

## CHAPTER 9

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# We Shall Have Cocktails in the Gloaming

## *Aftermath*

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The Allen Building takeover and the ensuing melee on the quad triggered intense reactions among all segments of the Duke community. Letters poured in to Knight and other members of his administration. Differences of opinion were stark. “Everybody had an idea about what to do,” Knight wrote to one alumnus, “but naturally the ideas were in violent conflict with one another.” As a result, the takeover and the events that followed were, according to the Duke president, “as strenuous an experience as I can remember.”<sup>1</sup>

Trustees were pleased that the police had been called in. “I have heard nothing but praise from those I have talked with for this prompt and firm action,” trustee and Executive Committee member Henry Rauch wrote to provost Marcus Hobbs. Tom Finch, president of Thomasville Furniture Industries, commended Knight for his “firmness.” He likened the takeover to “sitdown strikes” in an industrial plant. “If management does not act promptly . . . and with extreme firmness,” he told Knight, “management loses control of the situation,” warning that “it may be as many as 10 years before any semblance of proper order can be restored.”<sup>2</sup>

Faculty were also mainly supportive of the administration. In response to a questionnaire circulated by sociologists Allan Kornberg and Kurt Black,

87 percent called the occupation “unjustified” and fewer than 25 percent called the administration’s handling of the occupation “bad.” “A considerable number [of faculty] felt that the black students had a more than ordinary duty to conform,” Knight explained, “to be good ‘white’ students.” He saw a “lively sense of outrage” among faculty over the takeover. “There can be no compromise whatever with violence and destruction,” faculty member and nuclear physicist Lawrence Biedenharn wrote. “When students perform criminal acts, they must be treated as criminals,” biochemistry professor Irwin Fridovich commented. He called for the expulsion *and* criminal prosecution of the protesters and opposed any form of amnesty for students he called “outlaws.” Faculty who opposed the administration’s handling of the takeover felt strongly as well. “I am ashamed of what you have done today,” assistant professor Robert Jackson wrote to Knight in a telegram. “This should be a community of reason, not of force.”<sup>3</sup>

Student opinion was divided. As many as 56 percent of undergraduates and 68 percent of graduate and professional students called the takeover “unjustified.” But 51 percent in each group described the administration’s handling of the event “bad.” In an editorial, the *Duke Chronicle* called the administration’s decision to call in the police “reprehensible and immoral” and “stupid in the extreme.” Graduate student James Huntley Grayson wrote to Knight just after he was released from the hospital following the melee on the quad. Grayson protested the “completely irresponsible action of the police,” saying he “was beaten for no other reason . . . than the fact that I did not move fast enough.” Student Ray Winton objected to the takeover. “As a fellow student of [those] students who took over the offices in Allen Building,” he wrote, “I am in favor of nothing less than their expulsion from Duke University.”<sup>4</sup>

Not surprisingly, the Kornberg and Black questionnaire found that the intervention of police on campus made students more sympathetic to the occupation and increasingly likely to consider the administration’s handling of the protest “bad.” Cook observed the unfolding of this dynamic, going so far as to call the police “the great evangelicals.” The police, Cook believed, “did more to help the blacks’ cause at Duke than almost all the liberals who had ever been there.” “For that brief moment,” Brenda Armstrong explained, “everybody [on the quad] understood the desperation, the feeling of not having any options. . . . They felt what it was like to not be heard.”<sup>5</sup>

Alumni reactions were the most negative. With few exceptions, Duke graduates were profoundly disturbed by the takeover and angry that Duke administrators had allowed matters to reach this point. “We are waiting to see

who is in control of Duke University,” one wrote. “Duke is too great a school to be dragged down by a bunch of punks.” William J. Massey, a 1962 graduate, urged “maintenance of administrative control by whatever means necessary.” “Trespass and destruction of private property are as wrong in 1969,” an alumnus from Florida wrote, “as they were when the Goths overran Rome, and when Nazi legions pillaged Poland and France.” “If there must be a war on the Duke University campus,” another said, “let it be said that Duke fought for the aims for which it was created.”<sup>6</sup>

A number of alumni used racially charged language to express their concern. “Expel the Black Bastards,” one alumnus wrote. “Expel ‘em all and admit no more of them,” a double-degree graduate from Asheville urged. “Otherwise, they will expel you.” “Your first mistake was to enroll them,” a class of ’49 graduate wrote to Knight. “Organize Duke grads all over the world if need be not only to drive the animals out but keep them out.” One alumnus from Gastonia, North Carolina, drew on his sense of Duke history to make his point. James Duke’s sole purpose in setting up the Duke Indenture, he said, “was to provide for the education of the young people of the South. I do not believe that he intended the school to be established for the purpose of integration. It is a shame to permit a handful of burr-heads to disrupt . . . Duke University,” he concluded.<sup>7</sup>

Such comments, according to Knight, “weren’t just reflecting the feeling of the moment. They were reflecting feelings that were years long.” “The assumption was that once a commitment had been made to accept black students, that was all we needed to do,” Knight recounted. “The fact that Ralph Ellison’s ‘invisible men’ were still invisible was of no concern.” In this context, demands by the Black students for changes to university policy, curriculum, and culture seemed unfathomable. “It was only [after the Allen Building takeover] that I found out how deep the racist convictions went,” Knight reflected. “Then the requirement to bow to racial equality would evaporate.”<sup>8</sup> Challenged from all sides, Knight would struggle to find a path forward for the university—and himself.

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In the days following the takeover, tensions on campus remained high. Following up on a request from Knight, Durham mayor Robert Wensell “Wense” Grabarek sent a telegram to Governor Scott on February 14. “Due to uncertainty of existing conditions and possible attendant repercussions,” the mayor

requested that “National Guard troops remain available for immediate call through the weekend of February 15 and 16.” Acting at the request of the state adjutant general, Knight’s previously announced speech on February 15 in the indoor stadium was canceled. A statement by the university said that the action was taken “in order to avoid a large gathering during a time of tension on the campus.” The Duke president “feared that with a number of polarized groups there might be disruption.”<sup>9</sup>

The administration’s attempts to avoid a “large gathering” on campus were unsuccessful. On Saturday at 12:30 p.m., the time of Knight’s scheduled speech, a crowd of two thousand packed Page Auditorium for a community “convocation” to discuss events since the takeover and the student response. When Black students arrived minutes later, led by Howard Fuller, they were greeted with a standing ovation.<sup>10</sup>

Michael McBride, president of the AAS, spoke first. He emphasized the importance of Black student control over matters that involved them. On Black studies, for example, McBride argued that “white people cannot objectively set up a program about Black people.” Accordingly, he said, “Black people will set up the program; Black people will control the program; Black people will teach the courses.” McBride also made clear that any Black student adviser must be selected “in direct consultation” with the Black students. “How in the hell,” he said, “are them white people over in Allen Building going to select a Black adviser for me? They don’t know what Black people are. They don’t know who can relate to us.”<sup>11</sup>

After other speakers, including Fuller and William Griffith, addressed the gathering, someone suggested that a group march to Knight’s house to ask the Duke president “for a just redress of our grievances.” After Fuller “seconded the motion,” the march began. Just after a crowd of about one thousand arrived at University House, what the *Duke Chronicle* described as “a tired, frightened Douglas Knight” met them outside.<sup>12</sup> A chaotic, combative exchange followed.

“You’ve never really shown good faith,” one student charged. Claiming that steps taken by the university thus far were only those necessary to “placate a few people,” the student demanded that Knight “do a lot of things right now.” “We have met several of those demands . . . and you know it,” Knight responded. “And we will work with the others as fast as we can if we have that chance.” “We want some action!” a student shouted. “I’m sorry that the things that have been done . . . fit your idea of nothing at all,” Knight said, “because they have been considerable.”<sup>13</sup>

Knight thought he could demonstrate the university's good faith by discussing progress on a Black studies program. Presumably referring to the work of the Proctor Committee appointed in early November, he told the group about a department of Afro-American studies that "respected members of the faculty" had "recommended . . . to us." The department would "take some time to put . . . together," he explained, and "has to be approved by the entire faculty." Continuing, Knight described how "a great many of the courses that made the best sense in that department are already being taught in the university. . . . There will be others," he said, "that I'm sure we'll want to work out together." These facts, Knight said, showed that the university had "honestly, in good faith . . . worked toward this department. Is that an unfair statement?" Knight asked.<sup>14</sup>

"Yes," Chuck Hopkins responded, "it's unfair." In fact, the university had never announced the formation of the Proctor Committee and students were unaware that specific planning for a Black studies program for undergraduates had started. Far from confirming that the university was working "honestly" and in "good faith," Knight's reference to a faculty recommendation on Black studies only confirmed the Black students' fear that they would have little, if any, input into the program. "Who developed this program?" Hopkins asked. "We had no part in developing it." As to Knight's assertion that many courses in Duke's Black studies program were already being taught at the university, Hopkins was incredulous. "The people who run these departments are old and are not qualified to deal with what we are talking about," he told Knight. "They are not qualified to relate to Black people. They're not qualified to relate to a Black studies program. We will not accept such a program being forced down our throats. You can name it a Black studies program, but it's not a Black studies program. It's something you've thrown together to appease people."<sup>15</sup>

For Fuller, student involvement—from the outset—was the key issue. "Are you prepared," he asked Knight, "to give Black students the voice and control of various aspects of the Afro studies program? Who's going to write up the whole Afro studies program to start with?" he asked. "We're saying Black students are the ones who've got to be involved with it." Knight was willing to concede some student participation but only to a point. Students would be "involved" but not "controlling all by themselves," he clarified. "I'm not saying that any one group controls it."<sup>16</sup> Black students took Knight's response to mean that since "control" of Black studies was shared among groups, they would have the power to block any proposal they did not endorse. In truth, the university had no intention of ceding this level of control over the devel-

opment of a university academic program. The stage was thus set for further conflict in the coming days.

