

FOOD FOR THE REVOLUTION:
LOCAL CULTURE AND YOUTH POLITICAL RADICALIZATION IN THE 1960s SOUTH

By

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Quite apart from free speech, the Vietnam War, civil rights, and other well-known political flashpoints of the postwar period, the development of radicalism and student unrest during the 1960s and 70s was largely the result of local, cultural developments. University communities in particular provided young people with the space and leisure to openly respond to postwar cultural upheavals, resulting in an unprecedented degree of student engagement with social issues, heightened generational awareness, and a new paradigm of youth political action formed from a growing tradition of cultural dissent.

But far from representing a cohesive movement, these developments hinged on individual processes of acculturation in a local context. The evolution of young people's worldviews inherently followed the contours of their cultural landscape—the social circles they joined, the events and gatherings they attended, the media and merchandise they consumed, the activism of their adult role models, and the values of their religious denominations. These everyday considerations influenced the viewpoints of each young person differently, but their combined energies eventually brought about a transformation of the cultural and political ethos of the community as a whole.

The evolution of the University of Florida from an orthodox Southern institution into a locus of radicalism and counterculture demonstrates these changes. The legacy of local civil rights mobilization and the social engagement of faculty and religious leaders helped to legitimize reform-minded youth dissent. As students absorbed the changing ideas of their community, the advent of countercultural enterprises, underground presses, action groups, and liberal theologies aided the development of their own organizational capacities. Soon, Gainesville was home to a dedicated core of radical young people, as well as a large swath of moderate students who sympathized with their goals.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

A Change in the Seasons

On the night of December 5, 1964, nearly 3,000 young people took to the streets of Gainesville, Florida. Singing and chanting, the mob burned palm trees and tore down street signs, their smiles illuminated by bonfires lit in the city's major avenues. After two hours, beleaguered local police moved in with nightsticks, arresting sixteen and dispersing the crowd. It was a scene remembered and memorialized by students for years, until it was eclipsed by a conflagration graver, more explosive, and far more consequential.¹ By May 1972, the setting was the same, but the nightsticks had become tear gas, the two-hour disturbance had stretched to two days, the arrests had swelled into the hundreds, and the smiles were gone from students' faces.

Despite the violence, the first event was actually a celebration: the University of Florida's football team had upset its top-ranked opponent that night. The second, more austere occasion was a student rally in opposition to American escalation of the Vietnam War. Separated by seven years and an intellectual and cultural chasm, these two riots bookended a sea-change in youth consciousness, a process which transformed this Southern university community from a political backwater into a hornets' nest of radicalism. And while the years had certainly politicized the students, their new worldview was not simply anchored in politics. The story of their transformation, and of their construction of a radicalized community ethos, was inherently a cultural one.

Nevertheless, the historiography of youth activism in the 'long 1960s' is overwhelmingly concerned with matters of political and ideological development. Many scholars, focused on the intellectual origins and political architecture of the New Left, have conceived of the movement's

¹ Skip Havisser, "UF Students Riot, 16 Are Arrested," *Florida Alligator* (Gainesville, Fla.), December 7, 1964; and "Antiwar Demonstrations Rip UF," *Florida Alligator*, May 10, 1972.

social and cultural constructions as mere expressions of political engagement. In Sixties historical literature, notions of political idealism often precede themes of cultural change, as though radicals' individualism and social disaffection were natural products of their political consciousness.² New Left chronicler Todd Gitlin, for example, has written of the "direct line from the expressive politics of the New Left to the counterculture's let-it-all-hang-out way of life... The synthesizers took up a grand American tradition of trying to fuse public service and private joy."³

The shortcoming of this premise is that it undervalues the capacity of cultural constructions to serve as precursors to political engagement. In reality, popular and local culture had a critical role to play in Sixties political developments, and provided an acculturation beyond traditional narratives of antiwar, civil rights, and free speech mobilization. The sheer number of historical themes involved in movement socialization (including community formation, sexuality, race, gender, mass culture, and economics) testifies to the inadequacy of isolating political concerns as the predominant catalyst for cultural change. On the contrary, cultural forms were themselves powerful sparks in the explosive politicization of 1960s youth.

This is not to contend, however, that the realms of the political and cultural were entirely separate spheres. Rather, they were distinct but intertwined manifestations of a shared evolution

² The historiography of 1960s youth activism and the New Left is generally predicated on analysis of political matters. Cultural themes are certainly included, sometimes extensively, but often presented as manifestations of political engagement, or as yoked to an overall frustration with mainstream American social values (particularly of the materialism of the 1950s, civil rights, and what Theodore Roszak calls American "technocracy.") For examples of works which focus on the political and social, rather than the cultural, see also: Allen J. Matusow, *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984); Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam, 1987); James Miller, *Democracy Is In The Streets: From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987); Maurice Isserman, *If I Had A Hammer—: The Death of the Old Left and the Birth of the New Left* (New York: Basic Books, 1987); Terry H. Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); James Farrell, *The Spirit of the Sixties: Making Postwar Radicalism* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Jeremy Varon, *Bringing The War Home: The Weather Underground, the Red Army Faction, and Revolutionary Violence in the Sixties and Seventies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Van Gosse, *Rethinking The New Left: An Interpretive History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); and David Barber, *A Hard Rain Fell: SDS and Why It Failed* (Oxford, Miss.: University of Mississippi Press, 2008).

³ Gitlin, *The Sixties*, 213.

in values wrought by individuals drawn from a common social context. The principles enumerated at Port Huron—“anti-elitism, anti-bureaucracy, participation, community”—served social as well as political ends, after all.⁴ This study thus preserves the interconnectedness of the political and the cultural in 1960s youth activism, but inverts their traditionally assumed historical roles. It argues that popular and local cultural forms socialized outsiders into modes of radical political engagement. The process was aided by self-styled social nonconformists, who applied mechanisms of local culture to bestow mainstream legitimacy on ideas of social and political dissent. Their progress became self-sustaining, allowing other community issues—academic freedom and the right to open dissent, most prominently—to be subsumed into the countercultural narrative. In this way, an evolution in youth culture generated a transformation in youth politics.

Central to understanding the development of both political radicalization and the counterculture is a recognition of the historical contingency within individual processes of acculturation.⁵ Young people, especially in the South, were not intrinsically predisposed to join a sweeping youth movement, or to overturn a century of political protocol. Each person required a tangible, local idea of what cultural and political change meant, and a persuasive reason to resist the status quo. The oft-essentialized concept of the New Left, then, must be seen for what it was:

⁴ Milton Cantor, *The Divided Left: American Radicalism, 1900-1975* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 186.

⁵ Historian James Farrell describes radicals’ impulses toward communitarianism and cultural reform through the lens of “political personalism,” a synthetic merger of individualism and collective political engagement. Scholar Douglas Rossinow has similarly written that the rise of the “loosely associated set of cultural rebellions” known as the counterculture was an innovative means to circumvent the impediments to radical change inherent in an entrenched political system (Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America*, [New York: Columbia University Press, 1998]). Both of these analyses hinge on the centrality of a “politics of authenticity”—the existential search for personal wholeness and social justice. The authenticity model helps to explain the motives and ideals of a collective radicalization, but it also suggests that young people had a kind of unacquired internal catalyst which impelled them to seek and construct alternative mores. Other studies have linked New Left ideology to the broader historical currents of postwar liberalism, Fifties depersonalization, white racial guilt, and “Americans’ grand projects of the previous decades.” But these works’ concentration on the general sweep of the movement at times essentializes what was, as stated in these pages, an amalgamation of individual choices.

a tumultuous and disjointed ensemble of individual choices. Accordingly, this study concentrates on local projects of community building and cultural stimulus, wielded by dedicated radicals for the purposes of individual persuasion and acculturation among mainstream youth. This was not a ‘countercultural turn’ after modes of political organization began to corrode; it was rather an early and persistent desire to entice a broad youth demographic into alternative modes of social and political thought, using the co-optation of trends, social forums, and popular culture as its means. In addition, the influence of liberal local role models—faculty, religious leaders, and others—provided a legitimizing and bolstering stimulus for young people, while dedicated counterculturalists simultaneously constructed a holistic youth environment of nonconformity and dissent, thus providing young people with an array of local cultural encouragements to expand their worldviews. The specific mechanisms of this process included alternative businesses, drug culture, liberal theology, underground media, and the general transformation of communities’ cultural standards, all of which helped to smooth the fault lines situated at the intersection of culture and counterculture. And although these forms proliferated nationwide, their effectiveness inherently depended on localized processes of community construction, personal interaction, and manipulation of social space.

The transformation of the city of Gainesville, home to the immense University of Florida, provides an indicative canvas upon which to illustrate the primacy of cultural forms over political change. Indeed, observers from the period recognized the community’s unique example not only as a reflection of the broad process of radicalization, but also of the individual process of politicization. As leftist professor Marshall Jones said in 1969, “the Gainesville movement is as good a microcosm of the whole New Left as you are likely to find. It would be valuable as a study because it is a continuous movement, with little outside influence. Here, one can study the

growth of the movement and all the emotions people went through... One can see in the context of UF the history of a radical movement, [and] because it's really a small situation, you can see the elements more clearly."⁶ Having initially resisted the national discourse of student action, Gainesville's movement turned political too late—by the time politics and activism found community appeal, there was no remaining New Left to join. Community culture insulated the city from the fiery movements of the mid-1960s, but sustained a provincial radicalism even as national youth mobilization collapsed. These developments highlight the power of local cultural forms to resist broader social currents, and provide an important example of the political and cultural character of an area detached from the strong national tide of activism. Yet, as it abandoned the ingrained conservatism of the midcentury South, the community was increasingly shaped by the period's experimental counterculture. Gainesville in the late 1960s exemplified a community at a social and political crossroads.

Background

"I am from New Haven, Connecticut," wrote a University of Florida student in 1970. "Gainesville is in the stage New Haven went through four years ago."⁷

Taken alone, the recent transplant's assessment painted a bleak portrait of radicalism in this Southern university town. But his next thought encapsulated the rapid transformation underway in Gainesville's cultural landscape: "[People here] are quite aware of the status quo, but they lack direction. There is no solidarity here. These people possessing fine ideas are scattering their energies in many directions and are not pooling them together."⁸

⁶ Scott Degarmo, "UF's Radical Movement Called National Model," *The University Report* (Gainesville, Fla.), Vol. 2 No. 21, February 6, 1969.

⁷ MMc (pseudonym), "Letter to the editor," *The Eye* (Gainesville, FL), October 1, 1970.

⁸ Ibid.

The story of the unification of these energies is the story of an explosive social metamorphosis among Gainesville's youth in the late 1960s. Despite the University of Florida's massive size—it boasted an enrollment of 20,566 students by the fall of 1967—it had for decades been noted for its cultural homogeneity.⁹ Young women, first admitted to the university in 1947, joined sororities and social clubs, while young men created networks by participating in campus organizations, fraternities, and ROTC. All were white. The primary events on students' social calendars were football games and Homecoming celebrations, and the nearest thing to civic unrest took the form of so-called panty raids, in which crowds of more-or-less harmless male students marched on female dormitories.¹⁰

Off-campus, the city of Gainesville had been known as a sleepy, segregated Southern town. Unspoken but clearly delineated boundaries existed between white and black public spaces, effectively minimizing racial interaction. African Americans for generations had been relegated to the city's easternmost neighborhoods, which lacked the municipal resources of the town's exclusively white west side.¹¹ By the mid-1960s, however, these local Jim Crow customs began to meet with sustained resistance: black and white activists fought for social justice by challenging East Gainesville's lack of recreation facilities, arbitrary code enforcement, substandard health services, inconsistent waste collection, and, in many cases, lack of running water.¹² The primary force in this struggle was the all-female Gainesville Women for Equal Rights, which, along with African American associations like the SCLC and youth organizations like the UF Student Group for Equal Rights, catalyzed the process of social change in the town.

⁹ Florida Board of Regents, "Enrollment In Florida's Institutions of Higher Learning, Fall 1967." Office of the Board of Regents, State University System of Florida. Publication no. 111, 1968.

¹⁰ Jon Nordheimer, "Whites Joining Minority Groups In University of Florida Protest," *New York Times*, June 12, 1971.

¹¹ U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of the Census. *1970 Census of Population and Housing: Gainesville, Fla. Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972).

¹² Transcript, Jean Chalmers. Oral history interview with Stuart Landers, April 22, 1991, p. 9, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program Collection, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

A focus on social issues, rather than political ones, allowed community activists to operate flexibly and pragmatically, achieving reform through a series of small but important victories. Their battles represented the roots of Gainesville's radical tradition.

But despite these successes, the number of actual participants in Gainesville's civil rights struggles remained small. The overarching cultural ambience of the city and its university remained largely insulated from national discourse, and the student body resisted political engagement. The result was the community-wide preservation of a parochial, sports-and-socializing Southern university ethos—seemingly a world apart from the pitched political battles igniting on campuses nationwide. For much of the 1960s, the voices of Gainesville's small group of radicals remained isolated in a wilderness of local apathy.

But their challenge was also regional. Even as the national political narrative among young activists shifted to the war in Vietnam, to student free speech, and to frustration with what was perceived to be the counterfeit moral foundations of American material culture, Southerners who supported progressive causes experienced only “hostility and isolation” from their peers.¹³ Political agitation and ideas of participatory democracy were thus unlikely to meet with success, compelling radicals to seek alternative forms of coordination and expansion in order to legitimize their movement and its goals. Cultural constructions of community fused nonconformist values with mainstream scruples, helping to disseminate the evolving ideology of radicalism through tangible, localized mechanisms. These mechanisms—including the reconstruction of the local social environment, the foundation of co-ops and businesses, the popularization of drugs, the proliferation of underground newsmedia, and others—represented an

¹³ Gregg L. Michel, *Struggle For A Better South: The Southern Student Organizing Committee, 1964-1969* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 1.

innovative means to wake local students from their political lethargy, as well as to create a broad-based movement imbued with the idealized goals of moralism and authenticity.

