'"THERE WAS A TIME...':
AN ALUMNUS REFLECTS ON BLACK STUDENT LIFE
AT LAFAYETTE COLLEGE, 1966-1970

Midway through my sophomore year, James Brown released the single "There Was a Time." Brown's song, a vintage recording for the performer who would later proclaim himself "Soul Brother Number One," was a celebratory tribute to dances popular among African-American adolescents and young adults during the early-to-mid 1960s. In paying homage to dances such as "The Mashed Potatoes," "The Jerk," "The Camel Walk," and "The Boogaloo," Brown was, according to essayist and poet Larry Neal, tracing "the history of a people through their dances."

The thirty-odd black male students on campus did not offer an intellectual defense as to why the record was a constantly played one in our dorm rooms or social living groups. Owing to its beat, the song was a popular choice in the early months of 1968 for the sporadic parties held at Soles Hall or the then-existent fraternity, Phi Kappa Tau. Yet, in hindsight, I offer Brown's song title as the title of my presentation. Just as Brown was looking back with reverential homage to dances he "used to do," I offer a reflective commentary and assessment of my experiences here at Lafayette from 1966 to 1970. My comments may not be as fully celebratory as are the Brown lyrics, but for me these years were certainly "a time," one characterized by coming of age idealism, alienation, and enhanced racial and political consciousness. Yet, my lows and highs at Lafayette may have been both similar as well as dissimilar as those of other black students on campus as we, individually and later collectively, sought to adjust to and to change "that dear old college on the hill."

My individual campus experiences and later involvement in the Association of Black Collegians (ABC) should not be viewed in isolation. As a student at Lafayette I was affected, both negatively and positively, by the all-male environment. As a black student, I was impacted by the largely conservative and often indifferent attitude expressed by many white students in regards to matters of race, race relations and racial protest. While there would be incremental improvements in attitudes held by many white students after 1968, Lafayette was not always a welcoming community. In addition, my experiences here would be shaped by individual relationships with professors. Several faculty members who initially terrified me later proved to be powerful influences. Lastly, activities at Lafayette would be shaped by campus discussions and later activities centering on the ever-present war in Southeast Asia, by continuing reforms in curricula matters and by shifts away from the concept of in loco parentis and towards more students rights. All of these matters would influence the campus climate in an era of social tumult and educational change.

I first heard of Lafayette College during my junior year of high school in my hometown of New Rochelle, New York. When taking the PSAT exam, I checked a box indicating that I was a Negro student interested in receiving information about colleges from the National Scholarship and Service Fund for Negro Students (NSSFNS). Founded in 1947, NSSFNS was an independent agency located in New York City whose purpose was "to broaden and increase opportunities for qualified Negro students for higher education in an inter-racial environment." Shortly afterwards, based upon my scores, I received a questionnaire from NSSFNS asking about my personal and academic

interests. Throughout junior high school and now in high school, I had envisioned myself as a future Ambassador from the United States to one of the newly independent nations on the African continent and indicated such on the questionnaire. Several weeks later I received a list of NSSFNS profiles of colleges that offered programs in International Affairs. One such school was Lafayette College. I had read profiles of many colleges in the Fiske Guide to Colleges, but I was particularly interested in this small, all-male college in Pennsylvania. While the NSSFNS profile provided much of the same information that one could find in any college guide, I read with care the section entitled, "Attitude Toward Negro Students." What caught my attention was the NSSFNS assessment, derived from its more than fifteen-year association with the College, which read:

> ...Lafayette seeks a student body that is highly diversified in its abilities, interests and background. A Negro student should feel very much "at home" on the Lafayette campus.

I requested more information from Lafayette and was flattered by the amount of material I was receiving in my junior and early senior year. African-American students in my high-school class, particularly those of us in college preparatory programs, were among the first direct beneficiaries of the just enacted gains of the civil rights movement and of the Johnson administration's Great Society initiatives. Many of us, myself included, would be the first members of our families to attend college. Whereas our post-secondary school options just two years earlier may have centered around enrolling in historically black colleges or nearby public and private institutions to which

we would have commuted, now predominantly white colleges across the Northeast, Midwest and far West were sending us information. And, these schools were encouraging us to apply. None of my black male classmates applied to Lafayette, although several of my white male classmates would apply. Lafayette's recent success in the General Electric College Bowl was still of topical interest and, on occasions, one or two students in high school wore Lafayette College sweatshirts.

I applied to Lafayette and to three other schools and in February of 1966, I was accepted here. Not only was Lafayette the first college to accept me (I was also accepted into the other three), but the College offered me a rather significant scholarship. Over the next month and a half, I mulled over my choices before deciding to enroll at Lafayette. I had never visited the college nor talked with any current student or staff member, but somehow I was convinced that my decision to enroll here was a sound one.

With eager anticipation over the summer months, I looked forward to starting classes at Lafayette. I dutifully filled out all the forms that I received about housing and courses to be taken in the fall. In addition, I started reading the two books that all freshmen were required to read for small group discussions during orientation: Jacob Bronowski, Science and Human Values and Marcus Raskin and Bernard Fall's edited anthology, The Vietnam Reader. As someone interested in International Affairs, I found the latter book to be the more interesting. My attitudes then towards the Vietnam War were largely in support of the Johnson's administration waging of the war. As Lyndon Johnson had helped steer through Congress both the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the

Voting Rights Act of 1965, I was then supportive of both his domestic and foreign policy initiatives. Besides, I was enrolling in a college that required every freshman student to enroll in Army ROTC. Compulsory ROTC had no bearing on my decision to enroll, although one of my high-school classmates chose not to enroll at Lafayette because of the ROTC requirement. Besides, I had not yet turned eighteen and had not registered for the draft. The war was a distant matter for me and, surely by my expected graduation in 1970, the war would be over. I did give some thought to my being a Negro student at Lafayette. While I hadn't seen any pictures of African-American students in any of the college's materials, I was confident that significant numbers of other Negro male students would be joining me as members of the Class of 1970. That Lafayette was an all-male institution had no bearing on my decision to enroll. I hadn't dated extensively while in high school as I was both short and shy, but I was reassured by college guides' accounts that Lafayette College men dated women from nearby Cedar Crest College and Centenary College. Surely, I reasoned, Negro women attended these schools. I was prepared to be "at home" at Lafayette.

On September 6, 1966, my father, my aunt (my father's sister who helped to raise me after my mother died when I was five), my oldest sister and I drove to Easton, Pennsylvania. As this would be our first trip to Easton, we left early. As we crossed the Delaware River into Easton, we saw the college skyline. Proceeding up College Avenue, we made the left turn onto McCartney Street, and the sharp left turn toward my assigned dormitory, South College. I was in frightened awe. Lafayette was the second college campus on whose grounds I had ever set foot and was markedly different from the University Heights campus of NYU. Getting the room key from the

sophomore floor counselor, my family members and I began to unpack. About an hour later, my roommate and his family arrived. We shook hands in our first formal meeting. Although he had called me in New York three weeks earlier to introduce himself, he had no idea that I was black. While we had similar educational backgrounds, having both attended large suburban high schools and liking Motown (particularly The Temptations), I did wonder if we were assigned as roommates as I was black and he was Jewish.

Over the course of that day, my family and I walked around the campus and later attended the reception for first-year students at the home of President and Mrs. Bergethon. The Bergethons were gracious hosts (as they were every time I went to their house, whether invited or not). I do recall meeting one other black male student, Bob Lambert and members of his family, and one other white student, Jefferson Vitelli (whose father was on the faculty) and the chaplain F. Peter Sabey. After the reception, my family members were to leave and the formal orientation program was to begin. As my father, aunt and sister were preparing to say goodbye, I wanted to go home with them. No doubt, I was experiencing separation anxiety, but as my sister recently reminded me, "You looked like you wanted to cry." I probably did as I silently asked myself, "how did I allow myself to come here?" I watched them drive off, then I turned away and walked up the three flights of stairs to prepare for a section meeting and dinner in Marquis Hall.

