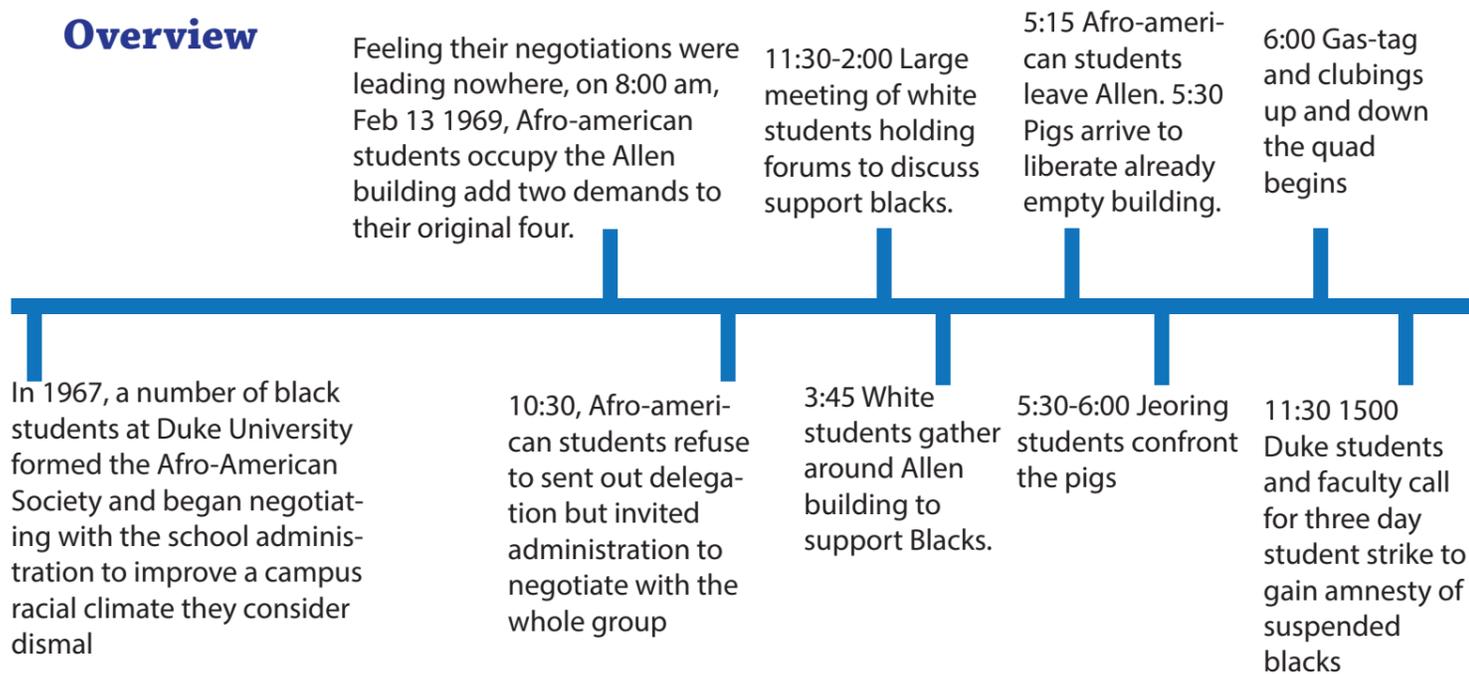


Allen Building Takeover: Inherently violent or necessary reaction

The New Left movement in the 1960s and 1970s contributed to the world a new discourse of narrating a range of issues such as race, gender, war, and social justice. However, in the year 1968, the new left coalition started to split and violent tendencies were seen in various places of the world. Fierce confrontation between activists and police forces was evident in France, Germany, Mexico and the US, etc. In this project, I wish to reexamine Allen Building Take over that happened at Duke University on Feb 13, 1969 as a gateway of understanding the violent radicalization of the New Left and the escalation of conflicts.

Overview

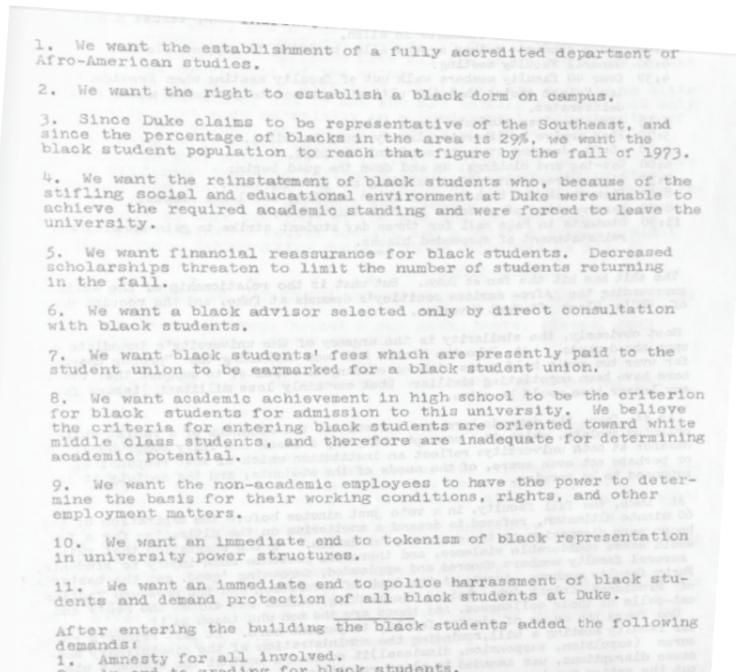


Who initiated the violence?