CHAPTER 2 COMMUNITY, AMBIENCE, ETHOS, AND ENTERPRISE

Community, Ambience, and Ethos

By co-opting elements of broader youth culture and combining them with the political agendas of their movement, radicals in Gainesville convinced themselves that mainstream participation in countercultural activities represented a broad endorsement of their convictions by other young people. The widespread public attraction of gatherings, hippie fashions, drugs, and concerts gave radicals a sense of acceptance and solidarity among their peers, even if many of them were simply seeking entertainment and gratification. Nevertheless, the growing popularity of these leisure activities presented counterculturalists with an opportunity to disseminate their social values and political ideas to a broader cross-section of the youth demographic. The bold presumption of broad-based support allowed nonconformists to chip away at the cultural conservatism of their city, even if it meant abandoning rhetoric of alienation and disaffection by pushing counterculture into the mainstream. The eventual result was the birth of a palpable freethinking ethos in Gainesville, an ambience so central to the community's identity that then-psychology professor Marshall Jones proclaimed in 1970 that he was living in the "Berkeley of the South."¹⁴

It was precisely this atmosphere that, throughout the 1960s, attenuated Gainesville's parochialism and transformed it into a place of open political debate and cultural experimentation. The measured pace of this change allowed gradual development of the community's cosmopolitanism and sophistication, rather than the sudden and violent politicization which marked many campuses around the nation. As a religion professor from the

¹⁴ Marshall Jones, "Berkeley of the South: A History of the Student Movement at the University of Florida, 1963-1968." (PhD diss., University of Florida, 1970).

period remembers, early radicalization in Gainesville was “democratic, responsible, within-the-law kind of activity... [The town was becoming] more cosmopolitan. The culture shock that many kids felt at Florida was not coming here and getting a black roommate but [rather] coming from Miami-Dade and having a roommate from Chipola, rural Florida. So the university had sort of moved into a more pluralistic mindset.”¹⁵ This provided students and citizens with a growing pool of cultural resources which belied the city’s rural surroundings. In the period between 1970 and 1972, for example, the Accent Speaker’s Bureau at the University of Florida sponsored public figures to speak on campus as varied as George McGovern, Allen Ginsburg, Barry Goldwater, Milton Friedman, John Kerry, Shirley Chisholm, Jane Fonda, Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin and Ralph Abernathy. Renegade “Southern Gothic” novelist Harry Crews, meanwhile, taught decidedly unorthodox creative writing courses to undergraduates. At times Crews stumbled into class intoxicated, bleeding, or singing; often he held classes in his favorite bars or at his house. He nevertheless built a fierce loyalty among students for his daring, countercultural style. As one of them recalled, “the literature we read was subversive, erotic, radical... Harry Crews [was] the spirit of the 1960s.”¹⁶ At the same time, the university’s Plaza of the Americas played host to an array of ideas and demonstrations, from rallies against the two-party political system to a session in support of “Soviet Jewry.”¹⁷

But as these events became commonplace, in many cases radicals’ yearning to place themselves outside the mainstream of society merely pushed them further toward the margins. Certainly they ushered in a pervasive hippie culture, complete with its fashions, lifestyle, and

¹⁵ Transcript, Austin B. Creel. Oral history interview with Stuart Landers, August 27, 1992, p. 39, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program Collection, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

¹⁶ Gary L. Long, “Silences, Criticisms, and Laments,” essay in Erik Bledsoe, ed., *Perspectives on Harry Crews* (Oxford, Miss.: University of Mississippi Press, 2001), 47; Ted Geltner, “Crews at 70,” *Gainesville Sun*, May 7, 2006; and Transcript, W.H. Abney. Oral history interview with Dirk Drake, April 7, 1996, p. 13, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program Collection, University of Florida.

¹⁷ David Miller, “SDS UF Chapter Plans Election Rally,” *The University Report* Vol. 1 No. 11, October 30, 1968; and Arnold Bucholtz, “Soviet Jews Backed in Plaza Rally,” *Florida Alligator*, May 1, 1972.

rhetoric. In 1967, a columnist wryly observed in the campus newspaper, the *Florida Alligator*, that “the Reitz Union theatre is the only movie-house in town whose audience is funnier and more interesting than its films. Witness the frolicking clothes of the sandals, bearded, long-haired hippies and ho-dads of the age who frequent the theatre each Sunday.”¹⁸ A wide swath of Gainesville’s youth population was recognizably slow to embrace these customs, as witnessed in its collective ambivalence toward the so-called 1967 “Summer of Love.” As hippies descended on green spaces in America’s major cities to the soundtrack of The Beatles’ *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band* (released on June 1st), and as tropes of free love, drug enlightenment, and artistic expression infiltrated the national news media, the preeminent controversy in Gainesville for nearly the entire summer was a proposed change to the seat reservation policy in the Florida Gators’ football stadium.¹⁹ When a small group of hippies staged a “love-in” on the Plaza of the Americas in July, it drew only a handful of attendees, some of whom were merely curious passersby.²⁰ And some self-proclaimed ‘freaks’ detached even further from the mainstream, as when one student took up the *nom de plume* of Pan The Warlock and offered ad hoc “courses in Black Magic and Satanic Beliefs.”²¹ Another student founded the UF “Water Brotherhood Colony,” a sect based on a science fiction book which promoted “philosophical concepts... including pragmatism, existentialism, objectivism, Bob Dylan, and [Marshall] McLuhan, a philosopher.” Only fifteen people joined.²²

These ventures overstepped the boundaries of acceptability in a community which was still in the process of forging its political identity, but they nevertheless gave young people new outlets for expression and individuality. Such inchoate forms of counterculture failed to find

¹⁸ Allen Pierleoni, “Rambling With Pierleoni: With Apologies To UF,” *Florida Alligator*, Jun 16, 1967.

¹⁹ The Beatles, *et al.*, *The Beatles Anthology* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2000), p. 254; and “Controversy Over Card Section Rages,” *Florida Alligator*, July 28, 1967.

²⁰ “Flower Power Advocates Stage Love-In,” *Florida Alligator*, July 25, 1967.

²¹ Classified advertisement. *The Eye*, October 27, 1970.

²² “UF Has ‘Water Brotherhood’ Colony,” *Florida Alligator*, June 23, 1967.

legitimacy, but the lessons learned helped campus rebels better understand the path to broad public appeal. Political grandstanding generated little interest, but changes in local culture—provided they weren't too revolutionary—could lead to political and social engagement. These young people were the community's avant-garde, and they learned quickly. However, given the disparity between their own political consciousness and that of most of their fellow students, they also became quickly frustrated.

While ahead of its peers in the South, Gainesville's political climate was limited when held against developments in California, Illinois, Wisconsin, and New York. In early 1967—three years after the Berkeley Free Speech movement had ignited broad youth politicization—the “largest and most militant on-campus protest demonstration in the history of the University of Florida” was a 400-person sit-in opposing disciplinary action against Pamme Brewer, a student who had posed nude in the humor magazine *The Charlatan*. Although it was locally significant, advocacy for the right to star in a centerfold photo-shoot hardly represented a ringing display of solidarity with the growing activism of the national New Left.²³ Certainly the incident represented student awakening to “the plight of students at the hands of the administration”—that is, young people beginning to writhe against the bonds of restrictive *in loco parentis* policies.²⁴ But the protest was a pyrrhic victory for those pressing for broader action. The slow pace of local social engagement vexed a radical faction who had long since turned its attention to the Vietnam War, national politics, and challenging what historian Allen Matusow describes as the “contradiction between American principles and American realities.”²⁵ Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) had existed in Gainesville since 1965, and the Southern Student

²³ Judith Brown, “The Valentine Vigil,” *The Crocodile* Vol. 2 No. 1 (Gainesville, Fla.), February 20, 1967.

²⁴ United Press International, “Vigil Begun as Florida Coed Is Punished For Posing Nude,” *New York Times*, February 15, 1967.

²⁵ Allen J. Matusow. *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 309.

Organizing Committee (SSOC) since 1967, but neither was officially recognized as a student group by the university. In this context, radicals were obliged to resort to methods of cultural coordination rather than political organization.²⁶

Another factor in this strategic shift was the incongruity between Gainesville's lethargic political engagement and the national maturation of student activism. By the time local involvement had congealed into a discernible movement, forms of advocacy which had seemed revolutionary several years earlier now began to take on a facade of banality. Before UF students had staged even a single large antiwar protest, customary methods of picketing and marching began to appear outmoded, due in no small part to the national attention given to more active movements across the country. An *Alligator* columnist wrote in 1967—again, before any large demonstrations had taken place in Gainesville—that “protest, as a tool for getting things done, seems to be becoming old hat. Turnouts are dwindling, causes multiplying too quickly, and the people who carry picket signs tending to take on a sameness of appearance. Protest, picketing, and civil disobedience may have reached a point of diminishing returns.”²⁷ Although this sentiment did little to prevent explosive demonstrations on Gainesville's streets in the coming years, for a time it became central to the promotion of alternative modes of engagement. Cultural dissemination was fresh, powerful, and appealing. If rallies and posters could not bring newcomers into the movement's fold, alternative culture could. Nonconforming lifestyles could translate into nonconforming politics.

Not that this approach received unanimous approbation within the radical community.

With increasing public attention given to youth politics, some self-styled political New Leftists

²⁶ President Stephen C. O'Connell to Lester L. Hale, Vice President for Student Affairs, memorandum, “Re: Recognition of students for New Party and Southern Student Organizing Committee,” March 4, 1969. Administrative Policy Records, University of Florida Office of the President (Stephen C. O'Connell), Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida.

²⁷ Jim White, “No More ‘Lost Generation’; Student Protest: Making Itself Heard,” *Florida Alligator*, June 23, 1967.

feared for the ideological purity of their movement. As the lines between youth culture and counterculture blurred; as drugs and ‘free love’ found greater esteem among young people; and as the intellectualism of Joan Baez and Bob Dylan replaced hit-machine pop, those who had initially spearheaded radical change chafed at what they perceived to be the cultural pretense of newcomers. The political New Left, they contended, should be kept wholly separate from the novelty of the growing, seemingly apolitical, counterculture. One such objector was leftist UF humanities professor Ed Richer who, writing in a national New Left journal, scathingly berated the ideological chasm between students who were truly “revolutionary” and those who were merely rebellious. The latter group, wrote Richer, demonstrated a “personal and intellectual slovenliness” due to a lack of “primal political character.” The result was an academic rights movement which diverted attention from more grievous structural problems in society—problems against which the true “revolutionaries” writhed: “The pot-smoker wants rebellion, the antagonist of the rat-race will have to make revolution.”²⁸ Three years later, philosophy professor Kenneth Megill agreed, declaring in a speech that politics was for traditional liberals, while cultural overhaul was the domain of a new, iconoclastic generation of radicals: “Liberal is practical—accepts the rules of the game. Radical calls these rules into question. Liberal fights for particular issues and particular improvements... Radical sees that these issues are related and that there will be no fundamental change until the economic and social forces which are creating the current order is re-structured.”²⁹

Nevertheless, many of Megill’s peers reacted with relish as their cultural designs brought them into contact with a wider cross-section of the moderate public. Throughout the 1960s,

²⁸ Ed Richer, “Radically Speaking,” *Free Student* (New York, N.Y.) No. 5, 1965.

²⁹ Kenneth A. Megill, “Radicals—European Style.” Notes for speech given at First Unitarian Fellowship, Gainesville, Fla., October 20, 1968. Kenneth A. Megill Papers, Special and Area Studies Collections, University Archive, University of Florida (Gainesville, Fla.).

radicals attempted to fuse their own labyrinth of doctrines with the rapidly changing world of popular culture. While it would be inequitable to dismiss this fusion as a collective misconception, it is clear that many movement leaders extrapolated broad notions of youth solidarity from what may have in reality amounted to mere popularity. For instance, in October 1970 a group of UF students staged a “counter-homecoming” celebration, billed as “the most far out happening ever in Gainesville.” The centerpiece of this weekend of revelry was the Halloween Costume Ball, which drew hundreds, or perhaps thousands, of students to the campus’s Plaza of the Americas. While the social appeal of such an event to a large group of college students is self-evident, the next issue of avant-garde magazine *The Eye* saw things differently, optimistically concluding of the party’s throng that “there was no doubt that these people were against the war. There is no doubt that these people are into things beyond WORK-STUDY-GET AHEAD-KILL... That’s what the sixties were all about. Getting the issues to the people,” adding hopefully, “we are starting to build in Gainesville.”³⁰

Enterprise

But “building” was not just an abstract conceit; it also translated to the physical realm of bricks-and-mortar community development. By the late-1960s, Gainesville’s business district had become dotted with small ventures traditionally associated with hippie culture. These were local organizations run by local people, unassociated with—but certainly inspired by—collectivist establishments proliferating nationwide. The individuals who operated these markets and shops generally came from a single, limited, social circle, and mutually collaborated to set up their operations and refer customers to each other’s ventures. But the feasibility of these enterprises was inherently dependent on the prevailing system of Darwinian commercialism that no well-intentioned idealism could counteract, a fact which compelled would-be collectivists to

³⁰ Fast (pseudonym), “Freak Power,” *The Eye*, November 7, 1970.

temper their ultimate objectives or face assured economic ruin. In this way, enterprises borne of a faction striving for nonconformity reached a broader public by attempting, ironically, to operate within a conventional capitalist framework. Although this may have seemed like a compromise of integrity or legitimacy, it actually had a serendipitous effect on the radical community's ability to appeal to greater numbers of citizens. By working within the familiar contours of capitalist society, radicals' unique form of cultural enterprise was made more palatable to a broader segment of the public. But this moderation also unintentionally produced a ready-made market for conventional businesses, whose co-optation of countercultural forms nourished the very profit imperatives that radicals so zealously opposed.

In rapid succession, organizations sourcing and distributing local goods, organic foods, and essential services materialized on Gainesville's avenues. Mother Earth Natural Food Store catered to the university community from a grocery located six blocks from the campus. The Hogtown Food Co-Op—under the motto “food for the REVOLUTION”—published recipes in local magazines and sought to organize a “free kitchen” for the public, in which residents could cook, eat, and trade meals without any exchange of money.³¹ Downtown, residents could browse the daily Gainesville Artisans' Market, while employees of the Great Southern Leather shoe shop moonlighted as the Hogtown Mechanic's Co-Op, in which novice auto mechanics were “ready and waiting to do you a good thing at people's prices.”³²

These enterprises represented small-scale forays into pseudo-communalism on the part of the operators. And although such ventures were inherently limited by the realities of the commercial system in which both the university and the surrounding town operated, the shared experience of founding co-ops and collective enterprises dedicated to distributing free

³¹ Wolfie (pseudonym), “Hogtown Food Co-Op,” *The Eye*, October 13, 1970, 17.

³² Maddy (pseudonym), “Food For The REVOLUTION!,” *The Eye*, November 24, 1970, 15.

products—or, at least, selling them at “people’s prices”—forged a close-knit community of individuals who repeatedly tested the practical boundaries of idealism. As their enterprises interacted and proliferated, this small group could exchange and consider radical ideas, and put them into practice if feasible. More importantly, they could present those ideas to the broader public in new and creative ways.

