



Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report

**From black power to multicultural
organizing in Greensboro**

Chapter 1

(L)eaders in Greensboro have yet to acknowledge the degree to which their participation in Greensboro's "progressive mystique," as I have dubbed it, has aided and abetted the perpetuation of white racial hegemony in Greensboro. What is the "progressive mystique?" It is a series of beliefs focused on perceiving Greensboro, and the Piedmont more generally, as moderate in its politics, tolerant in its social behavior, and above all, courteous and open to people of all persuasions as long as they play by the rules of the game. What are those rules? First, that people treat each other with civility. Second, that they are willing to listen to petitions for change, but only if these are offered with due deference and courtesy. And third, that any significant alteration of the status quo requires consensus that change is necessary – in effect, unanimous consent...

(T)he sit-in experience highlighted the degree to which it was necessary, whenever blacks wished to secure greater economic, social and political justice, for them to break the rules again, challenging the "progressive mystique" with all its attentiveness to "civility," manners and public order. Hence, the opprobrium cast on to Nelson Johnson for daring to lead tenants in rent strikes, cafeteria workers in seeking a minimum wage, or high school students who wished to choose their own class presidents by majority vote. Johnson "broke the rules," and was an outcast as a result. He did not behave properly.

Part of what Greensboro needs to address in its own truth and reconciliation process, then, is to explore and disclose the ways in which the old rules of the "progressive mystique" and "civilities" served as a means of reinforcing the racial status quo. It is a complicated story. Blacks as well as whites believed in "civilities." Issues of class and power operated in both communities, within as well as across racial divides. But unless and until people of all backgrounds are ready to deflate the mystique and examine its consequences, it will be difficult if not impossible to arrive at a fresh start where manners and courtesy operate effectively because people have equal power, not as a mean of keeping some people in subservience to others.¹

William Chafe
civil rights historian

The passage of the laws and the declarations of the court...had created this tension between declaration and reality - aspiration and reality. I think a lot of people who felt aggrieved, black folks in the community...whites and others in the community who felt empathetic with African Americans and their feeling aggrieved, wanted to demonstrate that these pronouncements are not enough. That declarations of good intentions are not enough. That the 'deliberate speed' that Brown had declared in '54 was not gonna get it done. There had to be something more dramatic to take place. There had to be more community commitment to eradicating the vestiges of Jim Crow and the vestiges of racism.

All of that needed to change. I think people were feeling this tension and this frustration over the fact that here we are, in 1979, 15 years after the Civil Rights Act had been passed, 16 years after the march on Washington, 14 years after the Voting Rights Act had been passed. And here we are still we are living in a largely segregated community. We're not willing to see all of this come to naught. More has to be done. The reality has to catch up with the declarations and the pronouncements.

There was that feeling, and the feeling of restlessness, and the feeling for the need for more marked change among those that were supposed to benefit from the civil rights changes of the '60s. On

the one hand, being unwilling to accept things as they were, and wanting to have real change in the community; and those that resisted that. That what was going on in the community... Schools in Greensboro had not been desegregated in 1979. The workplace in Greensboro had not been desegregated in '79. The City government had not been desegregated in 1979. Housing had not been changed very much, the economic picture had not changed – whites were still on the top, blacks on the bottom.

*There were a lot of pronouncements but nothing much had changed and there certainly had been no fundamental change. The most change that had taken place was tokenism – enough to say that some change had been taking place (by 1979) and if you wait long enough some other change will come. Some seemed to feel that the laws being on the books were enough, without actually having to enforce them. They thought African Americans should have been satisfied with that. As it turns out, they weren't.*²

James Ferguson
civil rights attorney

*You never have to stir up any dissent and discord, because the dissent, the anger exists, it's every day, it's part of the everyday life of people ... but what an organizer tries to do is to help people, 1) understand better what it is that gives rise to the things, the conditions that they're angry about, and 2) to help them be in a position to collectively work on doing something to change it. So that's what we did in communities. And when you do that, people will call it agitation, because it is – because you're helping to stir things up, different from what is the status quo. And that is so important to do, because all of my life I have lived in a country where the status quo is severely unjust.*³

Ed Whitfield
public intellectual and activist

The 1979 Context: Racial Disparities in Greensboro

To understand the background of black liberation activism in Greensboro and the convergence with Marxism to form the WVO is to consider the larger context of events and issues that concerned these organizers. In the decades leading up to the events of Nov. 3, 1979, racial disparities with regard to education, wages, housing and health care were significant. According to the 1970 census, North Carolina had twice as many black households as white households living below the poverty line.⁴ According to unemployment data for Guilford County, while blacks made up 20.5 percent of the labor force, they constituted over 30 percent of the total unemployed.⁵ Black residents were further “victimized by poor housing, inadequate government services and ill-equipped schools.”⁶

In the late 1960s and the 1970s, as “civil” groups including the NAACP, YWCA and the City’s Human Relations Commission continued their ongoing work addressing these inequities, Nelson Johnson, Sandi Smith and other organizers began articulating their goals through the rhetoric of Black Power, a phrase that caused deep anxiety among the city’s white elite and black middle class that did not favor such confrontational tactics. Later, when they joined the Workers Viewpoint Organization (which later became the Communist Workers Party) these activists understood their agenda through the ideology and rhetoric of communist revolution, which was even more upsetting to the city’s “progressive mystique” across racial lines.

Education⁷

Despite having the designation of being one of the first Southern states to legally desegregate its schools

in the wake of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, North Carolina's truth is that its schools, and those in Greensboro in particular, maintained de facto segregation long thereafter.⁸ According to statistics prepared by the Greensboro Public Schools for the 1969-1970 school year:

- 12 schools had student bodies that were more than 99 percent black
- 10 schools had student bodies that were more than 99 percent white
- 18 schools had between 1 percent and 18 percent black and other students of color
- Only five schools had an enrollment of black and other students of color between 18 percent and 51 percent.⁹

Wages

Comparisons between salary and conditions for white and black workers in Greensboro in 1970 also are telling. According to statistics compiled by the City of Greensboro Personnel Department:¹⁰

- Twice as many black households were living below the poverty level than white households.
- Approximately 75 percent of Greensboro City employees were white, approximately 25 percent black.
- With respect to “officials / administrators:” 28 white city employees and no black city employees earned over \$25,000 a year; for salaries ranging between \$24,999 and \$16,000, there were 46 white city employees and three black city employees
- With respect to “professionals:” three white city employees and no black city employees earned over \$25,000; for salaries ranging between \$24,999 and \$16,000, there were 91 white city employees and 10 black city employees.
- However, in the area of “Service Maintenance” (generally not considered decision-making positions) the ratio of white to black employees was 229 to 268.

The N.C. Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights found in its 1980 investigation that, “Among city employees, white males dominate the higher paid positions. Minorities and women are concentrated in stereotypical clerical and menial jobs. A few blacks and females hold second-line authority positions. The data submitted to the Committee by Greensboro officials reveal, more than do job titles, the disparity in pay among men and women, blacks and whites who work for the city.”¹¹

The black community felt not much had changed by 1980. The NAACP Urban Crisis Committee Paper reads: “Evidence shows that there is a lack of employment and promotional opportunities in both city and county governments. At present time there are no black department heads in city government. Where there are executive positions open, the tendency has been to seek personnel outside of the existing structure and community, rather than upward mobility of present staff.”¹²

Housing

Housing was one of the most pressing concerns for the black community in the late 1960s and early 1970s.¹³ In his book “Civilities and Civil Rights,” Chafe reports:

The three poorest census districts in Greensboro were in the black community and 5,000 families in the city – most of them black – lived in substandard housing or outright slums in 1969. More than 1,000 of these units were in such bad condition that they could not be repaired economically. “Horton’s Row” illustrated the infamous conditions that existed in such neighborhoods: Presided over by an absentee landlord who collected rents with a pistol on his hip, the dilapidated shacks stood side by side, unmaintained, with broken glass all around, and abandoned refrigerators in the backyards.”¹⁴

Issues of particular concern in poor communities included:

- Housing conditions not fit for habitation and unwillingness on behalf of landlords to make repairs;
- Negligent/lack of enforcement of the housing code;¹⁵
- Lack of adequate legislation to protect against unscrupulous landlords;¹⁶
- Use of redevelopment as a tool to destroy viable communities without consulting residents, forcing many out of redeveloped communities then building new residences unaffordable for the prior residents.¹⁷

Residents and supporters, such as members of the Gorrell Street Community Council, highlighted examples, such as the case of Rosa Lee Bailey, whose landlord increased her rent for the dilapidated apartment that he refused to fix: “Even though the rent is high, no repairs of the house in about two years. Members of the Community Council were invited by Mrs. Bailey to look at holes in the ceiling, faulty electrical outlets, rotten screens and screen frames, a hole in the bathroom floor, and paint peeling off the wall, etc.”¹⁸

“Because of the reluctance of landlords to repair their property and to maintain it at a level fit for safe, sanitary, and comfortable habitation, we are requesting the City of Greensboro to pass an ordinance to allow tenants to have necessary repairs done by an agency of the tenant’s choosing and that the cost of such repairs be deducted from the tenant’s rent cost.”¹⁹

Public health:

Although we have not found any statistics to illustrate racial and class disparities in the health care system in Greensboro in the 1970s, the following anecdotal evidence from white activists in Durham, where race and class disparities were central concerns of groups such as the Medical Committee for Human Rights, is helpful in understanding these inequities. These concerns eventually brought them together with Black Power activists. Paul Bermanzohn recalls his “radical conversion” through his awareness of class and racial inequality in health

You are supposed to get conservative in medical school; I became more radical as I saw how poor people were treated. How no expense was spared in taking care of upper class people and how if you were poor, and especially if you were poor and black you were treated as a lesser creature. I was shocked to hear poor black people routinely called “teaching material” in the clinics. Poor white folks weren’t treated much better. When I took a year off from medical school to work in Durham’s anti-poverty program as a health specialist, it was no surprise that the black community called Duke Hospital ‘the Plantation.’ My father got sick when I was a medical student and he got about the same treatment in New York City teaching hospitals as was given to poor folks at Duke. It wasn’t just a Southern thing or a black thing.