In order to answer the question was this movement inherently violent or was violence a necessary reaction. We have to look into what did the students really want? Fortunately, as I delve into the Allen Building Takeover collection from Rubenstein archive, I found the original list of demands from the black students:

1. What did they want?

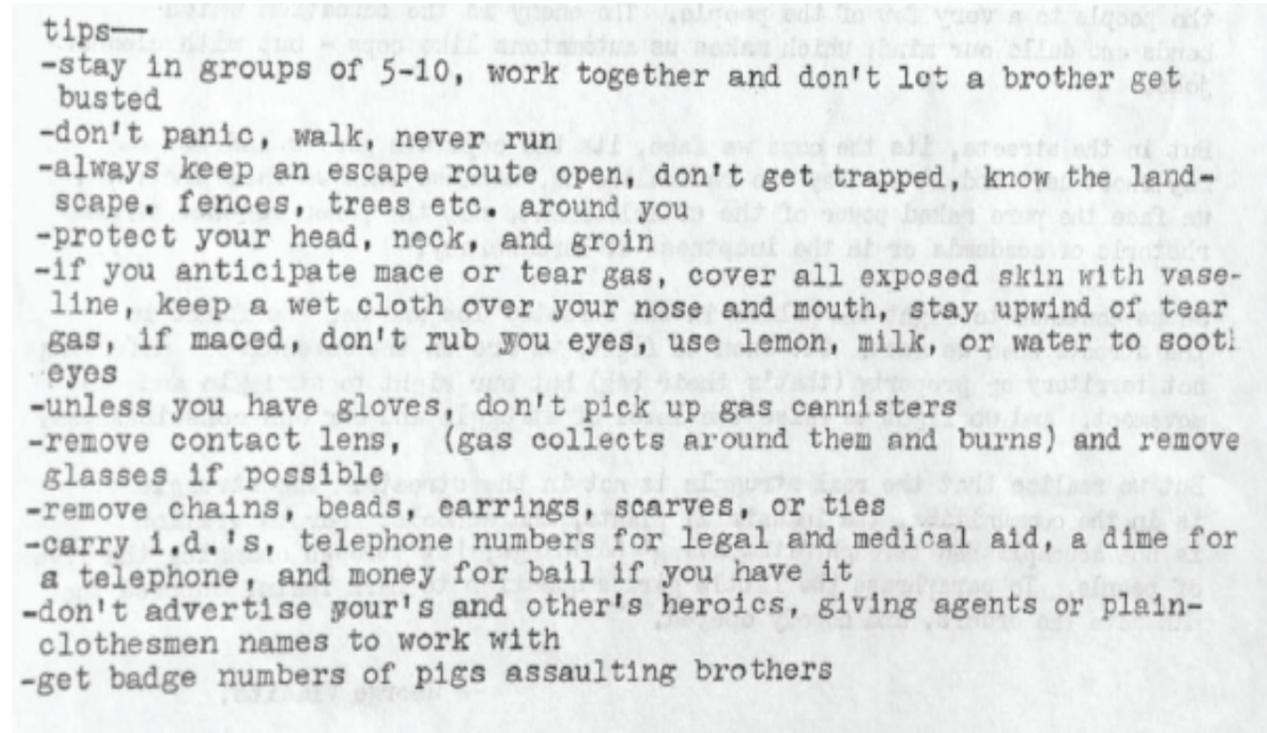
As the demand list shows, black students were hoping to achieve mostly if not merely educational goals: they were asking for fully credited Afro-American studies department, increase in the black student's population, black advisor, and financial aid to black students. From my humble understanding, none of the demands borders on being politically radical.



A poster from these students shows that students acted in solidarity in the strike that comes right after the Takeover, demanding amnesty and reinstatement for all black students instead of taking any sort of violent retaliation.

2. What were they trying to tell each other?

Secondly, a look into their Guide or Manual would help us understand what message Black student leaders wish to send out to other participants: a valuable Guide to successful street fighting included in the Allen Building Takeover Collection provides students with the following bullet points.



As we can see, this Guide to street fighting given to students is essentially **defensive instead of offensive**, demonstrating that the students are primarily not concerned about how to create a chaotic situation but concerned about how to protect themselves under police violence. They were trying to tell each other to stay safe and stay calm, instead of teaching each other how to engage violently.

