ST. CLOUD DAILY TIMES
MINNESOTA 56301, TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 1970

A Proposition Concerning Black Survival

"A Proposition Concerning Black Survival"

Black Students Occupy the SJU President’s Office
Racism Found Prevalent at SJU

By Rich Fuehs

Two weeks ago the University of Notre Dame sponsored a National Student Association Workshop dealing with the problem of “White Institutionalized Racism in America.”

Three Johnnies, Frank Liu, Hickner, and I, were given more than an hour to attend this conference with the knowledge that we might find out something concerning the problem of White Racism at St. John’s University.

At first appearance one might think that St. John’s was a case where racism could play no part. Everything looks so nice—if you are white, that is. But to some, the John’s institution is not so rosy.

Our interviews with the students we found out that manifestations of prejudice are minimum on campus. The things we heard at the rally and the student government meetings were substantiated by the students in our interviews with the students.

Black student organizations have been formed on most major college campuses within the last two years, but the OAAAS is not affiliated with any of these or with any national black student movement.

Membership in OAAS is open only to black students. According to a policy statement issued by OAAS members, “It is felt that an all-black organization will be more capable of assisting black students in overcoming the shock of entering a predominantly white community.”

There are 25 black students at St. John’s, ten are American, and 15 are foreign. Most of the black students at SJU belong to OAAS.

Marcus Ahmed, chairman of the organization, said that the OAAS hopes to make the average white student aware of the black man, his unique problems and his culture. To achieve this goal, OAAS plans to sponsor a black festival next semester and to bring major black speakers on campus to discuss the plight of the black man. The black festival would emphasize black art (African sculpture), literature (James Baldwin, Langston Hughes, etc.), and OAAS—Continued on page 8
1970 Sagatagan yearbook,
http://www.csbsju.edu/Images/SJU%20Archives/Sag_1970_pg139.jpg
Jerome Barney was a black student from Chicago.
In September of 1969, the Black students on the twin campuses of the colleges of St. John's University and the College of St. Benedict, came together as a group to promote Black culture. Isolated in Stearns County, Minnesota without any type of Black community, but themselves, they banded together and formed the Organization of African American Students. The university hardly aware of their feelings, gave them two small rooms in the basement of the Abbey church (old church and little monetary funds in which to devise an adequate program to promote their culture.

**Basement of the Great Hall**

"It is located in the Quadrangle, right around the corner from the SJU bookstore."

Later: **Basement of the Auditorium (SBH)**

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1975 Black Student Union history by Charles Bush Box 246 f6
http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/CSBArchNews/id/470
Cultural Center Set for Black Students

By Bill Rubert

In the school year of 1968 the machinery was put into action to fulfill a hope that many blacks held on the SJU campus. This hope, a black cultural center, will become a fact by the end of this month.

Under the auspices of the Black Student Organization and its faculty advisor Fr. Aidan McCall, the center according to the organization’s president, Ronald Morris, is meant to create a black experience on campus. By emphasizing black culture the center, according to Morris, should “expose some of the myths and stereotypes of the black man” and enable whites on campus to know what is meant by a black experience.

With this purpose in mind, President Morris, along with vice-president Richard Moore and secretary Lewis Nixon, plans to establish the center in the old post office near the bookstore. The remodeling is already in progress and much of the furnishings will be supplied by the administration, thanks to the active interest of Fr. Colman Barry, President of St. John’s University. The center will be divided into two parts. One section will be devoted to a lecture room with the other half containing a library of black literature. Vice-president Moore says that the cultural center will probably be open from 12 a.m. to 12 p.m. every day of the week.

Once the center is opened, near the end of October, it promises to be one of the more livelier places on campus. Black sensitivity sessions and courses that lead to adventures in understanding the black man form only part of the activities list. There will be black speakers on a number of topics, black bands with a variety of sounds, and cultural center sponsored dances that will trace the history of black music from old New Orleans jazz to contemporary soul.

Further plans call for “raping” sessions where both black and white can speak their minds, and movies relating to the black experience. There will also be a renewal of what was termed “most successful last year,” a teaching of soul dancing during the intermission. Also immediately connected to the black cultural center are the Black Student Organization sponsored Black Week, which this year will be a conference of blacks from neighboring colleges, and a black newspaper with Marcus Ahmed as editor.

Despite the natural emphasis on blacks in the cultural center, President Morris is quick to say that the center is open to everyone. He feels that the center will not only be a tremendous place for black Johnny's, but that it will also be one of great interest for those white Johnny's who want to know and understand their black brothers.

http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/CSBArchNews/id/33850
April 1969: Concerns were expressed by the fundraisers in the SJU Development office about how much money might need to be raised for a Black Cultural Center...

