outlined in “Grievances and Demands” (Holloway, 1968a) captured the extensive lack of institutional support for Black students and faculty at the University of Oregon in 1968. Tackling the racial injustice that permeated every division and department of the university was complex, but Holloway artfully presented a manageable and prescriptive format for addressing Black students and faculty needs. Keeping the university’s administration in mind, Holloway (1968b) wrote a follow-up proposal entitled “Proposal for Funding—Task Force on Black Studies,” which included a prediction that the university would greatly expand in size and student enrollment and surge past the 13,000 students enrolled in the late 1960s. Holloway’s (1968a, 1968b) arguments in both documents rightfully hinged on racial and social justice, simultaneously framing the issue as a wise business decision, which demonstrated that Holloway, the Black Student Union, and the Committee on Racism were mindful of their audience.

Although “Grievances and Demands” (Holloway, 1968a) was written in 1968, it easily could have been written within the last few years. In 2015, Black student group leaders gathered students, faculty, staff, and community members outside Johnson Hall to publicly address the climate around race on campus. Following that address, the Black Student Task Force issued 12 demands to the university’s administration with the hope of creating a safer and more inclusive campus community. These demands addressed a spectrum of issues and included items such as making Ethnic Studies 101 a graduation requirement, funding and building a Black Cultural Center, and hiring Black faculty across all disciplines (Schill & Alex-Assensoh, 2016). The demands in the 1968 and 2015 documents highlighted the need for increased representation for Black students and faculty, more financial aid and recruitment programs, and a greater focus on Black scholarship and culture. Although the language, tone, and specific action items of the documents differed, their intent was the same. Furthermore, student experiences—particularly within historically underserved groups—are not universal or monolithic, yet the list of concerns and demands for each document mirrors the other. These similarities suggest that the experiences of contemporary Black students are unnervingly similar to the experiences of Black students in 1968 and reveals insufficient institutional progress in terms of how the University of Oregon supported its Black students and faculty for 50 years.

Throughout the early 1970s, the Black Student Union remained committed to its efforts and sought to increase awareness about Black culture, arts, and intellect while also confronting social justice issues. In October 1970, the University of Oregon hosted its first symposium on racism, entitled “Perspectives on Racism: Brown, Black, and Red.” At the symposium, artwork by Black, Latinx, and Indigenous artists was on display, and members of the Portland Black Panther Party, the United Native American Indian Movement, and Los Siete participated as panelists and lecturers (Associated Students of the University of Oregon Cultural Issues Center, 1970).

The Black Student Union also continued to develop strong relationships with other groups and divisions across campus, including Student Affairs, the Office of Multicultural Academic Success, and the Council for Minority Education (O’Neal & Bigalke, 2015). These partnerships helped further strengthen their presence and broaden the Black Student Union’s influence on campus. The Black Student Union even planned a weeklong program of activities to be televised by the campus television station. The programming pertained to Black history and culture, as well as problems currently facing Black communities (University of Oregon News Bureau, 1970). Most importantly, the Black Student Union remained the definitive affinity space for Black students on campus. Due to the initiatives the Black Student Union developed in the 1960s, the enrollment and graduation rates for Black students increased (O’Neal & Bigalke, 2015).

According to some students who attended the University of Oregon during the 1970s and 1980s, the conversation around institutional racism lost momentum and dissipated (Matsumoto, 2016). However, the university did address some of the goals that Holloway (1968a), the Black Student Union, and the Committee on Racism developed, leading to some substantial improvements. For instance, the university created Project 75, a federally funded scholarship program for Black students (Matsumoto, 2016). The university also formed the Committee on Ethnic Studies, which was a precursor to the current department and program.

### **Multicultural Curriculum**

With the creation of the Committee on Ethnic Studies, a decades-long struggle for multicultural curricular graduation requirements at the University of Oregon began. Little advancement was made in the 1970s and 1980s in regard to developing and implementing multicultural curricula, but the early 1990s witnessed a resurgence of interest and commitment to a more diverse and multicultural curriculum. The racial and cultural student unions on campus advocated for increasing the number of available ethnic studies courses and insisted that ethnic studies courses be a university-wide graduation requirement. Unsurprisingly, this proposal met resistance from university faculty and administrators. According to a report published by the Ford Foundation in 1992, the Northwest region lagged behind the rest of the nation in developing and adopting new multicultural curricula and incorporating it into the general education requirements. At that time, 34% of all colleges and universities had a multicultural general education requirement, and more than half of all colleges and universities had introduced multiculturalism into their departmental course offerings (Schmitz, 1992). At the University of Oregon, however, there was no multicultural general education requirement and only 12 of the more than 3,000 classes listed in the university’s catalog

examined the history or lived experiences of people of color in the United States (University of Oregon Registrar, 1991–1992).