After more back-and-forth, Knight and the students agreed to hold a follow-up meeting to discuss the Black students' demands. Attended by AAS representatives, faculty, and administrators, the meeting would convene at University House at 8:00 p.m. that evening.<sup>17</sup>

Early Saturday evening, Knight's first public comments on the takeover were broadcast over WDBS. After providing reassurance of his "longstanding and deep concern for the position of black students on the Duke campus," the Duke president said that police were called to campus only as a last option. "I regret more than I can ever tell any one of you, that it was necessary to bring police onto the campus," he said. "But no honest choice was made evident to us during the ten hours . . . in which we proposed a great variety of possible solutions to those occupying the building."<sup>18</sup> The fact that the university had made only one attempt to speak directly with the Black students and that it had refused a late afternoon offer by students to negotiate seemed to directly contradict the "great variety of possible solutions" that Knight mentioned.

Following his remarks on WDBS, the 8:00 p.m. meeting at Knight's house was productive. Board chair Charles "Wade was there, Knight was there. Howard Fuller was there and a half a dozen Black students, all dressed in black," Richard Watson recalled. Joining them were three members of the Kerckhoff Committee and Hobbs. "Howard Fuller was very eloquent in outlining the so-called demands," Watson noted. "In almost every instance, Knight seemed to give assurance that there was no real problem in working them out." After three hours, an agreement "in concept" was reached on all but one of the issues—amnesty for the Black student protesters. The group agreed that the Kerckhoff Committee and the AAS would work on a "joint statement" setting forth the points addressed at that evening's meeting. The statement would be presented to the Duke community in Page Auditorium at 2:30 p.m. on Sunday. The *Duke Chronicle* reported that before the Black students left, Knight counseled them "not to act victorious" and "not to boast that they gained concessions from him and others attending the meeting." The students agreed. "It was a very congenial affair," Watson said later of the meeting.<sup>19</sup>

Hopkins was the first to speak at the Sunday afternoon meeting in Page Auditorium, confirming that the Black students had agreed to the statement Kerckhoff would be reading. The students hoped, Hopkins said, "that the constructive results obtained [at the Saturday night meeting] will make Duke University more relevant to the needs and aspirations of black people."<sup>20</sup>

The “statement of understandings” Kerckhoff read was promising. At the Saturday night meeting, the discussion was “at a level of specificity and depth of meaning that was most impressive,” he noted. “A great deal of information was exchanged” and “some real understanding was achieved.” Kerckhoff reviewed the issues in three categories. The first were actions that had been taken by the university “about which the Afro-American students had not been fully informed.” As an example, Kerckhoff pointed to the “felt need for an advisor for black students.” Here he reiterated the university’s commitment to hire such a person but added that the individual selected “will be (must be) mutually acceptable to the students and the administration.” Applause greeted this clarification.<sup>21</sup>

The second category involved issues on which “tangible progress has been made and on which future plans have been made.” By far, the most important item in this category was Black studies. Referring to the funding proposal prepared by Professor Cell in late 1968 and the more recent work of the Proctor Committee, Kerckhoff characterized both as merely a “rough outline” for a Black studies program. He announced that an intensive multiday retreat would be scheduled in the near future “to move forward [on a Black studies program] at a rapid pace.” Black student representatives would attend the retreat, along with Duke faculty, members of the Kerckhoff Committee, and one or two outside consultants. A deadline of April 15 was established for completion of a Black studies proposal with at least some parts to be implemented by the start of the fall semester.<sup>22</sup>

This sounded positive. Not only would Black students participate in a retreat to plan the Black studies program at Duke, but the university had agreed to consult outsiders with deep experience in the area. Moreover, the deadlines Kerckhoff announced showed a sense of urgency. The crowd once again applauded.<sup>23</sup>

This positive response, however, turned out to be premature. The issue of how much control Black students would have over the development and implementation of the Black studies program remained unresolved. Asked if Black students would have “some sort of voting power in the hiring or firing of professors in the program,” Kerckhoff was ambiguous. He pointed to the upcoming retreat. “Where it goes from there depends on the outcome of that meeting,” Kerckhoff explained.<sup>24</sup> Whatever his intention, Black students heard this statement as confirmation that no framework for a Black studies program would emerge from the retreat without their agreement.

The final category involved issues about which “the expression of need by the [Black] students was not clearly understood.” These items included

grading, the formation of a committee on Black activities within the student union, a reconsideration of admissions criteria, an increase in the number of Black students on campus, and problems of police harassment. Without being specific, Kerckhoff had acknowledged that each issue required attention and agreed, in most instances, that his committee would help facilitate further discussions.<sup>25</sup>

Those in attendance felt that some progress had been made. After a brief question-and-answer session, the group voted to suspend the class boycott originally scheduled to run through Monday. The university later made clear that, notwithstanding their suspension “pending due process,” takeover participants could continue to attend classes, at least until a disciplinary hearing was held.

On Sunday evening, Knight again broadcast remarks over WDBS. The items covered in the “statement of understandings” read at Page in the afternoon were not “major new decisions,” Knight told the Duke community. Rather, they were “matters which actually have been concerns of the University for months or even years.” The results achieved “were not brought about by confrontation,” the Duke president insisted. Rather, “they were brought about . . . by human beings who met in mutual faith and true desire for the understanding of one another’s points of view.” In comments to the press, Frank Ashmore was even more direct. “The only thing [the protesters] accomplished,” he said, “was a recapitulation of what is being done or previously has been announced.”<sup>26</sup>

The university’s claim that no concessions had been made to the Black students was lost in the press coverage of the meeting. “University to Meet Most Afro Demands,” the *Duke Chronicle* announced in a large front-page headline. “We got more done in that three hours” at Knight’s house, McBride commented to the paper, “than we ever have before. . . . It’s amazing what they can do when they realize they have to do it.” As to Knight’s protestation that the items announced were already in the works, McBride was skeptical. “No matter what they want to say,” he commented, “we now have some specific answers we didn’t have before.”<sup>27</sup>

Newspapers throughout the South described the statement of understandings as capitulation by the university. “Stripped of its camouflage of misleading academic language,” the *Charleston Evening Post* editorialized, the “‘peace settlement’ arrived at by Duke University administrators and dissident Negro students boils down to one thing: abject surrender by the administration.” “The concessions which Duke University granted this weekend to a handful of



black militant students are a sell-out to violence,” the *Richmond News Leader* wrote. “When confronted by campus revolutionaries, Duke president Douglas M. Knight demonstrated weak-kneed ambivalence.”<sup>28</sup>

Letters and telegrams, most of them furious, again flooded in from alumni. Some blamed events on broader changes they had seen at Duke during the 1960s. “I have not approved of the growing liberal policy at Duke,” one wrote, “and feel sure that the present ultra-liberal policy is the reason students felt they could get by with revolution.” Another alumnus claimed that “Duke has let the character of the student body deteriorate” and argued that it was “in the name of liberalization” that the university “did not take a strong stand against the rebels.”<sup>29</sup>

Many alumni responded to news reports by withdrawing their financial support from the university. “Your capitulation in the face of most unreasonable demands by Duke’s Negro students has assured the University a future of mediocrity,” a member of the class of 1962 wrote. “In the past, I have regretted that I was unable to contribute more to Duke’s future. Now, I regret that I have contributed at all.” Another was “ashamed” at the university’s response to the “black militants.” “In the future,” he said, “do not send me any further requests from the Alumni Association for loyalty fund pledges. You can get money from the NAACP or others.”<sup>30</sup>