...when funds were also needed for a student union for all the students and a new gymnasium.
1970 Sagatan yearbook,
http://www.csbsju.edu/Images/SJU%20Archives/Sag_1970_pg139.jpg
Coincidently—or perhaps not—the SJU alumni magazine that fall featured:

ST. JOHN’S AND MINORITIES

1. The Commerce Department and the Peace Corps are back to normal again, going their merry way, but a year and a half visit by a 1990 St. John’s graduate may have altered their psyche a bit. Tom Rowley is back at Quaker Oaks in Chicago now after trying to handle the apparently directionless Office of Minority Business Enterprise. Indeed, he says, the best thing that ever happened to Minority Business Enterprise since President Nixon took office was Tom Rowley’s firing.

14. International students have increased in enrollment by 30 per cent over the past year but their problems adjusting to American higher education have apparently stayed the same, in and outside the classroom.

19. Until a few years ago, black students enrolled at St. John’s found themselves in a white world. Now blacks on campus, with the help of the university, faculty and students, have established the Organization of Afro-American students and a Black Cultural Center. But if St. John’s has a debt to pay any minority race, it would probably be the Native Americans. Three Indians who studied at St. John’s in the early 1960’s are now working to strengthen the Native American voice in the United States.
“Cofell sees his once-a-week program as one way of increasing contact between colleges and elementary schools and community to improve racial relations in the classroom.”

Bill Cofell article on p. 48,
http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/SJUArchives/id/11742
Saint John’s [Alumni Magazine], vol. 10, no. 3, Fall 1970
http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/SJUArchives/id/11712
http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/SJUArchives/id/11716
http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/SJUArchives/id/11716
Rich Moore ‘71 was from Mississippi; Homer Brown ‘73 was from St. Louis
http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/SJUArchives/id/11715
Rich Moore ‘71 was from Mississippi; Homer Brown ‘73 was from St. Louis
This fall, 1970 issue was prepared and set in type two weeks before the three-hour occupation of the president's office on November 16 by 20 black students from St. John's and St. Benedict's. The incident grew out of frustrations similar to those described by some black students in the article beginning on p. 19 of this issue.—Ed.

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Part I
A Proposition Concerning Black Survival

Introduction: We, as black students, would like to clarify or support our decision to confront the St. John’s University and the College of St. Benedicta’s administration, mainly the presidents, and not the channels that may represent these two persons or people, because our line, as black people, is limited since we are fighting for survival. We would feel terribly out-of-place in attempting to seek our demands through these exhausting channels, perhaps to become terribly, terribly disappointed with the outcome. In other words, we are strongly against confronting the intermediaries rather than the mediators, and most provisional to the philosophy of probables and possibles rather than real possibilities. Therefore, our demands are being presented to the administration, the mediator, we feel, and we direct the administration to take advantage of channels whether governmental, social or whatever. If this type of action is necessary, in providing the black students with their complete demands that are being requested in this proposition.

Special note: We are quite aware that these demands are being created not only presented to the St. John’s administration but also presented to the College of St. Benedicta’s administration in accomplishing the black students demands.

FIRST BLOCK: We, the Black Students at St. John’s University and the College of St. Benedicta, being members of the Organization of African American Students, feel that the administration of these institutions (St. John’s University and the College of St. Benedicta) should allocate the Organization of African American Students the financial amount necessary to ensure the successful culture and unity among people of African descent on the safe campuses socially and politically in the school year that we are presently under, November 1970 to May 1971. We demand this financial aid be submitted to the Organization of African American Students officially, directly, and
As Fr. Colman related it later:

On Monday of this week, Russell Larkin, a second year student in Saint John's University, called to ask for an appointment which I arranged for Wednesday at 11:00 a.m. At the time of the appointment, Russell appeared, accompanied by some twenty students of Saint John's University and the College of Saint Benedict, and the enclosed was read to me by a member of the group, I believe Jerry Smith, who did not identify himself. It was then put on my desk. When I asked for an opportunity to reply the group left the room.

Student Russell Larkin made an appointment with Fr. Colman for Nov. 11th.

“At the time of the appointment, Russell appeared, accompanied by some 20 students of SJU & CSB, and the enclosed was read to me...