On the surface, this communalism was predicated on the political self-validation and mutual vision of its founders. But it was also a potential building block in the construction of a reformed community ethos that could, it was hoped, attract infusions of new people and ideas. Correspondingly, radicals integrated the commercial and political powers of their unorthodox institutions to create vehicles of outreach designed to attract interest from across the social spectrum. These were primarily centered on the manipulation of popular culture, as evidenced when co-op managers helped to organize “Saturday Rock-outs” on the Plaza of the Americas, events at which hundreds of students and community members could come together to meet, mingle, dance, and talk.³³

At the heart of these very visible manifestations of evolving counterculture was the desire to conform with some degree of legitimacy to the concept of communitarian anarchism by radicals who were unwilling or unable to actually divorce themselves from society. The disaffected rhetoric of “dropping out” thus always gave way, in actual practice, to the attempted construction of a new and more equitable society “in the shell of the old.”³⁴ Historian James Farrell has written that young radicals were motivated by a “political personalism” in which the dignity and activism of individuals could engender political changes in impersonal establishments. His assertion that personalists assumed that the institutions of a community

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ James J. Farrell, *The Spirit of the Sixties: The Making of Postwar Radicalism* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 7.

“created and converted individuals,” and could be manipulated to the benefit—or detriment—of society, helps to explain the antithetical impulses that pulled radicals toward anarchistic disaffection while simultaneously instilling in them a desire to reform and improve existing social structures.³⁵ It was a compromise which helped to popularize their efforts among the broader community, and bring their political message to a mainstream audience.

While the collectives put radical ideologies into practice, profit-seeking businesses appealed to images of counterculture to further their commercial ends, effectively bridging the worlds of hippie idealism and free-market capitalism. As scholar George Lipsitz notes, “grassroots efforts to create ‘free spaces’ ... alerted capitalists to the potential of untapped market desires that could easily co-opt emancipatory impulses for mercenary ends.”³⁶ In Gainesville, many existing firms quickly adopted psychedelic symbols and slang to demonstrate solidarity with the powerful youth market. Meanwhile, new companies positioned themselves to fulfill the emerging demands of alternative retail, selling the trinkets and wares of hippie culture from colorful storefronts and private homes. Dashiki’s Dresses and Shirts carried exotic-patterned clothing, The Apollonian Alternative sold “handcrafted leather belts, bags, vests, and custom made sandals,” Second Genesis unisex boutique advertised their “far out duds,” while the New Delhi Delicatessen boasted “Wow! Really good food man—Far out!”³⁷ Meanwhile, the strip of shops, bars, and restaurants adjacent to the university known as the Gold Coast—an area only desegregated six years earlier—had become, by 1969, the home of the first “head shop” in Gainesville, selling countercultural literature, music, and drug paraphernalia.³⁸ Whether or not these for-profit concerns truly embraced the counterculture, their economic strategy served to

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ George Lipsitz, “Who’ll Stop The Rain?: Youth Culture, Rock ‘n’ Roll, and Social Crises,” essay in David Farber, ed., *The Sixties: From Memory to History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 231.

³⁷ Advertisements, *The Eye*, Vol 1 No 2, October 1 1970.

³⁸ Transcript, W.H. Abney. Oral history interview with Dirk Drake, April 7, 1996, p. 20, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program Collection, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

legitimize the mores of the nonconformists they emulated and courted. The result was, ironically, a heavily capitalistic environment in which the profit motives of supply and demand nurtured and fostered an evolving anti-establishment radicalism.

CHAPTER 3 DRUG CULTURE AND UNDERGROUND PRESSES

Drug Culture

Intrinsically linked to counterculture in this period was an upsurge in drug use among young people. Perhaps more explosive, however, was the heightened public discourse surrounding the culture of drugs. As increasing numbers of students proclaimed their overt use and advocacy of mind-altering substances, parents, politicians, and administrators pointed to drug use as a degenerative national peril—indeed, both Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon addressed the issue to national audiences in 1968.³⁹ But while the perceived epidemic had firmly embedded itself in the public consciousness, the increase in raw numbers of committed users did not represent the most critical cultural change wrought by Sixties drug culture; in fact, one study estimated that this group did not exceed ten percent of the youth population.⁴⁰ Rather, discourse was most shaped by the principles of the uninvolved median of students, “often the majority of any given college population,” who were “not likely to seek out the drug experience deliberately,” but who also would not “recoil from it.”⁴¹ That this large segment of the community was aware of, and unoffended by, the increasing proliferation of illicit substances in college life gave drug proponents latitude to express their lifestyles publicly, and to champion their own constructions of morality.

This was certainly the case in Gainesville, where an active drug culture rapidly spread beyond the boundaries of the hippie movement. Indeed, by the early 1970s, concerned parents statewide whispered that Gainesville was “Dope City, U.S.A.” and that, so went the rumors, even

³⁹ Helen H. Nowlis, PhD, *Drugs On The College Campus* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1970), x.

⁴⁰ Donald B. Louria, M.D., *The Drug Scene* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968), 168.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

narcotics agents were powerless to thwart it.⁴² Despite the obvious embellishment, drugs were indeed becoming a fact of campus life and a common subject of public discussion. The university-sanctioned *Florida Alligator* regularly published pieces on drugs, prompting candid letters from students on both sides of the issue. On one such occasion, a business senior wrote a scathing guest editorial after an article suggested that the hallucinogenic LSD could cause hereditary defects: “I would also like to know why people in the ‘established’ press, who have long ago had their minds scrambled on overdoses of mom’s apple pie, continue to distort, misinform, and sensationalize about LSD!”⁴³ The pervasiveness of that substance was illustrated in humorous fashion when The Pub, a midtown beer hall, advertised in its window the sale of LSD for 25 cents—only to disappoint potential buyers when it was revealed that the product on sale was in fact Large Size Draft beer.⁴⁴

This levity, however, belied a darker side to Gainesville’s drug scene. In 1973, for example, student Tony Lee Garner was shot dead in his dormitory room while selling marijuana.⁴⁵ Also threatening to the wider community was the increasingly casual use of hard drugs, a risk exacerbated by the lack of gravity given to their dangers by users. Gainesville’s leftist publications reprinted romanticized notions about “the herbs and cactus and mushrooms of the American Indians” from Weather Underground leader Bernadine Dohrn, who insisted that mind-expanding drugs would “help us make a future world where it will be possible to live in peace.”⁴⁶ Local writers penned articles that breezily doled out drug advice, with titles like “What

⁴² Letter from Mr. and Mrs. Frank Belyeu, Jr., Winter Park, FL, to President Stephen C. O’Connell, University of Florida, April 16, 1973. Administrative Policy Records, University of Florida Office of the President (Stephen C. O’Connell), Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida.

⁴³ Joel M. Starkey, “‘Flower Power’ Strikes Back,” *Florida Alligator*, June 13, 1967.

⁴⁴ Bill Douthat, “Campus Beat,” *Florida Alligator*, May 19, 1967.

⁴⁵ Memorandum, “Tony Lee Garner, homicide,” from President Stephen C. O’Connell to Members of the Florida Board of Regents, April 19, 1973. Administrative Policy Records, University of Florida Office of the President (Stephen C. O’Connell), Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida.

⁴⁶ Bernadine Dohrn, “Notes From The Underground,” *The Eye*, September 15, 1970.

to Do If You Overdose on Heroin.”⁴⁷ But these blasé discussions of drug culture reveal a potentially dangerous spiral of abuse. Mainstream students looked on warily as the radical community’s hunger for new and harder drugs intensified. As early as 1967, the *Alligator* gingerly covered the rumored arrival on campus of the methylamphetamine known as STP, vigilantly repeating the assertion that the drug would cause users to “completely and literally lose their minds.”⁴⁸ The problem became such that even the committed drug users behind Gainesville’s underground presses promoted abstinence for addicts. The countercultural magazine *The Eye*—despite printing a “cannabinol extraction recipe” on the same page—implored dependents of “the hard stuff” to seek help at the newly formed Gainesville Methadone Maintenance Program, a walk-in rehabilitation clinic, adding, “no paranoia, but you should be trying to get off the stuff... We hope it works and you can kick your habit cause it’s such a bummer.”⁴⁹

Hippies—and later, radicals in general—used drugs as a means to bring others into their social fold. Thus mainstream students sampling drug culture inadvertently also found an entrée into a radical coterie of new values and ideas. Counterculturalists hoped that through introduction to drugs—and the social opportunities associated with them—a growing number of people could be made to question their long-held cultural assumptions, and thereupon be “turned on” to radical ideologies. In this way, the use of drugs was culturally packaged with the particular social maxims of their users and distributors. One student, entering the university in 1970 as a self-described Goldwater conservative, described the holistic manner with which he was swept into the cultural and political framework of the radical Left through this social interaction:

⁴⁷ Monterey Jack (pseudonym), “What To Do If You Overdose on Heroin,” *The Eye*, January 5, 1971.

⁴⁸ Bob Moran, “STP – Fact or Fantasy?,” *Florida Alligator*, July 14, 1967.

⁴⁹ “Methadone Is Now Available In Gainesville,” *The Eye*, November 24, 1970.

I was not [yet] radicalized then. I noticed that the radicals on campus had the best drugs, the best looking women who would have sex with you, and they gave the best parties. So social life was really good for the radicals. I began to see this and hang out with them more and more, and talk less and less conservative stuff and paid more attention to what they were saying... [eventually] I got into the whole world of the radical things; the politics, good looking women, drugs, the rock-n-roll, all of it.⁵⁰

In this way, drugs were a key tool in the dissemination of radicals' message and the expansion of the community's cultural and political boundaries.

Local and university leaders, unaccustomed to large-scale drug issues, were slow to act. Administrators were aware that students used drugs in residence halls, in fraternity and sorority houses, and off-campus, but hoped initially that the problem could be checked by pressure from housing personnel and by the examples of student role models. These efforts had little effect. The use of marijuana and depressant medications such as methaqualone were especially noted at public gatherings like rock concerts and Gator Growl pep rallies, where students mingled with young people from other cities. On these occasions, despite "open and obvious" drug use, police and administrators made "no concerted effort for law enforcement," giving users further incentive to maintain their habits and minister to the uninitiated.⁵¹ This vacuum of enforcement gave Gainesville a reputation as a popular drug center, inspiring repeated calls from citizens for corrective action. In 1969, Dr. Edwin Larson, a psychiatrist at the campus infirmary, estimated that Gainesville lagged only slightly behind known drug havens like San Francisco, and that the trend was only increasing: "If you think we've got a drug problem now, we're going to something greater in a few years."⁵²

⁵⁰ Transcript, W.H. Abney. Oral history interview with Dirk Drake, April 7, 1996, p. 3 and p. 16, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program Collection, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

⁵¹ Memorandum, "Illegal drug use in the university community," from Michael V. Gannon, Chairman, Student Affairs Committee, to President Stephen C. O'Connell, April 16, 1973. Administrative Policy Records, University of Florida Office of the President (Stephen C. O'Connell), Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida.

⁵² "Gainesville Sets Up Corner Drugstore," *Florida Times-Union*, October 10, 1969.

Eventually, a coalition of Gainesville and Alachua County police departments, local public school officials, concerned university students, and former drug users (like those from the Methadone Maintenance Clinic), came together to found the Corner Drugstore, a grassroots-organized rehabilitation space for present and former addicts and their loved ones. Receiving the full backing of the university administration, the Drugstore was conceived as a non-judgmental facility to stage sensitivity groups, give aid to “persons on ‘bum trips,’” and provide a venue for counseling and treatment.⁵³ It was not without controversy, however. Rumors swirled that rogue members of the staff who had failed to stay clean were peddling LSD and using the building for cohabitation.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, after opening its doors in 1969, the Drugstore received private donations from prominent Florida businessmen and politicians, and enjoyed wide support from the general public.

The central characteristic of drug culture as a mechanism in social proselytizing was its very neutrality. Unlike political postures or cultural dissent, drugs did not espouse any single cause or require ideological conversion. Rather, drug use was couched in the rhetoric of introspection and enlightenment, an alleviation of social pressure that led the user to the shores of personalism and cultural awareness but preserved his or her prerogative of choice on whether or not to take the plunge. Moreover, the perceived kinship linking drug users together in a form of abstract community—and it was primarily just a perception—brought young people a sense of fellowship with their idols. Music icons brought drugs to mass culture, transforming themselves into symbols of youth nonconformity in the process. The popularity of hip, progressive musicians and writers perpetuated the rhetoric of drug-fueled self-awareness among young

⁵³ Ibid.; and Letter from President Stephen C. O’Connell to the Honorable Don Shoemaker, Miami, FL, December 15, 1969, Administrative Policy Records, University of Florida Office of the President (Stephen C. O’Connell), Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida.

⁵⁴ Memorandum from James T. Hennessey, Assistant to the Vice President for Student Affairs, to President Stephen C. O’Connell, July 16, 1970. Administrative Policy Records, University of Florida Office of the President (Stephen C. O’Connell), Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida.

people. As historian David Farber notes, the legitimizing influence of cultural arbiters like rock bands made many teenagers feel, through their own participation in drug culture, that they were “part of a community of people, with the Beatles and the Stones being [their] den fathers.”⁵⁵ In an intellectual context, then, the cultural assumptions carried by drug use helped to fulfill youth fantasies related to both popular culture and radical discourse. Drugs provided young people with an idealistic notion of personal nonconformity, while simultaneously giving them a sense of solidarity with their cultural heroes. This utopian situation left no room for the influence of the reviled Establishment (nor, unfortunately, for proper awareness of the dangers of substance abuse). In short, drugs provided an outlet for ideas of detachment and isolation, and a common ground for the expansion of the radical community.

Underground Presses

Radicals’ persistent desire to disseminate their evolving beliefs and ideologies to a wider audience emerged in many forms. Some of these—like the businesses, social gatherings, and drug culture described above—were unsystematic efforts, tenuous steps to win favor and legitimacy for a somewhat amorphous social faction. Others were more deliberate. Radicals wanted not only to inspire an increased political consciousness among their peers, but also to organize and define their fundamental beliefs. Several years before frustrations with traditional outlets erupted into fiery protests, radicals sought more benign forms of alternative expression to spread and debate their values, resulting in the foundation of an independent news media. More importantly, by producing intellectually stimulating content, local writers hoped to continue radicalizing the uninitiated. Historian John McMillian has written of alternative newsheets that “in addition to trying to build an intellectual framework for the Movement’s expansion, [radicals] imbued their newspapers with an ethos that socialized people into the Movement,

⁵⁵ David Farber, *The Age of Great Dreams: America in the 1960s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994), 174.

fostered a spirit of mutuality among them, and raised their democratic expectations.”⁵⁶

Accordingly, from the mid-1960s on, Gainesville nurtured a vibrant underground press scene, which flooded the community with leftist magazines, newspapers, and pamphlets. The individual careers of these publications were generally brief—ranging from a few months to a few years—and most eventually capsized under financial troubles, low circulation, or editors who chose to move on. The single constant was a collective tenacity: when one publication fell, another quickly took up its mantle.

