Fists balled and raised, black berets, head wraps, swaying Afros, sunglasses, black leather jackets, army fatigue coats, dashikis, African garb, with Curtis Mayfield singing “We’re a Winner” in the background, shouting from fuming lips and posters in the foreground: “black power, racism, relevancy, black pride, revolution, equality, non-negotiable demands, student control, Black Studies, Black University”—higher education was under siege. The academic status quo had been destabilized. On February 13, 1969, black student activism and its challenge soared to a record level. Nine hundred National Guardsmen strolled onto the UW Madison campus with fixed bayonets that Thursday. Some rode on jeeps decked with machine guns. Helicopters surveyed the thousands of protesters. If the presence of city police had stirred campus activism a few days earlier when black students kicked off their strike, then the National Guard whipped students into a frenzy. After picketing and obstructing traffic during the day, about ten thousand students, with African American torch bearers leading the way, walked in the cold from the university to the capitol in the largest student march of the Black Campus Movement (BCM). Their bodies may have been freezing that night, but their mouths were on fire: “On strike, shut it down!” “Support the black demands!”

Meanwhile that day, the nationally renowned SF State strike—a protest that popularized the mantra “On strike, shut it down!”—entered its third month. At UC Berkeley, police brutality caused the two-week-old boycott of classes to escalate. Black Student(s) Alliance (BSA) members at Roosevelt-U in Chicago continued their week of disrupting classes to teach Black Studies. The night before, BSA members rejected a deal offered by Dean of Students Lawrence Silverman that included amnesty and written responses to their demands for a Black Studies department under their control. In a statement, the BSA yelled, “We will continue our program, BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY!!” Black students at U-Illinois delivered a list of demands to administrators on February 13, calling for the establishment of a Black Cultural Center and a Black Studies department, and the hiring of fifty black residence hall counselors and five hundred black professors. At Duke, forty-eight black collegians entered the administration building in the early morning, walked to the central records section, and told the clerical workers they had to leave. They then nailed the doors shut, threatened to burn university records if the police were called, and renamed the space “Malcolm X Liberation School.” They issued thirteen demands, including the creation of a Black Studies
department controlled by students, money for a Black Student Union building, a black dorm, and an end to “racist policies.”

At City College of New York, also on February 13, with a cold wind blowing, President Buell Gallagher stood on a snow-covered lawn in front of the administration building and delivered a speech that swirled coldly around affirming the five demands issued a week earlier. Livid, since they wanted a firm commitment that day, 300 black and Puerto Rican students swarmed into the administration building and ejected its workers. They plastered their demands on walls and ceilings and one student waved a sign that read, “Free Huey: Che Guevara, Malcolm X University.” While City College students occupied the building for three and half hours, in the Deep South, more than 90 percent of students at Mississippi Valley State avoided classroom buildings. Stokely Carmichael had launched the black power slogan into America’s social atmosphere in 1966, in Greenwood, ten miles from Mississippi Valley State. Wilhelm Joseph Jr., from Trinidad, like Carmichael, had been radically moved by the slogan. He successfully ran for student body president on a ticket that boasted, “We are going to move this place! This is a black college.” Under his leadership, students pressed for the ability to don African garb and Afros, to study people of African descent in their courses, and to terminate campus paternalism, student powerlessness, and the poor quality of faculty and facilities. In total, they presented twenty-six demands leading to the boycott. State police and campus security officers swooped in and transported 196 strikers to Jackson, imprisoned a dozen others, and put out a warrant on four leaders (including Joseph). Close to 200 protesters were expelled.

February 13, 1969, looms as the most unruly day of the BCM. If there was a day, or the day, that black campus activists forced the racial reconstitution of higher education, it was February 13, 1969. Black students disrupted higher education in almost every area of the nation—the Midwest in Illinois and Wisconsin; the Northeast in New York; the Upper South in North Carolina; the Deep South in Mississippi; the West Coast in the Bay Area. It was a day that emitted the anger, determination, and agency of a generation that stood on the cutting edge of educational progression. It was like no other day in the history of black higher education—a history of turmoil and progress, accommodation and advancement, isolation and community. Like the BCM it highlighted, this day had been in the making for more than one hundred years and changed the course of higher education for decades to come.