By far, the greatest anger was directed personally toward Knight. He was seen as weak for failing to control events on campus and giving in to Black student demands. “If the Board of Trustees had hired you for the sole purpose of wrecking Duke University,” one wrote to Knight, “you couldn’t have done a better job.” Citing Knight’s “complete lack of courage in every crisis you have faced,” this alumnus said the Duke president had “destroyed our reputation among those who love this university.” “So you finally gave in to the bastards, eh?” an alumnus asked rhetorically. “Brother, are you really chicken.” An alumnus from Raleigh, North Carolina, communicated his concerns directly to the chairman of the board. “It is the consensus of those to whom I have talked that Dr. Knight has finally brought complete chaos, embarrassment, and total failure of the University.” The Duke president had “recruited, coddled and cajoled a group of neurotic mal-contents,” this alumnus wrote, “whose only interests are disruption, contempt and ridicule.” He implored the chairman to “remove the blight which has smitten an outstanding [university] and to restore some degree of leadership and behavior.”<sup>31</sup>

Inevitably, these concerns became a primary topic of discussion at the March 7, 1969, meeting of the board of trustees. At that meeting, Wade pro-

vided copies of an alumni petition to board members. The document “expressed profound dissatisfaction with the administration of the University.” It also “expressed . . . the hope that the Board would take action to prevent wrongful, unwarranted and unlawful acts on the part of students and others.” The minutes of the meeting do not document what response, if any, the Duke president had to the petition.<sup>32</sup>

Knight left most letters from alumni unanswered but did respond to Alexander T. Davison, who wrote that he had “come to the reluctant conclusion that [Knight had] abdicated the office of the President, and become a conciliator.” Knight was angered by this characterization. “Why do you think I have become a conciliator,” he asked, “when I am the only man who, within a radius of 500 miles, has called in the police to stop student interference with the ordinary and free operation of the University?”<sup>33</sup>

In response to the avalanche of comments, Knight decided to issue a public statement “to correct the rather widespread impression that Duke University capitulated on most, if not all, of the 13 demands made . . . by a group of our black students.” Knight again declared that the university “already was working very hard to overcome problems which were included among the demands of the black students, and those demands which had no merit were rejected.” The Kerckhoff Committee issued a separate statement repudiating “the view that the use of force is an effective means of accomplishing goals in a university community.”<sup>34</sup>

It is not known whether the clarifying statements by Knight and the Kerckhoff Committee satisfied unhappy alumni, but it was clear that Duke’s Black students considered them “irresponsible.” “I don’t care what Knight called the school’s action,” McBride told the *Duke Chronicle*. “He is trying to save face for the school and he is doing it in a manner which provokes bad feeling [among] black students.”<sup>35</sup>

Just as Knight was being attacked as a “conciliator,” he was forced to respond to criticism from the city of Durham. Watching the national news on Friday, February 14, Durham city manager I. Harding Hughes was upset to hear university spokesperson Clarence Whitfield comment that “we were horrified at the use of tear gas.” Hughes reminded Knight in a letter that it had been the university’s decision to summon the police to campus and that it did so “*with the express understanding* that the police would come prepared with such equipment necessary to discharge their duties.” Tear gas was used, Hughes wrote, “*only after the police had been assaulted* with objects capable of causing serious injury or death.” Under these circumstances, Whitfield’s

comments were, according to Hughes, “a hard thing for the policemen to take.” Warning that the “morale” of police personnel would be important in any “future incident,” Hughes told Knight that a “forthright, unequivocal statement now by Duke University would clear the air and contribute to the good morale of the police personnel.” Going further, he said a “commendation of the good work of the police under trying circumstances would seem to be in order.”<sup>36</sup>

Knight responded to Harding on the same day he received his letter. Whitfield’s comments, he said, were not a criticism of the police. What the university regretted, he explained, was “the *necessity* for the use of tear gas, harmless as it is.” Knight expressed “the gratitude of the University for the prompt and full cooperation which [it] received from the civil authorities.” Knight went much further in a letter to the chief of the Durham Police Department. He offered the Durham police and State Highway Patrol the university’s “most sincere commendation. Because of the proficiency of these two groups,” he wrote, “order was quickly restored” and “National Guard troops which were on standby were never needed.” Members of the Duke community, Knight told Chief Pleasants, are “indebted to your men and the State Police for your assistance last Thursday.”<sup>37</sup>

Knight’s letters satisfied Harding and Pleasants. When they became public, however, many in the Duke community reacted with disbelief that Knight would “commend” police who only days earlier had clubbed and gassed Duke students on the main quadrangle. In an editorial, the *Duke Chronicle* called Knight’s commendation “an aggravation of the offense he committed” when he called police to campus and “a foolish provocation to those who are already disgusted by his recent behavior.” In a joint letter, the ASDU and WSGA presidents, the executive editor of the *Duke Chronicle*, the chair of the University Christian Movement, and the president of the junior class of the divinity school were equally critical. The student leaders protested Knight’s praise for “what was felt by those present to be [an] unwarranted and brutal overreaction to a situation that need not have occurred at all.” They warned the president that his statements “served only to antagonize increasingly large segments of the student body.” Black students were among those most upset. “There would have been no trouble had it not been for the cops,” McBride told the *Duke Chronicle*. “This is the sort of statement which makes us distrust the University’s motives.” Even the Kerckhoff Committee wrote to Knight to say that it considered his statements about the police “unfortunate from the point of view of the campus situation which the Committee is attempting to

confront and deal with. . . . We are concerned,” the committee told the Duke president, “with the erosion of faculty support for and student body confidence in the University.”<sup>38</sup>

Knight must have felt the walls closing in on him as he struggled to defend his position and retain his job. In a response to an alumnus who wrote to congratulate him on his actions following the takeover, Knight wrote, “We have moved, I think, as best we can, as far as we can, as fast as we can.” Fearing backlash, he commented that “there are men like myself who will be caught right in the middle of it, and there is absolutely nothing we can do to protect ourselves.” In his report to the board at its March 7, 1969, meeting, Knight described his situation. “The president of Duke has been a college and university president for nearly sixteen years,” he said.

At some point, . . . I think I ought to say to you that I’ve done my job as president of the University because I don’t think any one man . . . is the right man . . . for the long history of a place these days. . . . People get worn out and worn down. . . . I wouldn’t be honest with you . . . if I didn’t say that the point has to come where this kind of job must change for me.<sup>39</sup>

Almost a prediction of his demise as Duke president, the statement was full of foreboding. Events would further unravel for Knight as the semester continued.

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For the remainder of the spring semester, negotiations over who would control any Black studies program at Duke became a flash point. “We want an education which will sustain the culture of Black people,” the AAS demanded during Black Week, “while . . . allowing us to develop skills which will satisfy the needs of our people in this racist society.” Lacking evidence that the Duke faculty was capable of developing a program that met their needs, Black students demanded a central role in shaping Black studies at Duke. “We want the power to determine . . . our educational environment,” the students insisted. Such power would enable them to “engage in a meaningful educational process” that was “relevant.” Failing this purpose, any course of study, Black students believed, “is not education, but indoctrination.”<sup>40</sup>

In stark contrast, the university “wasn’t enthusiastic about Black studies at all,” according to Cook. Harold Lewis, vice provost and dean of faculty, was to have a central role in developing any program, but English professor

Louis Budd, who would soon head a Black studies committee, did not believe that Lewis “himself had any commitment to Black studies.” Budd described this as a “difficulty.” Cell was more direct, saying that Lewis “was reluctant to do anything.” Kerckhoff was also skeptical. Some had the perception that the Black studies curriculum might include “how to make a Molotov cocktail.” Acknowledging that the premise sounds “absolutely outrageous,” Kerckhoff believed that such a prospect was “not too far from what some people would define as the outer fringe of what . . . a [Black studies] program would do.” Kerckhoff thought that the goal of a Black studies program “as some people saw it . . . was to teach Blacks how to bring about social change in society.” It was “a way of mobilizing educated Blacks to take part in the revolution.”<sup>41</sup>

These profoundly different perspectives played out at the planning retreat held during the first weekend in March. The goal of the meeting, as Kerckhoff described it, was to “attempt to establish a framework for a specific [Black studies] program which will be developed in the next few months.” Attendees at the weekend retreat included the eleven members of the Proctor Committee, four representatives of the Kerckhoff Committee, and five representatives of the AAS. Four consultants also participated. Selected by the university were Martin Kilson, head of Harvard’s African American studies program, and Roy Bryce-Laporte, who would lead Yale’s program the following year. At the Black students’ suggestion, William Couch Jr. and Andres Taylor from historically Black Federal City College in Washington, DC, were also included.<sup>42</sup>