The names of the fifteen students who lived in our section of the third floor of South College would read like a roster of characters in a late 1940s racially and

ethnically liberal movie about World War II. While I would have been cast as the lone black, the other students were of varied ethnic and religious backgrounds. Surprisingly, I was the only student in the section from New York State, while the other students hailed from mid-sized cities, suburbs, and smaller towns in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Connecticut. Later that night, at the first dinner held for the 495 members of the Class of 1970, we were all introduced to some of the history and lore of the college and the accepted rules of behavior and etiquette. Like its all-male counterparts, Lafayette stressed the development of and manifestation of manhood, gentlemanly behavior and expected civility. Manhood and heterosexual masculinity at Lafayette were givens, thus there was near-unanimous acceptance for such thought-to-be gendered traits such as virility, courage, and steadfastness. Civility towards classmates and deference towards upper-class students were viewed as appropriate signs of gentlemanly conduct and behavior. Thus, we were told that freshmen were to wear coat and tie for dinner meals, Monday through Saturday, and for the Sunday mid-day meal. We were instructed in appropriate freshman behavior; we were to wear freshman beanies or "dinks" for thirty days or until Lafayette won its first football game. We were not allowed to walk across the quadrangle, but to walk around that open space. As first-year students, we were not to use the elevator in any classroom building during our first month on campus. Moreover, John Raymond, director of both the College Band and Glee Club, tried to instill class spirit in the assembled group by having us chant, "70, GO, GO--70, GO, GO." The chant never caught on, but he had more luck teaching us the words to the "Alma Mater" and to "Way Down in Easton There's a College."

Orientation lasted for two days and then classes started. I had chosen my intended classes over the summer; unfortunately, I had a horrible schedule for classes. In an era when there were classes scheduled from Monday through Saturday, I had two classes on Monday, Wednesday and Friday and three classes in succession on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday mornings. In addition, my ROTC class met on Wednesday morning and drill was held on Monday afternoon. Grade-wise, I had done very well in high school, but my first semester at Lafayette was hellish academically. I had done well in my high-school math courses, but suffered in my college calculus course. Similarly, I did not do particularly well in freshman English. I liked the instructor, Fred Closs, but was intimidated by his style and manner. Although I read the assigned readings in the E.B. White Reader and the other required texts, I was reluctant to participate in class discussions. Although I wrote several drafts before turning in the writing assignments, then referred to as themes, I could never receive a grade higher than a C. I faithfully read the assignments for "Introduction to Religion," taught by Earl Pope. I still remember one of the assigned texts, The Dynamics of Faith by Paul Tillich, and the book's basic thesis: faith is the state of being ultimately concerned. However, as in the English course, I did not speak up. Even in a course, "Origins and Development of Western Civilization" (a course that Al Gendebien would later describe as a "white man's course") in which I participated in class discussions, I did not do particularly well on the midterm exam. I knew the material and answered the essay question, but the section instructor for the team-taught class gave me a C. Focusing less upon the contents of my essay, the grader wrote an extended comment upon my sentence about a European monarch who "ascended to the throne." Writing that one does not ascend to the throne, but ascends the throne, the grader suggested that I study Latin

so that I could write proper English. I was crushed and dispirited. The one bright light during my first weeks on campus was my performance in my French class. I had placed out of the basic language requirement because of my score on the French Achievement Test. As a would-be International Affairs major, I needed to continue my study of French, so I had enrolled in an advanced "Survey of French Literature" course taught by Harold Streeter. I was one of three first-year students in an upper-level class of 35 students. The class was conducted in French and was devoted to discussions of the assigned texts. I was an avid discussant in the class, but, given my performance in my other classes, I was concerned about how I had done on the midterm essay exam. One day, while walking out of South College, I ran into Professor Streeter. In passing by me, he told me I had done well on the exam. Finally, I had broken through an academic ceiling. While I did raise my history grade, receiving an A on the second exam, my overall grades that semester were B's and C's and an F in calculus. I wanted to transfer.

My academic adjustment to Lafayette was rocky initially, but I did get along with nearly everyone in my dormitory section. They elected me to the Freshman Class Council. Even the college recognized that I could be a photographic representative of the campus' attitude towards race. Within weeks of my arrival, my picture appeared in a publication targeted for alumni. I also began to meet the other black students in my class. The ten of us came from public and private high schools in Virginia, Washington, D.C., Arkansas, Pennsylvania, New York State and Rhode Island. A majority of the ten black freshmen were either engineers or interested in biology or math; thus, I was in only one class with another black freshman. Although most of us lived in South College, we

really didn't hang out in each other's rooms. Obviously, we knew each other, but only saw each other at meals in Marquis or at ROTC drill. There were three Continental Africans in the Class of 1970, students from Nigeria, Ethiopia and Somalia. Regrettably, given my then career goals and aspirations, I never really got to know any of the three. Each was an engineer and none lived in South College. Within days, they began to socialize with each other and other international students from Europe, Asia and Latin America. As one black student from my class who held dual American and British citizenship told me two years later, he and the other African students were publicly encouraged by the adviser for International Students not to associate or to fraternize with black North American students.

For the most part, the ten of us had played intramural, junior varsity or varsity sports in high school. Most of us had not been recruited to play for any of the College's sports teams. Several black male students did try out for the freshman football team; one was cut immediately, another soon quit the team due to insufficient playing time and would later transfer. The third, Bob Lambert, did start for the freshman team and would later become a three-year starter on the varsity. No other black freshman tried out for any other sports teams. And, none of the fifteen upperclassmen were varsity athletes. While we all had been admitted to Lafayette as students, not gladiators, the college's manhood ethos then neither fully considered nor fully respected African-American masculinity in sporting endeavors. In succeeding years, a small number of black males began to play on the football and basketball teams, including George Weaver, the father of a current student.

Socially, my first semester at Lafayette was miserable. Lafayette then had rather restrictive social policies. There were only four approved party weekends each semester during which women guests were to be allowed on campus for social functions. Nearly all male students (the sexual identities of all Lafayette students were presumed to be heterosexual) reluctantly accepted the scant opportunities to entertain female guests. Still, during those approved weekends, the campus' nineteen fraternities and two social dorms were abuzz with music and revelry. First-semester freshmen, who were not allowed to attend parties at the fraternities and social dorms, had fewer options--the occasional mixers attended by women from nearby colleges. For black men in my class, an on-campus social life was non-existent. At the first freshman mixer with women from Cedar Crest and Centenary, only five black women were in attendance. All five were from Cedar Crest as the Hackettstown, New Jersey school had yet to enroll its first black student. Moreover, one of the women from Cedar Crest brought her boyfriend from home to the mixer. Not only were all ten black freshmen in attendance, but so were the ten black sophomores. Several of the latter escorted all of the black women to a party at Soles Hall. At the other scheduled mixers, no black women were in attendance. At Lafayette, there was an unspoken social code--African-American males did not socialize with white females. Thus, I went dateless the entire semester.

I looked forward to going home for an occasional weekend, for Thanksgiving, and for Christmas. Over the Christmas break, several of my friends still in high school and those home for the holidays threw a party. Those who attended historically black schools spoke of parties every weekend and how "phat" the women were. As a result

of my social isolation, I didn't know what the term meant and had assumed that they were using the homonym, "fat." I also didn't know the latest dances; while over the summer we were doing "The Skate," "The Freak " (the 1960's version) and "The Cool Jerk," I was loudly reminded that no one but me was now doing those dances.