In previous decades, Gainesville had demonstrated a marked lack of published dissent, paired with a tradition of rigid official control of student media. The primary literary outlet for antiauthoritarianism was the decidedly benign humor magazine *The Orange Peel*, published triannually under the watchful censorship of university administrators. Nevertheless, college satire represented an inchoate form of nonconformity, which the magazine itself acknowledged in 1960: “Many [college authorities] consider their humor magazine the most troublesome weed in their placid academic meadow, especially when the magazine razzes the administration.”⁵⁷ Certainly the University of Florida administration felt sufficiently “razzed” by the *Peel*’s content that it shut down the publication, replacing it in 1962 with the more domesticated *New Orange Peel*. By way of protest to this move, a group of students established an unofficial, off-campus publication—complete with restored risqué content—waggishly titled *The Old Orange Peel*.

As the Sixties drew on, alternative presses’ ambitions spread beyond satirizing university officials. Students began founding journals to treat contemporary issues of race, war, and education, especially at the local level. The main impetus for the creation of these periodicals was the perceived inadequacy of the town’s two main dailies, the mainstream *Gainesville Sun*

⁵⁶ John McMillian, *Smoking Typewriters: The Sixties Underground Press and the Rise of Alternative Media in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 4.

⁵⁷ Bill Helmer, “College Humor: Coming or Going?,” *The Orange Peel* (Gainesville, Fla.), Winter 1960.

and the student-run, university-sanctioned *Florida Alligator*. Gainesville's alternative presses were unanimous in their censure of these outlets, citing crimes of apathy and obliviousness. These characterizations, however, were not entirely justified, particularly in the case of the *Alligator*, which sought at times to be investigative but which was published at the discretion of university administrators. This compromised position is illustrated by a 1968 incident in which an op-ed lambasting the university administration over academic freedom policies was harshly suppressed by university president Steven C. O'Connell.⁵⁸ After five subeditors resigned in support of O'Connell, the article's author, Steve Hull, turned to alternative media to circumvent administration control. *The University Report*, an independent broadsheet, provided a forum for Hull and others to express themselves without the specter of censorship. The *Alligator* itself, following a similar stand from O'Connell (against the printing of an abortion clinic referral list), went on to sever its editorial and financial ties to the university, resuming publication in 1972 as the unsubsidized and unsupervised *Independent Florida Alligator*.⁵⁹

A survey of Gainesville's alternative media clearly reveals an escalating radical sentiment as New Leftists' simmering frustrations with their community began to boil. In only a few years, the optimistic idealism of mid-1960s journals gave way to iconoclastic militancy—bordering on sedition—on the part of an increasingly angry radical community. At times this process was evident from issue to issue within a single paper, as in the case of one of the trailblazing underground periodicals in Gainesville, pointedly named *The Crocodile*. Founded in 1966 as “An Equal Voice For All,” the broadsheet aimed to give exponents of various ideologies a space to for open debate and healthy discussion. But this format lasted less than a year before it was

⁵⁸ Associated Press, “Editorial Suppressed In UF Newspaper Gets Campus Circulation On Handbills,” *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, April 20, 1968.

⁵⁹ Minutes of Florida Board of Regents meeting, October 2, 1972, “Section L: Student Publications.” Administrative Policy Records, University of Florida Office of the President (Stephen C. O'Connell), Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida.; and Jack Kassewitz, “Struggle For Free Press, Even On Campus,” *The Miami News*, April 10, 1972.

relaunched by student editor Lucien Cross as a less idealistic, but determinedly more leftist, pamphlet, declaring itself “a voice and not an echo.” The new *Crocodile* promoted mass youth mobilization and local race integration, as well as seminars which discussed the antiwar movement and “the possibilities of [students] being full-time activists.”⁶⁰

Gainesville’s underground journals meandered through the fertile gardens of countercultural imagery and political fantasy. Each issue blended ideology, poetry, philosophy, art, and, perhaps most abundantly, dogma. These eclectic publications thus simultaneously served as the mouthpieces of radicals and as movement welcome mats for interested outsiders. Gruesome published accounts of brutality in Vietnam and racism at home cultivated politicizing acrimony amongst leftists, while local interest pieces and reviews of rock and folk music appealed to mainstream students. This all-embracing structure clearly illustrated a growing confluence of the cultural and political among Gainesville’s radicals. The underground press at once meant art and activism, creativity and civics. It provided an outlet for both hippie idealism and revolutionary advocacy. In this way, radicals methodically strengthened the intellectual foundations of an increasingly diverse youth movement.

Also, in the period before mass demonstrations were commonplace, alternative media provided the most visible manifestation of escalating antiwar sentiment. It is likely no coincidence that independent journals arose in their greatest numbers after the Nixon administration’s 1969 institution of military conscription. Articles from before that point primarily treated local issues—Alachua County voting trends, feminism in the university, tenure controversies, and the segregation of UF athletics—while the early 1970s saw a clear upturn in violent rhetoric surrounding the war in Vietnam. Veterans’ groups, in particular, saw pamphleteering and local journalism as key means to disseminate the antiwar message. The

⁶⁰ Alan Levin, “Caravan for Peace,” *The Crocodile*, May 22, 1967.

result was a literal combination of culture and politics: in the pages of these magazines students could read about the food culture of communist Hungary next to exposés on the Dow Corporation, and find information about Gainesville’s Gay Liberation Front together with firsthand accounts of My Lai-style atrocities from local veterans.⁶¹

By 1969, students had a cornucopia of periodicals to choose from. The *Hogtown Orifice* published articles in support of the Revolutionary Youth Movement and “struggles against imperialism.”⁶² The *Hogarm*, an organ of the protest group UF Veterans For Peace, investigated purported CIA involvement in the university’s Latin American Studies center and agitated for the grievances of “black North Florida brothers.” It also carried cryptic classified ads, including one soliciting trade for a gas mask and M14 rifle, “only fired once.”⁶³ Meanwhile, the short-lived *Hogtown Press* railed against the local ROTC program, and published pieces on military contracts awarded to the University of Florida, the city of Gainesville, and the county of Alachua (the latter of which, the newsletter estimated, received \$4 million annually from the Department of Defense).⁶⁴ But perhaps the most sophisticated of these underground outlets was *The Eye*, whose breadth—it covered subjects ranging from feminism to Fidel Castro—was only matched by its self-confidence as a mouthpiece for movement recruitment and cultural change. As one contributor put it, “the whole thing boils down to communicating. We’ve got to be able to tell

⁶¹ “We Intend To Tell America That Yes, WE KILLED!,” *The Eye*, April 1, 1971.

⁶² “Sparks From SDS-RYM,” *Hogtown Orifice* (Gainesville, Fla.: Florida Experimental College) Vol. 1 No. 2, December 7, 1969, University Archive, Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida.

⁶³ “CIA Penetrates the Latin American Studies Center for the Second Time In The Last Ten Years,” *The Hogarm* No. 4, December 1972, and “The Quincy Five,” *The Hogarm* No. 2, September 1971, University Archive, Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida.

⁶⁴ Aaron Todd, “UF Active In War Effort,” *The Hogtown Press* Vol. 1 No. 1, Spring 1972, University Archive, Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida.

each other where we are and what we're into... Yes, we are the builders. We are the artists who will design the new way.”⁶⁵

For all their political bluster, Gainesville's underground presses were heavily motivated by cultural concerns. The unique Southern placement of the community ensured that culture remained the critical focus of radical activities, and provided a tangible, local motivation beyond antiwar sentiment or national political enmity. While many youth movements around the country battled apathy and the frustrations of inciting change from the so-called 'Silent Majority,' Gainesville's radicals sought to eliminate what they perceived to be the bigotry and close-mindedness of the particular regional culture surrounding them. Outlets like *The Eye* were quick to cite cultural concerns as central to the simmering conflict between radicals and the establishment, and used the prevailing Southern cultural conservatism of the previous decades as a movement rallying cry and a catchall explanation for ongoing disputes. In recounting a case of sexual harassment against a young female Hippie, for example, *The Eye* proffered the following analysis: “If you've never been to Mac's Waffle Shop in the early early morning, you're really missing something. It's one of the places in Gainesville where the freak culture and the redneck culture really meet. Sometimes it's really a groove and everybody just enjoys the strangeness of the other. Sometimes, though, prejudices and misconceptions about another way of life really cause hassles.”⁶⁶ In another piece, the magazine explained the central role of culture in the diligent construction of a radical local movement: “Anyone who thinks this is already a community of love or that a counterculture has definitely established itself here is deluding himself, but these things are in process of happening. *The Eye* is one of these developing community realities.” Written in 1971—after Hippie experimentation had elsewhere turned into

⁶⁵ Madman (pseudonym), “Dear People of Hogtown,” *The Eye*, January 19, 1971.

⁶⁶“Women Fight Back ... at Mac's,” *The Eye*, February 23, 1971. University Archive, Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida.

militancy and extremism—the piece betrays an optimistic, hopeful note for cultural understanding and awareness: “The bad attitude of the old culture avoids confrontation and flatly rejects what threatens it. We don’t treat our friends that way, we respond to them [and] argue with them if we care about them at all. People building a new culture here, too, will react differently to what seems to them mistaken; they will struggle with it responsibly as a part of themselves. This is what we invite.”⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Editorial statement, “The Eye Collective,” *The Eye*, February 9, 1971. University Archive, Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida.

CHAPTER 4 FACULTY ACTIVISM

Reflecting on his profession in 1972, Dr. Irving J. Goffman, head of the university's Department of Economics, declared that the work of scientists and faculty must be guided by social needs. "From the time I entered college in 1950 to the day I received my PhD in 1959," Goffman said, "I never once heard a professor speak at length on poverty, pollution, or urban decay. Not once did I read a professional piece on the economic plight of the blacks or Chicanos or women. [Professors'] chauvinistic value structures dictated a different ordering of priorities reflecting the whims of those who governed, and hence set the rules."⁶⁸

Goffman's generation of scholars represented a clear break from the hierarchical, orthodox academic structures of his youth. By 1960, young faculty increasingly reflected the changing society around them, a development manifested not only in the classroom but in professors' own activism. In Gainesville, this meant a passionate core of professors—and their families and friends—who brought energy and enthusiasm to the local civil rights movement. Moreover, as the public discourse absorbed other narratives (academic freedom, opposition to the war in Vietnam, women's rights, and others) faculty transformed the traditional university classroom into an arena for debate and a forum for the dissemination of new ideas.

The actions of activist faculty are critical to understanding the germination of a radical local culture. The 1960s quest for personalism among young people involved a complex—and often contradictory—relationship with hierarchy and authority. On one hand, students questioned the rights of university administrators to dictate morality and exert control over their lives. The battles that proliferated nationwide following the 1964 Berkeley Free Speech Movement, for example, were the boiling point of resentments over structure and subordination which had

⁶⁸ Doug Colyer, "Goffman: Values Dictate Research," *Florida Alligator*, May 19, 1972.

simmered for years in the university context. On the other hand, students proved to be deeply and personally affected by the actions of politicized faculty, holding them in considerable esteem and seeing in them an admirable use of authority for noble ends. These seemingly antithetical values were another manifestation of the contradictory impulses toward both resistance and reform so commonly held by students caught in the cultural cross-currents of the period.

On a more practical level, faculty represented a significant portion of the community's population, meaning that as their values and cultural understandings changed, so too did those of the city around them. This transformation can be explained primarily by the demographics at play: More than the student body, the administration, or city residents at large, the university faculty drew together individuals from diverse cultural and intellectual backgrounds. Hailing from the North or Midwest, many professors were simply not steeped in the Jim Crow hierarchy that marked their adoptive Southern community. This was critical in forging a tradition of dissent in Gainesville, as many transplanted faculty rejected the cultural assumptions of the South and resisted its hostility towards activism. Thanks to an exponential increase in academic hiring precipitated by the explosive postwar growth of the university itself, this cultural dissonance reached its height in the 1950s and 60s.

Decades later, many faculty and their families recounted with stark clarity their first impressions of Gainesville and its conservative status quo, an experience which quickly radicalized many among them. These 'coming to Gainesville' vignettes portray jarring moments of cultural and political awakening. The late Lyle McAlister, distinguished scholar of Latin American history, recalled the outright "cultural shock" he experienced after moving to Gainesville from San Francisco in the 1950s. Upon arrival, he repeatedly found himself contravening Southern cultural customs. Unaware of Jim Crow, he was chastised for drinking

from blacks-only water fountains and sitting in the rear sections of buses. Further rejecting the mores of his adoptive home, he refused to stand up at football games when the band played “Dixie,” and was threatened with violence for not being properly reverent of the Confederate flag. His own worldview was sharply at odds with these conventions; as he later recounted, “I felt for a long time like I had been exiled.”⁶⁹

Jean Chalmers, who had spent her life in Canada and New York City, was almost immediately repulsed by Jim Crow after her arrival in Gainesville. When an elderly black couple stepped into a gutter during a heavy rainstorm to defer to her on the sidewalk, she recalls how her guilt and revulsion galvanized her politics: “The racial situation just absolutely astounded me. I just could not believe what I was seeing... it rapidly politicized me.”⁷⁰ Her husband, however, was more accustomed to the Southern social code from his years in Washington, D.C. Having previous experience with racial politics, David Chalmers was struck by Gainesville’s toxic combination of stagnant Jim Crow conventions and ingrained class inequality: “There were not basically the explosive race problems, [but] the underlying problem that Gainesville faces [is] that this is a terribly poor community, one of the poorest communities in the United States. Alachua County is a poverty area. You are going to find that particularly for youth there are no jobs. There are no jobs for young black men in Gainesville.”⁷¹

This lack of “explosive race problems” masked the fundamental injustices built into the community’s structure. The absence of violence gave a false impression of harmony, and for years allowed the perpetuation of a white supremacist status quo without impulse for significant reforms. For many newcomers, this situation was galling. The rot of public apathy became a

⁶⁹ Transcript, Lyle N. McAlister. Oral history interview with Stuart Landers, June 17, 1993, p. 10, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program Collection, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

⁷⁰ Transcript, Jean Chalmers. Oral history interview with Stuart Landers, April 22, 1991, p.5, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program Collection, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

⁷¹ Transcript, David Chalmers. Oral history interview with Stuart Landers, June 2, 1992, p. 27, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program Collection, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

motivating factor in the creation of a new brand of local social activism which sought to hold a mirror to the community's mores and force whites into a public debate on racial inequality. The goal was nothing less than the reversal of a century-old system of cultural conventions. Religion professor Austin Creel recalls that race was initially "a rather quiet subject. It was clear that this was a Southern area... [but] we did not hear much one way or the other." Many members of Gainesville's white public, it seemed, subscribed to the segregationist notions of the region but were not compelled to take public stands in defense of their views. Creel heard only private grumblings, studded with racial epithets and dampened pejoratives about the liberalism of Chief Justice Earl Warren.⁷² Even local activists operated with a marked "timidity," which dampened militancy and prevented social issues from becoming central to the public discourse. As Creel recalls, "it was a whole way of understanding a minimal kind of accommodation, and hope that down the road bigger things would happen... It was so depressing."⁷³

But the evolving faculty demographic quickly began to challenge the accommodationist ethos of the previous decades. By the early 1960s, frustrated newcomers had begun to assemble a civil rights coalition of black leaders, faculty wives, and sympathetic students. A core of activist professors (Marshall Jones, Austin Creel, Ed Richer, David Chalmers, and others) worked with a small group of students to found the Student Group for Equal Rights (SGER) on campus. Together with the NAACP, the organization immediately began picketing local establishments and staging small civil rights demonstrations.⁷⁴ Meanwhile, a group of professors' wives and local women, including Beverly Jones, Jean Chalmers, Shirley Conroy, Cora Robertson, and

⁷² Transcript, Austin Creel. Oral history interview with Stuart Landers, August 27, 1992, p.15, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program Collection, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Michel, *Struggle for a Better South*, 95.