...When I asked for an opportunity to reply the group left the room.”
"A Proposal Concerning Black Survival" laid out two demands:

1. $10,000 “for the purpose of promoting successfully culture and unity among people of African descent on the twin campuses socially and politically…”

$10,000 in 1970 = over $62,000 in 2017 according to inflation calculator at http://www.in2013dollars.com/

“A Proposition Concerning Black Survival”
http://www.csbsju.edu/Images/SJU%20Archives/AProposalConcerningBlackSurvival_L.jpg
"A Proposal Concerning Black Survival" - second demand:

2. An ongoing O.A.A.S. budget to purchase educational materials and supplies for the Black Cultural Center to enable them to sponsor educational and social events so as to “contribute something to the Westernized atmosphere of the SJU and CSB community.”

“Proposition Concerning Black Survival”
http://www.csbsju.edu/Images/SJU%20Archives/AProposalConcerningBlackSurvival_lg.jpg
How they proposed to spend the $10,000:

**Education Materials**
- Books
- Magazines
- Newspapers
- Films
- Records
- Convocation Lectures and Speakers
- Convention Representatives

**Renovation Materials**
- African relics
- Pictures
- Statues
- Bookcases
- Tables

**Emergency Fund**

**Social Endeavors**
- Black entertainers
- Dances
- Black programs

**Miscellaneous Materials**
- Film projector
- Typewriters
- Tape Recorder

A response was requested by noon on Monday, November 16. If in the negative, the "Proposition" said "the only step that we desire the administration to take...is to reply this negativism in writing...!"

From *A Report on the Two and One Half Hour Occupation of the President's Office of SJU on Nov. 16, 1970* in the SJU Archives
“A Proposition Concerning Black Survival”
http://www.csbsju.edu/Images/SJU%20Archives/AProposalConcerningBlackSurvival_1g.jpg
“A Proposition Concerning Black Survival”
http://www.csbsju.edu/Images/SJU%20Archives/AProposalConcerningBlackSurvival_1g.jpg
The President's Administrative Council met Nov. 13th about the students' *Proposition:*

**MINUTES OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL MEETING**
13 November 1970

President's Conference Room 11:00 a.m.

Present: Fr. Colman Barry, Don Conway, Fr. Alfred Deutsch, Fr. John Eidenschink, Dr. Jos. Farry, Dr. Ed Henry, Dr. Mark Hughes, Dr. John Lange, Fr. Aidan McGoll, Fr. Florian Huggli, S. Doreen Brennan, Robert Flannery, Dave VanLandschoot.

Agenda: 1. OAAS PROPOSAL 2. OPEN HOUSING PROPOSAL 3. BLACK OCCUPATION

1. Fr. Colman began the meeting by saying that Fr. Gopaul, Fr. Aidan and Dave VanLandschoot had formulated an answer to the document and that as a result a letter, signed by Fr. Colman would be sent today to every black student on campus.

- Letter is a good strategy
- Are a few blacks forcing division among all?
- Include Bahamians and Africans? Trying to “divide and conquer”?
- Downplay it; “feared white reaction”

Fr. Aidan said that we are not getting out of the problem because it is obvious that this institution is going to have to make some changes in its thrust in order to meet the demands of the students it brings in. St. John's has not faced up to the problem. This will give it an opportunity to do so.

1970 Nov. 13 Minutes of the Administrative Council meeting, p. 1 & p. 3
Robert Flannery was a 1969 SJU grad who went on to the graduate school, hence would have been representing the graduate and/or seminary students. Dave Van Landschoot was a sophomore in November 1970.
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Agenda: 1. OAAS PROPOSAL
2. OPEN HOUSING PROPOSAL
3. BLACK OCCUPATION

3. Fr. Colman informed the Council that a group of blacks plan to occupy the President’s office with food and primitive weapons on Monday. He will leave the office open but not be there. The very personal files will be placed in the vault.

Dr. Henry suggested injunctive procedures.

Dr. Farry said the District Court Judge could issue the injunctions.

Fr. Colman will prepare the University injunctions and notify the District Court Judge for the government injunction. He will explain the serving of the injunctions to the protestors.


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Dear Students:

I am replying in this letter to "A Proposition Concerning Black Survival" which was presented to me on 11 November 1970. I presented the proposition to the Administrative Council of Saint John's University and they have considered the proposition.

The Administrative Council of Saint John's University unanimously states that we cannot consider any proposition which is not signed by those who present it. We ask that signatures be subscribed to this petition.

But since the proposition is unsigned, there is no way in which to know how many students are represented or the dimension of specific requests.

(Signed)
Colman J. Barry
President
At 2:45 P.M. on the 16th about 20 black students from SJU and CSB entered the President's Office carrying food supplies and boards to barricade themselves inside. The secretary was asked to leave the office and Fr. Colman himself was in St. Paul attending a funeral.