Over the winter break, I received in the mail a transfer application from SUNY--Buffalo and a letter from the History Department. The former was my then-hoped-for exit from Lafayette; the latter persuaded me to stay. Because of my overall performance in History 1, I was being recommended for an advanced section of History 2. The fifteen students in that class would attend the course lectures, but were exempt from the weekly discussions. Instead, we were to attend monthly seminar meetings in which we would discuss additional readings and write critical, methodological essays. I felt validated, never filled out the transfer application, and looked forward to returning to campus.

The second semester of my freshman year would be a better semester, academically and socially, but still one of adjustment to college realities. While everyone in my dormitory section came back to school, quite a few members of the class had flunked out and others had been placed on probation. I was not on probation, but I needed to improve my grades to retain my scholarship. I did better academically in my courses; History and French were still my best classes, and I participated more often in class discussions in my religion and English courses. Still interested in International Affairs as a major, I took the introductory course in economics. That course was taught by a visiting instructor, Julia Biehn, the only female

instructor I had in college. While Professor Biehn was an engaging lecturer who could readily explain and illustrate via graphs the law of supply and demand and the law of diminishing returns, I didn't like economics.

That semester I did pledge a fraternity, Phi Kappa Tau. Lafayette's Chapter of Phi Kappa Tau had been expelled from its national organization in the mid-1950s, for having pledged a black student. The chapter would be readmitted to the national several years later as the national, owing to the principled stand of the Alpha Omicron Chapter, ended its "white males only" clause. Over the next two decades, Phi Kappa Tau would be one of the very few
fraternities on campus that accepted black males as pledges. Obviously, I would learn the fraternity's history during the pledge period, but the chapter's racial liberalism was not the reason I sought to pledge. Two of the three black members of the fraternity (Fred Strickland and Bob Maffett, members of the Class of 1969) were among the few black upperclassmen that I knew reasonably well. Moreover, at campus events, each had a date. I pledged Phi Kappa Tau, not because I was firmly committed to fraternal brotherhood, I wanted a social life. I was one of two black pledges (Michael K. Jackson of Richmond, Virginia was the other) in a pledge class of eighteen; I got along reasonably well with other members of my pledge class, most of whom I had not known before the pledge period. My social life did improve, from non-existent to marginal. For pledge weekend, I had asked a high-school senior from my hometown to come to campus. While BJ wanted to visit for the weekend, her parents, in spite of my letter and telephone calls about how much I respected their daughter, would not let her attend. The next party weekend I had a date (my first date) with a high-school senior from

Easton Area High School that had been arranged by my Big Brother, Fred Strickland. We both had a good time. In April, Marvin Gaye had been invited for Inter-Fraternity Weekend. I asked HP (the woman from Easton) if she wanted to go to the concert, but she was going to visit Penn State, the college she would attend in the fall. I then asked a woman from Cedar Crest, but she had a date with someone from Princeton. Needless to say, I was crestfallen (pardon the pun) as I went to the concert alone. However, I was not as disappointed as all of the couples in attendance. Marvin Gaye didn't show up, although rumor had it that three hours after the concert was to have started, an adult black male in a tuxedo jacket was driving a late-model luxury car down High Street and asked a pedestrian where was Alumni Gymnasium.

Neither my floor mates nor pledge brothers and I discussed matters of race. Whether out of politeness, deference or indifference, conversations about race relations and African-American protest were not brought up. The appearance of Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Toure) on campus during the spring semester was perhaps the exception. The charismatic chair of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) had been invited to speak by the Student Council. I was familiar with SNCC's work in the Deep South and had followed, via television news snippets and newspaper reports, Carmichael's espousal of "Black Power." Carmichael was to speak in Alumni Gymnasium, but, owing to the scheduled intramural wrestling championship that night, the speech venue was to be changed to Marquis Hall. Outcry from students led to the speech being given at the Gym. While Carmichael was viewed by many as a "radical" and an "extremist," his speech, I found, was a reasoned, historical discussion of "Black Power" within the context of American ethnic pluralism. Indeed, he

enunciated many of the themes that he and Charles Hamilton would later espouse in Black Power. I was in basic agreement with much of what Carmichael said, although my personal political bent had heretofore been supportive of Dr. King's "beloved community." For several days, I was asked what I thought of Carmichael's speech; some individuals did express amazement that I was in basic accord.

As my racial consciousness started to shift, so did my political consciousness. On April 15, 1967, all of the Phi Tau pledges were in New York City for a scavenger hunt in which we were required to bring back assigned items from New York tourist sites and cultural institutions. That date was a memorable one, the date of the first truly significant (in terms of total numbers) national march and protest against the Vietnam War. I don't recall any discussion on campus about the proposed march; thus, I was truly impressed by the turnout and the racial composition of the crowd of demonstrators. Martin Luther King spoke, openly declaring his opposition to the war; Stokely Carmichael and Dr. Benjamin Spock were other speakers. Standing on a New York City sidewalk, I watched in admiration as an all-black contingent of demonstrators marched by, chanting, "Hell No, We Won't Go" while carrying placards which read, "Black People: 23% of the Dead, 2% of the Bread." Both the chant and placard messages resonated within me, particularly as I thought about the large numbers of black males from my high-school class who had enlisted or had been drafted into the armed services. I collected as much of the memorabilia as I could; unfortunately, I turned that material in (as well as the ticket stub from the Apollo Theater) to the fraternity pledgemaster.

Carmichael's appearance on campus and my accidentally being at the April 15th anti-war protest were the overt beginnings of my political and nationalist sentiments. Those sentiments were further enhanced over the summer of 1967 as I followed the news accounts of the urban rebellions in Newark, Detroit and Plainfield, New Jersey. Certainly, I was familiar with the Harlem Riot of 1964 and the Watts Riot of 1965 (note the terminology), but the rebellions of the "long hot summer of 1967" affected my consciousness more deeply. I began to read more, The Autobiography of Malcolm X, for example, and I began to let my hair grow. More importantly, I no longer used the term "Negro" (which led to growing tensions with older, more traditionally oriented family members). Heretofore, I had used both "Negro" and "Black" as racial designations, but after Carmichael's speech and the events of the summer, I was a Black Man.

Returning to campus for my sophomore year, I roomed with a senior named Joseph Cox, now both the father of a current Lafayette student and a member of the College's Board of Trustees. Joe Cox was one of the most decent, principled, and honorable individuals that I have ever met. Joe was from a white, working class family and a native of Springfield, Massachusetts. A graduate of its public school system, he was used to being around black people. While Joe and I would sometimes discuss racial matters, most of our conversations steered around campus issues and concerns of social class . Growing up as a son of a tailor in New Rochelle (the fictional home of Rob and Laura Petrie of the old "Dick Van Dyke Show"), I had assumed that all white students at Lafayette were from middle-to-upper-middle-income backgrounds. Joe was an English major, Dean's List student, member of the Student Council, Lieutenant

Colonel of the College's ROTC Brigade, Head Dormitory Proctor in McKean Hall, and one of the nominees for the Pepper Prize. What most impressed me about Joe was his principled integrity; he had debrotherized from a fraternity (to be unnamed) as that social living group had blackballed a would-be black pledge.