Although discussions at the meeting lasted a total of eighteen hours, the retreat was a “fiasco,” according to Cell. The issue, not surprisingly, was control. “We got hung up all day,” Cell recalled, on whether “students [should] be on [the committee] and how many.” What the students wanted, according to student Adrenée Glover, one of the AAS representatives, “was a . . . mutual consensus,” to avoid “decisions that would be totally unacceptable to either group.” Those speaking on behalf of the university saw matters differently. Martin Kilson’s comments to the AAS representatives were particularly rigid. “He told them,” Cell recounted, “that students are at a university to learn, teachers to teach, and administrators to administer.” Kilson “was so conservative,” Cook remembered, “he didn’t want to see students on committees.” For Cook, Kilson’s view was that “students don’t know anything. That’s why they come to college.” Cook disagreed. “You couldn’t be serious,” he told Kilson. “One thing they do know is how they feel, what’s inside them. What’s bugging them.” Unmoved, Kilson “thought everything the students said was supercilious,” according to Cook.<sup>43</sup>

Discussions of content were equally problematic. For example, Charles Becton reported that when asked what materials the library had that would be useful in a Black studies program, a faculty member responded, “The Library has many collections on the Plantation System.”<sup>44</sup>

Inflaming matters further, it soon became apparent that the Proctor Committee was already well along in finalizing its proposal on Black studies. Black students believed they had been promised the opportunity to participate in a “meaningful dialogue [on Black studies] among various [retreat] participants.” They also believed that their consent would be obtained before any proposal on Black studies was released following the retreat. Now they saw themselves “relegated to . . . ‘advising’ the Proctor Committee,” which would “go off among themselves and decide what would be recommended.” “They listened politely,” Hopkins said of the Proctor Committee, “but they had already made up their minds.”<sup>45</sup>

The Kerckhoff Committee published a statement about the results of the retreat in the *Duke Chronicle* on March 4, 1969—the day after the weekend meeting. Highlighting areas of consensus, the statement reported that all retreat participants agreed that there would be a program in African and Afro-American (A&AA) studies at Duke starting in the fall and that a major in the area would be established. The statement was also clear, however, that Black students would not control the program. The statement outlined that a Supervisory Committee, consisting entirely of faculty, would be established. Students would have input into the selection of faculty to serve on the committee but would not be included among its members. It would be “the first order of business” of the Supervisory Committee, the Kerckhoff Committee wrote, “to consider the role and function of the black students in decision-making concerned with the program.”<sup>46</sup>

As if to leave no doubt that the university was prepared to proceed without the consent of Black students, the Proctor Committee also issued *its* report on the day after the retreat. Consisting of ten “recommendations,” the report said that Duke should establish an interdepartmental major in A&AA studies. New courses and other “learning experiences” in the discipline should be developed by various academic departments. Departments should be “encouraged to make vigorous efforts to recruit additional faculty members competent to teach courses in the Program.” A committee consisting “exclusively of faculty members” should initially supervise the program. The role of Black students would be limited to providing input on the membership of the Supervisory Committee and serving on subcommittees regarding matters such as curriculum, to be established in the future.<sup>47</sup>

Black students viewed these developments as a complete breach of faith. In a separate statement, also published in the *Duke Chronicle* on March 4, they charged that the report produced by the Proctor Committee was not based on “give-and-take-discussion” at the retreat. Rather, “basic decisions concerning the [proposed] program had been made by the Proctor Committee during the week *preceding* the retreat.” Rather than provide input into the appointment of the faculty Supervisory Committee as recommended by the Proctor Committee, the Black students proposed that a ten-member committee composed of an equal number of students and faculty be established. Because such a group would be “more representative of the various groups and interests concerned,” the AAS said, it would be “more effective in implementing a program acceptable to all concerned.” The relationship between the university and “the students who have unwittingly served in the present master-slave relationship has terminated as of now,” the students announced. “Public discourse between the Afro-American Society and the University” could resume, they said, only “when Black students are given equitable representation in the events that affect them.”<sup>48</sup>

Kerckhoff saw the statement from the AAS in the *Duke Chronicle*. There is no record that he reached out to Black student representatives. Instead, Kerckhoff wrote Hobbs, urging the provost to act on the Proctor Committee’s recommendation that he invite the AAS to appoint a committee of students to meet with him to discuss faculty membership of the Supervisory Committee. “Today’s statement in the *Chronicle*,” Kerckhoff acknowledged, “would suggest that this request for their participation would be rejected. However, we are not certain that this would, in fact, occur. Even more important,” Kerckhoff told the provost, “we think it is essential that the University move in good faith in the direction of establishing a Program and of doing so with student participation. Should that prove impossible,” he said, “it should be perfectly clear that it resulted from the student rejection of the offer of joint action.”<sup>49</sup>

Kerckhoff appeared to have largely abandoned hope of finding a shared path forward with Black students. His concern now was assigning blame if they refused to accept the limited role the Proctor Committee had assigned them.

Hobbs followed Kerckhoff’s recommendation. On March 5 he wrote the AAS, asking stiffly that “three *bona fide* student members” be selected to meet with three administrators to “effect the suggested consultation and discuss specifically the possible membership of the Supervisory Committee.” Hobbs wanted there to be no doubt about where control of the nascent A&AA studies

program resided. "It should be clearly understood," he told the AAS, that "implementation of the adopted program is in the area of responsibility of the Undergraduate Faculty Council."<sup>50</sup> University faculty would control all decisions.

The AAS responded to Hobbs immediately. Writing on behalf of the AAS, McBride demanded "that the Proctor Committee be abolished." Instead, a Supervisory Committee "composed of five black students and five faculty members" would be appointed to "work out the specific details relating to the departmental structure of the African-Afro-American Studies program." "We would like to see positive action taken on fulfilling these requests," McBride wrote ominously, "by Monday, March 10, 1969."<sup>51</sup>

That evening, a rally attended by seven hundred students was held at Baldwin Auditorium. "If the administration does not respond by Monday night," McBride told the rally, "further action will be taken." In his remarks, Howard Fuller implied that Black students were considering withdrawing from the university. "Duke University has to decide," he said, "if it wants to have black students or not." "Knights says, 'have faith,'" Fuller declared, "and I say, 'In who?' You are asking for us to have faith in people who have already betrayed us." Black student Vaughn Glapion dismissed the university's proposed A&AA studies program as just a shell game. "There is more interest in shifting existing courses at Duke, North Carolina College and the University of North Carolina," he said, "than in creating meaningful courses for black students at Duke."<sup>52</sup>

On the following evening, three hundred students marched in a torchlight parade to East Campus. Those leading the march carried a banner that read, "Power to the Blacks, Power to the Students, Power to the People." One of the signs held above the crowd asked, "Do we beg for the right to live—or do we take it?" McBride and Tony Axam reported no progress on the development of a Black studies program or the inclusion of students on the Supervisory Committee. The *Duke Chronicle* commented correctly that "Duke University is once again rapidly approaching a crisis situation."<sup>53</sup>

By this point, the composition of the Supervisory Committee had become the sole focus of discussions and the cause of the standoff. Having demanded equal representation on the Supervisory Committee, the AAS did not respond to the provost's invitation to consult on the composition of an all-faculty committee. Axam called it "a delaying tactic." Eager to finalize the membership of the Supervisory Committee and move forward, Lewis commented to the *Duke Chronicle* that "it will be a question of how long we wait" before appointing the committee.<sup>54</sup>



The answer was “not long.” On March 10, Lewis appointed five faculty members to serve on the Supervisory Committee, asking Professor Louis Budd to serve as chairman (Budd Committee). Lewis asked that the committee meet first “to determine the extent of any student participation.”<sup>55</sup>

The Budd Committee convened almost immediately. Deliberations on student committee participation did not take long. “We first agreed that we would have students on the committee,” Cell recalled, “and second that we would have three. . . . The feeling” was, Cell explained, “that between five and none, three might be an acceptable compromise.” One reason the members of the committee were able to decide quickly was that they viewed the issue of student representation as having little practical consequence. “It didn’t make a damn bit of difference how many students we had on the committee,” Cell believed. “It was a symbol. . . . Once you have any students on there, it doesn’t matter” how many there are. In Cell’s experience, committees do not resolve differences by voting—“you talk them out. . . . I knew very well that once we got to substance, we wouldn’t be voting. . . . That’s the way committees work.”<sup>56</sup> Students, however, did not view it this way.