Rosa Williams, formed the Gainesville Women for Equal Rights (GWER), which spearheaded local activism and worked toward the betterment of African Americans for more than a decade.

Though initially limited in scope, these groups quickly spawned a fervent activist tradition in Gainesville. The organizing experience of GWER proved to be a “central building block” in the formation of the Gainesville women’s liberation movement (which, following the mass circulation of a pamphlet by Beverly Jones and Judith Brown known as the “Florida Paper,” skyrocketed to the forefront of national women’s politics in 1968).⁷⁵ Youth pickets and cross-state rallies with SGER, meanwhile, soon blossomed into a comprehensive front of student and faculty activism on issues as varied as academic freedom, *in loco parentis*, and the war in Vietnam.

Mutual understanding

For some young people—most of whom had spent their lives cocooned in the unchallenged embrace of Southern conservatism—civil rights activism provided proxy versions of the same stark moments of realization described by outsiders Jean Chalmers and Lyle McAlister. In 1963, for example, student Judy Benninger was leaving a downtown restaurant when she came upon an angry mob threatening two black men who were attempting to integrate the Florida Theater. Immediately confronted with a crisis of personal conviction, she joined the black activists and the NAACP, who she felt “had a light in their eyes... a look of deep sincerity and intelligence—the bravest—unlike any other people I knew.”⁷⁶ Meanwhile, students like Dan

⁷⁵ Jenny Brown, “Gainesville-area Women’s Liberation Movement Pioneers Honored in NYC,” *Gainesville Iguana* (Gainesville, Fla.), February 6, 1998; and Carol Giardina, “Origins and Impact of Gainesville Women’s Liberation, the First Women’s Liberation Organization in the South,” in Jack E. Davis and Kari Frederickson, eds., *Making Waves: Female Activists in Twentieth-Century Florida* (Gainesville, Fla.: University Press of Florida, 2003), 319.

⁷⁶ Carol Giardina, “Judith Brown: Freedom Fighter,” in Susan M. Glisson, ed., *The Human Tradition in the Civil Rights Movement* (Oxford, U.K.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), 258

and Jim Harmeling almost immediately joined pickets outside the Gold Coast and College Inn restaurants after contemplating segregation and the moral roots of activism.⁷⁷

Efforts like GWER and SGER were therefore critical in strengthening ties between faculty, community leaders, and students. For the first time, adult mentors actively recruited young people to engage with salient social issues, helping to forge relationships firmly separate from traditional, classroom-based association. Moreover, the observable progress of professors' efforts in the civil rights movement by the early 1960s gave radicalizing students a sense of hope and confidence in the power of engagement. This would later apply to youth mobilization for a range of political and social causes. Civil rights activism was thus not a separate movement but part and parcel of a holistic, broad social reformation in the postwar period. Accordingly, as scholar Van Gosse notes, the "paradigmatic New Leftist" was not Mario Savio or Tom Hayden, but rather Martin Luther King, Jr.⁷⁸

Students treated socially conscious faculty alternately as patriarchal figures, as political shepherds for their sometimes disjointed causes, and as prisms through which their frustrations with university structures could be interpreted. Of course, these relationships evolved over the course of the decade. At first, students simply followed the example of their faculty mentors, as the case of David Chalmers, Austin Creel, and the Student Group for Equal Rights makes clear. But faculty beginning to include students in social causes and treat them as peers was a critical watershed for the progress of a burgeoning social consciousness among the community's youth. In 1966, Dr. Surindar Suri, a visiting political science professor from India, told *The Crocodile* that, from his outsider's perspective, it seemed "students apparently aren't used to being treated as responsible and equal human beings by the faculty... On the other hand, many of them are

⁷⁷ Michel, *Struggle for a Better South*, 95.

⁷⁸ Gosse, *Rethinking the New Left*, 36.

already mature emotionally and physically and, because of the compulsions of nature, act in adult ways... They have to live in two worlds at once. There is no spark of resistance.”⁷⁹ Faculty like Chalmers, Creel, and Richer provided a bridge between those two worlds, bringing young people into the activist community and helping to ignite the “sparks.”

As students found their own voices, they began to combine a radicalism fostered by the real-world activism of their mentors with the rebellious tendencies of an evolving national youth culture. The result was the slow reconstruction of the university’s political atmosphere as students reformed their expectations of local power structures. According to historian James Farrell, students in the 1960s “looked for an administration focused on the needs of people, not bound by the rules of bureaucracy,” and expected their teachers to “allow them to integrate the personal, the academic, and the political in class sessions and assignments.”⁸⁰ Faculty who fulfilled these expectations not only avoided the general scorn for authority figures so prevalent during the period, but also wielded enormous influence over students, their culture, and the form taken by the malleable local radical movement.

Together, professors’ changing social agendas and young people’s changing cultural expectations worked to erode the rigid mentor-student relationships so central to the university’s structure. This change was a critical prerequisite to overcoming one of the primary hindrances to joint social action in the academic setting: lack of mutual understanding. As the Student Group for Equal Rights showed, the efforts of conscientious students and faculty to recognize points of view across generational lines produced a more coherent front of social engagement than two separate struggles, dictated by experiential differences, could have hoped to achieve. Moreover,

⁷⁹ Dr. Surindar Suri (Visiting Professor of Political Science), published interview with Bill Huey, “American Education from Another Perspective,” *The Crocodile* Vol. 1, No. 7, June 15, 1966. University Archives, Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida.

⁸⁰ Farrell, *Spirit of the Sixties*, 169.

the coalition was successful even while ostensibly adhering to traditional hierarchies of power, because the official recognition of activist student organizations (and the associated nomination of an approved faculty sponsor) legitimized the close working relationship of professors and students.⁸¹ Thus, within the sanctioned world of on-campus involvement, SGER planning boycotts and demonstrations represented not a perversion of traditional academic relationships, but simply the everyday pursuits of an official student group. Such intergenerational cooperation proved durable in the coming years, as illustrated by the group of twenty students and professors who, in 1968, organized a series of four symposia on the nature of student unrest. Working together for mutual comprehension, the association of adults and youth made it their goal to increase awareness and understanding of the ideological workings of youth movements, both locally and in Latin America and Europe.⁸²

For their part, many professors sought not only to inspire students, but also to influence officials, policymakers, and the community at large. Certain respected members of the university who sympathized with the social and political activism of students saw opportunities to use their social standing and cachet in support of worthwhile causes. The result was the sorely-needed legitimization of otherwise divisive ideas among moderate members of the public. Nowhere was this more evident than in the formation of the Gainesville Committee of 71, which in 1971 brought together 71 “prominent citizens of Gainesville” to increase support for activism against the Vietnam War.⁸³ The group was conceived as a nonpolitical community action organization which would encourage constituents to write weekly letters to Congress and President Nixon, as

⁸¹ Transcript, Austin Creel. Oral history interview with Stuart Landers, August 27, 1992, p. 20, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program Collection, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

⁸² Eunice Martin, “Students, Professors Planning Symposium on Student Unrest,” *University Report* Vol. 1 No. 8, September 25, 1968. University Archive, Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida.

⁸³ Letter from Parker A. Small, Jr., to Dr. William F. Enneking (College of Medicine, University of Florida), March 31, 1971, Gainesville, Fla. Manning Julian Dauer Papers, Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida.

well as to bring publicity and resources to the genuine concerns of citizens opposed to the war.⁸⁴ The unique aspect of the Committee of 71 was the reputability and perceived integrity of its members. These included Emanuel Suter, dean of the College of Medicine, Robert F. Lanzillotti, dean of the College of Business Administration, and Manning J. Dauer, chairman of the Department of Political Science, as well as an assortment of respected Gainesville attorneys, businessmen, pastors, and priests. The group hoped to cleanse the popular conception of antiwar activism as the exclusive domain of degenerates and disorganized youth, and aimed to inspire communities nationwide to lend establishmentarian legitimacy to the antiwar movement. Their local efforts were initially successful: the *Gainesville Sun*'s editorial board enthusiastically proclaimed that "this is no bang-tailed, clabber-lipped conglomeration of mal-contents... This is the answer... The opening shot of the Establishment peace crusade has been fired in Gainesville. We pray it is heard around the world."⁸⁵

A Spiritual Paragon: The Example of Father Michael Gannon

Perhaps the most respected and well-known member of this "establishment peace crusade" was Father Michael V. Gannon, UF Professor of History and Religion and the first chaplain of Gainesville's St. Augustine Catholic Church and Student Center. Gannon's story provides a useful microcosm of the precarious position occupied by faculty caught between the changing interests of students and those of university authorities. Sympathetic to the concerns of young people, Gannon also provided a critical voice of moderation as generational tensions escalated, a role which helped him maintain the esteem of both students and members of the establishment. Also, while his evolving views and community activism embodied Gainesville's growing ethos of social and political engagement, his skill at mediation—particularly when cultural tensions

⁸⁴ Letter from Parker A. Small, Jr., M.D., to Members of the Gainesville Committee of 71, June 27, 1972. Manning Julian Dauer Papers, Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida.

⁸⁵ Editorial, "The Peace Crusaders," *Gainesville Sun*, April 17, 1971.

boiled into demonstrations—gave form to the neglected possibilities for understanding and reconciliation between radicalizing students and reactionary administrators.

As a longtime Florida resident, Gannon was heavily invested in serving the community, and could often be found participating in local humanitarian pursuits, including charity drives on the Plaza of the Americas and a twenty-mile walk around the city in support of VISTA’s local “Steps for Development” project.⁸⁶ He also sought to improve the community’s interracial dialogue against an increasingly militant atmosphere of protest and vandalism. For example, after racial clashes in 1971 led to the resignation of UF Head of Minority Affairs Roy Mitchell, Gannon hosted a Southern Regional Council forum on race issues at the Catholic Student Center.⁸⁷ Similarly, during the forcible desegregation of Gainesville High School, Gannon volunteered as an ombudsman, helping to alleviate tensions between black and white students and parents.⁸⁸

Gannon took up his post in the Catholic Church in 1959 and remained for twelve years, a tenure which was marked by local civil rights struggles, changes to university social policies, and increasing public resentment to escalation in Vietnam. Increasingly intrigued by the growing controversy surrounding the war, in 1968 Gannon obtained a press pass from Catholic magazine *America* and the National Catholic News Service, and extensively toured the Vietnam theater. The experience left him vehemently against the war, and upon his return to Gainesville he began participating in antiwar activities with both students and faculty. He frequently allowed the use of the Catholic Student Center space for debates, speeches, and meetings, and volunteered testimony for the Committee of 71 to send to President Nixon, stating: “In travels from the

⁸⁶ Sunny Barlow, “Walking Father,” *Florida Alligator*, May 7, 1970.

⁸⁷ United Press International, “Former UF Official Asks HEW Probe,” *St. Petersburg Times*, May 26, 1971. The Southern Regional Council had previously requested a campus venue for the meeting, but President O’Connell had flatly refused. The use of Gannon’s Catholic Student Center space was therefore key in allowing the forum to take place.

⁸⁸ Barbara Gallant, “The Resegregation of Gainesville,” *Gainesville Sun*, October 13, 2003.

[Demilitarized Zone] in the north to the Mekong Delta in the south, on the battlefields, in the rice paddies and throughout the cities, I saw at first-hand the futility of this war.”⁸⁹

With such outspoken views, Gannon quickly became a ubiquitous figure in Gainesville’s political and social demonstrations, although primarily this was in the role of moderator and peaceful organizer. Gannon was no stranger to large protests, having attempted to calm the violent civil rights clashes in St. Augustine in 1964. Although unsuccessful in this effort, it proved to be a valuable experience in coping with later unrest in Gainesville. In the wake of the May 1970 killings at Kent State University, for example, Gannon delivered the first speech at the University of Florida’s memorial invocation—before even President O’Connell—and led 6,000 people in a candlelight vigil.⁹⁰ The following day, when students’ mourning escalated into mass protest, Gannon conducted large discussions and eventually convinced students to abandon their occupation of the campus’s Walker Auditorium classroom building.⁹¹

In April 1971, when frustrations among black students boiled into a clash with officials and police at Tigert Hall, Gannon stepped in to try to restore order, personally pleading with the university’s chief of police to abstain from entering the building and causing the students harm. Gannon mediated between law enforcement and the Black Student Union, and eventually secured the release of ten arrested students. Taking up a building loudspeaker, Gannon spoke to the ingrained cultural issues at play, and pleaded with the crowd to remain composed: “These blacks who have been in bondage for 300 years aren’t going to be freed in three minutes... [this negotiation is] only a first step, but maybe what we accomplish in our society can be

⁸⁹ Written testimony by Father Michael V. Gannon, St. Augustine Catholic Church, Gainesville. Collected by the Gainesville Committee of 71 to End the War in Vietnam, March 1971. Manning J. Dauer Papers, University Archive, University of Florida (Gainesville, Fla.).

⁹⁰ Robert Fraser, “Tigert, SG Call Today ‘A Day of Mourning,’” *Florida Alligator*, May 6, 1970; and Bob Wise, “6,000 Join Candlelight Procession,” *Florida Alligator*, May 11, 1970.