That year, I tried to emulate Joe's academic accomplishments. He took upper-level courses from William Watt and Fred Closs, while I sought to finish the English requirement with courses from Fred Closs (whom I always liked but still feared). Joe received A's, I received a C and a B. However, sophomore year for the most part was academically unrewarding. Still intending to major in International Affairs, I took two government courses (which I disliked), two philosophy courses (I respected George Strodach), two psychology courses (where I met, but didn't really get to know until later, Howard Gallup), two French courses (I disliked the instructor), and ROTC. Now opposed to the Vietnam War, I did not attend ROTC class except to take exams and I did not attend weekly drill. I had to go to the then ROTC house on numerous occasions to work off my accumulated class cuts. Although I was passing--barely passing--the class, I stood good chances of failing as I was not going to drill. I passed ROTC with a D, largely because some of my unexcused absences from drill were expunged from my record by the Brigade Commander.

Midway through my sophomore year, I decided not to go advanced ROTC and not to major in International Affairs. Politically, I rationalized, as I opposed the Vietnam War (my opposition heightened after two of my friends from high school who had enlisted in the Marine Corps were killed in combat within a month after their arrival in

early 1968), I could not represent or speak in support of the foreign policy of the United States Government. Thus, I was no longer interested in a career in the Foreign Service. Secondarily, I did not particularly like Economics or Government courses, courses that I would need for an International Affairs major. Sadly, my experiences in the French composition course soured me from further study of that language. I chose history as a major, a decision that I have never regretted.

Over the course of my sophomore year, I developed further my since longtime friendship with Fred Strickland. I can not put into words what our more than three-decade friendship has meant and means to me. Fred had been my "Big Brother" during my pledge period and now as fraternity brothers, he and I, along with Bob Maffett would talk about women, music, academic course work, and racial issues. Fred and Bob, who were both involved with women from Easton, would continue to introduce me to women from Easton, and I began to date socially a woman from Cedar Crest. So when Dionne Warwick and later Smokey Robinson and the Miracles came on campus, I had a date. Aside from their being social mentors, Bob, Fred and I engaged in extended conversations about changing black protest thought and questions of black identity and protest. Bob was a Philosophy major from Philadelphia, the son of a Presbyterian minister. Fred (whose full name is Frederick Douglass Strickland) was majoring in Metallurgical Engineering and was the son of an Aliquippa, PA steelworker. Indicative of the era's gendered discussions of work and social status, we never talked about the paid work done by our female parents and relatives. From our respective conversations with family members, all of whom were Southern-born and grew up in the era of "Jim Crow" each of us knew some aspects of Black History. Moreover, each of us

was familiar with then Negro History Week observances. In reaction to the killings of three black students at South Carolina State College by South Carolina state troopers in February 1968 and to call attention to Lafayette's total lack of any course offerings in Black history and culture, we staged a symbolic gesture. For the length of Negro History Week, each of us wore a white sweatshirt on which we had inscribed magic marker slogans such as "Black is Beautiful," "Remember South Carolina State," "I'm a Soul Man," and other phrases. We wore the sweatshirts to class and around the fraternity every day (all three of us worked in the kitchen to defray board costs), but our action was met with silence, even from some of the other black students.

In a partial effort to publicize issues about race relations on campus, I ran for Student Council in my sophomore year. With the encouragement and vocal support from my roommate, fraternity brothers, and other black students, I won a seat. I was one of two members of Phi Tau and one of two black students, the other being Riley Temple, who were elected. One of my first acts was to call for the creation of a course in Black History, a proposal that the Student Council passed. I then drew up a petition to get support from members of the student body and gained the support of two other members of the Student Council, Jon Reitman and Jim Ingram, and a black freshman who was to become one of my best friends and political allies, Larry Lennon. Larry was from Jamaica, New York and had the biggest Afro on campus. Although he and I knew each other from speaking to one another in passing, we hadn't been really close. While both of us were "political," I had been afraid to visit his dorm room during his first semester lest I, a fraternity member, would be accused of improper conduct in trying to pre-rush a freshman. My conversational distance and college rules aside made no

sense to Larry, who refused to pledge a fraternity or social dorm. Instead, he went home nearly every weekend to see his girlfriend.

The four of us circulated the petition and to my amazement, we were able to get more than three hundred signatures. We turned in the petition to Albert Gendebien (whose formal bearing I had initially found intimidating in the History 01 and 02 courses). As chair of the History Department, Professor Gendebien read the petition, looked up at the four of us and said he agreed with its contents and could he sign.

Several weeks later, the four petition organizers were asked to attend a meeting in Professor Gendebien's office. At the meeting Professor Gendebien, who was now my departmental academic adviser, and James Vitelli, of the English Department and head of the then-named American Civilization program, talked with us. Professor Gendebien had presented the petition to a small group of faculty. Jim Vitelli had expressed an interest in teaching a course, or possibly two, about Black Life, History and Culture and wanted to talk with us about the possible scope of the proposed course(s). The four of us and Professor Vitelli met intermittently to discuss the course. We talked openly about format (lecture course or seminar), chronological and thematic structure, and grading criteria. Jim was very open and receptive to our suggestions and probably for one of the first times in the college's history, students had direct input in shaping the nature of a course. He agreed to teach the course but told us he needed time to plan the course and the course would not be taught until the following spring semester.

While we were planning what would become American Civilization 66, "The Black Man in America" (again the gendered reference), there were other stirrings of black consciousness taking place on campus. On March 13, 1968, Lafayette hosted an all-day symposium entitled, "The City: Chaos or Order." Classes were canceled so that all students could attend. Among the speakers were James Farmer, the founder and former head of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and Dr. Nathan Wright, an Episcopal priest who had convened the 1967 Black Power Conference in Newark. I looked forward to the symposium. I enjoyed all of the speakers, especially Dr. Wright. In a discussion afterwards, a small group mingled to talk with Dr. Wright. Fred, Bob, and I were there, along with Richard Cummings and John Cann. Rick was a junior from Baltimore who was majoring in Industrial Engineering. I didn't know him very well, and we had only a nodding acquaintance. John was a sophomore from Bermuda who was majoring in Biology. Although he and I had been in the same discussion group for "Introduction to Religion" in our freshman year, neither one of us had been close. John had lived in Easton Hall that year, and I knew few people in that dorm. Both Rick and John were brothers in Kappa Delta Rho. Rick and I struck up our first real conversation and talked about our mutual frustrations as black students on the Lafayette campus and what could be done. We talked about the need for black students on campus to come together as a group; Bob, Fred, and John voiced similar concerns. The five of us decided to meet three days later. I tried to get in touch with Larry Lennon, who had gone home, to let him know about the meeting.

Three days later, the five of us (minus Larry) met in the basement of Marquis Hall and talked about forming a black student organization on campus. All of us were in

accord about the need for such an organization and tried to seek out other black students. A week later, a somewhat larger group met; neither of the two black seniors attended, but three juniors, three sophomores, and five freshmen attended. We talked about the need for an organization and what type of organization should it be. Some individuals, the sons or siblings of individuals who had pledged historically black fraternities, supported the establishment of a chapter of either Alpha Phi Alpha or Omega Psi Phi. Most wanted some other organization, not a fraternity. Ultimately, we decided to form a black student organization but were uncertain about its name. Some of us, myself included, did not see the need for us to be recognized by the college. We argued that we should just organize ourselves, independent of the college. Others argued that we should organize and seek recognition and maybe funding from the college. The latter point of view prevailed, so we sought college recognition.

At that time, college regulations stated the student organization had to be recognized by the Student Council and that student organizations needed a constitution. Rick Cummings knew someone at Princeton and wrote him, asking for a copy of the constitution of that school's black student organization. Shortly afterwards, he received a copy of the constitution. A small group of us--no more than seven--met and read the document sent to Rick. We liked the document, made some changes in the text and submitted the revised document to the Student Council. We even chose for our organization the same name as the Princeton organization, The Association of Black Collegians (ABC).