Nine AAS members joined the Budd Committee meeting after about an hour. Kerckhoff described the encounter as a “thing of wonder.” He was shocked by the physical transformation the students had undergone. “They all came in with black leather jackets and shades, [and] caps with afros,” he described. These students “who had been wandering around looking like ordinary students,” Kerckhoff recalled, “looked like something out of the East Side of New York.” The students had undergone “some degree of radicalization,” he realized. “The students . . . weren’t there to become friends with ‘whitey,’” Budd recounted. The students resisted attempts to hold the discussion “on a friendly basis.” Budd did not “think it was rudeness” but rather “very studied mock aggression.”<sup>57</sup>

The students presented a compromise proposal—a Supervisory Committee composed of five faculty, four students, and one member of the Duke community acceptable to both parties. This proposal was rejected. The Budd Committee “simply told the students, ‘This is the way it’s going to be,’” Kerckhoff described. “That was not a smart thing to do.” “In retrospect,” Cell thought, “we should have said, ‘We cannot decide this now. We will make a decision later.’” “The meeting was very brief,” Kerckhoff recounted, “and broke up with a real split.” Describing the meeting as a “final disastrous encounter,” Kerckhoff saw a lot of “hard work [go] down the drain in a very short period of

time.” “I guess I felt that we had failed about as badly as we could have under the circumstances,” he said sadly.<sup>58</sup>

“We cannot participate under the inhuman conditions we have been subjected to,” Hopkins told a rally of three hundred students on the chapel steps just after leaving the Budd Committee meeting. He then stunned the crowd by announcing that Black students would be withdrawing en masse from the university. Withdrawal, Hopkins told the rally, “will put an end to the constant destruction of our minds and humanity.” Later, the AAS reported that twenty-three undergraduates would be withdrawing from Duke immediately, with another seventeen leaving Duke at the end of the semester. The *Duke Chronicle* calculated that when added to the fourteen Black students who had been dismissed for academic reasons at the end of the fall semester, “59 percent of Duke’s 91 black undergraduates will have left the University by the end of the school year.”<sup>59</sup>

Following Hopkins’s announcement, Black students, along with supportive white students and faculty, led a torchlight procession to downtown Durham. At the same time, Fuller led hundreds of community members in a separate march, meeting the Black students at Five Points. From there, the two groups marched together to St. Joseph’s AME Church for a rally. “The procession was intended to be symbolic,” Fuller wrote. “The black students were in essence returning home to their community with the support of their white peers from Duke.” A crowd of two thousand packed into the church, with Duke Black students “occupying honorary positions on the altar.” Hopkins announced the formation of a new Malcolm X Liberation School, asking the crowd for “support and solidarity.” A *Chronicle* reporter noted that a “strong feeling of brotherhood could be felt throughout the hall.”<sup>60</sup>

The decision to withdraw was the subject of intense debate within the AAS. “We had a real struggle amongst ourselves,” Hopkins recalled. “My position was that we had lost the battle but not the war. And that it was just a matter of getting together, regrouping, and coming up with some new strategies. . . . I argued down to the last breath,” Hopkins remembered, “but I lost out.” Cook thought the idea of withdrawing was “insane.” “I said, ‘You don’t want to withdraw from the university,’” Cook remembered. “‘Look at what it would mean. You want to see this university become lily-white again?’”<sup>61</sup>

A majority of AAS members saw it differently. By withdrawing, Becton explained in a statement published in the *Duke Chronicle*, “many Black students are . . . saying, ‘Duke University, at this stage of the battle, you can keep your white system . . . for it is morbidly masochistic at best for us to fight when you

have all the power and are unwilling to give it up.” Why give up on Duke? “Duke has been de-segregated for the last seven years,” Becton answered. “It has never been integrated.” Becton wrote that he was “not aware of any program Duke has implemented at its own initiative in regards to Black students save those programs under which Duke received monies for having black bodies here.” Even Duke’s “talk-and-do-nothing committees,” he argued, were formed only when “Black students had . . . created such a crisis that Duke could no longer be insulated or unaware of distressing conditions.” Duke’s Black students had “petitioned; marched to the President’s house; held ‘sit-ins’ and ‘study-ins’; liberated the first floor of Allen Building; and . . . followed the ill-spun web of proper channels,” Becton recounted. Duke had shown itself unwilling to give the Black students even limited control over the Black studies program that had become central to their identities and needs as Duke students. Black students, Becton explained, now faced only two choices—“destruction and withdrawal.”<sup>62</sup>

The *Duke Chronicle* supported the move. “Some of Duke’s most moral and courageous students walked out of the University Monday,” the paper editorialized. “They did it, because, after so much indifference, they were too alienated from the white community to trust whites.”<sup>63</sup>

When students approached their deans about withdrawing, some encountered resistance. “We all went to Dean Bryant,” Howard recalled. “We wanted it to be a real simple process. . . . She said, ‘I’ll have to see each one of you individually.’ . . . And [when] I went in . . . she just cried. And she cried. She knew me. She . . . went on about how she didn’t understand and how it was such a serious mistake.” Howard remembered Dean Bryant asking, “What are you going to do?” . . . It doesn’t matter,” Howard responded, “I just don’t want to be here.” Finally, the dean “very reluctantly” gave Howard the withdrawal form.<sup>64</sup>

Among senior administrators, public opinion was the primary focus. Knight and newly designated interim chancellor Barnes Woodhall published a three-page statement to the Duke community commenting on the planned withdrawals. Noting that the Black students had accused “the University of bad faith and of an unwillingness to work with them in a meaningful way” in planning a Black studies program, Knight and Woodhall declared, “There is simply no basis for this charge.” Knight and Woodhall then outlined, in great detail, the university’s efforts toward implementation of a Black studies program at Duke. “Despite the reported plan of some black students to withdraw from Duke,” the statement said, the Supervisory Committee “will continue to work—with students—to develop a program of academic integrity which

will be both respected and respectable.”<sup>65</sup> Within a couple of days, the Undergraduate Faculty Council voted to approve the Budd Committee’s recommendation that three students be added to the committee.

Meanwhile, Kerckhoff reached out to the AAS. In a letter to McBride, Kerckhoff expressed “regret” that Black students had announced plans to withdraw. “Although we understand the sources of strain,” Kerckhoff wrote, “much more of value can be gained by working together within the University than by leaving. We thus urge all of you to continue to work within the University.”<sup>66</sup>

McBride’s response was brief. “Although the Afro-American Society will continue as an organization until the end of the semester,” he wrote to Kerckhoff, “it will in no way communicate with the University. In view of this,” McBride concluded, “your committee need not concern itself with the Afro-American Society.”<sup>67</sup>

Learning of McBride’s response, Hobbs wrote to Kerckhoff. “I was sorry to learn of the rejection of the Afro-American group,” the provost said parenthetically, “though I guess this has been [the] case all along.”<sup>68</sup> Hobbs appeared to have blamed the Black students alone for the impasse.

The next week was eventful, to say the least. Discussions within the AAS and between the AAS and the university continued. A rally attended by eight hundred Duke, NCC, and Durham Business College students was held in downtown Durham. Although alluding to the possibility that the Black students might revisit their decision to withdraw, McBride remained defiant. “We live what we believe,” he told the crowd. “We won’t be messed over no more. I’d rather be a poor black than a rich nigger,” he declared. After the rally, violence erupted. Durham police were called in after twenty-five downtown store windows were smashed. The mayor imposed a 7:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. nightly curfew in Durham. National Guard troops were called in to help enforce the curfew. Several days later, on March 17, the Malcolm X Liberation University opened with about forty students.<sup>69</sup>

During this week, no Black students completed the paperwork necessary to withdraw from the university, and only a handful notified Duke of their intent to leave the school. With support for the withdrawal strategy eroding, members of the AAS released a statement reversing the decision announced only a week earlier. “As revolutionary forces within one of the most conservative and oppressive institutions in America,” the statement read, “we deem it necessary to remain here and continue the struggle.” Black students would be entering Duke in the future, the statement explained, “making it imperative that the [AAS] continue to exist to meet the needs and aspirations of black

people.” Malcolm X Liberation University would meet the Black students’ immediate needs. The statement concluded: “Power to the people; student power to students; BLACK POWER TO BLACK PEOPLE!”<sup>70</sup>

Reading in the *Duke Chronicle* that Black students would be staying, Budd wrote to McBride. “I hope that you will feel inclined to get in touch with me,” he said. The Budd Committee “would like to have student members,” he reminded McBride, “and I am sure that the Committee would welcome your advice as to whom [Dean Lewis] should appoint as its student members.”<sup>71</sup>

The university’s position had prevailed. Students would serve on the Supervisory Committee but would have no power to direct, or block, any action. Full control over the A&AA studies program would remain with the faculty. Not surprisingly, Hobbs commented later, “we got things under reasonable control.”<sup>72</sup>

In early May, the Proctor Committee met with a member of the Budd Committee for a progress report on the proposed interdepartmental Black studies major. After the meeting, Proctor wrote to Hobbs that the Proctor Committee was “distressed to learn that [the Budd Committee] has experienced considerable difficulty in securing cooperation from the various Departments in development of a curriculum” to support the major. “There has clearly been a loss of the sense of urgency which prevailed in March,” Proctor wrote, “to say the least.” The Proctor Committee considered this state of affairs “to be most unfortunate” and had agreed unanimously to tell Hobbs of its “grave concern.”<sup>73</sup>

It took Hobbs almost a month to respond, having met in the interim with Proctor and Cook. “It is next to impossible for us to deal with these matters rapidly,” he wrote, “but we can deal with them consistently.” In their meeting, Cook had suggested that the university add “five or six” individuals with expertise in Black studies over a short time frame. Citing budget constraints, Hobbs said the university could afford to add “occasional new people,” but not the number suggested by Cook. As to finding a director for the Black studies program, Hobbs said he had been “totally immersed in budgetary problems” and had not gotten around to working specifically on the matter. Calling it a “first priority,” Hobbs said that he “should get to it sometime within the next several weeks.” “We can, I hope, solve this problem at least,” he concluded, “and hopefully show good evidence of continued interest and high priority consideration to making a viable Afro-American Studies Program.”<sup>74</sup>

Clearly, Hobbs was in no rush to move Black studies forward, notwithstanding his statement that the matter would be treated as a high priority.