By the time I graduated from medical school in 1974 I was on my way to becoming a revolutionary. Soon after, I, working with Jim Waller and others helped to found the Carolina Brown Lung Association. I helped organize clinics and educated workers about the effects of cotton dust on their breathing. We worked with textile unions and retired workers to set up the programs. We also had a group that organized in the community to improve health care for poor people in Durham.

Marty Nathan recalls how basic living conditions, health care and labor organizing converged in her

late husband Mike Nathan's community work:

As a student, he had worked at Operation Breakthrough, and had lived in the African American Edgemont community in Durham, organizing to empower people there for the basics: housing, education, food, and welfare ... It was natural for him to read Marx, Engels and Lenin with Paul (Bermanzohn) and to work with WVO in supporting black hospital workers at Durham County General, who had been infected with tuberculosis by unsafe working conditions in the laundry department.²⁰

It is clear that, as in labor struggles we describe later in the report, the outspoken tactics by which Bermanzohn, Nathan and other activists advocated for their cause of equal rights to health and health care put them at odds with those who might otherwise have been their allies. For example, Mike Nathan's colleague Evelyn Schmidt, Director of the Lincoln Community Health Center that provides health care to Durham's under-served population characterized Bermanzohn and Nathan and their associates as "acting out". She said that she didn't argue with their ends, but she did argue with their means. She recalled that around 1979 there was a new hospital being built in Durham and the group had aggressively confronted and insulted the board. Schmidt commented that this was not the way to "buy brownie points." Schmidt noted that, "*Some of the things they were dealing with were injustices, but some of them I would say weren't, but how they dealt with them particularly was the difference. In insulting some of the medical people, they were losing people that could have been their friends.*"²¹

Greensboro: Civility meets Black Power

The local conditions of inequality described above and activists' impatience with the city's culture of civility, which kept the status quo in place, combined to make Greensboro what has been referred to by many as the center of the Black Power movement in the southeastern United States.²² Former Mayor John William Forbis observed,

I also learned—have come to understand Greensboro's place in history—if you want to make a statement in race relations, you don't go to Atlanta, you don't go to Baltimore, you don't go to Richmond—you go to Selma [Alabama], you go to Birmingham, you go to Greensboro, and you go to Memphis. You'll find towns who have been historically represented in civil rights progress and history, that's where you go to make your demonstration or make your statement. And Greensboro will always be a place, in my opinion, where the Klan comes to march, and where the black students at A&T (North Carolina A&T State University), and the other civil rights organizations decide to make their stand and make their pitch. That, from the historical presence, is where Greensboro pretty much has been since the 60s.²³

Former FBI agent Dargan Frierson saw the rise in black activism in threatening terms,

About 1965, '67, '68, somewhere along in there, the Klan became much less active and the black militants invaded our area here...there were an influx of Black Panthers from New York who came to A&T, and, you know, we had to then find out what they were up to. And found that they were certainly espousing violence. You know, the whole Black Panther movement at that time in the late '60s was "Out with the Pigs!" and "Kill the Police!" and that sort of stuff. They totally advocated anarchy. They had a film that they had made – that Huey Newton and that crowd out in California had made – and the title of the film was Off the Pig: How a Young Bitch Could Kill a Policeman. So we had our own Black Panthers group here, and so my assignment then became, I turned over all the activity that I had as far as the Klan was concerned, and became almost, well, was totally involved in trying to develop sources in the black militant movement to keep us apprised of what was going on here.²⁴

FROM BLACK POWER TO MULTICULTURAL ORGANIZING IN GREENSBORO

Black activists themselves, of course, saw things differently. Increasingly frustrated with the stranglehold of resistance to change, many struggling for racial equality came to believe that active and aggressive challenge to the status quo was the only way for change to occur. Thus, there was for many a shift from the non-violent protest activism of the 1950s toward the more militant “direct action” of 1960s. At the GTRC’s first public hearing, local organizer and grassroots historian Lewis A. Brandon III spoke about the need for this more direct challenge:

I don't know of any social change that occurred in this community without a struggle. I've been here since 1957 and this is a city that does not do things because it is the right thing to do. It does things because it's forced to change ... Like in '57, rather than desegregate the swimming pools it sold the swimming pools and got out of the swimming pool business. In '58, when the school system was ordered to take two students in at Caldwell School, they moved all of the white students out, the white teachers out, and Caldwell School, which is over on Martin Luther King, became an all black school. This is how this city operates. After '69 (the Dudley/A&T Revolt, see below) the Civil Rights Commission came in and did a report and ... they found the same conditions existed ten years later. That's the Greensboro I know. Change doesn't come because of the goodness of the people in the community. People have to struggle, people have to fight to get change in this community.²⁵

An example of this evolving struggle and its place in the national and regional arenas can be found in the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Starting out with lunch-counter sit-ins and other civil disobedience, SNCC began to change, directed by the thinking of Ella Baker, the woman who called students together at historically black Shaw University in Raleigh for the 1960 gathering that led to the group’s formation. Baker was “an internationalist who grounded herself unapologetically in black communities and working-class black culture, at the same time that she forged strong and enduring ties with white radicals and liberals and other people of color.”²⁶ In the early 1960s, SNCC took up direct action in class politics that was seen as a “major departure, both in substance and in style, from the practices of national and regional groups like the NAACP, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), which operated on the assumption that leadership came from an educated, professional or clerical class.”²⁷ These groups also came to represent the belief in the possibility of achieving change through legal and cooperative means. SNCC activists began to knock on the doors of the impoverished remote areas of black communities to solicit and involve their experiences, asking them to analyze the situation from their perspective. Baker, who previously worked with the SCLC, was instrumental in this new inclusive, participatory style of organizing in which women, youth and others who had been marginalized could be involved. This shift within SNCC’s activities paralleled a national shift, marking an increasing awareness of the internal struggle within the Civil Rights Movement itself – exposing the economic gap between the elite and the working class.

The Black Power Movement emerged in the mid-1960s in response to anti-Vietnam War sentiment and various urban uprisings, bringing more direct collective action, demonstrations and strikes. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, the focus of black activism in Greensboro and elsewhere was on black self-determination, emphasizing the “defining of and controlling of the Movement by blacks exclusively as part of a heightened consciousness of race and racial pride.”²⁸ This intense period, happening alongside anti-colonial movements in Africa, featured a struggle for ideological supremacy among Black Power, Pan-Africanism and Marxism.²⁹ Ed Whitfield recalls,

During that time most of us would have defined ourselves as Pan-Africanists and Black Nationalists ... out of a concern that our community had been damaged, disrupted by the whole process of slavery. That we were ultimately, you know, African peoples who had been transported to the United States and that we had a responsibility to help in the reconstruction

and development of Africa, as well as helping to build the community here. Tremendous amount of confusion during that time period as to exactly what any of that meant, and what it meant our responsibilities were. All I knew for sure was that I was dedicated to spending my life trying to improve the condition of the community of which I was a part, and to be a part of the struggle that had been part of my consciousness since childhood. And that's what brought me to Greensboro.³⁰

The decade of the 1960s saw “a shift from non-violence to self-defense, from a Southern focus to a Northern one and from interracial solidarity to Black Nationalism and separatism.”³¹

From the momentum of the very active, largely unified activism of the '60s, a major change had occurred by as early as 1970, with ideologies competing against one another. Where Marxists aimed to break down the extreme class divisions that left great economic inequities, they were criticized for being overly theoretical and introspective. Cultural Nationalists, on the other hand, believed in a common cultural base derived from a shared history despite economic divisions, but were criticized for being idealistic in their hope of unifying Africans and African Americans. The progression from Black Power to Pan-Africanism was a broadening in scope from the regional view to the global African experience, connecting and identifying with liberation movements on the African continent, including those driven by socialist and Marxist leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, Patrice Lumumba in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Julius Nyerere in Tanzania, Sekou Toure in Guinea and Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe.

This Marxist influence in black activism grew not only regionally but internationally by the 1970s. In Greensboro, the fusion of black liberation and Marxist ideology took shape in the Malcolm X Liberation University (MXLU) and groups including Students Organized for Black Unity (SOBU, later to become Youth Organized for Black Unity, YOBU) and the Greensboro Association of Poor People (GAPP). Sandi Smith, who came to Greensboro to attend Bennett College in 1969, was active with all of these organizations, as well as with the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC), chapters of which were organized in Greensboro and elsewhere in North Carolina as part of a movement of international solidarity to end apartheid in South Africa and to establish independent Zimbabwe against the efforts of the colonial Rhodesian government to keep Rhodesia as a white settler state that oppressed and exploited the native majority of people of color.³²

In Greensboro, activists working in the 1970s through groups including GAPP, SOBU and YOBU had behind them a history of grassroots action and organizational connections that stretched back to the pivotal moment in 1960 when four freshmen at N.C. A&T State University began a movement that changed the nation. There also was a history of government surveillance and deliberate interference in these efforts, both locally and through federal programs such as COINTELPRO, the FBI's Counter-intelligence Program (See Federal law enforcement chapter).

Sit-Ins: “I made a down payment on my dignity”

To place in context the disparities by the late 1970s as evidenced above, it is necessary to draw attention to the momentous activities that had been taking place in Greensboro for many years. The most widely felt confrontation between black power and Greensboro's culture of civility was the Sit-In Movement that began in Greensboro and spread throughout the Jim Crow South.