While we had a favorable first meeting with Student Council Representatives (I was on the Student Council), there were questions from some council members and the Dean of Students Herman Kissiah, then in his first year on campus. As the college was seeking to adopt a resolution mandating that fraternities on campus remove clauses that had reserved membership for white males only, we were asked why was there a need for a black fraternity. We argued that the ABC was not a fraternity and pointed out that most of the black students at that meeting were members of campus fraternities. Somewhat mollified, the Student Council gave us a favorable vote. The submitted constitution was then sent to an administrative committee. Later, a small group of us met with Dean Kissiah. There was concern about the name of the organization, Association of Black Collegians. Why didn't we change the name to the Association <u>for</u> Black Collegians. That way, it was suggested to us, interested white students could join the organization. We rejected the suggested name change and claimed, citing arguments from Carmichael and Hamilton Black Power, that we were willing to work in <u>coalition</u> alliances with interested white students. Dean Kissiah must have been impressed with our arguments, the Constitution of the Association <u>of</u> Black Collegians was approved, and the ABC was recognized.

While the ABC was being formed, I was jolted by the events of April 1968. On Thursday, April 4, 1968, I was in Skillman Library, studying for a psychology quiz, when one of my fraternity brothers came looking for me. He had been on the second floor in the reading room when he had heard over the radio that Martin Luther King had been shot in Memphis. Taking me to the reading room, I heard the news: the shooting and later reported death of the civil rights leader and Nobel Peace Prize laureate. I had

come to appreciate and respect Dr. King, particularly after he had emerged as one of the nation's leading critics of the Vietnam War. Stunned by the news, I was nonetheless upset by a remark made by someone in the room, "They shot the wrong one" --a reference that perhaps Stokely Carmichael or H. Rap Brown should have been the intended victim. Chaplain Sabey immediately moved to arrange a memorial service. Pete, as he was commonly known, was one of the few administrators that I knew. I didn't attend religious services on campus but had gotten to know him. He would prove to be an invaluable ally and supporter of ABC members. I was asked to participate in the memorial service, which I did. A large crowd assembled in Colton Chapel; but somehow in my then anger, I thought many attended not in genuine respect, but for appearances' sake.

The year 1967-1968 had witnessed the beginning of black student activism on campus. We had declared, to paraphrase the thesis of a 2001 article written by historian Karen Miller that we were "Negroes No More." Defining ourselves as "Black Men" and as "Brothers," members of the ABC would seek to build upon our newly professed unity and solidarity to bring about recognizable changes. No longer willing to be viewed as assimilationist tokens who were being converted into deracialized Negroes concerned only with individual goals, we sought to increase our numbers and to improve our collective status. We sought to move from the stage of passive alienation, defined by sociologist Amitai Etzioni, as apathy and acquiescence to active alienation in which we "strove to transform" Lafayette. While feelings of alienation would remain constant or even heighten over the next two years, we were determined to be lead actors, not subjects, in shaping our experiences on campus.

My junior and senior years were my most rewarding years academically. Having completed most of the basic requirements for graduation, I could now concentrate on taking History courses. During those years I was fortunate to take courses from Charles Cole, John Coleman, Jacob Cooke, Albert Gendebien, George Heath and Robert Weiner. Regrettably, I did not have the opportunity to take any courses from Richard Welch, who had been my academic adviser during my freshman and sophomore years. Professor Welch was on leave my junior year, and I had scheduling conflicts with the courses he taught during my senior year. History was one of the most popular majors among those students taking humanities courses, in part because of the teaching and research skills of each of the above-named. The department largely stressed the political, diplomatic and constitutional histories of Western Europe and the United States. While history students were not exposed to revisionist and methodological debates then taking place in terms of studying the "new past," "the new social history" or "history from below," I was <u>always</u> encouraged to write research papers on topics of my interest. Thus, for Professor Heath's classes I wrote major papers on the Wat Tyler Rebellion of 1381, England's role in the slave trade, and the Impact of the French Revolution on the Haitian Revolution. For Professor Coleman's class I gave oral presentations on slave revolts in the colonial period and African-Americans during the American Revolution. For Provost Cole's seminar, I wrote a paper on the history of Black Churches to 1865. For Professor Gendebien and Weiner's class, I did research for a paper on the Italo-Ethiopian War. Owing to circumstances that took place on campus during May of 1970, I never turned in that paper. More importantly, I made the Dean's List during both my junior and senior years. I took my fourth class, "Modern British

Fiction," from Fred Closs, whom I now found to be friendly and affable, and received an A.

In addition to my History professors who impacted my life in the classroom and helped shape my subsequent career, four other individuals helped me learn valuable life lessons--Richard Dowall, Jim Vitelli, Sam Craig, and Dave Portlock. Dick Dowall, the Dean of Housing, was at Lafayette for only two years, but when I needed to vent my frustrations, he provided me with a reasoned, non-condescending but sympathetic ear. Jim Vitelli taught American Civilization 66; and in one class meeting of the seminar, I publicly challenged him for spending what I thought was too much time on the Harlem Renaissance and not discussing the writers I wanted to discuss, Lorraine Hansberry, James Baldwin, and the then Le Roi Jones. He gently but firmly chastised me for my impatience and for my arrogance in thinking I knew it all and made me realize the importance of the historical sweep of African-American literature, not just "relevant writers." In addition, Jim invited two prominent speakers to speak to the class, novelist Ralph Ellison and historian Herbert Aptheker. The class had read Invisible Man the week before Ellison's visit and several weeks after my intemperate remarks and class members engaged in a lively discussion with the novelist. The historian Herbert Aptheker was also invited to the class and was the first scholar of African-American History whom I had met. His pioneering work on resistance to slavery and African-American protest would influence my scholarly career.

Sam Craig nurtured my interest in Education. Once I had decided that I want to teach secondary school, getting over my brief flirtation with going to law school, I took

nearly every class Sam Craig offered. He exposed students to contemporary issues in education in addition to matters of teaching pedagogy. In his classes we read Death at an Early Age and we debated/discussed the merits of "open admissions" being considered at City University of New York. However, Sam Craig, and to a lesser degree George Heath and Jacob Cooke, taught me lessons about rejecting stereotypes. Each was a white male who had been raised/educated in the South. Prima facie, in mid-to-late 1960s discourse borne from my watching the news coverage of civil rights activities, I had assumed each to be racist. In their basic civility and actions, I was proven wrong. Indeed, Sam Craig would be one of the few professors who openly offered support to the ABC.

Two years ago, I was invited back to Lafayette to offer tribute to Dave Portlock. My impressions of him remain the same as those expressed at the renaming of the Black Cultural Center in November of 2000. When Dave Portlock assumed his part-time position as a consultant to the Dean of Students in the fall of 1968, members of the ABC had not been informed of the hiring process until news of his appointment had been made public. Thus, there was initial skepticism among most of the members of the ABC. Who was Dave Portlock? What was and would be his role? Was he to be an advocate for the nearly forty black male students on campus? Or was he to be a brake upon the beginning and burgeoning "militancy" of the ABC leadership? Thus, Dave was to be watched very carefully in the first few weeks of his appointment. However, Fred Strickland and Bob Moffett, who had the most extensive contacts with black residents of Easton, did let the rest of us know that Dave was "all right."