* * *

February 13, 1969, stands at the apex of the BCM, the subject of this book. During this movement, which emerged in 1965 and declined in 1972, hundreds of thousands of black campus activists (and sympathizers), aided on some campuses by white, Latino/a, Chicano/a, Native American, and Asian students, requested, demanded, and protested for a relevant learning experience. Notions of relevancy differed with activist ideologies that ranged from moderate to radical nationalists. In most cases, students considered a relevant education one that interrogated
progressive African American and Third World literature and gave students the intellectual tools to fix a broken society. Students crusaded at upwards of one thousand colleges and universities, in every state except Alaska. When they principally utilized campus activism against higher education during this eight-year social movement, they were black campus activists to distinguish from the many black students who chose not to participate and from students engaged off campus in the myriad of black power groups in the late 1960s and early 1970s.4

To disentangle this social movement from other threads of activism during the Black Power Movement (BPM), from the campus movements waged by other racial groups at the time, and from black student off-campus activism during the contemporary civil rights period (1954–1965), this struggle among black student nationalists at historically white and black institutions to reconstitute higher education from 1965 to 1972 has been termed the Black Campus Movement. Even though they both tend to be conceptually located in what is widely known as the Black Student Movement, this late 1960s black power campus struggle represented a profound ideological, tactical, and spatial shift from early 1960s off-campus civil rights student confrontations. They were not merely different phases of the Black Student Movement. Along with the generally unknown New Negro Campus Movement of the 1920s, they were unique social movements, or, more precisely, separate but interlocking tussles in the Long Black Student Movement (LBSM) from 1919 to 1972.5

Akin to the concomitant Black Arts Movement, Black Theology Movement, and Black Feminist Movement, to name a few of the black power social movements scholars have distinguished, this period of black student activism should be understood as a social movement in its own right. In addition, even though black students battled the same structure in the same space with similarities in their ideas and tactics, and were sometimes allies, their struggle must be conceptualized as independent from white student activism. A few scholars have already followed the New York Times, which published a story on May 12, 1969, with the headline “The Campus Revolutions: One is Black, One White.” In sum, the BCM was at the same time a part of and apart from three larger social movements: the transhistorical LBSM, beginning after World War I; the transracial student movement of the Long Sixties; and the transobjective contemporary BPM of the late 1960s and early 1970s.6

At historically white and black colleges and universities, black campus activists formed the nation’s first chain of politically and culturally progressive black student unions with varying names and gained control of many student government associations. They utilized these Black Student(s) Unions (BSUs) and Student Government Associations (SGAs) as pressure groups to pursue a range of campus alterations, including an end to paternalism and racism, and the addition of more black students, faculty, administrators, and Black Studies courses, programs, and departments. They fought at almost every historically black college and university for a black-dominated, oriented, and radical “Black University” to replace what they theorized as the white-controlled, Eurocentric, bourgeoisie, accommodationist “Negro University.” Their ultimate aim was to revolutionize higher education.
Black campus activists did not succeed in revolutionizing higher education. However, they did succeed in shoving to the center a series of historically marginalized academic ideas, questions, frames, methods, perspectives, subjects, and pursuits. They were able to succeed in pushing into higher education a profusion of racial reforms—in the form of people, programs, and literature. Most decisively, but least chronicled, black campus activists succeeded in exchanging the academy’s century-old racist ideals. The 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* decision, which deemed unconstitutional separate but equal public policy, did not do this. Neither did the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which outlawed discrimination. The BCM forced the rewriting of the racial constitution of higher education, the central contention of this text.