⁹¹ Terry Pitman and Rick Roskove, “O’Connell Dismisses All Classes,” *Florida Alligator*, May 6, 1970.

accomplished only after first steps.”⁹² With this message of non-confrontation, Gannon led those assembled into negotiations, effectively avoiding further violence.

He reprised his mediator role a year later, when he rushed to the scene of the university’s largest-ever antiwar demonstration. Gannon arbitrated terms between university officials and the Student Mobilization Committee, addressed rioters, contacted city leaders to try to legalize students’ occupation of nearby Southwest 13th Street, and worked to diffuse the potential violence of the culmination of years of student disquiet.⁹³ As the disturbance spilled into a second day, Gannon joined with members of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War in an unsuccessful attempt to turn the strike into a peaceful candlelight vigil.⁹⁴ Amid the tumult, he spotted a police officer in riot gear preparing to throw a tear-gas grenade into the all-glass façade of a Krystal restaurant occupied by protesters. Fearing casualties, Gannon grasped the officer’s throwing arm and pleaded with him not to harm the students. As a result, Gannon was beaten with a baton, dragged across the street, and arrested—but the grenade was never thrown.⁹⁵ He was released later that evening and, the following day, began work with the university’s Student Government to collect money to provide to students in need of bail funds and legal fees.⁹⁶

The social engagement of a respected community figure like Gannon was an important influence in relations between Gainesville’s youth and members of the city’s establishment. Gannon brought legitimacy to a local culture of dissent through his reasonable, respectful activism. That a well-regarded professor and clergyman could involve himself in not just the salient political issues of the time but also in local, social ones, contributed to his importance in

⁹² Skip Perez, “Confrontation Could Have Been Worse: UF’s ‘New Day’ Had Light Moments, Heroes,” *Gainesville Sun*, April 16, 1971.

⁹³“Antiwar Demonstrations Rip UF,” *Florida Alligator*, May 10, 1972.

⁹⁴“UF Hit By 2nd Night of Unrest,” *Florida Alligator*, May 11, 1972.

⁹⁵ Jeff Klinkenberg, “The Remarkable Michael Gannon: His History Is Florida’s History,” *St. Petersburg Times*, May 30, 2010.

⁹⁶ Marianne Macina, “Gannon, SG, Bondsmen Provide Bail,” *Florida Alligator*, May 12, 1972.

the community. He maintained his beliefs but toed a line between the interests of the students and the wider interests of the city and its leaders. Accordingly, Gannon commanded respect from local radicals and student activists even while maintaining the confidence of the object of many students' derision, Stephen C. O'Connell, who sought Gannon's counsel on campus issues and even served as the best man at Gannon's wedding.⁹⁷ At the same time, Gannon was a legitimate and respectable actor in the eyes of even the most radical local leaders. Iconoclastic Vietnam veteran Scott Camil, for example, remembered Gannon as "level-headed. He was a good person... he also had a lot of credibility... Gannon was a person whose word was good, who was a humanitarian, who I liked very much."⁹⁸ As O'Connell reflected later, "Mike Gannon was a positive force. He did not start the [demonstrations], but he frequently ended up leading them in a way that would diffuse them. So he performed a very fine service to the students as well as the university."⁹⁹

But Gannon's service was in more than mediating conflicts. His activities demonstrated the possibilities vested in faculty to exert influence on both the radical subculture and the dominant establishment. In sympathizing with antiwar activities, Gannon lent political legitimacy to a largely disfranchised segment of Gainesville's youth population, and by providing support for social engagement and space for ideological debate, he lent social legitimacy to an experimental and ill-defined counterculture. Gannon's story is critical to the narrative of Gainesville's youth activity because he was an influential figure who recognized that a main source of the conflict between establishment and counterculture was an unwillingness to understand conflicting points of view by both sides. He believed that the friction resulting from the increasing progressivism of

⁹⁷ Editorial, "Tale of Two Men," *Lakeland Ledger* (Lakeland, Fla.), January 22, 1977.

⁹⁸ Transcript, Scott Camil. Oral history interview with Stuart Landers, October 20, 1992, p. 56, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program Collection, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

⁹⁹ Transcript, Stephen C. O'Connell, Oral history interview with Joel Buchanan, June 19, 1996, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program Collection, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

the university community led to resentment from the city, engendering a desire to punish activism and quell dissent. This key point of understanding by a professor who was decidedly not radical represented a critical bridge of communication between the warring factions of an insulated Southern town. Only an increase in this communication proved to calm the fissures. In 1971, Gannon was awarded the *Gainesville Sun*'s Community Service Award, for "spiritual leadership for University of Florida students of all faiths, particularly during times of community tension."¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ "Sun Community Service Award Nominations Open," *Gainesville Sun*, January 20, 1985.

CHAPTER 5 ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND FREE SPEECH

Academic Freedom

While Gannon exemplified moderation in his respectful calls for change in society, not all of his colleagues were so patient. The University of Florida in the 1960s and 70s was marked—perhaps even defined—by heated clashes between unabashedly radical professors and determinedly austere administrators, resulting in an ongoing spate of dismissals, appeals, and public hearings. These events were not merely confined to the halls of power at the university; rather, they played a primary role in fueling public debates over academic freedom, politicization of education, and the structure of the university itself. These issues seeped into the culture of the city as students, faculty, and citizens splintered over the propriety of administrators' decisions; the conduct of university professors; and the suitability of radicalism in the context of higher education. Students, in particular, mixed the question of faculty independence with frustrations about their own subordination, resulting in a heightened impulse to brand university officials as the central antagonists in their fight against structure and order. The controversial terminations of professors Ed Richer, Marshall Jones, Kenneth Megill, and others, gave young radicals a local *cause celebre* and helped give meaning to their sometimes-nebulous cultural movement. Support for outspoken faculty mentors meant support for an open, freethinking Gainesville, and opposition to university presidents Reitz and O'Connell stood as a proxy for opposition to staid adult culture in all its forms. In this way, public struggles over academic freedom became central to defining the radicalism and cultural transformation of 1960s Gainesville.

Attrition

Repression of dissent and restriction of freedom of expression, however, were not new developments in Gainesville in the 1960s. Since the university's inception, scholars offensive to

prevailing sensibilities had been silenced by officials, public demand, or both. Crimes warranting termination had ranged from praising Abraham Lincoln (as had Enoch Banks in 1911; he resigned due to public outcry) to openly practicing Catholicism (as had Father John Conoley in 1924; he was kidnapped and forced into exile by the Alachua Ku Klux Klan). But the university's most sinister purge of controversial faculty came in the wake of the postwar Red Scare, with the 1956 state authorization of the Florida Legislative Investigation Committee.

Known colloquially as the Johns Committee (after its chairman, conservative state senator Charley Johns) and modeled after the anticommunist crusade of U.S. Senator Joseph McCarthy, the committee performed draconian investigations of individuals within the statewide university system. Its tactics included interrogation of professors without counsel, employment of campus police to remove students from classes for questioning, and surveillance of public spaces for suspicious behavior. The committee initially claimed to be seeking suspected communists and members of the NAACP, but quickly devolved, as had McCarthy's investigation, into an extralegal witchhunt against homosexual faculty and "deviates"—suspected gay infiltrators of public institutions.¹⁰¹ By the time the investigation had run its course, more than twenty professors had been fired or resigned and more than fifty students had been expelled. Consistent with the fearful and insulated ethos of 1950s Gainesville, the activities of the Johns Committee went almost completely unopposed by the community, including faculty and administrators.¹⁰² Indeed, university president J. Wayne Reitz cooperated fully with the committee, authorizing the

¹⁰¹ James A. Schnur, "Closet Crusaders: The Johns Committee and Homophobia, 1956-1965," from John Howard, ed., *Carryin' On in the Lesbian and Gay South* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 156.

¹⁰² Karen L. Graves, *And They Were Wonderful Teachers: Florida's Purge of Gay and Lesbian Teachers* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 73.

use of the UF Police Department for the investigation's coercive tactics and personally dismissing faculty members named by its reports.¹⁰³

The committee's brief display of unilateral power created an atmosphere of intimidation and coerced acquiescence among faculty. For several years, professors maintained a fearful silence even as their colleagues vanished overnight from the university payrolls. After the committee dissolved, this grudging compliance turned into shame. Therefore, although the investigation had been disgraced and discredited by the early 1960s, its impact on Gainesville's academic atmosphere was profound. David Chalmers cites the investigation as a key turning point in academic consciousness at the university:

The faculty community was supine about [the Johns Committee]... I think a lot of us decided, and felt very deeply, that we were at fault because we had let something like this go on. I think that those who experienced it were convinced, without ever having taken the public stance... that one had to fight against any such oppressive activity. This is one of the legacies of the 1960s; that one has to take a public stand and fight against the things that are wrong. I think for some people the experience of the Johns Committee, when we did nothing, brought about changes in our thinking. I do not think that we would let that go by again... It had an influence on many of the faculty.¹⁰⁴

These feelings, combined with nationwide developments in the arenas of race, culture, and politics, emboldened many academics to act on their social concerns. Furthermore, for those instructors and students who held legitimately radical views, the post-Johns Committee ethos of open defiance and academic activism attenuated their fears of offending the community, minimizing their willingness to soften nonconformist rhetoric. These reformed attitudes, however, were not in concert with those of university administrators or the public at large. The result was nearly a decade of battles between professors who sought to test the limits of freedom

¹⁰³ Howard, ed., *Carryin' On in the Lesbian and Gay South*, 142.

¹⁰⁴ Transcript, David Chalmers. Oral history interview with Stuart Landers, June 2, 1992, p. 28, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program Collection, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

of expression and authorities who sought to maintain a dutiful conservatism within the realm of higher education.

The first such battle concerned journalism instructor Ed Richer, who wrote the “Radically Speaking” column for the *Florida Alligator* (eventually syndicated to national SDS outlets). Richer had long been involved in social activism; among the group of faculty who picketed to integrate local restaurants, he was one of the few who travelled to demonstrate in St. Augustine and Ocala.¹⁰⁵ As an outspoken member of CORE and the NAACP, Richer had become one of the most visible of Gainesville’s white activists by the mid-1960s, stridently making speeches and penning written opinions which fused pointed cultural criticism with his own political convictions. Following the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Richer was featured on the *Alligator*’s front page expressing his disappointment with the legislation, opining that it was an unfortunately necessary political solution to an ingrained “moral and psychological problem” with the country.¹⁰⁶ More unsettling to university administrators than this publicity, however, was his enthusiastic support for student activism. Richer had served as the faculty sponsor to the Student Group for Equal Rights and was instrumental in supporting the Freedom Party, a renegade group which challenged the decades-old fraternity stranglehold over the university’s Student Government.¹⁰⁷ He also represented UF at a conference of the Southern Student Organizing Committee (SSOC), a group that had been denied official recognition by the university.¹⁰⁸

The brazen fusion of political activism with Richer’s duties as a university instructor swiftly put him under the microscope of UF President J. Wayne Reitz. At the end of the 1965

¹⁰⁵ Transcript, Austin B. Creel. Oral history interview with Stuart Landers, August 27, 1992, p. 18, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program Collection, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

¹⁰⁶ Bob Thomas, “Richer Talks About CR Bill,” *Florida Alligator*, July 7, 1964.

¹⁰⁷ “Florida Students Form Free University,” *Free Student* (New York, N.Y.) No.5, 1965.

¹⁰⁸ Report on Spring Conference, Southern Student Organizing Committee, March 1965. Archived by Civil Rights Movement Veterans 1951-1968. Accessed January 20, 2012. http://www.crmvet.org/docs/ssoc_misc.pdf

spring term, Reitz declined to renew Richer's year-to-year teaching contract, citing his lack of academic qualification. The university was on stable ground with this charge: Richer possessed only a master's degree in journalism and had no publications to his name (and even his friend and fellow activist David Chalmers admitted that he was likely unqualified for tenure).¹⁰⁹

Nevertheless, Richer suspected that his firing was based more on administrators' opposition to his politics than to his resume, and insisted on an objective hearing before the university's faculty senate. The administration circumvented this by simply withholding its lawyers from participation, a decision which effectively denied Richer due process—and ended his career.¹¹⁰

The ease with which the university dispatched Richer undoubtedly served to reinforce the feeling of political and intellectual hegemony enjoyed by administrators. With the Johns Committee still fresh in the community's collective memory, Richer represented simply another heretic to be kept away from students. This line of thought, however, overlooked the rapid cultural changes already underway in Gainesville, and was dramatically proved obsolete when President Reitz attempted to muzzle Richer's activist contemporary Marshall Jones. By that time, just three years after the Richer termination, concerns over academic freedom had become central to the popular consciousness, a development that ensured administrative attempts at censorship would thenceforth be subjected to exacting public scrutiny. For the first time, the community demonstrably recognized its stake in allowing the university to serve as an open forum for ideas, and indicated that radicalism could no longer simply be expelled at the whims of the local establishment.

¹⁰⁹ Transcript, David Chalmers. Oral history interview with Stuart Landers, June 2, 1992, p. 19, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program Collection, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

¹¹⁰ Jeffrey A. Turner, *Sitting In and Speaking Out: Student Movements in the American South, 1960-1970* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 159.

A professor of psychology and psychiatry in the university's College of Medicine, Marshall Jones had long been a central figure in Gainesville's civil rights movement. Like Richer, he allowed this activism to spill into his university life, serving as the faculty advisor to both the Student Peace Movement and the local chapter of SDS. Openly radical, Jones dedicated much of his time to social issues as a prolific writer, orator, and demonstrator. In 1966 alone, he organized a picket of a Florida Blue Key banquet appearance by Hubert H. Humphrey, debated political science professor John Spanier on the Vietnam War in a so-called "Freedom Forum," and published a short piece, *The Black Power Argument*, under the auspices of the Gainesville SDS Press. For many moderate students, Jones served as an introduction to radical culture, while for those already committed, he was a like-minded mentor and community organizer. As then-colleague Austin Creel recalls, Jones was "the brains, the strategy planner" of Gainesville's early student protest activities, and was instrumental in pushing it forward with "his commitment, his passion, and probably his resources."¹¹¹

Jones's activities vexed university administrators, but his visibility and scholarly accomplishments proved to be complicating factors in their attempts to extirpate him. It happened that Jones was an excellent candidate for tenure, with a growing resume and a substantial record of service. A fellow psychiatry professor told reporters that Jones was "probably one of the world's experts" on factor analysis in differential psychology, and was "well known" in the academic world as a specialist in behavioral genetics.¹¹² University officials opposed to Jones's political activities, however, were unmoved by these achievements. Their enmity toward activism clearly took precedence over institutional aspiration for academic

¹¹¹ Transcript, Austin Creel. Oral history interview with Stuart Landers, August 27, 1992, p. 35, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program Collection, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida; and Marshall B. Jones, *The Black Power Argument* (Gainesville, Fla.: Gainesville SDS Press, 1966).