Dave very quickly won many of us over. As the first African American to have an appointment at Lafayette other than in a service capacity, he initiated an "open-door" policy whereby black male students could come by his office on the several afternoons and Saturday mornings that he was on campus. I don't think there was ever a time from the fall of 1968 until the spring of 1970 that we didn't stop by either singly or in groups. "Come on let's go see Dave," was a rather common refrain. For some of us, the reasons were therapeutic; we needed to talk to an African-American male who at that time was less than a decade older than most of us. In designating to him the role of confidante, we could talk for hours on end about our individual and collective concerns, fears, anguish and hopes. He could empathize with our frustrations, but he would never allow us to doubt our abilities or to wallow in self-pity. He encouraged us, indeed challenged us, to do better academically. Yet, that challenge came from genuine concern about our individual and collective self-improvement, not from any paternalistic or self-promoting impulses. For others of us, Dave served as elder statesman as we used him as a sounding board to talk about ABC issues and strategies. Dave, in hindsight, was remarkably patient. He listened to us at a time when we trusted very few faculty or administrators. Even when we disagreed with his advice, our disagreements were civil and respectful.

In 1968-69, the ABC became fully functional. Rick Cummings served as the organization's first coordinator (the title used in lieu of president), Larry Lennon was the assistant coordinator, and two other sophomores , Conrad Williams and Nate Stone, were secretary and treasurer. There was an ABC "Kitchen Cabinet" that consisted of John Cann, James 'Hap' Hairston and myself. John was the liaison to the admissions

office and he worked closely with Rusty Shunk, a recent graduate of the college who did oversee the recruiting of black students. Through John, ABC members would write individual letters to would-be applicants. James 'Hap' Hairston was a sophomore from Pittsburgh. Hap was part of the ABC's Black Culture Committee and would later co-edit issues of our publication, The Black Voice. I was social coordinator and a member, like Larry and Hap, of the Black Culture Committee during that year. As social coordinator, I had one of the organization's most serious responsibilities. While I was responsible for communicating with other black student groups in the Lehigh Valley and elsewhere, I also had to help plan our parties and to make sure that enough women came. Dave Portlock made my task easier when he coordinated Lafayette's publishing of the Black Student Directory for Lehigh Valley Colleges. Now we began to party--principally at Lehigh and then at Lafayette--with black students on other campuses. Our on-campus parties attracted sisters and brothers from East Stroudsburg State, Cedar Crest, Muhlenburg, Lehigh, Moravian and Allentown College. The parties were serious as we were no longer socially isolated; thus, we were doing the same dances as our contemporaries at other schools: "The Puppet," "The Funky Broadway," "The Horse," "Tighten Up," "The Soulful Strut," and "The Sophisticated Sissy."

Even with improvements in my social life, there were problems. On occasions, black males had had difficulties in finding housing accommodations on College Hill for their dates. For Lafayette-Lehigh weekend, I had a date with a woman from East Stroudsburg State. Finding a room for ZJ was no problem, but on the morning of the football game she and I went to look at available apartments. ZJ was a senior majoring in education who was to begin student teaching the next semester in Easton.

We visited one landlord who told us that she did not rent apartments to "colored girls," owing to a negative experience that she had with a previous tenant. Incensed, we left and went to Dave Portlock's office. Dave listened to our account and told us he would get back to us. Later that afternoon, he called and asked that the two of us meet with both Howard Gallup and himself. In addition to being a member of the Psychology Department, Howard Gallup was a member of the Easton Human Relations committee. During the meeting, I wished to press the issue, ZJ did not. Still, Howard Gallup brought the matter up with city officials. In the end, Dave did help her procure an apartment. Although ZJ and I saw each other a few more times, we soon stopped as she said that I was "too angry" and "too militant."

No doubt I was becoming "angry" and "militant," themes I might have expressed in issues of The Black Voice. The Black Voice was a literary and political tract that was published by the ABC and issued through Dave Portlock's office. We chose a clenched raised fist as our symbol of racial togetherness and as a sign of political support for the protests made at the 1968 Olympics by John Carlos and Tommy Smith. Through essays and poetry, we stressed themes of racial unity and solidarity, our rejection of professed "bourgeois" norms, and our alienation and disenchantment with life on the hill. In addition, groups of us began to visit other campuses--for one-day or for longer stays. Sometimes we hitched or got rides, as only one black student had a car; we put more than eight thousand miles on his car over that year, traveling to schools in Philadelphia, Maryland, New York and in several New England states.

The ABC's early goals, while stated most militantly, were largely reformist. We were largely working with the Admissions Office in terms of recruiting more students. Our militancy escalated during the spring semester. Whether through firsthand contact via visits and correspondence with other black student organizations or through reading the coverage in newspapers and news weeklies, we became aware of burgeoning discontent and alienation on other campuses. We followed the news of student takeovers of administration buildings at Northwestern University, San Francisco State, Brandeis, Swarthmore, Oberlin, and of course, Cornell University. The activities on other campuses forced us to consider demanding more black courses, the hiring of black faculty members, and a meeting space. In the spring of 1969, the core constituency of the ABC met with President Bergethon at his home. We spelled out our concerns (not yet demands) and engaged in a free and open exchange with the president.

During that semester, I was more concerned with ABC matters and less so with matters at Phi Kappa Tau. By 1968-1969, there were only three black members of Phi Kappa Tau. Both Fred and Bob were seniors, concerned with job prospects after graduation. Bob had gotten married and Fred was seriously involved with his girlfriend; neither was around the fraternity that often. I spent most of my time with Rick, John, Hap and Larry, especially Larry. Larry and I had a lot in common, particularly in an era when "clothes made the man." We both wore New York footwear--black, low-cut Converses and Florsheim "Playboys." We hitchhiked to and from several campuses, (the song, "Twenty-Five Miles" by Edwin Starr was dedicated to our all night hitchhiking trip from Beaver College). Thus, I was becoming more alienated from Phi Kappa Tau. That spring, I debrotherized.

Events on campus, particularly around ROTC, heated up that spring. Although many of the leaders and outspoken voices within ABC were firmly opposed to the war, we had not made the war and ROTC a major issue. In deference to a number of black seniors and juniors who were seeking military commissions and used the ROTC scholarships to pay tuition, we remained neutral. Although most of the black seniors in ROTC were at best nominally affiliated with ABC, we did not wish to criticize their decisions to go advanced and become commissioned officers. Thus, we did not ally ourselves with the newly formed Students for a Democratic Society in their protests against ROTC on campus.

However, we did work with members of SDS on the food stamp campaign. As Albert Gendebien relates in The Biography of the College, members of SDS had met with President Bergethon to have the college pressure Easton National Bank and Trust to redeem food stamp coupons in the South Side branch. That branch had refused to do so, arguing that most food stamp customers did not have accounts at the bank and that processing those transactions would have been too time consuming. Campus groups did get involved, including the Student Council and the ABC. As a member of both organization, I had helped draft a motion for Student Council action. The Student Council voted to conduct an on-site survey to ascertain the need for the issuing of stamps and how much time bank tellers spent in processing food stamp transactions. Several student council members, myself included, spent time in shifts during which we observed the number of food stamp recipients who visited the bank and how long each transaction took. We wrote a report that recommended that the bank process

all food stamp transactions as those transactions did not impede with other banking activities. The bank president accepted the report and the bank changed its policies.

My senior year, 1969-1970, was perhaps the most turbulent year in Lafayette's history. As the year began, one could sense change; but as changes were realized or anticipated, we sought more. In a classic case of "rising expectations," the prospects of change only whetted our desire for more change and our frustrations at the pace of change. Lafayette had hired two African-American males to instructional positions. The Reverend Isaac Newton Patterson IV was hired to teach the second part of "The Black Man in American Civilization" course. The nattily dressed Patterson was instantly dubbed "Rev" by ABC brothers, many of whom took his class. Art Statum, a longtime teacher and coach at Easton Area High School, was hired to teach Physical Education courses and to be an assistant coach for the football and wrestling teams. The most apparent change came in the demeanor of that year's freshman class. I had been disappointed that only 2 or 3 black students from the Class of l972, now sophomores, had become active in the ABC. The thirteen black members of the Class of 1973, radicalized by events in their high schools, communities and the nation, was primed to become assertive influences within the organization. What this class lacked in numbers was made up in its energy and commitment.