* * *

Although undermined since 1919 by the LBSM, and more recently by the *Brown* decision and the Civil Rights Act, in 1965 there were at least four entrenched elements that had long undergirded the racial constitution of higher education: the *moralized contraption, standardization of exclusion, normalized mask of whiteness,* and *ladder altruism*. The moralized contraption was a system of rules, in place at practically all HBCUs, that regulated student freedom and agency. Students were told when to eat, sleep, study, and socialize. Chapel, convocation, and class attendance were mandatory, and women were slapped with additional restrictions. These rules, injected by white benefactors, paternalists, and black accommodationists, were meant to Christianize and civilize, and ultimately to induce submission to the white supremacist, capitalist, patriarchal American order. The ideas that justified these rules were deeply colonialist, racist, and sexist, and the moralized contraption resembled the off-campus segregationist directives that continuously endeavored, for a century after the Civil War, to keep African Americans a step away from slavery. In place of the contraption, Black campus activists demanded moral freedom.

Moreover, the open exclusion of African Americans from faculties, student bodies, administrations, coaching staffs—from every facet of the communities at historically white colleges and universities—was standardized. Standardized (or standardization) as opposed to standard, since the exclusion was not by happenstance. Inequality is never a coincidence. African Americans were purposefully excluded by academics. The prohibition or marginalization of Africana scholarship from curricula was standardized by academics at both historically white colleges and universities (HWCUs) and HBCUs. African Americans were also customarily excluded from many (usually private) HBCU professorial bodies and presidencies into the 1920s, and from boards of trustees into the 1960s. There were instances in which black concepts and people found their way into these terrains, but these were the exceptions to the rule, to the standard. The desegregation movement created many of these exceptions, for instance, as did the slight postwar flow of African Americans into HWCUs. Black students demanded more than exceptions. They desired the standardization of inclusion.
Exclusion was not merely standardized in 1965. Those who kept African Americans at bay projected the exclusionary environment as the norm. Notions of objectivity, removed scientific inquiry, unbiased scholarly assessments, empiricism, standardized tests, universalism, evolutionism, and Eurocentric thinking are a few of the many constructs that academics, politicians, and benefactors used to mask the preponderance of whiteness—white ideas, people, and scholarship—as normal. Thus, white racists and capitalists and black accommodationists actively created and maintained this white normality by masking it, by removing the adjectives, by denigrating and downgrading everything non-European, everything outside of the Eurocentric or capitalist homily. European history and literature were not presented as such. Academics labeled it the history and literature. By conceiving of European (and Euro-American) scholarship as superior to all others, they racialized it, they gave it whiteness—an officious social construct of racial superiority. Academics had still veiled the academy with the normalized mask of whiteness in 1965, with few holes, compelling students to demand its removal and denormalization.

During the century preceding the BCM, when academics were not normalizing and masking whiteness, they were instituting and encouraging ladder altruism. They taught the many altruistic African American college students to believe that their personal advancement up the American ladder of success advanced African America as a whole through the societal doors that graduates opened and through their function as role models. Meanwhile, academics, politicians, and capital allowed colleges and universities to serve as ladders, removing African Americans politically, economically, and culturally from the black masses. In contrast to ladder altruism, black campus activists demonstrated for the demolishing of the personal and institutional ladders, and demanded an ideological and tactical reconnection through grassroots altruism. In sum, black campus activists during the BCM challenged the rules and regulations (moralized contraption), black marginalization from practically all facets of higher education (standardization of exclusion), the irrelevant curriculum, which they termed White Studies (normalized mask of whiteness), and the fact that academia encouraged and facilitated their removal from the masses (ladder altruism).