The issue of multicultural curriculum reform remained a top priority for students of color. As a result, during the 1992–1993 academic year, a multicultural curriculum committee of students and faculty convened, researched, and presented a proposal to expand graduation requirements to include two courses. These courses included one course on gender, race, or non-European cultures, and a second course on race in U.S. society focusing on the experiences of Blacks, Asian Americans, Latinxs, or Native Americans. This proposal was ultimately defeated by a vote of the full faculty assembly, with faculty members raising concerns about “indoctrinating” students and imposing “group think” and “political correctness” (University of Oregon Assembly, 1993, para. 6).

At an assembly meeting in May 1993, Dr. Edwin Coleman, an English professor, poignantly asked, “What is it that . . . threatens so many people? Is it cost? Is it anti-Semitism? Is it multiculturalism? What happens to a dream delayed? Does it explode?” (University of Oregon Assembly, 1993, para. 22). The decision to not instate multicultural courses as a graduation requirement was supposedly influenced by a lack of additional funding and resources to hire new faculty to teach ethnic studies courses and develop a new ethnic studies department. Due to an apparent lack of additional funding, establishing an ethnic studies department would have shifted funds from existing departments.

Despite this initial defeat, in 1993 SCBB—a coalition of five minority student associations—declared they would dissuade prospective minority students from attending the university if the administration did not improve campus conditions for students of color. SCBB stated improvements could be accomplished by hiring and supporting faculty of color, fostering a more tolerant campus environment, and enhancing the multicultural aspects of the curriculum (James, 1993). These sentiments clearly resembled the issues the Black Student Union raised in 1968. SCBB also announced they would instruct alumni of color to withhold donations until campus conditions improved (James, 1993). SCBB’s threats spurred the university’s administration into action, and they created a special faculty committee with members appointed by the vice provost of academic affairs during the 1993–1994 academic year. The vice provost tasked the committee with creating a feasible compromise on a multicultural curriculum requirement (James, 1993).

Eventually, the committee developed requirements stating that undergraduates must take two courses from the following three categories: (a) American cultures (i.e., the study of race and ethnicity in the United States, including European Americans as an ethnic group); (b) identity, pluralism, and tolerance (i.e., the study of issues addressing classes, genders, religions, sexual orientations, or other groups that contribute to cultural pluralism); and (c) international cultures (i.e., the study of world cultures in view of race and ethnicity, prejudice and tolerance, and pluralism and monoculturalism; University of Oregon Assembly, 1994). The faculty assembly voted on the revised proposal in April 1994, and it passed without much debate in a noticeably less well-attended assembly (University of Oregon Assembly, 1994).

During the assembly, a statement from SCBB was read, which explained these groups' "desire not to support or condone the legislation. Our heritages are very valuable and it is not in our interests to force a reluctant populace to learn to appreciate them" (University of Oregon Assembly, 1994, para. 8). SCBB believed that the newly adopted multicultural requirements diluted their histories, cultures, and ancestors' contributions. Andres Montoya, a member of *Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan*, stated the requirement "will give the university an excuse for not doing what it should be doing for students of color" (University of Oregon Assembly, 1994, para. 23). In fact, the university frequently cited budget cuts and a lack of resources for hiring new faculty as reasons for dodging extensive multicultural curriculum and institutional reform. Similar to Dr. Coleman, students of color viewed this as a convenient and unconvincing excuse, and the curriculum battle continued throughout the 1990s. When the students who restarted the multicultural curriculum debate in 1991 graduated and new students took hold of the issue, the focus shifted toward creating a major in ethnic studies. The Oregon State System of Higher Education approved the major in October 1997, and the Department of Ethnic Studies continues to operate at the University of Oregon.

Students of color did not receive what they initially sought with curriculum reform, but their demands led to an intensive examination and critique of the curricular content of courses at the University of Oregon. Their activism also compelled the university to critically evaluate the politicized act of teaching and learning. In other words, who is included and who is excluded in the academy? Who is valued, legitimized, and respected at an interpersonal and an institutional level? There is a clear obligation for colleges and universities to provide opportunities to engage with new and recovered knowledge of historically underrepresented groups and communities. With the activism that the Black Student Union began in 1968, which continued on through coalitionist activism among racial and cultural affinity groups in the 1990s, the opportunities and obligations of a university to promote multicultural understanding were finally beginning to be realized at the University of Oregon.