¹¹² Associated Press, "Assistant Professor To Get Boot at UF," *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, November 1, 1967.

prestige, as subsequent events made obvious. When Jones's department and college both approved his tenure, President Reitz and Graduate School dean Linton E. Grinter overturned it, claiming that Jones had had an "undue effect" on students. To corroborate this claim, officials cited Jones's supposed role in cultivating the interracial marriage of white activist student Dan Harmeling to a black Orlando woman.¹¹³ In June 1967, Reitz unilaterally dismissed Jones.¹¹⁴

Unlike with Richer three years earlier, however, neither the faculty nor many members of the community were willing to remain on the sidelines of Jones's case. Widespread indignation over the administration's actions rapidly fostered a broad base of public support for an appeal. The ensuing controversy demonstrated an awakened sensitivity to matters of academic freedom on the campus, and pushed the emerging local struggle between radicals and officials into a national spotlight. Moreover, by encroaching on the fledgling extracurricular teacher-student relationships under development in Gainesville, administrators only alienated radicalizing students further, many of whom quickly began to organize around a vicarious sense of persecution. Clearly, much had changed since the shamed silence of the Johns Committee years.

Jones's appeal began in the spring term of 1968, and a series of contentious and controversial hearings followed. Local and state media outlets began to debate the broader philosophical implications of the proceedings, thus shining a light of public attention on the question of freedom of expression in higher education. Despite the publicity, however, Jones made no attempt to rein in his very conspicuous activism. Following the Memphis assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. (which occurred precisely in the midst of the tenure hearings) Jones appeared in downtown Gainesville and angrily interrupted the city's memorial service. Railing

¹¹³ Recorded interview, Daniel E. Harmeling. Oral history interview with Marna Weston, February 13, 2009. Samuel Proctor Oral History Program, University of Florida.

¹¹⁴ Interview with Marshall B. Jones, October 1967. Unidentified interviewer. Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida (Gainesville, Fla.).

against the ingrained problems of American society, Jones demanded that citizens should “live in a way Martin Luther King lived,” and exhorted the crowd to occupy the major intersection of University Avenue and Main Street in protest of local racism. He was arrested, along with twenty others, in what quickly escalated into a night of vandalism, riots, and the mobilization to Gainesville of the Florida National Guard.¹¹⁵ Unsurprisingly, this did nothing to help Jones’s appeal, and his termination was upheld.

These events, and the appeal hearings themselves, drew nationwide attention to the growing challenges to the conservative status quo in Gainesville. The *New York Times* reprinted McCarthyesque statements from Reitz, including his belief that Jones was “one of the cleverest leaders of rebellion in United States academia,” a “fomenter of rebellion,” and an “emotional and dangerous manipulator of students and faculty.”¹¹⁶ The disconnect between these statements and Jones’s very obvious base of support among students and peers served to further undermine the official position, and the situation was only exacerbated by the subsequent actions of President Reitz’s successor.

Former Florida Supreme Court Justice Stephen C. O’Connell became the University of Florida’s president in October 1967, and his tenure was almost immediately controversial. Radicals noted that in 1959 he had joined the majority in an opinion denying college admission to a black applicant; they also repeatedly called for his resignation from the segregated Gainesville Country Club—an action O’Connell refused to take (stating that “a man’s personal associations are his own business”).¹¹⁷ Given the city’s recent history of Jim Crow and the institution’s rocky struggles with integration, some questioned O’Connell’s appropriateness as the right man for the moment. As the *New York Times* later summarized:

¹¹⁵ Associated Press, “Troopers Called In: Guard Alerted In Gainesville,” *St. Petersburg Times*, April 8, 1968.

¹¹⁶ Anthony Ripley, “Black Power Unit Stirs Florida City,” *New York Times*, April 21, 1968.

¹¹⁷ James T. Wooten, “Florida U. Head Disavows Racism,” *New York Times*, April 18, 1971.

He graduated from a segregated high school, attended the segregated University of Florida, joined a segregated fraternity, became president of a segregated honor society, and graduated from a segregated law school. He practiced law in a segregated firm before all-white juries in an all-white judicial system and ultimately became the Chief Justice of an all-white State Supreme Court. When he became president of his alma mater, he moved into a white-pillared, Georgian mansion provided for him on the edge of campus, joined the all-white country club and settled at a school known for its white conservatism.¹¹⁸

As president, O'Connell sought generally to maintain order and convention, even in the face of street protests, racial inequality, and student unrest. For this, the new president stood as a key counterpoint to the dissonant culture emerging in Gainesville. If institutional leadership in general drew ire from rebellious students, O'Connell in particular quickly became a *bête noire* among Gainesville's young radicals. For the students exploring communitarian forms, experimenting with drugs, rejecting the mores of their parents, and absorbing the rhetoric of outlets like *The Eye*, O'Connell's attempts to keep the university a staid, businesslike institution met not only with dissatisfaction, but with outright upheaval. The polarizing nature of his presidency drew counterculturalists into academic freedom debates with fervor, helping to further develop the hodgepodge of cultural, political, and social causes taken up by Gainesville's young people.

One of O'Connell's first decisions as president was to uphold his predecessor's action against Marshall Jones. The furor surrounding the Jones case from both radical students and moderate faculty, however, ensured that O'Connell's decision would be widely challenged. Following the first hearing, the chief student editor of the *Florida Alligator*, Steve Hull, wrote an editorial denouncing the actions of both the Reitz administration and the proceedings under O'Connell. The piece called the treatment of Jones "irresponsible and blatantly cowardly" and

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

called for an apology from university officials.¹¹⁹ Although Hull did not consider himself a radical, the incendiary contents of the editorial caused five of the paper's more conservative sub-editors to resign their posts in support of the administration.¹²⁰ An incensed O'Connell, via the Student-Faculty Board of Publications, suppressed publication of the piece, and demanded that Hull "change [his] ways or putative action would be taken." It was the first time an *Alligator* editorial had been censored in the history of the university.¹²¹

The ensuing uproar brought into clear focus the growing unwillingness of students to bow to administration pressure. A day later, students crowded into the newsroom of the *Alligator* to show their support for Hull, and the editorial was circulated on the campus via the printing of 5,000 handbills. A highly diluted version of the article was eventually permitted in the *Alligator*, but the damage to the administration was already wrought. State and regional newspapers reprinted earlier versions of the piece, and the *New York Times* recounted the censorship fracas for a national audience.¹²² Nevertheless, officials moved to keep the *Alligator* under a watchful eye in the coming months, and O'Connell's deputy, Dean of Student Affairs Lester L. Hale, installed one of the five resigning editors—the administration-friendly Harvey Alpert—in the menacing post of "Special Editor."¹²³

The controversy brought academic freedom to the center of the local public discourse, but did little initially to change the climate of repression for faculty. Just a year later, the university dismissed three faculty members for refusing to sign an oath of loyalty to the Florida constitution—still a condition of collegiate employment despite having been ruled

¹¹⁹ Anthony Ripley, "Black Power Unit Stirs Florida City," *New York Times*, April 21, 1968.

¹²⁰ Associated Press, "Revised Version of Alligator Editorial OK'd," *Daytona Beach Morning Journal*, April 19, 1968.

¹²¹ Steve Hull, "O'Connell Told Me 'Change Your Ways,'" *University Report* Vol. 2, No. 18, January 15, 1969.

¹²² Associated Press, "Editorial Suppressed In UF Newspaper Gets Campus Circulation On Handbills," *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, April 20, 1968; Associated Press, "Editors Quit 'Toned Down' School Paper," *The Tuscaloosa News*, April 22, 1968; Anthony Ripley, "Black Power Unit Stirs Florida City," *New York Times*, April 21, 1968.

¹²³ Scott DeGarmo, "Student Revolt: Where Next?" *University Report*, Vol. 2 No. 21, February 6, 1969.

unconstitutional by the Florida Supreme Court in 1962 (with O’Connell himself still on the bench as a justice). The oath pledged support to the governments of Florida and the United States and included a vow not to have any relations with the Communist Party.¹²⁴ Despite an injunction request by the American Civil Liberties Union, the three who did not sign the oath were summarily dismissed by O’Connell. Only one dissenter, Dr. Thomas Hanna, chair of the Department of Philosophy, was retained after eventually agreeing to sign (although on the back he inscribed “that which is signed on the reverse side I deny.”)¹²⁵

The dismissals did nothing to improve relations between the university and the faculty. As Hanna told the Associated Press, “there are no Communists here. This is merely a popular political issue which accounts for why Florida has a second-class university system.”¹²⁶ The fracas also did little for the institution’s reputation. In the wake of the scandal—and considering one of the dismissed was Leroy Lamborn, a law professor on a tenure track—the Association of American Law Schools produced a report on the case at its 1971 annual conference, issuing a “strong reprimand” to the university for its “insensitivity to evolving conceptions of the broad reach of a full hearing.” The organization also threatened sanctions if action toward restitution was not taken.¹²⁷ University officials took little notice.

Dissonance

O’Connell’s urge to tamp down what he saw as the abuse of career privilege by radical faculty never diminished during his six years in office. After the Jones controversy, however, it seemed clear that action taken against rebellious educators required clear transgressions on the

¹²⁴ Robert R. Sherman, “Loyalty In Florida: 1969,” *Changing Education* Vol. 4 No. 4, Spring 1970 (Journal of the American Federation of Teachers AFL-CIO), Washington, D.C. Kenneth A. Megill Papers, Special and Area Studies Collections, University Archive, University of Florida.

¹²⁵ Associated Press, “4 Dismissed For Not Signing Loyalty Oath,” *Ocala Star-Banner*, December 4, 1969.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Proceedings of the 1971 Annual Meeting of the Association of American Law Schools*, “Part I: Reports on Projects and Committees,” (Washington, D.C.: Association of American Law Schools, 1971), p. 129.

part of the professors themselves, rather than unilateral and abrupt decisions from above. The justification for this line of thought was mixed, however, as was demonstrated in yet another dispute of national recognition: that of education instructor and doctoral candidate Robert Benjamin Canney.

Canney was a perfect example of the evolving relationship between activist faculty and their increasingly open-minded students, and accordingly represented the consummation of the fears of conservatives leery of the influence of liberal faculty. The impacts—and risks—associated with the social engagement of radicals like Ed Richer and Marshall Jones, as well as their effects on local acculturation and politicization, were perfectly encapsulated in Canney’s biography. As a student in 1962, Canney joined Richer’s Student Group for Equal Rights. He quickly became a committed activist, and traveled to Ocala to participate in civil rights protests with Jones. By 1968, he was involved in labor advocacy, and from his instructor post at Brevard Junior College helped to organize a statewide teachers’ strike. Upon his return to the University of Florida in 1970, he began an intense campaign of political action, including antiwar demonstrations and advocacy for the Black Power Movement. Reflecting later, Canney would cite joining SGER as the catalyst for his intense radicalism—thus proving the potential success of the student-faculty social relationship.¹²⁸

In April 1970, Canney was invited to speak at Florida’s first statewide antiwar rally, held at Straub Park in St. Petersburg. Canney’s speech, given in front of a crowd of approximately 2,000, included the line “let’s bring the goddamn war home and begin dealing seriously with the problems that confront us here.” The speech met with applause from the assembled activists, but upon stepping down from the podium, Canney was struck from behind by six police officers, who threw him to the ground and arrested him for profanity (the offending word in question

¹²⁸ Faye Douglas, “Accent Cops Out, Speech Goes On,” *The Eye* No. 4, October 27, 1970.

being “goddamn.”)¹²⁹ The charge was later dropped, but Canney was convicted of resisting arrest, and the university moved quickly to terminate him. O’Connell also pressured Accent into withdrawing its funding for a scheduled forum in which Canney was to participate on campus.¹³⁰ Canney, for his part, insisted that his firing was simply because his political views “called for a disturbance of the status quo, and because certain officials want to make an example of me to intimidate others from also speaking out.”¹³¹

If there was any truth in Canney’s statement, the example set by his proceedings certainly did not work in the administration’s favor. Several years of appeals and court dates brought considerable attention to Canney’s plight, until he became something of a martyr symbol among leftists nationwide. A ‘Free Bob Canney’ movement materialized, repeatedly calling for a mistrial to be declared in the case. Canney also received abundant space in mainstream news outlets, and took advantage of it to claim that his situation was a proxy for the push to “stop all political repression, to free all political prisoners and to end all oppression and exploitation of women, and black people, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, and poor and working people.”¹³² National opinion magazine *Mother Jones* petitioned the governor of Florida to pardon Canney, insisting that “two years in jail for saying ‘goddam’ was a blatant contravention of the Second Amendment.”¹³³ The groundswell of support eventually led to Canney’s parole in 1976, but the popular movement for his freedom further focused outside attention on the attrition of left-leaning faculty at the university. Gainesville, once a sleepy Southern college town with little

¹²⁹ Press release, “People’s Victory In Florida.” Issued by the Bob Canney Support Committee, Gainesville, Florida, March 28, 1976. Robert Canney Collection, Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida.

¹³⁰ This plan backfired, however, and the forum went forward without Accent. With even more militantly radical views than before his arrest, Canney appeared on stage with Junta of Militant Organization (JOMO) chairman Joe Waller, who compared Canney to nineteenth-century radical abolitionist John Brown.

¹³¹ Faye Douglas, “Accent Cops Out, Speech Goes On,” *The Eye* No. 4, October 27, 1970.

¹³² Roger K. Clendening, “Canney to be Paroled to Maine,” *St. Petersburg Times*, March 26, 1976.

¹³³ “Two Years In Jail for Saying ‘Goddam,’” *Mother Jones* (San Francisco, Calif.) Vol 1 No. 3, May 1976.

bearing on the nation's broader cultural and political currents, was rapidly becoming a point of convergence for pitched battles over activism, counterculture, and New Leftism.

Retrenchment

The proliferation of these controversies did not mean, however, that moderates and right-leaning faculty were complicit in the firestorm created by their radical colleagues. The struggle for legitimacy among leftist faculty was made more difficult by many peers who either chose not to rock the cultural boat in Gainesville, or who openly condemned the growing activism of their fellow professors.