As I was Coordinator of the ABC, Head Dormitory Proctor of McKean Hall and had debrotherized Phi Tau, I chose to eat in Marquis Hall to help organize and mobilize the black freshmen. I had been in contact with some of them via our letter-writing campaign of the preceding year. However, the freshmen needed no prompting on my

part to become involved in ABC. They came out en masse to our first meeting, held in our newly acquired lounge in Watson Hall. Moreover, the first-year students and I established the "black table" in Marquis Hall, where we ate our lunch and dinner. Our "black table," deemed racially separatist by some letter writers to The Lafayette, did not exclude white students. Some became regulars and would become invaluable political allies over that year.

The first-year students were even more impatient than I. Not only did they reenergize the ABC, but they prodded those of us who saw ourselves as sufficiently militant. By 1969, Afros were bigger and facial hair was more evident (yearbook pictures are taken in junior year) and we were wearing flared pants, boots and sneakers, and our trademark "shades" as part of our "uniform." Our handshakes and power salutes became more elaborate. Over the first few weeks of the semester, we began to formulate our discontent and made plans to issue our demands. On October 27, 1969, before a crowd packed into Colton Chapel, the ABC issued its demands. Like other collegiate groups across the country, the ABC demanded:

1) More Black Students
2) Black Studies Program
3) More Black Faculty Members and Black Administrators
4) A Black House
5) The end or neutralization of the effects of racism on this campus

At that open meeting ABC speakers, myself included, presented our case for the demands. We then submitted a written document, which we labeled The Manifesto as

the supporting text for the collective demands. The manifesto was written by committee and endorsed by the ABC membership as our collective position.

Interpretations of the events that occurred thereafter do differ. Certainly, Al Gendebien's account in The Biography of a College does vary somewhat from my recollections. I do not recall significant faculty and administrative initiatives regarding our demands before the open meeting was held and the manifesto was drafted. After we presented our demands, we did assume, righteously and somewhat naively, that our demands would be met rather quickly. Not familiar with college decision-making procedures and academic governance, we did not know about reports submitted to faculty committees, discussions and votes on the floor meetings, and then referral to other administrative offices for review. Moreover, actions undertaken at faculty meetings were never reported on in The Lafayette. Thus, throughout the remaining months of the fall semester and continuing into the spring semester, we knew little about the status of our demands.

The shroud of silence led to growing bitterness on the part of most ABC members. ABC officers met with administrators, but we have little to report back in general meetings. The freshmen students pressed for action. On their own, the first-year students, who were not allowed to take AC 66 or 67 and were dissatisfied with the paucity of works by black writers discussed in English 01, staged peaceful actions whereby all thirteen would go to one another's English class to have each respective class discuss the omission of black writers.

Still, such actions were deemed insignificant and there was talk of taking more dramatic action to prod responses from the administration. Several of us did talk seriously about taking over a campus building. We weighed the pros and cons of such an action. Some individuals were fervently behind the seizure of a building, others were not. We later decided not to pursue that action. Our decision did not result from fear of the college's response to our action or to our faith in the college administration. In the aftermath of the May 1969 counter-demonstrations by students opposed to SDS actions, we were concerned about those students who were opposed to our actions and demands. Would they seek to evict us bodily from our targeted location?

Our frustrations mounted and some of them were voiced in a question-and-answer interview several of us had with Dave Portlock, the editor of Lafayette (a former fraternity brother of mine) and the editor of the Lafayette Alumnus The points-of-view expressed by each of the five black students did vary. I don't apologize for the harshness of my remarks, as they were my genuine and honest opinions then. When asked if I "would like to come back here after graduation for employment?" I responded tersely: "I wouldn't consider it." And, in conclusion, when asked: "What do you like best about Lafayette?" I replied, "Nothing." My frustration and bitterness had reached a low.

By February 1970, we had heard nothing from the administration or faculty about the status of our demands. The freshman students demanded action. From an ABC member who worked in Marquis Hall and from my freshman roommate, with whom I had stayed in touch and who supported our actions and who was a waiter in the

faculty dining room, we had heard that the Board of Trustees would be on campus within a week. We wanted to meet with the Board. Assembling in our lounge, twenty-five of us (and one woman--someone had a date) marched from Watson Hall across campus to the President's House, where the Trustees were assembled for a reception. We rang the Bergethon's bell and when the door opened, we demanded a meeting with the Trustees. Initially, we were told, "no," but we insisted and did not budge from the steps or the yard. President Bergethon invited four or five of us, the ABC leadership, into his house and we began to talk with the Trustees. The meeting was not going well, as the trustees resented our intrusion, when, as President Bergethon reminded me upon my telling this story two years ago, the doorbell rang. One of the freshmen students, Bobby De Loatch from Savannah, GA, had rung the doorbell exclaiming, "It's cold out here." The Bergethons let all of us into the foyer and living room of the house. Tensions were still high on both sides until Nate Stone, the assistant coordinator and a most tactful individual, stated, "Gentlemen, we're all educated men, why can't we be reasonable." Nate's comments broke the ice and a more fruitful discussion ensued in which it was decided that a later meeting between a group of trustees and members of the ABC would take place.

We made a tactical shift and decided not to antagonize the Trustees during the scheduled meeting. We carefully researched all of our issues and sought to rely on facts, not emotive and rhetorical arguments. As each trustee would meet with four or five students to discuss each particular demand, we balanced each group so that each contained both "militants" and "moderates." Lastly, we decided not to wear our usual choice of clothing; each of us wore a coat and tie, some of us wearing suits. The

college had prepared a written response to our demands, the first time we had seen any response to our demands, which sought to explain from the administrative perspective what had been done since the fall. Nonplussed, we responded to the document in our respective group meetings, pointing out what we considered to be still-to-be completed and inadequate responses to our demands. The meeting went off very well; the Trustees were impressed. The following week, Professor Gendebien congratulated me for the ABC's unprecedented action; we had been able to meet as a group with the Trustees before the faculty.

I was starting to feel better about our efforts. Weeks earlier, the ABC had hosted on campus a meeting of black student organizations from across the state. Our partners from the Lehigh Valley schools were there, but we also had Brothers and Sisters from several of the major schools in and around Philadelphia, and from F and M, Wilson, Bucknell, Gettysburg in attendance. The meeting went well, the party was better (particularly with the premiere of the Lafayette Line Dance). During the spring semester, ABC implemented a reading and discussion group. Every other week a number of us would meet to discuss books. All of us had read the Autobiography of Malcolm X, but we assembled to read Eldridge Cleaver's Soul On Ice and his later Post-Prison Writings, William Grier and Price Cobb's Black Rage, and Frantz Fanon's Wretched of the Earth and Black Skin, White Masks. Whereas there had been "moderate" and "militant" contingents within ABC, there now emerged a professed group of "revolutionaries." We also sponsored a speakers series, which we did advertise around campus. Few white students attended and fewer

faculty. One speaker was Dr. Letitia Brown, then a member of the History Department at Howard University and the mother of an ABC member. Dr. Brown was the first black Ph.D. whom I had ever met. I was most impressed with her presentation, as were two other attendees--Richard Welch and Sam Craig.