* * *

Literature on the BCM has been largely subsumed in the historiographies of the Student, Black Student, and Black Power movements, with white student activism, early 1960s civil rights remonstrating, and off-campus engagements, respectively, receiving most of the attention. The black campus struggle has been largely relegated and scattered in these three areas of inquiry. When the BCM has been studied, the treatments have almost always been campus specific, as historians have detailed the struggle at U-Illinois, UPENN, Columbia, Rutgers, Cornell, NYU, and SF State—to name the most expansive and prominent campus studies. The SC State (1968) and Jackson State (1970) “massacres” of black students have also been examined. The Black Campus Movement provides the first comprehensive national examination of black campus activism at black and white four-year
colleges and universities in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It situates each campus struggle in the national movement and delivers a national purview for future campus studies. The Black Campus Movement not only centers the combating of the racial constitution of higher education at the locus of this history. It bonds the activism at HWCUs and HBCUs. It continues the recent scholarly revelation of the array of radicalism at HBCUs in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the multitude of women and moderate black power activists, black power organizing with whites, and black student activism prior to 1960, all the while presenting the range and attainments of black power, negotiating local with national activism, connecting and disconnecting black power to civil rights, elaborating on the most recent golden stretch of black educational nationalism, providing the movement context for the rise of what is now called Africana Studies, and showing the vicious backlash to the BCM. It places 1969 (as opposed to 1968) at the peak of black student activism, at both HWCUs and HBCUs, and the national clamor for relevancy, including Africana Studies. It pulls the origin of the movement back from 1967 or 1968 to 1965, while demonstrating that the Orangeburg Massacre (February 8, 1968) and the assassination of the Martin Luther King (April 4, 1968) did not spark the struggle, as some scholars have claimed. Those societal tragedies only accelerated it. This book proves that the movement did not start at HWCUs nor did the most “militant” protests disrupt those institutions. It complicates the more celebrated story of campus activism at HWCUs and expounds on this emergent literature by elucidating the largely unknown struggle at rural liberal arts colleges, remote institutions in the Great Plains, Northwest, and New England, and recently desegregated southern HWCUs. The study enters the discourse at the time of an evolving battle among the increasingly powerful race-neutrality advocates, who are advancing on race-specificity and diversity, and reinscribing the pre-1965 racial constitution of higher education in the name of integration, color blindness, and racial progress. At the same time, the vines of diversity continue to ensnare the halls of the academy and grow further away from their roots of resistance—systematically unearthed and revealed for the first time in this book.

Neither the cultural nor political-economic features of the movement—their cause and effect—were shortchanged during this historical analysis. The words, deeds, and perspectives of black campus activists rested at the center of this investigation. Therefore, the documents they produced and their voices, presented in publications during the movement, provided the bulk of the evidence. Oral history interviews of activists conducted after the struggle, secondary campus-specific studies, and documents produced by the marginal actors of the movement—administrators, professors, and black leaders, for instance—enhanced this delineation. Campus-specific ideas, outlooks, reactions, requests, demands, protests, and implementations were fused into a national depiction of the BCM.

The initial chapter provides an introduction to the history of black higher education in the United States before the BCM. It addresses the harsh experiences of black students and offers the top-down configuration of the racial constitution of higher education by white paternalists and capitalists, black egalitarian
elites, accommodating separatists, and revolting nationalists. The next two chapters discuss the activist response to racism and segregation on and off campus through a survey of the LBSM from 1919 to 1962. More than thirty years of mass black student activism set the stage for the BCM. In particular, the successes, failures, repression, and ideological and tactical lessons emanating from the Civil Rights Movement (CRM) (and early black power) in the first half of the 1960s provided the immediate social conditions that spawned the BCM. Chapter 4 presents this making of the movement from 1963 to 1965, and ascertains the factors that refined and circulated black student ideology during the BCM. Since they on occasion reference the BCM and the 1960s, these four chapters are not “traditional” histories, but rather provide the historical context for the BCM.

With the immediate prehistory of the movement and the ideas, societal calamities, and forms of consciousness raising that energized the BCM laid out, Chapter 5 provides a narrative historical overview of the BCM. Chapter 6 delves deeper into the movement by examining the disposition of black student organizing—their demands, protests, and support—while the following chapter discloses the forms of opposition and repression students faced. The final chapter lays out the new ideals (and reforms) their struggle brought to life, or rather forced to the center. An epilogue providing a post-history of black student activism and an analysis of the revitalization of the racial constitution through egalitarian exclusion concludes The Black Campus Movement.