### **Agents of Change**

Advancing multiculturalism at the University of Oregon did not stop at curriculum reform. The student activists who advocated for such reforms also proposed that the university establish a multicultural center in the Erb Memorial Union, the student union building and nucleus of campus. They argued that adding a multicultural center would provide a space for all students to collaborate and educate the campus community about diversity and inclusion. The Multicultural Center (MCC) was approved in the mid-1990s and was entirely student funded. Over the next two decades, the MCC became the hub for activism, consciousness raising, and connecting students of varied identities and backgrounds. The MCC has consistently sponsored annual conferences on diversity and social justice that have featured renowned keynote speakers, such as Angela Davis, Amiri Baraka, Howard Zinn, Bobby Seale, and Reverend Jesse Jackson. Furthermore, the MCC united disparate groups at one physical location, which engenders dialogue and partnerships aimed at achieving common goals.

The spirit of community within the MCC was best represented in the spring of 1999 when an incident of intolerance and racism occurred through a class listserv, which

involved racial stereotyping and threats of sexual violence toward women (Daily Emerald, 2001). A coalition of students at the MCC swiftly organized and publicized a protest at the president's office in Johnson Hall. This coalition was comprised of students from different racial and cultural student unions, women's organizations, and LGBT organizations. Together they coordinated an overnight sit-in to discuss their concerns with one another, the president, and administrators. Students who were present at the sit-in argued for extensive sensitivity training for faculty and supplying student groups with at least one million dollars in funding to help meet their diversity goals (Daily Emerald, 2001). Students were arrested at the sit-in, but their arrests and civil disobedience helped draw attention to the unchecked ignorance and racism within the university. The charges against the students were eventually dropped and the administration acquiesced to many of their demands. A notable accomplishment was the hiring of 10 student interns who spent the summer of 1999 researching and developing a new diversity initiative plan (Summer Diversity Internships and Objectives, 1999).

This diversity initiative plan achieved two central goals. First, a bias-response team was formally established and was designed so that the university could better respond to incidents of racism, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of discrimination on campus. The bias-response team would also promote respect for diversity in all aspects of campus life. The second goal was a policy statement published in May 2000, known as the "University of Oregon Affirmation of Community Values," which was endorsed by the university senate and the Faculty Advisory Council, and was a pledge to "preserve the freedom of thought and expression of all its members" (University of Oregon Policy Statement, 2000, para. 1). Substantial reform still needed to occur across the institution, but the new infusion of commitments to multiculturalism positioned the University of Oregon to make further advances as the university moved into the 21st century.

### **Conclusion**

A close examination of the activism and advocacy of previous diversity task forces and student unions reveals that students of color at the University of Oregon were very astute as to how they could best organize, conduct research, analyze possibilities to initiate change, and present their goals. These indefatigable students were meticulous in identifying how resources should be allocated and what steps needed to be taken to foster diversity and affect university structures. The process of change has always necessitated a collaborative effort among many groups that consist of students, faculty, staff, and administrators. At times, students' and administrators' interests were diametrically opposed, and students certainly pressured administrators, but students were also keenly aware that they needed to work with the administration rather than against it. With this approach, students reimagined and reshaped university structures from within rather than as outsiders.

Classes at the University of Oregon still primarily consist of White, middle-class students, but this composition is slowly changing to accommodate the needs of a more diverse student population and workplace. The protests led by students of color in 2015 skillfully disrupted the campus and forced the university and its constituents to confront their apathy toward supporting communities of color. As of today, the University of Oregon's administration has met seven of the 12 demands from 2015, and students

continue to work with administrators to ensure all demands are eventually met (Schill & Alex-Assensoh, 2016).

Because of the leadership and activism of the Black Student Task Force, the University of Oregon now has an African American Opportunities Program. Bringing together the university's Division of Student Services and Enrollment Management, the program has significantly expanded efforts to attract and recruit Black students, including programs and activities that enhance outreach to, and partnership with, Black students, their families, and community partners. The university also invited six historically Black Greek-letter organizations to campus to become part of Fraternity and Sorority Life. The Umoja Pan-African Scholars Academic Residential Community was created and accommodates 25 students, and student advisory boards, speaker series, seminars, and workshops were also developed. The university is also publishing campus diversity data that is reviewed annually.

Arguably, the most exciting advancement is the new Black Cultural Center that will be a place to "share and celebrate Black culture . . . [where student voices will create] a lasting legacy that will have a major impact on this university for decades" (University of Oregon Announcement, 2018, para. 7). The university broke ground on the project in Fall 2018, 50 years after "Grievances and Demands of Black Students on the University of Oregon" (Holloway, 1968a) was published. Hopefully, with the unyielding commitment to racial and social justice demonstrated by current students and the formidable leadership of the Black Student Task Force, the conversation will not abate, and the University of Oregon will continue to become a more inclusive and welcoming community.

#### Author Note

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