The Sit-In Movement began on February 1, 1960, when Ezell Blair Jr. (now Jibreel Khazan), Franklin McCain, Joseph McNeil, and the late David Richmond walked into Woolworth's Department Store, bought toothpaste and school supplies, and sat down at the lunch counter. When they were told they

couldn't be served as the counter was for whites only, the students countered that they had been served elsewhere in the store when the cashier took their money. Why, they asked, could they not do the same at the lunch counter? The reason was only custom – a suffocating cultural code they were determined to challenge outright. “I made a down payment that day on my dignity and on my manhood,” McNeil recalls.³³

The demonstrations started at Woolworth's and Kress department stores, and later added Meyer's Tea Room and Walgreen's Drug Store. As the movement took root, so did resistance to it. One response to the Sit-Ins was hostility, particularly from the business community and the institutional power structure. They were seen to be “upsetting the ‘good relationships,’ setting back race relations, bad for the economy, and bad for city ...”³⁴ Rather than yielding to what had clearly become a widespread phenomenon, many white citizens became increasingly incensed at the overt audacity of demonstrators challenging the city's code of “civility.” Demonstrators were met with very uncivil counter-pickers, including Klansmen, who screamed, spat and threw punches at demonstrators and burned them with cigarettes, sometimes sparking skirmishes in the streets of downtown. There are even accounts of personal attacks, such as a Klan leader showing up at one demonstrator's doorstep.³⁵

Other resistance was more subtle. Many seemed to be unwilling to confront race issues larger than the right to be served at a lunch counter. Greensboro Daily News editor at the time, William Snider commented,

People are inclined to find good reasons for doing what they already believe. And I think that any change in this area was startling because people, many white people, assumed that this was the way things had always been and, therefore, they were right because they'd always been that way. That's true of any sort of change basically. And some people are more amenable to it than others. But obviously the, the side of right was on the side of treating blacks as people rather than property or treating blacks as people rather than as less than people, which, of course, they had been treated for years.

*It's like when I find a situation involving Dudley High School where you find the facilities, or the physical facilities, seem to be much inferior to those in Grimsley High School. The two high schools were built about the same time. But there is a tendency among people to see what they want to see. And I think this is true of all of us. It's very difficult to know when you're subjected to pressures that you know not.*³⁶

Other people didn't resist the change that was slowly coming with the sit-ins, but did not feel they could openly support it. One long time white resident of Greensboro told us with some emotion that “You know there were a lot of good people who lived through segregation. We didn't like it either but there was nothing we could do so we lived with it.”³⁷

Yet even the integration of public facilities proved slow ground to win. As successful as the demonstrations had been in launching a nationwide trend, by July 1961 in Greensboro, desegregation had only happened in four eating establishments. Everything else remained segregated.

Congress of Racial Equality

During the same period, the Freedom Rides and Freedom Highway voter registration efforts were taking place. The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) was a national group that participated in these important events. James Farmer, the national director who had participated in the original freedom rides in the late 1940s, came to Greensboro to provide support. Immediately after the Sit-Ins, CORE began organizing in East Greensboro, creating a local chapter.

With the support of the Rev. Marion Jones, pastor of First Congregational United Church of Christ, and others, the Greensboro chapter of CORE began to sit in at coffee shops, demonstrate at Howard Johnson's restaurants and to picket select areas around the city. By summer and fall of 1962, they had targeted two more restaurants downtown – the S&W and Mayfair Cafeterias. On Thanksgiving Day of 1962, several members were arrested for going into those two restaurants.

The activities were led by a coordinating committee, which met at the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer on East Market Street. It included CORE, which was placed in charge of demonstrations; the NAACP, which coordinated the administrative side; and the Ministerial Alliance (now the Pulpit Forum), which secured facilities for mass meetings. As picketing continued, more and more students participated. In 1963, a demonstration was organized outside the McDonald's on Summit Ave. The numbers quickly increased and by April, some demonstrations exceeded 3,000 people a night. Students also staged demonstrations at local movie theaters – repeatedly attempting to gain entry, only to be met with arrest.

As before, there remained a counter presence at the demonstrations, sometimes resulting in mass arrests. At the first mass arrest in early 1963, “you would have thought that was some kind of major ‘criminal’ activity,” Brandon recalls. “They had cordoned us, to hold (us) down, blocked off all the streets, and brought in buses to move the students out.”³⁸

By spring of 1963, the activities became so frequent and arrests so common that the available jails filled to capacity. The arrested students had to be taken to a former polio hospital. The conditions there were unfit – there were no sanitary facilities or other necessities. Showing their broad support, many from the black community turned out to support the students, helping to gather clean sheets, bed linens and food, as well as to participate in demonstrations, creating a community demonstration that crossed social and economic lines.

But the silent marches were soon to end. Not achieving the desired response, organizers felt the need for a different strategy. One example involved the long-standing issue of housing and slum landlords. By the summer of 1963, people in the community were looking for help to engage the city council to correct problems in the area formerly called “Horton Row” after its absentee landlord.

City officials were not addressing issues of housing and desegregation. In response to the perceived ineffectual Human Relations Committee already in place, the Greensboro Men's Club was formed. It was composed of black professionals – doctors, lawyers, teachers and businessmen, but no ministers. This new group, called the Evans Committee after Dr. George Evans, a local physician, attempted to negotiate in a business-like fashion the desegregation of Greensboro.

Student-led demonstrations, meanwhile, continued to grow in intensity and numbers. In one memorable demonstration, Jesse Jackson, an A&T student at the time, was part of a march that was decidedly not silent – people were singing, clapping and sitting in the street. Participants asked Jackson to pray with them before marching to their destination and disbanding. The following morning news came that the police wanted to arrest Jackson for inciting a “riot.” Immediately a pre-arrest rally was called. Organizers called the television stations before Jackson arrived; word spread and thousands of people showed up outside a local church. They marched downtown to Jefferson Square, at the corner of West Market and Elm streets, and sat down in the street. Mayor Jack Elam arrived with police and about 200 people were arrested. The mayor began at this point to talk about desegregation and prompted the students to end the demonstrations in Greensboro that night.

Then-FBI agent Dargan Frierson remarked on how well the police performed given the tense situation

and how different the police handled demonstrations of this type compared to elsewhere in the country:

The Greensboro Police Department arrested hundreds in one night-I think they arrested five or six hundred at least. And there was never one single allegation of police brutality involved in the Greensboro Police Department. Let me tell you that's amazing because what they had to put up with, the verbal abuse, the whole tense emotional situation that existed at that time. And I was out there every night with them during this whole period and there was not one single allegation of police brutality. And I'd like to see any other city in the country that can claim that that happened.³⁹

Voter registration

At the same time, Greensboro activists were aware of the need to develop a black political voice and were part of the massive voter registration drives of the early 1960s, although the broad national effort was focused in Mississippi and Washington, D.C. Registration projects during school breaks involved groups of students.

In the summer of 1963, for example, a coordinating committee consisting of CORE, the Greensboro Citizens' Association (the NAACP's political arm and precursor of the George C. Simkins Jr. Memorial Political Action Committee), the Ministerial Alliance (now the Pulpit Forum), YWCA, the American Friends Service Committee and 30 students from around the country participated in registering voters locally.

As they did in the Sit-Ins, students played an active role in voter registration efforts, as well as in other community organizing work that was beginning to clean up decaying housing, pave dirt streets, install street signs, establish a park for children, and generally assist the community to organize around issues for urban neighborhood improvement.⁴⁰ The vast majority of these demonstrations and activities were driven by students' commitment to change. At the time, "social change was in the air." If a meeting was called, people turned out by the hundreds, Brandon recalls. That energy continued through the 1960s and students from historically black North Carolina A&T University similarly turned out to support students from the predominantly black Dudley High School in the 1969 Dudley/A&T Revolt (discussed in more detail below). Starting with a mere 25 people marching from A&T, the crowd had grown to 300-400 by the time it arrived at Dudley.

This was due in part to a good system of communication including the African World Newspaper and regular community meetings. Every Saturday morning, for example, students would gather in great numbers at the Cosmos Club, each week addressing a different topic such as ways to engage young people, ways to address a particular issue such as drug abuse, or the black liberation movement in general. Meetings featured live music, speakers and discussions.⁴¹

Nelson Johnson and the Greensboro Association for Poor People

One of these student leaders was Nelson Johnson, an A&T Student Government Association vice president who also became a statewide leader through the Foundation for Community Development (FDC), a state organization to mobilize communities by developing political activism among the poor. Born out of the North Carolina Fund's efforts to fight poverty across the state, the FDC was established

in 1963 and moved toward advocacy of Black Power under the direction of Howard Fuller, who later would change his name to Owusu Sudaukai. In 1969, Fuller was the founding leader of Malcolm X Liberation University (MXLU) in Durham, founded to provide an alternative educational experience for black college-age and younger students, and which moved to Greensboro a year later to capitalize on its stronger activist community.

Johnson also was instrumental in the 1967 founding of the United Neighborhood Improvement Team (UNIT), created to address public housing issues. In 1968, UNIT joined with twelve professional black men to co-sponsor an internship program on community organizing with the Foundation for Community Development. The program started with six interns and a supervisor.

At this time there were different perspectives even within the black community on how to organize for equality and justice. For example, the NAACP promoted integration and legislative reform, while Johnson and others were focused less on race and more on social-economic equity and equality. Ed Whitfield, who moved to Greensboro in 1970 as a faculty member at MXLU, reflected on these differences in strategy for black empowerment:

By the time I was here, many of the struggles in civil rights – you know around issues of public accommodation, voting rights, basic kinds of open access, school integration – many of those things had already been settled ... while access had been granted to a lot of stuff, a lot of people didn't have the means to make use of that access. Like somebody could decide you could live in any neighborhood, it was clear you don't have the money, you're not going to live in any neighborhood, you're going to live where your money affords you a chance to live. You can be able to stay at any hotel or eat at any restaurant, but if you can't afford it ... It was clear that disparities on the economic front were kind of the main thing going on...