Even during the fall nadir, we had continued to work with the Admissions Office. John Cann was one of two students on the Admissions Committee and he did have direct input with admissions officers; Larry Lennon was the ABC's Recruitment Coordinator. In that capacity, he typed a written letter to each black male and now female applicant to Lafayette and remained in ongoing communication with every prospective applicant. Moreover, some of us had been asked to submit written responses to questions for a brochure, "Rapped In Black," that the Admissions Office was sending out to prospective black applicants. We came up with the name, rejecting one that the Admissions Office had contemplated using, "I Am Curious-Black." While there was some displeasure with the final product, as some of the responses printed were composite statements from black students and not always our exact words, the brochure proved to be quite popular. The rise in applications, due in part to our individual efforts but in larger measure to Larry's yeoman efforts, were starting to bear fruit. More black students, male and female alike, were interested in attending the soon-to-be coeducational Lafayette. For reasons of social self-interest and demographic self-interest, the ABC as an organization enthusiastically supported the decision to go co-ed. As I recall, only one black student spoke out against coeducation,

arguing that the presence of black women on campus might change the ABC from a political organization to a social organization.

Unfortunately, I was not going to be around to see women attend Lafayette. I had applied to VISTA (Volunteers In Service To America), the then short-lived domestic equivalent to the Peace Corps , and was applying for teaching positions on the secondary school level. At that time, I was assigned as a student teacher of American History at Phillipsburg High School. In that capacity, I became the first black teacher in the history of P'burg High. I had wanted to teach at Easton Area High School, but Dave Portlock dissuaded me, saying in reference to students and teachers at the New Jersey school, "They need to see you there." So reluctantly I accepted that student-teaching position, even though I had to cut my Afro and shave off my goatee. I was to have a very good experience at P'burg High and was now seeking teaching positions in Baltimore, Washington, DC, and New York City. However, my lottery number for the draft did pose a problem in terms of post-college plans, especially since I had just passed my pre-induction physical.

By the fall of 1969, the ABC had taken a firm position against the war in Vietnam and organizationally was opposed to the policies of the Nixon administration regarding the aerial and territorial escalation of the war. When, in late April 1970, Richard Nixon ordered the military
invasion of Cambodia, we joined with other students opposed to that action. ABC members, as photographs from the era reveal, were quite visible as attendees at the campus rally calling for a strike. I was at the rally as the former coordinator of the ABC.

A week or so earlier, the ABC had held elections for officers for the next year. Our constitution had mandated spring elections, with the incumbent officers serving until the end of the academic year. However, several members voiced opposition to the then heirarchical structure of the organization, contending that too much authority, visibility, and decision- making powers had been vested in the coordinator's position. Their proposal for change was not directed against me personally, but against a too-small group being seen as the only public voices for the organization. Instead of an executive board, they called for changes in which assignments and decision making were to be distributed amongst a seven-man committee, with each of the seven taking turns chairing meetings . Upon voice vote, that plan was adopted and my term as coordinator was abruptly terminated.

While no longer an elected voice for the ABC, I still worked with the new leadership in terms of how we intended to ally ourselves with the strike coordinators. Although leaders of the strike and leaders of the ABC were in accord on their common opposition to the war-making policies of the Nixon administration, there were crucial disagreements that had to be resolved. After the killings at Kent State I, for one, was upset at what I viewed as the hypocrisy of many leaders and supporters of the strike. Two years earlier, when Bob, Fred, and I had tried to call attention to the deaths of the three students at South Carolina State, few cared. Now the campus was in an uproar over the deaths of four white students. I shared in that anger and remorse over the deaths of the four white students on the Ohio campus, but fumed at the comparative lack of campus indignation over the earlier loss of the lives of black

students in South Carolina and the mid-May 1970 killings of three black males, two of whom were students, by Mississippi State
troopers on the Jackson State College campus. When, as part of the strike activities on campus, the ABC sponsored a memorial service for those black victims of state repression, few white students attended.

Although I was on "strike" at Lafayette and had agreed to accept pass-fail grades or grades for work already submitted (the reason why I never turned in that final research paper to Professors Gendebien and Weiner), I still had to complete my student teaching obligations at P'burg High so that I could get provisional state teaching certification. Thus, I could not go take part in anti-war and strike activities that were distant from the campus. I did not attend the several rallies held in New Haven to offer support to the members of the Black Panther Party, including Bobby Seale, who were on trial for murder in that city. Like other students on campus, I did write a letter to my Congressman expressing my opposition to the war and to the Nixon-ordered actions in Cambodia.

I was student teaching every afternoon and was not directly involved in the negotiations around strike-related issues. A crucial difference between the leadership of the strike committee and the new leadership of the ABC was over support for the Black Panther Party. ABC leadership (and I was in complete accord) insisted that strike leaders support our calls for justice at home, particularly fair trials for members of the Black Panthers, whom we argued were political prisoners. Many of the white students balked at that demand as one of the strike's

aims, arguing that the two issues-support for a strike in protest against the war in Vietnam and support for the Black Panther Party were not related issues. The Black Panther Party, many argued, was a violent-prone organization and had nothing to do with "peaceful protest"
against the violence in Southeast Asia. The ABC would not relent and after long and extended negotiations, we were finally able to get the strike leaders to accept the inclusion of justice for members of the BPP as one of the aims of the strike. Still, when the ABC invited members
of the Philadelphia branch of the BPP to speak on campus, a rally that I had to miss, many students stayed away from that rally.

As graduation approached, I had firmed up my post-college plans. Owing to my draft status, I never received final decisions from VISTA or from the personnel offices in Baltimore and Washington about my applications, but I had been offered and accepted a teaching job at the
same junior high school that I had attended in my hometown. I was elated since I really wanted to teach Social Studies or history at the junior or senior high school level. I had not given consideration then to attending graduate school and I don't recall if any members of the
History Department encouraged me to apply to masters or doctoral programs sometime in the future. (Within two years, several Lafayette professors-Albert Gendebien and Sam Craig would write letters of recommendation for me). However, the "Rev" and I had a conversation

about a week before my graduation about my possible long-range career goals. Knowing of my interest in African-American History, he advised me to consider getting an advanced degree and to "go where those courses have always been taught, not where Black History courses are just now being established." His words resonated within me and were major reasons, gender demographics aside, why I would later enroll at Howard.

By the end of that year, the ABC had helped bring about changes on campus. The Class of 1974, the first coeducational class admitted to the college, contained 33 African-American men and women, almost doubling the black student population. Kenneth Rich of the Class of 1967 was named to the Board of Trustees, the first African American to serve on the board. Ashley Bryant was hired in the English Department and my good friend and classmate Michael Jackson was hired as a full-time admissions officer. Dave Portlock was hired to a full-time position in the office of the Dean of Students. Lastly, Lafayette College committed itself to the establishment of a Black Culture Center to be located in what then Chaplain Sabey's residence.

On an overcast June 5, 1970, just over four hundred students, members of the last class to spend their entire stay at all-male Lafayette College, graduated. All nine black students who had come back as sophomores graduated. Amidst the "pomp and circumstance" of the occasion, many of the soon-to-be graduates wore white armbands and affixed peace symbols to their caps. In addition to an armband, I proudly wore my ever-present black liberation button on my robe. I listened attentively to the commencement speaker, former Attorney General Ramsey Clark, and then

marched in line toward the stage to receive my diploma. I thought about how quickly my four years at Lafayette had gone by. Certainly, that period had been a "time." More
importantly, I was the first member of my family to graduate from college and throughout the ceremony I had reflected upon the familial sacrifices that had been made to assure that I would be able to attend and then to graduate from college. As my name was called, I received my
diploma and shook President Bergethon's hand. In that brief moment, we shared a private exchange as he said, "Gerry, Good Luck. Don't Forget Us and Come Back When You Can." Tonight, as on other occasions since that day, I'm fulfilling my end of the deal.

I Came Back.