Knight commented later that the provost felt “things were moving too fast for his comfort.” This gradualist approach, of course, meant that the needs of the university’s Black students continued to be unaddressed.<sup>75</sup>

Ultimately, it was the Budd Committee that directed the university’s nascent Afro-American studies program during the 1969–70 school year. A search committee for a permanent director of the program was not appointed until December 1969. As 1969 ended, a faculty committee found “few signs to indicate that the employment of black academics is a matter [of] priority” at the university and highlighted “the critical need for more incisive commitments and statements from [the university] on priorities in the area of black students and black studies.”<sup>76</sup>

As had been the case since desegregation, these changes would occur very slowly.

.....

In the midst of the turmoil, the university’s disciplinary hearing to consider punishment for participants in the Allen Building takeover was held on March 20, 1969. The outcome of the hearing carried enormous consequences for both the students and the university.

Knight was under intense pressure to deal swiftly and decisively with the protesters. Calls and letters flooded in. “Smash student anarchy immediately and decisively,” an alumnus implored, “and expel the anarchist.” “There is nothing like expulsion for what ails you,” Russell Price, a member of the class of 1952, wrote. “Stand fast.” An alumnus from Newport News, Virginia, was most succinct. He wrote simply, “EXPULSION THEM!”<sup>77</sup>

Knight saw how racial attitudes informed many of the demands for strong action. “It was clear,” the Duke president observed, “that people had been waiting for a moment where you could really move in on the black situation.” “You have a God given chance,” one alumnus told Knight, “to rid the school of a number of people who should not have been admitted.” Knight heard this type of refrain from board members, alumni, and many others: “We haven’t had a clear cut case, but now you’ve got it.” “Wonderful—Now you have them where you want them; you must throw them all out.” These comments, Knight said, were repeated “just that nakedly.” “All the unspoken fears and resentments came into the open,” Knight wrote later. “These black students were intruders; they should be intruders in the dust, cast down, cast out.”<sup>78</sup>

The students were also under tremendous stress. “I think it was clear to all of us that there were a lot of people asking for extreme measures to be taken to make an example” of us, Becton recounted. This prospect “was something that was thought about before we went into the building.” Even so, calls for the students’ suspension or expulsion were frightening. Beyond academic and professional considerations, male students who fell out of good standing at the university faced the draft. So grave was this concern, Kerckhoff told Knight, that at other campuses “the popular characterization of suspension has been the ‘death penalty.’”<sup>79</sup>

Students also faced anguished parents. Among the “best and the brightest” of their generation, the Allen Building protesters arrived at Duke bearing the hopes and expectations of their families, communities, and race. Now, everything they hoped to accomplish was in jeopardy. Howard remembered all the calls that flooded in from “moms, grand moms, and aunties.” “All of us had turmoil within our families,” Armstrong remembered. The anguish many parents felt was expressed in a letter Tom and Ruth D. McBride wrote to Knight asking that their son, Michael, be allowed to complete his Duke education. “We know these young people have disrupted the normal operation of the university,” they told Knight, “but . . . we beg of you to ask that these bright young black Americans be given both justice and mercy.” Promising to “do everything that we can to prevent Michael from becoming involved in future demonstrations,” they concluded by telling Knight that their son “is a good and kind boy who is active in the movement only because he feels that America must accept blacks and whites on an equal basis.” Knight acknowledged receipt of the letter but told the McBrides that “the deeply saddening events of the last days make it difficult for me to answer you wisely at the moment. I . . . would do everything I could for Mike,” he told the young man’s parents, “if he’d give me half a chance.”<sup>80</sup>

As the disciplinary process moved forward, the university was unable to identify all the students who had occupied the Allen Building. Contact between Duke administrators and protesters during the takeover had been extremely limited. The protesters emerged from the Allen Building to a chaotic scene and asked that no photographs be taken. Many covered their faces to avoid being recognized. Complicating matters further, according to C. G. Newsome, a significant number of Black students from NCC had come to the Duke campus to support the Allen Building protesters. Because “you couldn’t tell whether they were from Central or Duke,” the university could positively identify only twenty-five of the approximately fifty Allen Building protesters.

Duke decided to proceed against those students, who received papers charging them with violating the university's regulations on pickets, protests, and demonstrations.<sup>81</sup>

Aware of the university's problem identifying protesters, members of the AAS took a profoundly dramatic and risky step. Writing in the *Duke Chronicle* on February 27 that "our struggle is a group struggle," the AAS petitioned the university that "any so-called charges [it] wishes to bring against us . . . be brought against the group as a whole or not at all." The petition listed the names of more than sixty AAS members who demanded to stand trial for the takeover. "All of the work that had been done to make Black students into a cohesive force," Armstrong explained, "came to fruition . . . when we all decided to surrender." For the Black students who had not come into the Allen Building, she recounted, "this was their way of expressing their anger." Moreover, the "surrender" by all sixty members of the AAS put the university in what Armstrong called "a very precarious position." "They really couldn't put us all out," Brenda Brown remembered thinking. Acting as a group, Brown believed, provided "protection" for those students the university could positively identify as takeover participants.<sup>82</sup>

The disciplinary hearing began at 9:00 a.m. and lasted nine hours. Law school dean Kenneth Pye, two professors, and two students made up the hearing committee. Although only twenty-five Black students had been formally charged, forty-seven appeared at the hearing asking to be tried by the university. The parents of many of the Black students attended the hearing. Both the university and students were represented by outside counsel.<sup>83</sup>

The hearing began with the student defendants entering a plea of "nolo contendere" to the charge of violating the university's regulations regarding pickets, protests, and demonstrations. Although not an admission of guilt, this meant that each defendant accepted conviction for violating the regulations as though a guilty plea had been entered. In effect, the defendants would not dispute that the Allen Building takeover occurred or that each of the forty-seven defendants participated in the protest. With the plea, the hearing dealt exclusively with the appropriate sanction for the defendants. If the hearing committee determined that a sanction was called for, it could choose among only four options: reprimand, probation, suspension, or expulsion.<sup>84</sup>

The university's case, presented by attorney Marshall Spears Jr., focused only on how disruptive the takeover had been for the university and its employees.<sup>85</sup> Frances Baker, an employee in the bursar's office, testified that one Black student held a raised pipe in his hand when he told employees to "move out." "I was



scared to death,” she told the committee. Bobbie Jean Day recalled being told, “Move it move, it. If you don’t get out, some one’s going to get hurt.” As she exited, Day passed a student with a pipe in his hand “who used profane language” as he demanded that she leave. Day testified that she was “very much afraid and very much shocked.” Day was among three employees who, it was alleged, quit their jobs at Duke because of the takeover. University registrar Richard Tuthill described the condition of the registrar’s office after the takeover and testified that the office was closed for two days as a result of the protest. Clark Cahow, assistant registrar, testified about the various pipes, crowbars, chains, hammers, and other materials left in the Allen Building by the protesters after the takeover. Although the students testified that these items were carried in only to secure the building, witnesses for the university characterized them as “weapons.” Griffith described the progress that had been made on the list of concerns presented to the ad hoc committee by the Black students in October 1968. He denied any “foot-dragging on the university’s part.” Under questioning, Griffith acknowledged that the ad hoc committee had no jurisdiction to implement a Black studies program—the most important issue for the Black students.

In their case, presented by J. W. Ferguson, the defendants focused entirely on the harsh conditions at Duke that had given rise to Black student activism at the university. They testified about the frustration they felt over the school’s inability to address their needs. Stef McLeod testified that “nothing major” had come from the extensive discussions with the university and described his feelings of deep alienation. Asked if any further recourse was available to Black students as of February 13, 1969, McLeod responded no. Bertie Howard testified to the hostile racial climate Black students endured at Duke, including the long struggle to force Duke to ban the use of segregated off-campus facilities by university groups. McLeod and Howard both refused to state unequivocally that Black students would never again violate the regulations regarding pickets, protests, and demonstrations. Asked if she felt the AAS had “a right to take over control of an area of Duke University,” Howard answered, “I think in this situation it was justified.”