(M)uch of the early part of the civil rights movement had been around access, which as much affected middle-class blacks as anybody else, and as such they played a lot of the leadership role in that, in a way that they were not going to play in a struggle around workers' rights and people at the very bottom. And while they could play a supportive role, and many of them do, many of them have the same kind of arrogant values that the predominant society has about poor folk being poor 'cause they are too lazy not to be, and don't understand the kind of structural problems that exist ... It became very clear that while all this access was available, fundamental conditions for far too many African Americans had remained the same and there was no grand improvement of that, and that something different needed to be done.⁴²

By the end of summer 1968, with initial grant of \$27,000 from the Ford Foundation, Johnson created GAPP, which was one of the first independent anti-poverty organizations in the country.⁴³ The early activities of GAPP reflected the background from which it arose. “The Greensboro Association of Poor People (GAPP) grew out of the collective experiences of poor people and their mutual desire for community improvement,” the organization said in its 1974 Community Service Center Program Fact Sheet.⁴⁴ GAPP began the work of political education and economic empowerment, and created a relatively efficient and effective communications network.

It is the opinion of GAPP that most poor people are poor because of laws, policies, structure and traditions which operate in the interest of property owners and the wealthy. The institutional structures and processes create dependency (both physical and psychological) and a sense of apathy and powerlessness and is reinforced by the operation of these institutions among poor black people.⁴⁵

FROM BLACK POWER TO MULTICULTURAL ORGANIZING IN GREENSBORO

From its inception, GAPP sought resolution of problems involving workers and working conditions, housing, housing improvement, tenants' rights, public schools, relevancy of education and development of "programs, institutions and activities emphasizing self-reliant group action and resourcefulness." With the aim of breaking down the dependency complex, it attempted to fight apathy by developing a sense of pride in self and race. "The ultimate goal of the program ... is the attainment of liberation and self-determination of Black people."⁴⁶

Concerned with mobilizing the black community of Greensboro, GAPP worked to give power back to the citizens to take control of their situation. According to its fact sheet, GAPP initiatives were to focus on:

- Educational programs – tutorial program; children's story hour; community seminars; "basic but critical discussion and work sessions centered around the major factors influencing our condition as Black people, with emphasis on finding solutions and implementing them;"⁴⁷
- African awareness sessions focusing on African history and culture;
- Communication programs including a newsletter and the radio show "Black Forum;"
- Basic services including clothing distribution, job referral, low-income housing, food stamps, fundraising and action against police brutality;
- Other activities including a reading room library, programs and activities for "the aged," recreational activities for youth, a black prisoners program and African bazaars.

GAPP workers acted as service providers, problem solvers and information conduits. Among the campaigns in which they were active or took a leading role:

- formation of Black Citizens Concerned with Police Brutality (BCCPB);
- an unsuccessful campaign against integrating all-black Dudley High School (in order to maintain its integrity as a community school);
- attempts to establish a statewide black political party to work on issues such as housing, welfare, education, economic development, employment and health care.

GAPP had specific activities in Morningside Homes including voter registration projects, a youth group called Youth United for Blackness (YUB), parades, and distribution of hundreds of chickens donated by the Progressive Club, a group of business and professional people. GAPP had three offices, including one in 1974 across from the Community Center on Everitt Street, where the Nov. 3, 1979, shootings happened. Also, two GAPP board members were from Morningside.

The first black student/community strikes and infiltration

Also key to the movement for empowerment of poor black people was the involvement and leadership of GAPP in labor and rent strikes in Greensboro. The labor strikes were not efforts to form labor unions, but community efforts to advocate for economic empowerment for some of the most disempowered workers in the community. Through community-supported strikes, otherwise vulnerable workers were able to force people to the table to improve wages and working conditions.⁴⁸

In March 1969, Nelson Johnson led the A&T Cafeteria Workers Strike as an intentional means of bringing community and student concerns together. It proved to be a watershed moment in Greensboro's black community organizing.

The cafeteria workers were supported by A&T students, who refused to eat in the dining hall until the grievances were resolved. Johnson recalls,

This imposed an enormous burden on us. I don't know how many students exactly ate in the dining hall, it probably was between 3,000-4,000 at the time. So there were 3,000 or 4,000 people to feed, we spent most of our time organizing food. We turned the student union into a place where people were fed. The churches were quite generous. We went out to grocery stores and we had committees to go out to grocery stores to gather food. We had a lot of huge rallies. In the context of this, there was a disruption related to the store across the street from the school, which was one of the few stores that we asked to give and they did not give. And this was the store whose whole business was based on the students at A&T. There were people who got upset with it (that store) and took food, frankly. And that involved the police department coming in.

The short version of it was that the strike was successful. The cafeteria workers achieved an increase in their wages, better treatment, and conditions under which they worked (were improved) and I think it was very, very successful. That strike spawned a similar effort at UNCG and we actually became a major support group at the UNC-Chapel Hill. But the main one that I was a part of, and led, was the A&T cafeteria workers strike.⁴⁹

However, the strike was also a watershed in the violent confrontations with the police and concerns about “Negro militants.” Historian Chafe cites FBI and police records to paint a more chaotic picture of the atmosphere around the cafeteria strike. According to police, students marched in the streets, stoned cars and exchanged gunfire with police.⁵⁰

The incident appears to have sparked panic among local law enforcement. Chafe cites police and FBI reports that indicate the GPD received intelligence from the FBI warning that “insurgents” were plotting to ambush police and blow up buildings. Chafe speculates that these reports may reflect primarily the work of an agent provocateur planted by the FBI to incite illegal activities that would warrant a crackdown, but Greensboro police at the time seemed to accept without question the veracity of the information.⁵¹

Chafe’s conclusion that there was probably an FBI agent provocateur is based upon 1) his interviews with witnesses who said there was a newly arrived person who professed to be a Black Panther and advocated violence; 2) written evidence that corroborates oral testimony including FBI documents that reveal Harold Avant, alias Nunding, (whom Chafe calls “Mr X”) portrayed himself as section chief of Black Panther Party sent to organize new chapters in Greensboro. According to FBI reports, Nunding arrived in Greensboro from New York with his associate Eric Brown. The two claimed to be Black Panthers sent to organize a Greensboro chapter, although FBI memos show that the Oakland Black Panther Party (BPP) disavowed the two and no local BPP members could identify them. FBI informants reported that Nunding allegedly introduced plans at meetings of college and high school students to expel white merchants from East Market Street, a black section of Greensboro, ambush police cars and bomb a white curb market. Other FBI documents also raise questions about Nunding’s authenticity as a Black Panther because no other local BPP informants had heard of him and he was not in any of the Bureau’s extremist databases.⁵²

During the weeks following the cafeteria workers’ strike, a mood of near-paranoia swept through the city’s white leadership, as Greensboro, like so many other locales in the nation, mobilized to do battle once and for all with Black Power efforts to topple established authority. Chafe notes that in early 1969 students were becoming more unified with a sense of their collective power to push for change.

During the Feb. 5 protests, (when students protested dress codes, questioned the competence of teachers who failed too many students, and called for the abolition

of pop quizzes) students had responded negatively toward an alleged Black Panther spokesman who tried to inflame the situation. By mid-March, however, the actions of city authorities had moved the students toward a more radical posture, minimizing the divisions that continued to exist within the student body.

Local police meanwhile were receiving intelligence reports from the FBI that suggested a conspiracy led by Black Panthers to foment violence. FBI documents and confidential interviews suggest that the primary source of these violent plots may have been an FBI informer and not a Black Panther at all. In addition, most supporters of GAPP rejected the advice of the alleged Black Panther.

Nevertheless, police tended to generalize from the information they received and to believe that all the black insurgents were part of a Panther conspiracy.⁵³

Dargan Frierson, who was the Greensboro FBI agent charged with undertaking and supervising all of the Bureau's "racial investigations" in Greensboro from the mid 1960s until his retirement in 1971, confirms that he had multiple informants in the BPP.

We could have never, you never get along with just one (informant), you've got to have them telling on each other so you know whether they're telling the truth. I had, I don't know, dozens of them. At one time I had 22 Klan informants working for me alone but I don't know how many black informants I had, maybe ten, twelve, fifteen or so. But, you know, the FBI's interest in that was because, again, these people were burning down the country. You remember Detroit, Watts in Los Angeles, and all.

And you see it all started right here in Greensboro, everything always started right here in Greensboro. So the Bureau was vitally interested in what was happening. I don't know how many burnings we had in Greensboro, but there were enumerable stores burned, and looting and stuff, and so that's what the Bureau's interest in was, again, the security of the country. These people, they were anarchists, the Black Panthers and all, their whole program was, off with the Pigs, kill the police, destroy all semblance of authority, let anarchy take over and then we'll run it. That was the whole philosophy of the whole Black Panther movement. They had films — I know we could get copies of those films and that kind of stuff. They had Black Panther coloring books where the little children would color pictures of killing policemen and stuff. So that's pretty heavy stuff, so we were vitally interested in that.⁵⁴

Frierson, although he said he would have been the one to supervise such an informant, flatly denied both that Harold Avant was his informant or that any of his informants acted to provoke any violence.