SJU's legal counsel and the local police were summoned, attempts were made to persuade the students to leave, and, when nine refused, a legal injunction was read aloud...

A Report on the Two and One Half Hour Occupation of the President's Office of SJU on Nov. 16, 1970, p. 3 and Nov. 17, 1970 St. Cloud Times’ account of the Nov. 16 protest
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Nov. 17, 1970: St. Cloud Times’ account of the Nov. 16 protest
It made the front page of the Minneapolis paper, too
Blacks seized St. John’s office… why?

‘If we wait any longer we will begin to die out’

Those who stayed did so because “there was a certain commitment made by the black students, and it just so happened that there were nine students who kept the commitment,” according to Leroy W. Smith, a 19-year-old freshman from St. Louis, Mo.

Smith said the demands and the occupation were fueled by a fear that “if we wait any longer for what we want, we will gradually begin to die out.”

“We wanted to tell the colleges to give us our lives back,” said Shirley Nkrumah Sanders, 19, a sophomore from a segregated high school in Pickens, Miss.

“We wanted to show,” said Charles Harvey, an 18-year-old freshman from St. Louis, “that we really want to survive. We were only talking about surviving.” The two campuses have a combined enrollment of about 2,200 students, of which 121 are black.
Blacks seized St. John’s office... why?

By JOHN GREENWALD
Minneapolis Star Staff Writer

ELM, Minn.—“I had to pick one course of action and at times I was watching the consequences and the序列
down I knew I had made the right choice.
when I suddenly felt I was a man.”

Thoughts of survival also were expressed yesterday by Father Barry.
Sipping a glass of Scotch whiskey in his 100-year-old office, the priest
said the Order of St. Benedict, which runs the two schools, “has been
going for 14 centuries, and we intend to keep going.”
He said a campus disciplinary board is withholding the occupation until the students’ court case is settled. A similar decision
was reached by a board at St. Benedict.

November 18, 1970 Minneapolis Star newspaper quotes
Fr. Barry Appeals for Calm as 9 Black Students Return to Class

Collegeville, Minn. — Black students involved in a takeover of the president’s office at St. John’s University Monday were expected back in class today after an appeal from university President Rev. Coleman J. Barry for “calm and forbearance.”

Fr. Barry issued his statement after noon Tuesday following an appearance in court of nine of the students.

The nine, five from St. John’s and four women from the College of St. Benedict, St. Joseph, were released on their own recognizance by Stearns County District Court, postponing the formal arraignment until Nov. 25.

The nine were arrested on contempt charges for disobeying a court order demanding they leave the office. About nine others left when the order was read to them.

District Court Judge Paul Hoffman reduced bond set at $1,000 Monday night to $500 Tuesday but warned the students against any further confrontation before their court appearance.

The All-College Board postponed action on the case Tuesday night until after the students appear in court.

Fr. Barry’s statement is:

“As president of St. John’s University I wish to thank all administrators, faculty and students for the calm that prevailed on our campus during and after the incident of yesterday (Monday) afternoon when the office of the president was taken over. The incident was handled well, according to all reports which I have received, and I am grateful to all who showed their concern, and for the effort that was made by everyone to prevent a more serious outbreak.

“It is in times such as this that our Christian and Benedictine heritage must manifest itself both in action and in word. And so it is that I appeal to each and everyone this morning to remain cool and calm.

“Our five St. John’s students who were arrested yesterday (Monday) afternoon have been freed by the court on their own recognizance, and the hearing has been postponed until Wednesday, so that legal counsel may be obtained by those involved.

“The students, therefore, will be returning to our campus, and, because we must not pre-judge them, either on the basis of the civil action or on the basis of the incident here, I ask that these students be received back with true Christian charity and understanding. I believe that there is a real distinction between condoning what has been done, and forgiving the persons involved. This does not mean that no action will be taken. But the action that will be taken must be in accord with our regular academic procedures. The All-College Board, therefore, will meet as soon as possible to consider the facts in the case.

“The All-College Board, as you well know, is made up of faculty and students, and I am fully confident that justice and right, based on Christian charity and forbearance, will prevail.

“Again, therefore, I appeal to each and to all, to let the regular university procedures take place in a spirit of calm and quiet dedication to our usual way of living as students and members of the faculty of this community. We now have the opportunity to be leaders; let us not jeopardize that opportunity by any manner of acting or speaking that is not fully Christian.”
Fr. Barry Appeals for Calm as 9 Black Students Return to Class

COLLEGEVILLE, Minn. — Black students involved in a takeover of the president’s office at St. John’s University Monday were expected back in class today after an appeal from university President Rev. Colman J. Barry for “calm and forbearance.”