In his closing statement, Spears argued for the university that the defendants had presented “testimony of motivation—but not justification.” He dismissed the students’ assertions that the history of their treatment by the university legitimized the takeover. “If we have any degree of maturity,” he said patronizingly, “we must realize that we can’t have what we want when we want it.” The Black students “should not be excused or patted on the head.” The takeover, Spears concluded, “demands a serious punishment.”

In his closing statement on behalf of the defendants, Ferguson spoke of the history of race relations at Duke and the events leading up to the protest. The occupation “did not begin when a group of students met and decided to do this,” he said. Rather, it originated one hundred years ago when all-white Trinity College was established. It began when Duke’s first Black undergraduates arrived in 1963 and realized that Duke was not equipped to deal with them. It moved closer when the university sponsored events at segregated facilities Black students could not attend and when fraternities said they “would like to have black members but can’t.” It advanced each time a Black student “realized [his] education was not relevant to his needs” and that requested changes were “deferred to one committee or another.” Their protest was “a symbolic act to say listen to us and minister to our needs—give us a relevant experience at Duke.” “The way to deter further actions,” Ferguson told the hearing committee, “would not be to take serious action against these students, but to take serious action on the *needs* of these students.” He urged the members of the hearing committee to “open their hearts.” “Fifty black students went into Allen Building and said ‘somebody listen to us,’” Ferguson concluded. “Today we ask the same.” Ferguson’s closing statement “had everyone in tears,” Armstrong recalled.<sup>86</sup>

Before concluding the hearing, Pye asked if anyone had further comments for the committee to consider. Armstrong described what happened. “Most of us had one parent who was there,” she recalled. “Parents got up [and spoke]. They were just beautiful. All of that anger that our parents had lived with and had no way of expressing came out through their children. I remember [parents] saying, ‘This is my child, and you are not going to put my child out without me having something to say.’ It’s not that they understood or even condoned what we did. [But] parents were going to back their children,” Armstrong remembered. “There was absolutely no way they were going to leave that place with their children being put out of school.”<sup>87</sup>

The disciplinary hearing was important for many of the parents who attended. “They had no idea of the pressure we were under; they certainly had no idea of how difficult it was socially to live at Duke,” Armstrong described. As a result of the hearing, attitudes were transformed. “My mother changed sitting there,” Armstrong observed. “I could never talk to her about the takeover; someone else had to tell her.” But after the hearing, Armstrong’s mother said, “If you had to do it over again, I would support you.”<sup>88</sup>

In its decision, the hearing committee made clear that “a sentence of suspension would be clearly appropriate for individuals who planned and led

the take-over of the building regardless of their motivations.” The committee was unable, however, “to determine relative degree of culpability among the [forty-seven] defendants. . . . We are particularly concerned,” it stated, “that over one-half of the defendants before us appeared voluntarily to be tried in the absence of any charges brought against them by the University.” Treating these individuals severely, the committee said, “might constitute a substantial miscarriage of justice.” Accordingly, the committee placed “all persons charged on probation for the period of one year from this date.” Hopkins called this punishment “a tap on the back of our hands.”<sup>89</sup>

The Black students’ solidarity had protected them. “I was convinced,” Armstrong explained, “and no one will convince me otherwise, that we were going to be put out of school. It was the intention to make an example so it would not happen again.” By standing as one, Black students had made this impossible. In Armstrong’s words, they had become “an undeniable force.”<sup>90</sup>

If parents were relieved that their children would be allowed to remain in school, many students were unhappy with the outcome of the hearing. “If they think that in 1969 five whites can sit in judgment on 47 blacks,” Hopkins commented, “they’re crazy.” Hopkins also made clear that probation would not deter the students from further protests if the university did not follow through on its commitments. “To get our demands,” he said, “we won’t hesitate to take another building.”<sup>91</sup>

The roiling conflicts Knight faced with trustees and alumni only intensified after the hearing committee failed to suspend or expel the Allen Building takeover participants. “I don’t know as a fact,” Pye recollected, “but it was my clear impression that when I notified the president of [the sanction] that he was shocked.”<sup>92</sup> Knight likely sensed that any hope of remaining the president of Duke was disappearing.

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In the aftermath of the Allen Building takeover, Douglas Knight feared for his physical safety and that of his family. During the takeover, the Duke president had been concerned about reports he received of vigilante forces circling campus and preparing to attack Black students in the Allen Building once night fell. Witnessing what he described later as the “savage reaction of the regional community” to the takeover, Knight believed that these same forces were now targeting him and his family. The location of University House—bordered in the rear by woods with easy access to a public road—

added to his alarm. “It was obvious,” he wrote, “that the threats against us could easily be carried out.”<sup>93</sup>

The Knight family took steps to protect themselves. A security guard was posted at University House and the family decided that their youngest son—twelve at the time—would sleep at a friend’s house for a while. Most dramatic was a nightly routine the Duke president adopted. At 1:00 a.m. each evening, Knight would slip a loaded pistol into the pocket of his dressing gown and take “a little tour” of the University House grounds with the security guard.<sup>94</sup>

Fewer than six years had elapsed since the summer of 1963, when Knight had arrived at Duke to universal excitement and acclaim. Inaugurated president at age forty-two, Knight’s future seemed boundless. Now, in March 1969, he was wandering the grounds of his home each evening, carrying a loaded gun. Peering into the woods and looking for signs of danger, Knight saw himself as a hunted—and haunted—man.

Opinions differ on how much actual physical danger the Knight family was exposed to during this traumatic time. Professionally, though, Knight was clearly in a situation of high risk. “There was substantial agreement among Trustees, the Duke Endowment, the regional community, and a disturbing number of alumni,” Knight wrote, “that the situation was out of control and that I had failed to control it.” “There was no support left in the situation,” Knight realized. “It was a dramatic example of watching the support cut away from you on every possible side. The metaphor I’ve used” to describe the situation, Knight commented poignantly, “is that of a man with a begging bowl, standing where the five roads intersect. Down the five roads,” the president related, “come not the people he wants who will put goodies into his bowl, but come the thundering herds. All opposed to one another and all intent on demolishing him.”<sup>95</sup>

With his Duke Endowment critics playing a central role, trustees began to press for a special meeting of the board where a formal demand for Knight’s resignation could be made. “This was vicious business,” Knight commented later. The trustees conspiring to remove him were “jungle fighters,” he said. “These were guys with knives in the dark. That was their basic nature. That’s how they got their other business done.”<sup>96</sup>

Board chair Charles Wade took on what historian Robert Durden described as “the painful task of persuading Knight to resign before he could be formally asked to do so.” “A vote would have been forced on whether to fire me,” Knight explained. There were “many trustees who had been whipped up to that.” Wade encouraged Knight to take the initiative. His resignation was

necessary “for the good of the university,” Knight recalled Wade saying. “It had to take place.”<sup>97</sup>

“I have conveyed to Chairman Wade my desire to be relieved of the office of president of Duke University,” Knight wrote to the board on March 27, 1969. “It is not easy for me to leave Duke University,” he explained, “but after more than fifteen years as a college and university president, I have an obligation to protect my family from the severe and sometimes savage demands of such a career.” Knight asked to stay on until June 30, 1969. The board accepted Knight’s resignation “with regret.” “Basically, Doug Knight has been a most generous man in allowing us to work this thing out so that it does not reflect [badly] on him or the University,” Wade told Marshall Pickens, “and to him is due most of the credit for the way I was able to handle it.”<sup>98</sup>

Many trustees and alumni were relieved at the news that Knight had resigned. The *Duke Chronicle*, despite many conflicts with Knight over his tenure, wrote that it was “deeply grieved” that the Duke president was stepping down. A number of trustees were also dismayed. “Some trustees said to me the day I resigned,” Knight recounted, “‘You know, we want to apologize to you, we weren’t there when you needed us.’ And there was nothing I could say except, ‘Yes, that’s true.’”<sup>99</sup>

For Knight, his resignation marked a professional and personal inflection point that permanently altered the course of his life. The academic world was what he knew and loved, and until his time at Duke, he had encountered only approval and success. After his Duke experience, however, Knight felt himself an outcast from the only professional world he had ever known. “The sequence of those years [at Duke] just finished my academic career,” he reflected. “I could never go back into the university world again.” “It was quite an experience to find that I’d been exiled from the [university] community where I’d made my whole life,” he wrote almost two decades later. “I found the trauma so deep,” he commented, “that for several years I could not spend time on a university campus at all—even for the graduation of our third son.” He added: “Mine was certainly the wrong temperament to go through that without some major destruction taking place. I can see that . . . from a distance.”<sup>100</sup>

Knight deserves credit for the role he played in the transformation of Duke from the accomplished regional university it was when he took office into the preeminent international powerhouse it later became. “Doug Knight was a consummate gentleman and scholar,” Duke’s ninth president, Richard H. Brodhead, said after Knight passed away in 2005. “Duke emerged from the tumultuous years during which he served as president as a stronger institution, and the

foundation Doug Knight laid enabled the university to rise in the ranks of the nation's leading universities today." Duke's eighth president, Nannerl O. Keohane, described Knight in 2003 as a "poet and scholar." "The breadth and sensitivity of his thinking," she said, "informed not only his public pronouncements as the CEO of a rollicking, feisty, ambitious Southern institution of higher education, but also the work he undertook behind the scenes as a collaborative leader and administrator."<sup>101</sup> To honor him, Duke renamed University House—the setting for so much of Knight's anguish—the Douglas M. and Grace Knight House.