It's an absolute bald-faced lie... He was never an informant. I never made any attempt to make him an informant. I had excellent informants that I had developed in cooperation with the Greensboro Police ... you know, usually before trouble is going to happen, thank goodness, but Nunding, or Harold Avant, was never an informant.⁵⁵

What Harold Avant's agenda was and who, if anyone, he may have taken instruction from may never be known for certain, but both Frierson⁵⁶ and the black activists who dealt with Avant agree that he was the one who put forward the most physically provocative ideas of any in the group and plainly intended to encourage violence.⁵⁷

The Dudley/A&T Revolt

While the Sit-ins represented one socially significant uprising of black resistance, another more painful such watershed moment in Greensboro history was the so-called Dudley Revolt in May 1969, which occurred when school administrators refused to allow then-Dudley High School student Claude Barnes to take office as student government president.⁵⁸ Barnes, a member of YUB, had run on a platform drawing attention to how Dudley was less privileged in terms of its facilities and resources than the other public high schools, calling for dress codes that would permit more Afrocentric styles, and advocating a curriculum that included African American studies and allowed students more input into choosing reading material. Administrators first took Barnes' name off the ballot, then – after he won a landslide write-in victory – denied the legitimacy of the vote and declared the runner-up to be victorious. Barnes recalled,

Looking back I can understand why people were threatened (by my platform). I looked at how Dudley was treated in comparison to Grimsley, (Ben L.) Smith, and Page. These were white schools. They had privileges that we didn't have ... tennis courts, stadiums, to leave campus for lunch, didn't have any 'enlightened dress code' like we had. You'd get kicked out of school for wearing Afros and dashikis, which was the popular way to express yourself at the time. I challenged all those things. At that time, we were raising issues about the curriculum and the content of the education. At that time, you know, students weren't supposed to raise questions about curriculum. We wanted to have some input in to the kinds of reading materials, especially in English class and History class. I presented problems.

*And the worst thing of all, was hanging around known 'subversives,' like Lewis Brandon, Nelson Johnson, and Joyce Johnson, people who been established as 'making waves.'*⁵⁹

Barnes and a handful of other students walked out of class and protested the refusal to allow Barnes to be seated as student body president. On May 21, 1969, during class changes, students saw police beating Barnes and other students as they were being arrested on the sidewalk in front of the school. Barnes recalls.

Before the assembly, we had passed out these leaflets, talked to all these people, 'yeah, we're gonna boycott, we're gonna walk out.' Nine people walked out. But, they (school officials) were going around and slandering us, 'if you get involved in this, people were not going to graduate.' (It) scared people to death. But what changed that situation, was we were out there protesting, all nine of us, protesting in front of the Dudley administration building 50 feet away, because the courts legally advised us that if we publicly protested on the sidewalk, we had perfect right, a legal right. We were out there protesting, within our legal right. They couldn't tolerate that! Owen Lewis who was the Public Relations Director of the Greensboro School Board, came on the scene and basically told the police to arrest us. I'll never forget it, to 'arrest those niggers,' basically.

(I)t just so happens that classes were changing at that time. They were arresting us and of course we were resisting. We were getting clubbed. High school students were getting clubbed by the police. At that time we didn't have that much support, we had nine people who were committed. But when our fellow classmates saw how people were getting treated, that broke the taboo. I mean people started joining the protest then. The next day when we called a protest, it shut the school down. It wasn't a grand conspiracy. Some of these things just happened spontaneously because of the reaction that people had to the excessive use of force.⁶⁰

Upon their release from jail, the protesting students walked to the A&T campus, where a national conference of SOBU was in progress. The Dudley students appealed to those in attendance for help, and the meeting participants immediately began a march to Dudley, picking up more marchers as they went. Says Barnes:

When we were protesting at Dudley, we marched over to A&T, and we invaded the founding conference of SOBU (Student Organization for Black Unity), with all these black militants with long hair, dashikis ... Here we were, all these little high school kids, bloodied, reeking of tear gas. They basically shut the meeting down and said 'look, we're gonna march back over to Dudley and find out what's going on with our young people.' As we were marching from A&T's campus back to Dudley, we started out with about 25 people, and ended up with about 300 or 400 people. Just by marching through the campus of A&T and people said, 'what's goin on?' They wanted to be a part of it.⁶¹

Barnes notes that the series of events sparked a real sense of connections among high school students, college students and Greensboro's black community members, all of whom were angry about what was happening. When the crowd reached Dudley, Nelson Johnson recalls that he went to the gymnasium, stood on a table and pronounced Barnes student body president. Johnson recalled,

As we came on campus the students at Dudley began to celebrate. They were hanging out of the windows cheering. We knew many of them. I tried to approach Mr. Brown, the principal, but he walked away. We went into the women's gym, the police were there. And I got on a table and said "On the authority of the black community in all its configuration, we install Claude Barnes Jr. as the elected student body president." And then we left. That was an explosive theme all over the city.⁶²

For his pronouncement, Johnson was arrested and charged with disorderly conduct and disrupting a public school.⁶³

Shortly after, white vigilantes also began prowling the city and the students retreated to the A&T campus. The police responded to the situation by calling in National Guard tanks to attempt to storm the A&T campus and knock down the doors of A&T dormitories. Black Vietnam vets reportedly refused to yield.⁶⁴ There are some reports of sniper fire at police officers, although it is not known where these shots originated.⁶⁵ The violence culminated with the still-unsolved fatal shooting of student Willie Grimes on the A&T campus.⁶⁶ Barnes explains,

Here we were high school students and we were confronted with police in full riot gear, pepper gas ... We were brutalized basically, we were beaten, locked up. Then it moved to A&T's campus. What really escalated the civil revolt is when Grimes was shot (May '69), the community felt that we had to protect ourselves. (We) armed ourselves, because we didn't want to be shot down like dogs. The movement, at least in Greensboro, went to a different phase, in a sense that nonviolent, direct action turned the other cheek and lost credibility. People were about not initiating any kind of offensive action, but certainly if someone attacks you, you want to repel that attack. At that time a lot of Vietnam vets were around who were politically conscious and who also knew about firearms and that kind of thing. At A&T, for example, they had organized armed patrols to protect the campus, to protect the students.⁶⁷

Frierson recalled his own memories of the stand-off at A&T.

The kids were busting out windows, they were looting, they were throwing Molotov cocktails through the windows of the businesses downtown, they were shooting. It sounded like a war going on down there, shooting off of the campus at the police. Three police, (Chafe) says three, were hit one night. I thought it was four, but I know of a total of five police officers were shot.⁶⁸

The revolt still reverberates for many in white Greensboro as evidence of the potential dangers of black activism, and Nelson Johnson's involvement in the incident is seen by many in the white establishment as evidence of the danger he and "agitators" like him pose to the public. Jim Melvin, who was mayor of Greensboro in 1979, has been a main proponent of the view that Greensboro had no race-relations problems except those Johnson manufactured. He frequently points to the revolt as proof, as in a 1987 interview:

Nelson Johnson was in and around and expanding that thing like crazy. And if you look, that was in '69, alright then comes Nelson Johnson back in 1979, you know. ... you've got to say he was connected to both and that there was violence in both. He is the only person that you can find that is connected with both.⁶⁹

Others also have attributed the outburst of violence to provocation, but from a different source. Chafe argues that there was provocation by an FBI agent, who in turn delivered reports to police headquarters, informing his commanders of the mayhem being planned by the students, which in turn provoked an over-reaction by police.⁷⁰ This is a claim that Frierson dismisses as "asinine."

(Chafe's claim) that the FBI provocateur, who obviously was Harold Avant, or Nunding, was fabricating all of these things, and creating an atmosphere of potential violence, which the FBI, and that would have been me, because I was the only person that did any of this. I worked it all myself. That I then would have given this information to the police, and as a result of that, the police overreacted and used tear gas on the people out there at Dudley High School, and so forth. That, of course, is an absolute falsehood, totally untrue.⁷¹

While some suggested manipulation either by FBI agents on one end of the spectrum or Nelson Johnson at the other, different perspectives, including that of Barnes himself, hold that the revolt was no conspiracy but rather was symptomatic of genuine and profound bitterness and anger widespread in the black community.⁷² Likewise, the North Carolina State Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, in its assessment of the violence, observed:

The Committee believes that the issues involved were simple and quite clear. The main issue was the unequal treatment of citizens of Greensboro because of their race: discrimination in housing, employment, education, and the delivery of services, coupled with institutional racism and the unresponsiveness of the official system.⁷³

More community strikes : "Form a group that just refuses to move"

GAPP also became involved in subsequent successful labor strikes, including the 1969-70 strike by blind workers against Skillcraft Industries of the Blind, the mid-1970 strikes by school cafeteria workers around the city, launched by a core group of women who had gotten together to demand better wages, and a strike soon afterward by sanitation workers.⁷⁴

FROM BLACK POWER TO MULTICULTURAL ORGANIZING IN GREENSBORO

The cafeteria workers grievances were both pay and treatment. Salaries were only \$1.20 - \$1.60 per hour without paid holidays or accident and workmen's compensation insurance. A list of 26 grievances was presented to the Greensboro School Board. However, Barnes reports that despite promises to the contrary, the Board refused to act on the concerns of the workers.⁷⁵

The blind workers were contesting very low wages, horrible working conditions, and safety issues. They worked in a shelter workshop where there was inadequate ventilation and the dye used created problems for the workers, turning their hands green and making them prone to injury from the machines. A boycott of the downtown area was coordinated during the crucial Christmas holiday, people raised money and took up collections in local churches for the "union" fund.⁷⁶

Other economic issues GAPP took up dealt with the "redevelopment" efforts around East Market Street and Bennett College that had displaced many residents and black businesses. One FBI memo recounts a meeting called by black activists, including GAPP, with the Greensboro Redevelopment Commission to confront them with their grievances, but the Chair and all but one Commission member (who was black) failed to attend. The FBI report on that meeting (which the Bureau claimed was "sponsored by the Black Panther Party") recounted that "Mr. Brooks, a negro man in a wheel chair," told the meeting that 53 black-owned businesses had been displaced by the redevelopment project. According to the FBI report, Mr. Brooks further recounted that this group of merchants had tried to form a Black Businessmen's Association in order to win borrowing power to re-establish in the East Market Street area but had been turned down by the Redevelopment Commission. The report further recounted that Howard Fuller, "the Negro militant from Durham" delivered remarks that "were by far the most inflammatory" in which he commented that "You see, you asked The Man to come to the meeting and he didn't, so let's go to him. When The Man asks you to move, then just don't move. Form a group that just refuses to move."⁷⁷

GAPP also led actions in the area of housing – a primary issue of concern in the poor and working class black community – including direct interventions to halt evictions. In one such intervention, GAPP, with the legal assistance of civil rights attorney James Ferguson, got the Greensboro Housing Authority to withdraw its demand that a Ray Warren Homes resident choose between eviction or having tubal ligation sterilization.⁷⁸

The AAA Rent Strike was an action led during this period by GAPP, whose housing efforts included advocating on behalf of people being evicted and around basic housing standards for the poor. In November of 1969, residents testified at a city council hearing⁷⁹ in which demands were made to improve housing conditions and create a rent-control system and strict code enforcement.