Fr. Barry issued his statement after noon Tuesday following an appearance in court of nine of the students.

“The nine, five from St. John’s office. About nine others left when the order was read to them,” District Court Judge Paul Hoffman reduced bond set at $1,000 Monday night to $50 Tuesday but warned the students against any further confrontation before their court appearance.

The All-College Board postponed action on the case Tuesday night until after the students appear in court.

Father Barry had earlier written a general letter asking that the St. John’s students “be received back with true Christian charity and understanding.”

Several defendants denied being in need of either quality yesterday.

“They act as if we had committed some sort of crime,” observed Louise Anderson, a freshman from Pine Bluff, Ark.

“They say follow your conscience,” added Harvey, “and then when we do they say, ‘Oh, why did you do that?’”
On the afternoon and evening of November 24, the day before the five St. John's students and four St. Ben's Students were to appear in court, the Executive Governing Board of St. John's University met to consider how the University would respond to the action of the students. The two motions below were the result of hearing all sides of the issue for more than three hours.

"It was moved (Mr. Hughes) and seconded (Father Colman) that the Executive Governing Board go on record as being opposed to acceding to the demands of the O.A.A.S. as presented to Father Colman.

"It was moved (Fr. Alfred) and seconded (Father Abbot) that the Executive Governing Board of St. John's recognizes that certain needs exist in St. John's University and at the College of St. Benedict's for which funds are not now available. It urges Dr. Idzerda and Father Colman to raise funds on behalf of St. John's University and the College of St. Benedict which may be expended by them for specific purposes including legitimate needs of the black community. The Board recommends that Dr. Idzerda and Father Colman, or their designates, consult with appropriate groups including members of the black community in such needs."
Nine black students who took over the president’s office at St. John’s University Nov. 15, pleaded guilty to contempt charges in Stearns County District Court today, were given a 30-day suspended sentence, and then discussed their problems with Judge Paul Hoffman.

Hoffman told the students, four from the College of St. Benedict, St. Joseph, and five from St. John’s, Collegeville, that he would normally pass a suspended sentence of 90 days for a contempt of court charge but said that “circumstances of this case distinguishes it from the average.”

He told the defendants, “It is difficult, if not completely impossible, for me to understand the full extent of your problems, stresses and strains, so I decided to reduce the term.”

At the end of the hearing, shortly before noon today, the judge asked the court reporter to allow some off-the-record discussion and entered into a dialogue with the students about their problems at the two schools.

The students appear in court before Judge Hoffman on Nov. 25

St. Cloud Times
Nov. 25, 1970

Judge Paul G. Hoffman

St. Cloud Times account of the students’ hearing in district court
On December 7th, the All-College Board met
J-Book, "The All-College Board is empowered by the university to take necessary action in any case in which the behavior of the student is unacceptable to the university community. It may impose probation, suspension or dismissal.

"The All College Board on the advise of the presiding Judge decided against taking any further action against the students who invaded the President's Office. The punishment imposed by the Court is more severe than any punishment this Board could impose."

A Report on the Two and One Half Hour Occupation of the President's Office of SJU on Nov. 16, 1970, p. 9
On December 18, 1970, the St. John’s Administrative Council unanimously approved this Statement of Policy:

"Disruption of the normal functioning of the University will not be tolerated; if after having been officially warned the disruptors persist, the assistance of the civil authorities may be invoked."

A Report on the Two and One Half Hour Occupation of the President's Office of SJU on Nov. 16, 1970, p. 9
Idzerda's statement after the event - 1970-12-18 Community p. 1-2

http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/SJUArchives/id/42151 and

"We've Only Just Begun," The Torch, March 25, 1971, p. 4, by Joan Knothe.

http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/singleitem(collection/CSBArchNews/id/470
When asked, the students said they want to remain at the schools and help “prepare the groundwork for our brothers and sisters who will be coming up next year.”

“People might ask, ‘If you hate the place, why don’t you leave?’” remarked an 18-year-old sophomore known to the university as Russel J. Larkin, but who prefers to be called Kuaku Shabazz Nkrumah.

“I would say to them,” he went on, “that if I did that I would have to pack up and leave America, because America is Western culture, and the only way is to stay here and face it.”

Letterhead from 1976 02 12 Black Student Union letter to Blecker Box 246 f6 November 18, 1970 Minneapolis Star newspaper quotes
1970 Sagatagan yearbook,
http://www.csbsju.edu/Images/SJU%20Archives/Sag_1970_pg139.jpg