Without diminishing this legacy, Samuel DuBois Cook saw Knight's tenure as more complicated. "In many ways, Dr. Knight was a tragic figure," Cook commented. "I think he was caught up in forces over which he had no control." Still, Cook saw Knight as at least partially responsible for the problems he encountered at Duke. "He had great liberal credentials and tradition and commitment," Cook explained. "But . . . when he got here—it often happens—he [got] in an environment that's conservative and he [was] inclined to forget the liberal issues. . . . Perhaps, had he been more outspoken, more courageous, more determined, he would have gotten much more done. . . . But he would have encountered opposition and he would have had to fight for what he wanted. He wasn't willing to fight for it," Cook concluded. "I don't think he was willing to pay the price for doing it."<sup>102</sup>

In his remaining months as Duke's president, Knight acted as a caretaker. He spent most of his time answering correspondence and dealing with routine administrative matters. Mindful of the toll his time at the university had taken on Knight, his colleagues took steps to celebrate the end of his tenure as Duke president. A group who worked with Knight on the second floor of the Allen Building presented him with a set of "Absolutely Non-Negotiable Demands." Referring to themselves as the Continuing Sit-in—Second Floor Allen, they demanded that Knight "remember your many warm friends here," "sail often," "create poems now and then," and "keep in touch and come back to see us."<sup>103</sup>

In early June, Frances and Barnes Woodhall, and a group they described as "your faithful staff and friends all," held a farewell dinner in Knight's honor. Most of Duke's highest-ranking administrators and their wives were invited—William Anlyan, Frank Ashmore, Edwin Bryson, William Cartwright, Frank de Vyver, William Griffith, Marcus Hobbs, Charles Huestis, Harold Lewis, and Rufus Powell. "We shall have cocktails in the gloaming and dinner when we are relaxed," the Woodhalls wrote to the Knights. As going-away gifts, the Knights were presented with what the Duke president described in thank

you notes as “books and silver.” So where did this impressive group of senior Duke leaders gather at 6:30 p.m. on June 4, 1969, to honor Douglas Knight? The French Room at the segregated Hope Valley Country Club.<sup>104</sup> Whatever changes in racial attitudes and practices had occurred at Duke during Knight’s tumultuous six years as president, senior leadership held fast to the prerogatives white privilege afforded them.

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Until the fall of 1963, educational opportunities at Duke University were only available to young white men and women. Students would graduate having benefited from rigorous classroom instruction. In addition, attending events at Hope Valley Country Club and on campus, they would learn to move comfortably at the country clubs, office parties, neighborhood gatherings, and other social settings they would encounter later in life. In this sense, Duke also operated as a finishing school for the attitudes and behaviors that defined white privilege.

When Black undergraduates arrived on campus, Duke faced a historic challenge. Could a university that had previously catered only to the needs of white students extend the full benefits of a Duke education to Black students as well? The university’s bylaws set forth the values Duke sought to embody. Duke aimed “to assert a faith in the eternal union of knowledge and religion; . . . promote a sincere spirit of tolerance; . . . and to render the largest permanent service to the individual, the state, the nation, and the church.”<sup>105</sup> Would the university embrace its responsibility to make these values real in the college experience of the Black undergraduates who joined the Duke community?

Duke University fell far short of meeting this moral imperative. In critical respects, Duke was unable to manifest the values it held out as central to its mission. On matters of racial progress, Duke was at best reactive and at worst highly resistant. It refused to devote finite university resources to creating an inclusive environment where both Black and white students could thrive. Only when pressure was brought to bear did racial change occur. Progress was at best sporadic. “The University must not continue to be in a defensive position,” the Faculty Committee on Student Concerns warned the provost in its final report in June 1969. “It must propose courses of action, actively seek student (and other) support for its actions, and take the initiative in the implementation of those principles which all of us profess.” Concerned that the university had previously acted only when compelled to do so, the committee

cautioned that “it is all too easy to relax during a ‘quiet period’ and wait for the next explosion.”<sup>106</sup>

Black student activism was by far the key driver of racial change during this period. Yet even with their best efforts, Black students could only accomplish so much. White supremacist attitudes persisted among some university trustees, administrators, and faculty, and the prerogatives of white privilege proved to be unshakable for many. This is no surprise. What is revealing, however, is the number of racial myths and justifications embraced by those at Duke who found change in race relations abhorrent, impolitic, inconvenient, or just uncomfortable. Few, if any, would identify as white supremacists. But racial progress stalled because so many found a way to avoid meeting the challenge of desegregation.

Central to the university’s failure was ignorance of the background, goals, challenges, and strengths of the new Black students. The university did almost nothing to prepare for the arrival of these students or to understand their distinctive needs. Having chosen to remain oblivious to the lived experiences and strengths of its Black students, racial myths determined how they were received. Professors assumed that even the most intellectually gifted among them were deficient academically. Deans communicated that certain professions—such as medicine—were beyond their reach. Most fundamental, however, was the belief that Duke’s Black students should want to simply fit in to the Duke experience that had been crafted over generations to meet the needs of white students. Griffith, along with his colleagues, simply expected the Black students to take their place as members of the Duke community through a “natural kind of amalgamation.”<sup>107</sup>

The controversy over the use of segregated off-campus facilities by campus groups and Knight’s membership in one such facility illuminated other attitudes. Knight had initially assumed that there was no substance to the dispute and that the controversy was being “fabricated” by internal factions.<sup>108</sup> Once it became clear that the problem could not be wished away, various justifications for the continued use of segregated facilities arose. Many believed that prohibiting campus groups from using off-campus segregated facilities infringed on their freedom of choice. “Pragmatism” was another reason some resisted a ban, with university finances always a concern.

When pressed to resign his personal membership in Hope Valley, Knight added “gradualism” to the arsenal. Only by remaining a member, Knight argued, could he use his influence as an insider to effect a change in the club’s exclusionary racial policy. Any such change would take time.



Escalating Black campus activism in 1968 and 1969 exposed still other attitudes. The university insisted that any change to university policies should come only through “proper channels,” and committees were the decision-making forum of choice. Indeed, starting in late 1968, a dizzying array of committees were formed to consider Black student demands and advance Black studies: an ad hoc committee of administrators, students, and faculty; subgroups of the ad hoc committee assigned to investigate specific issues; the Proctor Committee; the Kerckhoff Committee; and the Budd Committee. During this period, administrators and faculty remained convinced that they were acting in “good faith” in responding to Black student demands. For administrators and faculty, formation of these various committees and attendance at meetings were proof of their good faith. But for students, such actions only signified delay. With rare exceptions, administrators and faculty were unable or unwilling to respond to the profound urgency Black students were communicating.

Furthermore, during meetings in late 1967 and early 1968, university officials developed a pattern of blaming the *students* for the slow pace of progress on their demands. As activism reached a crescendo in late 1968 and 1969, this thinking morphed into the belief that the demands students presented were not real issues of legitimate concern but convenient means to provoke a confrontation. Black student activism was not considered to be a reaction to racial conditions at Duke but instead part of a national Black student conspiracy or a rite of passage. In this view, Duke students did not organize and plan the Allen Building takeover. Rather, Howard Fuller pulled their strings or Dick Gregory lit the fuse. As ignorance interacted with misperception, the view of Black students as “intruders” solidified. Once the occupation of the Allen Building was underway, it became far too easy for university officials to use force against students they readily saw as trespassers operating outside the bounds of the Duke University family.

The arrival of Black students at Duke was a first encounter between young people who had grown up in segregated communities and white trustees, administrators, faculty, and students who had rarely, if ever, interacted with a Black person other than across the “veil” created by Jim Crow. One can, perhaps, imagine a parallel universe where this encounter could have occurred unburdened by the racial dynamics that distorted how whites at Duke perceived, and responded to, the school’s new Black students. In that universe, desegregation would have played out very differently. Faithful to the university’s values—the union of knowledge and

religion, a spirit of tolerance, and a dedication to service—whites would have embraced the new students without the ignorance, racial myths, and self-serving justifications that shaped desegregation. Such a world, however, required self-reflection, empathy, and a moral commitment to racial justice that those who ran Duke could not entertain. Creating this world of racial inclusion and diversity at Duke University would remain an ongoing project for decades to come.