GAPP helped build a coalition of students, middle-class blacks and others to support the long-running AAA Rent Strike, which began in 1970. Some 250 tenants went on strike to pressure AAA Realty to improve housing conditions. GAPP united with the Greensboro Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Greensboro Citizens Association, the Black Ministers Forum, the student Government Association of North Carolina A&T State University, the student Government Association of Bennett College, the Student Organization for Black Unity (SOBU) and various church groups to support the tenants.²⁹ Rent was paid to GAPP, but was withheld from the AAA Realty. "At one point I had thousands of dollars in rent in a shoebox in the GAPP office," recalled Johnson.⁸⁰ Activists prevented landlords and police from evicting people by physically standing in front of them.⁸¹ But AAA manager and part owner Kay Agapion reportedly refused to negotiate with tenants, so tenants retaliated by smashing windows and walls, tearing screens, ripping out bathroom fixtures and opening faucets to flood apartments. Some \$90,000 in property damage reportedly resulted.⁸²

The damage forced negotiations and the strike eventually won tenants several concessions.⁸³ In addition,

the strike called attention to welfare recipients' inability to afford safe and healthy housing and other basic living costs, a situation that continues to the present.

GAPP's activity attracted the attention of the FBI. Dargan Frierson observed that the Bureau was "very interested" in GAPP.

Sure, because they were meeting right with Eric Brown and Nunding and all of them were working right together. You know they had, oh they had Black Liberation Front, they had Foundation for Community Development, they had GAPP, they had Students' Organization for Black Unity, and all the same people were running it all. Sure, we were interested in them. We were interested in any of them who might cause violence, because we had enough of it here. We had four or five riots in three years, I think it was.

... The same people were running GAPP that were running SOBU [Student Organization for Black Unity] and BLF [Black Liberation Front] and everything else, the same people, Nelson Johnson and his crowd. That's why we were interested in them. Because they were the ones that were causing, you know, causing the trouble.⁸⁴

Police brutality and police-community relations

While the relatively non-violent reaction of the police in response to the integration turmoil of the 1960s throughout the South is a point of pride among many in white Greensboro, many in the black southeast quadrant of the city complained of brutality and ill treatment by the police. Concurrent with their efforts on wages and housing, GAPP was also influential raising awareness of incidents of police brutality against the black community.

Frustrated with what many in the black community saw as the city government and justice system's mistreatment of the black community, people sought other outlets for voicing their concerns about injustice. In 1972, GAPP participated in a "People's Court" through the formation of Black Citizens Concerned with Police Brutality (BCCPB).⁸⁵ This "court," held before an audience of 300-400 people, heard mock trials against the GPD, the City Council, and the City Solicitor for brutality and unfair treatment against the black community. In addition, the "court" detailed other institutional and social failings of the justice system, including blacks' not being informed of their Miranda rights when being questioned, excessively high bail amounts, and the systematic exclusion of blacks from juries.

Among the court recommendations were the following:

1. The creation of an independent Citizen Review Board that accurately reflects the ethnic diversity of Greensboro. The Review Board must have the power to investigate all charges, determine guilt or innocence, and take action deemed proper, against individual policemen of the police department;
2. For local community groups to organize court and police monitors;
3. That legal actions be launched to challenge the exclusion of black people from positions in the criminal justice system;
4. That regular education seminars be conducted throughout the black community to make black people aware of their legal rights;
5. To press for immediate dismissal or recall of prosecutors and judges who routinely permit the exclusion of black people from jury duty through prosecutors' racist use of 'preemptory'

challenges;

6. That the justice system begin using telephone directories, welfare rolls, census records and other sources to create jury pools, instead of just tax rolls and voter registrations lists.⁸⁶

Other GAPP activity

In addition to the strikes and People's Court, GAPP also issued a memorandum in response to a 1974 Duke Power rate increase and organized a "Stop the Test" campaign against the high school competency test. GAPP activist Willena Cannon recalls,

For high school kids to graduate they had to pass a competency test. If you didn't pass the test you got a certificate of attendance, not a diploma or even a GED. African Americans and poor white students were most affected, it was a class thing. But they just flunked the kids--they didn't try to improve the conditions. Classes were too big, there weren't any teacher helpers like they have now. They said it's the child and not the system.⁸⁷

Joyce Johnson, who married Nelson Johnson in 1969 and also was active in GAPP, along with Sandi Smith, recalled the organization's holistic approach:

We did some job training, (were) involved in education work and campaigns to keep kids in school ... working wherever you could, right beside people. (We would) pick people up, take them to the grocery store. They were going to get their food stamps, you'd be there. If the kids were sick, you'd be there. But they would be there for you too. It was really a two-way thing. So the babysitters for my children while I worked were the ladies in the neighborhood. So they (my children) had a whole bunch of uncles and aunts who looked after them, and nurtured them, and provided immediate family ... This was my home and still is. Just trying to make it a better place to live for yourself and for other people ... I also did some administrative stuff like writing letters, leaflets, teaching classes about income taxes.⁸⁸

Multiracial organizing, communism and labor

By the 1970s, many members of black activist groups in North Carolina were shifting again in their focus and ideology, although maintaining the overall goal of improving the social conditions of the poor. After having studied how other social revolutions had taken place, they decided that they needed to address institutional problems faced by local workers, and to do that they needed to go into workplaces themselves and experience the same problems. Many, including Sandi Smith, who was the daughter of a textile worker in Piedmont, S.C., went to work in textile mills. Umgaza Sobabu Laughinghouse, a longtime labor activist himself, remembers Smith and others before and after they joined the Communist Workers Party and turned their gaze more directly onto workers' rights.

(T)here has always been this effort to organize workers in the Greensboro and the North Carolina Triad community, and I knew many of the activists: Sandi Smith, and Marty Nathan, and Cesar and many of the other activists that they were tied to because I, too, was tied to organizing workers in the eastern part of North Carolina. Oftentimes, we'd get a chance to share the lessons we were learning as organizers. It was just a great period of time where there was hope for challenging right-to-work laws and organizing and unionizing many workers in North Carolina, as well as empowering many of these working-class communities through what we considered

community empowerment type organizing around housing, health benefits and a host of other issues. ...

I knew many of those individuals in the Communist Workers Party because they were an integral part of the communities that we lived in, or that I lived in. They were very active as community activists, whether it was struggling for decent housing, struggling against slumlords and for better housing; whether it was fighting for improved or better recreational facilities for our youth. So they weren't isolated or disconnected from many of the struggles of many working people in our community. So that's the context in which I knew many of the members of the Communist Workers Party. I know some people get all, you know, goose bumps when they hear the words "Communist" or "Socialist," but I know good and well that Dr. King was called a Communist by many folks, and those words never scared me, regarding Paul Robeson or Dr. King or anyone calling people communist or red. So, I worked with many of the members of the Community Workers Party in these various community efforts and labor organizing efforts. ...

They were leaders in our community. Sandi Smith I met as a young 18-year-old. I was a member of the Youth Organization for Black Unity chapter at Columbia University. We used to have major meetings at the Franklinton Center in eastern North Carolina, where all the chapters of this youth group would meet and there we met one of the leaders, Sandi Smith, Nelson Johnson and a host of other leaders. So, many of the members in the Communist Workers Party grew out of the youth movement and civil rights movement of the '60s and '70s, and we had connections with them and relationships with these great fighters prior to them joining the Communist Workers Party.⁸⁹

Laughinghouse also was connected with Greensboro and Durham activists through the multiracial but predominately black ALSC. The Greensboro ALSC chapter, which in 1978 won a major victory by helping to bring about justice in the police beating of a black youth named Gernie Cummings, was a leading force in forming a statewide coalition to support the "Wilmington 10."

A large contingent of A&T students was part of a large statewide rally held in Raleigh to free the 10 political prisoners, the most famous of whom was Ben Chavis (who would later become national head of the NAACP). In January 1971, violent demonstrations had erupted in Wilmington, N.C. after city authorities denied black students' request to hold a memorial service for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. During the violence that erupted, Chavis and his associates (nine black and one white) took shelter in a Wilmington church that was attacked by white supremacists, including members of the Klan and Leroy Gibson's Rights of White People. Afterwards, Chavis and his associates were arrested and charged with firebombing a grocery store and shooting at police officers. They were sentenced to a collective total of 282 years. The case was overturned in federal court in 1980, after Amnesty International took up the case of the Wilmington 10 as political prisoners. The court found that the State had illegally withheld material exculpatory evidence and that the trial court had denied the defendants their constitutional rights to confront witnesses against them by improperly restricting the cross-examination of the State's main witnesses.⁹⁰ The case aroused widespread controversy among civil and human rights activists throughout the state, nation and even internationally.

Meanwhile in Greensboro, as organizers including Johnson and Smith shifted their emphasis from race to class and began trying to build multiracial coalitions in the mills, they faced a particular challenge in the post-Jim Crow workplace. Fighting the Klan represented a central part of that challenge, Laughinghouse recalled.

(T)he Klan has always been the antithesis of what union organizers and civil rights organizers have always done ... struggling for democratic rights. The Klan has always denied people democratic rights and historically the Klan at this particular juncture had done the same thing in Greensboro in the early 70s; they were very divisive. And, again, never representing the best interests of our community, which is bringing all people together to try to improve the quality of life for everybody, in terms of struggling for improving people's rights and trying to give people a better standard of living.⁹¹

The fight against the Klan coincided with many of these leaders embracing far-left ideologies, which Barnes believes diminished their effectiveness. He recalls sectarian in-fighting as rampant the late 1970s as groups engaged in individual party-building and vied to create a vanguard party:

Once we started moving down the road to Marxism, we became kind of inward looking and not outward looking. In a sense that we were less tolerant of people who had different ideas. In the past, it was like a big tent, and I hate to use these big tent terms, but it was more broad coalition and more attention to that. But when we started moving toward a Marxist perspective, it became more of an elitist kind of thing for the most part.

On the one hand, I think it was a good move to talk about bridging the gap and building these coalitions between workers, but I think people became too ideological and too wrapped up into other peoples' social revolutions and really did not appreciate their own grassroots history and struggle, their own unique struggle.

But the whole notion of Marxist, Leninism, Mao Tse-tung thought and all that, I thought, got us into a more sectarian politics than what we needed to be and didn't appreciate our grassroots. And it alienated a lot of people, quite frankly. The whole communist verbiage alienated people. And I don't think people paid sufficient attention to the role of culture and language and the need to bring people along in terms of consciousness. It almost became an elite type of situation.

I think some mistakes were made in that regard. We alienated a lot of grassroots in that transition from Black Power to Marxism ... It was almost as if at one point, the attitude was that if you're not working with the point of production, then whatever you were doing wasn't relevant. And I think that cost the organization ... It's probably what ran me away. I made the decision to drop out of the organizations at the time (around '76/'77). I was just frustrated with what I call this "sectarian" attitude. I decided to pull back and take a look at all the things we had been doing and see if I could make some more sense out of it.

From the one side, when you challenge the powers that be, you can expect excessive use of force ... that's a problem. I'm not sure what happened between '69 and '79, in that sense – given the experience of '69, how do we get to the point where things like you relying on officials to protect you? At least from the outside looking in, that's what it looks like. It looks like we were upset by the Greensboro police not doing their job. The Greensboro police have never done their job – they've always been part of the problem. So, what happened? My own preliminary answer to that is sometimes you get blinded by ideology. (You) believe your own press. You really believe that that kind of response wouldn't happen. But why wouldn't it happen? That's the issue of the Klan. Why wouldn't the police be there to protect against the Klan? They've never protected us ...⁹²

Barnes, who went on to earn a Ph.D. in political science before returning to A&T, his alma mater, to join the faculty, explained how the politics made labor organizing especially challenging:

I think one of the hardest things was to build racial coalitions in the mill environment, because the owners and the supervisors used the race card to keep people apart. I remember they'd always put these rumors out that these people are communists, you know, "they don't work no good, they're really little rich kids"... they'd put all these kind of rumors. It was rough working in that environment. Working conditions were rough and organizing conditions were rough. So to make any kind of progress at all is remarkable. It was painstaking work. It would take a long time to get these mills organized to the point where you would have any kind of human dignity as one of their main concerns. I think I made that assessment that this is going to take a lifetime. Do you really want to be committed to this? But we had some people that were committed to that. And that is remarkable, too.⁹³

For many of its citizens, Greensboro has been a model of progressive moderation in times of tumultuous social change, while at the same time many in its black community have felt that this enforced moderation has often been another form of refusing change. The commitment of some organizers working for self-determination, dignity and equality for black people in Greensboro was matched by the commitment of the city's white leadership to maintaining the "culture of civility," which condoned no activism beyond patient requests for change. The mainstream of Greensboro's white community was in denial about the poor black community's experience of inhumane living conditions, racial discrimination in health care, wages, working conditions and education. The unwelcome bearers of this message were often seen as a violent threat, as James Ferguson noted:

By 1979, much of the law had already been declared that said this era of Jim Crow segregation was behind us. The law said that – from 1954 until 1979. But the reality is that Jim Crow, racism, discrimination and racial segregation, racial separation was not only not behind us, but it really wasn't even catching up very much. I think, in Greensboro, people were feeling the need to express that and to express it in a way that it would be seen as a real live issue. It would be seen in a way that the community would have to deal with the fact that the whole issue of race was far from being behind us, but was facing us, face to face, every day.

And I think the fact they wanted to have the march against the Klan was a symbolic way of bringing that to the fore of the community and saying these are issues you must face up to. And that organizations like the Klan had to be faced down. A lot of people in Greensboro as well as other places in the South in 1979 wanted to feel that the era of the Klan was over. But it really wasn't. The Klan symbolized a lot of racial feelings that other people still harbored in their hearts, but didn't come out with it.

I saw the march as being an effort to bring about this coming out on race, let's get it out in front, let's have the community face these issues of race and then address it. I think the "establishment community," I'll call it, in Greensboro, was uncomfortable with that. They were really willing to try to deal with race to the extent they could that didn't make anybody uncomfortable, but it didn't really shake anything up. It sort of inched along, then maybe one day we'll reach that promised land of equality, absence of race, absence of racism and all of that. The powers that be never really wanted to confront that face to face, they wanted it to be nice, they wanted it to be easy, they wanted it to be comfortable, and the truth is, it just couldn't continue to be that.

I think that's a lot of what the rally was about ... and a lot of what the resistance to that rally was all about ... because the establishment at that time just wanted race to go away quietly and easily and comfortably ... Those who felt the need to give expression to where we were with race at that time simply weren't willing to go away quietly.⁹⁴

FINDINGS

The affiliation of Nov. 3 demonstrators including Nelson and Joyce Johnson, Sandi Smith and Willena Cannon with the CWP has almost entirely obscured the reality of their effort to work for economic and social justice in Greensboro's disempowered communities, which both pre- and post-date the events of that day.

The nature of the work undertaken by many of the Greensboro demonstrators during this period, political ideology notwithstanding, is best characterized as advocacy for human rights, self-determination and equal opportunities in education, housing and employment.

Further, the economic and social injustices that they worked against amounted to government failures to provide humane standards of living adequate to basic human needs.

GAPP and other black activists believed there was no choice but to actively challenge Greensboro's repressive culture of civility in order to win equality for the poor and black people. These activists were, therefore, characterized by the community and the power structure as dangerous outside agitators.

Tension between activism that resisted the status quo of class and racial inequalities and the powerful institutions trying to curtail that activism meant that on some level a clash was inevitable.

■ Notes

¹ William Chafe, written statement to the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 20 March 2006.

² James Ferguson, interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 3 June 2005.

³ Ed Whitfield, statement at the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission* Public Hearing 16 July 2005.

⁴ U.S. Bureau of the Census, "General Social and Economic Characteristics", *North Carolina, 1970 Census of Population*, No. PC(1)-C35, 282, 303.

⁵ Claude Barnes, "A Consideration of the Relationship Between Ideology and Activism in the Black Nationalist Movement: A Case Study of the Rise and Fall of the Greensboro Association of Poor People," (Masters thesis, Atlanta University, 1981), 54 (on file at GTRC) (hereafter "Barnes"). Citing Guilford County Planning Department, "Update, a Planning News Digest," Vo. 3, Sept. 1972).

⁶ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁷ It is important not to make the leap from the reality of racial disparities in education to the widely held assumption that predominantly African American schools were inherently academically inferior to predominantly white schools or, even further, to the assumption that schools were healthier after desegregation. Segregated schools were a symptom of a larger problem and, as a country, we did not do a sufficient job of investigating the root problems of why some schools were segregated and why schools with predominately black student bodies tended to be underfunded before attempting to legally abolish the symptom. At a GTRC public hearing, Rev. Mazie Ferguson described this phenomenon:

"(A)ll of a sudden, children were lumped together in schools and we entered and engaged in the greatest experiment of social adjustment in our country that we've ever had. Now right or wrong we need to face up to the fact that we sent children to school and African American parents told their children you go to that school, you obey that teacher. If you don't obey that teacher then I am going to punish you at home. But they didn't hear the children when they came home and said, "The teacher doesn't like me. The teacher is practicing racism against me." They didn't hear the child when the child said, "I am being hurt and wounded and downgraded

and talked about”...We did not prepare these children for this experiment, and we sent little babies out to do a job that grown people could not do... And we sent them out there with the idea that when they got to the school all of a sudden a society that was doing wrong everywhere else was going to start doing right. That was not true. And the end result was a group of people that were wounded. And let’s not just talk about African American children, because the problem you see is a problem of people living together in a community. White children also suffered and I have had this discussion with white people, and I have seen tears come to their eyes...And it created resentment, serious resentment.”

⁸ “Black White Perceptions: Race Relations in Greensboro,” A Report Prepared by the North Carolina Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (November 1980).

⁹ “Trouble in Greensboro: A Report of the Open Meeting Concerning the Disturbances at Dudley high School and NCA&T State University,” The North Carolina State Advisory Commission on Civil Rights (March 1970), Appendix B (hereafter “Trouble in Greensboro”).

¹⁰ “Black White Perceptions,” *supra* note 100, 3.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² NAACP Urban Crisis Committee, “Position Paper,” Greensboro Branch, 4 November 1980, 2.

¹³ Barnes, 59.

¹⁴ William H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (New York: Oxford, U.P., 1980), 224.

¹⁵ Notes from City Council Meeting, Session on Housing at 1 (Nov. 3, 1969) (on file at the offices of GAPP).

¹⁶ NAACP Urban Crisis Committee, “Position Paper,” *supra* note 14.; Greensboro Association of Poor People (GAPP), “City Council Meeting: Proposal on Housing,” presented to Greensboro City Council Session on Housing, 3 November 1969 (on file at GTRC).

¹⁷ “Letter to Robert Barkley, Director of Redevelopment,” Greensboro, N.C., 15 August 1968, from Residents of the Washington II Project, cited in Barnes, “Ideology and Activism,” 60.

¹⁸ “Letter to Mr. William DeVeny,” from Mrs. Mary Oliver, Gorrell Street Community Council, June 27, 1969, (on file at GTRC).

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 3.

²⁰ Marty Nathan, statement to the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Public Hearing, 1 October 2005.

²¹ Evelyn Schmidt, interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*. 20 March 2006.

²² Claude Barnes interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 7 July 2005; Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights*, p. 6

²³ Interview with Mark Dorosin for Greensboro Voices, 15 February 1988 (transcript available at <http://library.uncg.edu/depts/archives/civrights/detail-iv.asp?iv=9>)

²⁴ Interview with Kathy Hoke, for Greensboro Voices, 10 November 1989. (transcript available at <http://library.uncg.edu/depts/archives/civrights/detail-iv.asp?iv=5>)

²⁵ Lewis A. Brandon III, statement to the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Public Hearing, 15 July 2005.

²⁶ Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 345

²⁷ Ransby, p 279

²⁸ Thomas C. Dent, *Southern Journey: A Return to the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: W. Morrow, 1997), 38.

²⁹ Barnes, .3

³⁰ Ed Whitfield, statement to the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Public Hearing, 16 July 2005

³¹ Ransby, 345

³² Signe Waller, “A City of Two Tales: The Greensboro Massacre of November 3, 1979, in Fact, Context and Meaning,” (Joint copyright of Greensboro Justice Fund and Beloved Community Center, Greensboro, NC, February 2005), 34

³³ “Sit-In Roundtable Discussion with the A&T Four,” part of 46th *Sit-In Anniversary Celebration*, NCA&T State University, 1 February 2006.

³⁴ Lewis Brandon III, interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 28 July 2005.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ William Snider, interview with Eugene Pfaff, Greensboro Voices, 19 April 1979.

³⁷ Confidential interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 15 April 2005.

FROM BLACK POWER TO MULTICULTURAL ORGANIZING IN GREENSBORO

- ³⁸ Brandon, interview with *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 28 July 2005.
- ³⁹ Dargan Frierson, interview with Kathy Hoke, Greensboro Voices, 10 November 1989. (transcript available on line at <http://library.uncg.edu/depts/archives/civrights/detail-iv.asp?iv=5>)
- ⁴⁰ Brandon, interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 28 July 2005.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁴² Whitfield, statement to *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission* Public Hearing, 16 July 2005.
- ⁴³ Claude Barnes, interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 7 July 2005.
- ⁴⁴ Greensboro Association of Poor People Fact Sheet, “Background,” (no date). On file at the GTRC.
- ⁴⁵ GAPP Fact Sheet, “Objectives and Methodology,” (no date)
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁷ GAPP Community Service Center, “Program Fact Sheet,” 24 July 1974
- ⁴⁸ Nelson Johnson, interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 12 August 2005.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁰ Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights*, 184
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 264 . See also <http://foia.fbi.gov/foiaindex/bpanther.htm> for extensive FBI files on the Black Panthers in Winston Salem and Greensboro. (Note 9 to Chapter 7, pp265-66)
- ⁵² For example, FBI memo from SA Charlotte (157-6171 p) to Director (105-765106 Sub 8), Black Panther Party, RM (Racial Matters) (7 February 1969) advised the San Francisco Office (nearest to the BPP headquarters in Oakland CA) and Bureau indices of extremists contained no information on Avant. (available on line <http://foiafbi.gov/foiaindex?bpanther.htm> part 01, 116.
- ⁵³ Chafe, Note 5 to Chapter 7, 264. Frierson complains that Chafe unfairly chides the FBI for incorrectly labeling Nelson Johnson and Claude Barnes as Black Panthers. Frierson maintained that the FBI had never so labeled the two black activists. However, the FBI Black Panther file refutes that claim by routinely referring to both of them as Black Panthers. To give but one example, the extensive 1969 memo on the Black Panther Party dated May 23, 11969 recounts the Dudley stand off between police and A&T students refers to “Walter Brame, a member of the BPP urging everyone to support Claude Barnes, another member of BPP” (p28) and “In the crowd were Nelson Napoleon Johnson and Robert Evans, both BPP leaders.” (p29) <http://foia/fbi.gov/foiaindex/bpanther.htm>, part 01, 54-55. Frierson later says, “You know when you live with a Panther, and you talk like a Panther, and you look like a Panther, and you act like a Panther—I don’t care whether you’ve got a card in your pocket or not”. Frierson interview with Kathy Hoke, Greensboro Voices, 19 January 1990.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁶ “(Nunding) and Eric Brown were the ones that were purposing all of the violence in conjunction, while they were with Nelson Johnson, at Nelson Johnson’s apartment.” *Ibid.* See also “D. Acquiring Weapons and other Paraphernalia (CE 157-6171” (no date) Nunding plans a guerilla training camp, driving white merchants off East Market Street through boycotts or ‘the next best thing,’ which obviously meant tearing or burning them down”. He further talks of overcoming the “pigs” and expresses a desire to obtain a machine gun. <http://foia.fbi.gov/foiaindex/bpanther.htm>, part 01, 46.
- ⁵⁷ Johnson, interview with *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 12 August 2005.
- ⁵⁸ FBI report to the U.S. Department of Justice “Racial Matters. Walk out by students, Dudley High School, Greensboro North Carolina, May 9, 1969.” Dated 12 May 1969. The report says that Barnes was refused permission to run for office by Principal Franklin Brown “because of his association with the Black Panther Party.” Available at <http://foia.fbi.gov/foiaindex/bpanther.htm>, part 01, pg 56. (accessed 15 May 2006.)
- ⁵⁹ Barnes interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 7 July 2005.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁶² Nelson Johnson interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 16 August 2005. FBI reports of the incident do not indicate any incitement by Johnson as frequently alleged by many police officers today, “Nelson Johnson talked with the students in the school gymnasium and due to the situation, school was dismissed.” <http://foia.fbi.gov/foiaindex/bpanther.htm>, part 01.
- ⁶³ Herb Belvin, Federal Grand Jury testimony (24 August 1982), 8.
- ⁶⁴ Nelson Johnson, interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 12 August 2005.
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid.* Also, Capt. Larry Gibson was a patrol officer in 1969 and was on duty during one of the night of violence on A&T’s campus. He stated that he had heard there had been shooting at police officers by students, although he did not witness it. (Gibson, interview with the GTRC, 5/5/06)
- ⁶⁶ Chafe, 189, 193-4, 201

- ⁶⁷ Claude Barnes testimony, first public hearing of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 15 July 2005.
- ⁶⁸ Frierson, second interview with Kathy Hoke. Greensboro Voices, 9 January 1990.
- ⁶⁹ Jim Melvin, interview with William Link, Greensboro Voices, 18 November 1987 (transcribed 5 April 1993).
- ⁷⁰ Chafe, pg. 184.
- ⁷¹ Frierson, interview with Hoke, 1990.
- ⁷² Barnes, 64.
- ⁷³ “Trouble in Greensboro,” 15.
- ⁷⁴ Brandon, interview, 28 July 2005; Nelson Johnson, interview, 12 August 2005
- ⁷⁵ Barnes, 69.
- ⁷⁶ There was no organizing with the white community around labor at this point. By 1970, young white radicals and young black radicals were operating very separately. (Nelson Johnson interview with the the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation* , 12 August 2005; Lewis Brandon, interview with the the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation* , 28 July 2005.)
- ⁷⁷ FBI memo, “Racial Matters: Meeting Sponsored by Black Panther Party (BPP), concerning Greensboro Redevelopment Commission, March 25, 1969.” On file at GTRC. Also available at <http://foia/fbi/foiaindex/bpanther.htm>.
- ⁷⁸ Nelson interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 12 August 2005. James Ferguson interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 3 June 2005.
- ⁷⁹ Chafe, 217
- ²⁹ AAA Tenants’ Union, Press Release, April 3, 1970.
- ⁸⁰ Johnson, interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 12 August 2005.
- ⁸¹ GAPP, “City Council Meeting: Proposal on Housing,” presented to Greensboro City Council Session on Housing, 3 November 1969 (on file at GTRC).
- ⁸² Barnes, 62; Ralph Jones, “AAA Apartments Destroyed: Exploited Poor Retaliate,” *Carolina Peacemaker*, March 28, 1970.
- ⁸³ Barnes, 63.
- ⁸⁴ Frierson, interview with Hoke, 1990.
- ⁸⁵ Transcript and Record of the “Police Brutality Trial of the Greensboro Black Community,” *People’s Court v. Greensboro Police Department, Greensboro City Council, Greensboro Human Relations Commission, Guildford County Solicitor, Douglass Albright* (5 March 1972). This trial was held by the Greensboro Black Community through its representative body, the BCCPB, Chairman WT Brown, and entrusted to the GAPP for publication and keeping (transcription, 11 August 1972).
- ⁸⁶ The Recommendations from this hearing numbered 16 in total. See N.C. Criminal Justice Task Force, “The Greensboro Report,” 12 August 1972, 15-16.
- ⁸⁷ Willena Cannon, statement to the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Public Hearing, 30 September 2005.
- ⁸⁸ Joyce Johnson, interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 4 May 2005.
- ⁸⁹ Umgaza Laughinghouse interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 17 February 2006.
- ⁹⁰ In December 1980, the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit overturned all of the defendants’ convictions in *Chavis v. State*, 637 F.2d 213 (4th Cir. 1980). The State of North Carolina eventually dropped all charges against the Wilmington 10 in 1981.
- ⁹¹ Laughinghouse interview with the GTRC.
- ⁹² Barnes, statement to the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 7 July 2005.
- ⁹³ *Ibid.*
- ⁹⁴ James Ferguson, interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 3 June 2005.