This divide among faculty had a long legacy. When academics began to engage with local civil rights issues, a group of business administration faculty, supported by Dean Linton Grinter, were known to deliberately cross their picket lines.¹³⁴ Later, when the university was integrated, many black students found that some of the greatest resistance to their arrival came from professors. One of the university's first black enrollees recalled that, while white students were generally welcoming, the faculty appeared unaccustomed to black students and "assumed that a black person could not do the work. [They] really did not know how to deal with them, feeling that most of the black people here on campus were admitted or were here because of some federally funded program. [They felt] we were all high risk."¹³⁵ Other scholars believed that growing social activism had damaged students' commitment to academics. Economics professor Allen M. Sievers wrote in the *University Report* in 1968 that students' protests hindered scholarly pursuits, and that true institutional reform had to originate from students themselves. Although he conceded that the university community had grown more "intellectually aware,"

¹³⁴ Transcript, David Chalmers. Oral history interview with Stuart Landers, June 2, 1992, p. 15, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program Collection, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

¹³⁵ Transcript, Betty Stewart-Dowdell. Oral history interview with AaBram Marsh, March 15, 1995, p. 7, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program Collection, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

Sievers decried the hypocrisy of radical students criticizing the power structure while having “no reverence for scholarship.”¹³⁶

Some reactionary faculty went so far as to actively root out those students they suspected of having countercultural associations. One self-described radical student, William Abney, recalled an incident in 1971 in which a professor in the English department passed out three-page questionnaires on the first day of literature class. The survey required students to report their personal views on religion, sexuality, and politics, after which the professor took photographs of each student and filed them. Incensed at such a blatant violation of privacy, Abney stormed from the classroom, reported the professor, and was directed to Harry Crews’s literature course instead.¹³⁷

Conservative faculty—and, indeed, members of the public at large—represented the university’s ongoing link to the Southern cultural norms of decades past. In many ways, their presence helped to define Gainesville’s unique brand of radicalism, as continuing pushback from right-of-center opponents served as a focal point and organizing principle for leftists and counterculturalists. One graduate student, responding to an epithet-laden diatribe against integration in the *Florida Alligator* in 1967, highlighted the scope of the motivation that he and his counterparts felt when listening to rigid Southern orthodoxy and traditionalism. The letter argued that reactionary members of the community made people “aware of the fact that this world is not free from ignorance, hate, and fear. [They make] it possible for those who love life and despise bigotry—in my mind a type of moral and intellectual death—to continue to struggle to improve the lot of man. Moreover, [they] serve to awaken those of us who are complacent in

¹³⁶ Dr. Allen M. Sievers, “Sievers’ Reminiscences & Reform,” *University Report* Vol. 1 No. 5, September 18, 1968.

¹³⁷ Transcript, W.H. Abney. Oral history interview with Dirk Drake, April 7, 1996, p. 12, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program Collection, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

the acceptance of responsibilities to our fellow man. For, indeed, we do have responsibilities... We can make understanding our ideal!”¹³⁸

Meanwhile, conservative faculty also served to legitimize the actions of the university administration, lending approval and support to officials, and aiding their resolve in maintaining order on the campus. For example, when President O’Connell refused to yield to protestors’ demands for concessions to black students in 1971, petitions commending the administration flooded into his office from engineering, music, and building construction faculty. The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences passed a resolution supporting O’Connell, while 108 Career Services staff sent a declaration of agreement.¹³⁹ Clearly, conservative faculty members were not willing to completely abdicate control of the public discourse to their leftist counterparts.

Shifting currents

While some in the university community were steadfast in their beliefs about their radical peers, many moderates were increasingly affected by proceedings like the Jones case and the outside scrutiny it attracted. After all, growing concerns about the instability of academic careers—and, increasingly, institutional reputations—were not issues limited only to radical thinkers. Particularly after public debate on the matter began to grow, academic freedom became a central focus for much of the university’s academic community. Moreover, the specter of academic rights organizations began to hover above the university, further exacerbating professors’ career insecurities. Shortly after the Marshall Jones controversy came to a close in 1968, the local chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) issued a resolution expressing “severe condemnation” of Jones’s treatment, hoping to set a tone for

¹³⁸ Harold Fenster, letter to the editor, “Bailey Serves 1 Purpose,” *Florida Alligator*, April 7, 1967.

¹³⁹“O’Connell’s Mail Still Mostly Pro,” *Gainesville Sun*, April 24, 1971.

incoming President O’Connell.¹⁴⁰ The resolution, however, did nothing to reverse the Jones decision or preserve the employment of those who had refused to sign the constitutional oath.

But professional security was not the only salient issue; also at stake was the reputation of the institution itself. Many of the faculty who supported Jones were not radicals, had already gained tenure, and legitimately held concerns that the ongoing repression of professors would damage the university’s academic and institutional standing. This position was taken up by many outside observers as news of the controversy spread. In 1968, the editorial board of the *St. Petersburg Times* wrote that “if it fires Jones, the University of Florida is telling the world it will permit only popular, comforting, noncontroversial ideas... It will be saying that the search for truth has ended on its campus.” The institution, claimed the paper, “could not more effectively ward off challenging teachers and inquiring students if it built a wall around all of Alachua County. Unless its faculty members have the right to be wrong, Gainesville can’t call itself a university.”¹⁴¹

The negative press increased when the AAUP’s national organization trained its microscope on Gainesville. Frustrated members of the local chapter, including David Chalmers and Gladys Kammerer, had advised the group’s Washington, D.C. headquarters of the university’s situation in 1967. After an analysis, the AAUP in its December 1970 bulletin recommended official censure of the University of Florida, citing conditions that were “not conducive to the protection of academic freedom for non-tenured faculty members nor, as indicated by recent developments, for faculty in general.”¹⁴² The censure—the strongest sanction issued by the AAUP—was a jarring national testament to the struggles of UF’s faculty

¹⁴⁰ Associated Press, “Assistant Professor To Get Boot at UF,” *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, November 1, 1967.

¹⁴¹ Editorial, “In Search of the Truth,” *St. Petersburg Times*, February 10, 1968.

¹⁴² Report, “Academic Freedom and Tenure: University of Florida,” *AAUP Bulletin* Vol. 56, No. 4, December 1970 (Washington, D.C.: American Association of University Professors), p. 405-422.

community. It also represented a demoralizing blow to the scholars invested in the institution's academic environment. A professor of psychiatry and pediatrics worried that it would cause the university to be "blackballed as an unworthy place for a scholar with a sense of honor to go," while the head of the UF chapter of AAUP agreed that the censure "probably will be a drawback in recruiting effective faculty members."¹⁴³ Worse, the reprimand brought more national attention to the campus's atmosphere of restriction. The *Wall Street Journal*, for example, reminded its national readership that the University of Florida had joined a list of only twenty-five schools at which the AAUP advised against employment.¹⁴⁴

These events left many members of the faculty—and particularly the activists—shaken and fearful for their own livelihoods. But unlike the silent assent of the Johns Committee era, faculty by the early 1970s were prepared to stand together and push back against the administration. Moreover, faculty struggling for academic freedom shared a symbolic relationship with radical students struggling for recognition and reform; together, they increasingly represented public dissent and the pursuit of ideals. Differences in age, background, and attitude, rather than being divisive, served only to demonstrate the large catchment area of the decade's cultural movements. In actively pursuing freedom from censorship, faculty and students were united.

This unity was another manifestation of the blurred lines separating radicalism and counterculture from the mainstream. No single theme—civil rights, free speech, or even Vietnam—was at the center of this movement, and in some ways such an ambiguity of philosophical boundaries helped to fuel activism and the hope for broad solidarity among radicals. After all, the same impulse for free thought that drove 'Counter-Homecoming'

¹⁴³ Associated Press, "Assistant Professor To Get Boot at UF," *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, November 1, 1967; and Associated Press, "Censure of UF Effects Listed," *St. Petersburg Times*, April 21, 1971.

¹⁴⁴ Richard Martin, "Uneasy Profs: Tenure for Teachers Is Beginning to Crumble as Critics Push Drive," *Wall Street Journal* (New York, N.Y.), April 16, 1971.

celebrations and the circulation of underground newspapers could be found in the academic rights campaign. Movement disjointedness provided the inspiration for individuals to believe that fellow counterculturalists would rally to any number of causes, and gave them the latitude to raise new ideas and suggest new strategies. Shortly after Bob Canney's Accent appearance, James Millikan, a radical instructor from the Department of Philosophy, penned an open letter to students and faculty, imploring them to unite in the name of free thought at the university. The letter occupied the entire front cover of the week's *Eye* magazine, declaring in boldface that it had taken time for Millikan to realize "how subtly and insidiously the university's uglier tendencies have done their work" to intimidate faculty, but that they should no longer stand for it. "I'm going to tell the truth in my classes," Millikan wrote, "and I'm going to talk about real issues, and I'm going to do what I can to help people really to learn. And that means, among other things, talking and acting on the truth as I see it about what goes on here in this university." The letter referred to dismissed faculty as the "University of Florida shooting gallery," and asked, "Dr. Zabeeh, Ed Richer, Spencer Boyer, Marshall Jones, Lee Lamborn, Bob Canney; What about Ken Megill, is he next?"¹⁴⁵

The answer to Millikan's question, unfortunately for *The Eye's* target demographic, was that radical professor Ken Megill was indeed next. More than any of the other faculty dismissals, however, the Megill case demonstrated the collision of culture and politics, and the entrenched ideas of the Nixon-era 'Silent Majority' brushing up against radicals' insistence on freedom of speech. For the first time since the Johns Committee collapsed, politicians initiated a campaign to directly intervene in the affairs of the university, challenging both the climate of academia and the loyalties of a university administration caught between reactionary legislators and a growing radical faction on campus. The controversy made starkly clear the political priorities of

¹⁴⁵ James "Jimi" Millikan, letter, *The Eye* No. 4, October 27, 1970, p. 1.

university officials, and more significantly, helped to clear a path through a tangle of deeply rooted cultural barriers to unionization.

Kenneth A. Megill joined the Department of Philosophy in 1967, and quickly earned a reputation for being a politically engaged and socially active professor. Megill became a fixture in local civil rights and antiwar organizations, and like many of his colleagues, brought his cultural and political ideas into the classroom. One of his courses, entitled “The Systematic Consideration of the Nature of Democracy,” involved dividing the class into workgroups (which he called “collectivities”) in order to debate ideas and find solutions to local problems. Among these groups were “Working with the Vietnam Veterans Against the War to end U.S. involvement in Asia”; “Investigating and publicizing chemical-biological warfare research conducted at the University of Florida”; “Reading Marx”; “Working with architecture students to redesign the university”; and “Distributing radical literature on campus.”¹⁴⁶

In 1969, Megill drew the alarmed attention of politicians in Tallahassee when he made a series of public speeches addressing the power structure in higher education. In the talks, Megill argued that “at the proper time, radical students and faculty must unite to take over control of the university if we are to have a free university. We can only control our lives when the administration responds to us and is responsible to us.”¹⁴⁷ Despite clarifying that he was merely referring to administrative representation, a political firestorm ensued. Almost immediately, State Senator Tom Slade, a Republican from Jacksonville, threatened legislative action against the university—as well as a full government investigation of its affairs—unless Megill was immediately dismissed. Concurrently, the leader of the State House of Representatives

¹⁴⁶ Letter from Bruce David Alper, student, to President Stephen C. O’Connell, University of Florida, April 2, 1971. Kenneth A. Megill Papers, Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida.

¹⁴⁷ Eunice Martin, “Megill Calls For Unity to Get ‘Free University,’” *St. Petersburg Times*, February 24, 1969.

introduced a bill requiring that all Florida college students sign an oath promising not to participate in any activities, expressed or implied, which would “result in the disruption of the orderly process of administration” on campus.¹⁴⁸ Both legislators were quickly checked by government officials, who called for due process procedures within the university to be completed before beginning any political action, but the result was a full-scale crisis of autonomy for the university administration. Tigert Hall found itself caught between unacceptable threats from interventionist politicians and irksome machinations from subversive radicals.

President O’Connell’s initial strategy was to brush off the legislature’s demands, deferring to the university’s judicial procedures and suggesting students and faculty not engage with Slade, as “you don’t get into a squirting contest with a skunk.”¹⁴⁹ As pressure to adopt an official position increased from both Tallahassee and the Gainesville community, however, O’Connell was compelled to wade into the controversy. Complicating matters most of all was Megill’s considerable standing as an academic. His published works included numerous peer-reviewed articles and a successful pre-dissertation book, *The New Democratic Theory*. In a show of support for Megill, students had voted him Outstanding Professor in the College of Arts and Sciences, and he was the university’s first-ever nominee for a National Foundation of the Humanities fellowship.¹⁵⁰ Most importantly, he had the support of his colleagues, including his department chair, who considered Megill “without question one of the ablest, most thoughtful and interestingly dedicated young men within the faculty of this university, and in terms of

¹⁴⁸ Editorial, “Legislators Are University Threat,” *The Evening Independent* (St. Petersburg, Fla.), February 19, 1969; and Associated Press, “Slade Won’t Stir Megill Pot, But—,” *Daytona Beach Morning Journal*, February 18, 1969.

¹⁴⁹ Associated Press, “O’Connell Apologizes,” *Daytona Beach Morning Journal*, February 16, 1969.

¹⁵⁰ Event program, “The Ferment on Campus,” First Unitarian Church, Orlando, Fla., presented by the American Civil Liberties Union, October 28, 1969. Kenneth A. Megill Papers, Special and Area Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida; and Kenneth A. Megill, *The New Democratic Theory* (New York: The Free Press, 1970); and Kenneth A. Megill, “On Marx’s Method,” *Southern Journal of Philosophy* Vol. 9, Issue 1, (Memphis, Tenn.: Wiley-Blackwell, Spring 1971), p. 61-66.

personal probity, sobriety, and human generosity he is one of the finest men I have ever encountered in the teaching profession.”¹⁵¹

O’Connell was not pleased with Megill’s statements, nor with his classroom activism, but the threat of intervention from the legislature in Tallahassee led him to prioritize the autonomy of the institution and of his administration above his political disagreements with a radical scholar. Tellingly, O’Connell’s private correspondences also reveal his concern over exacerbating tensions with the AAUP, writing that disciplinary action against Megill would violate the organization’s tenets of academic freedom and only draw it into further objection.¹⁵² In consideration of these pressures, and armed with Megill’s record of academic excellence, O’Connell used the Megill case to fight for independence for the university, condemning Megill’s words but justifying his right to say them, while assuring Slade that his attempts at legislative discipline would likely not be upheld by the court system. Ironically, O’Connell used his opponents’ rhetoric of academic freedom to defend the university’s right to self-determination, writing that academia was inextricably linked to the changing culture around it, and that the “academic community is beset by fear when dismissal proceedings happen, hindering the ‘spirit of inquiry.’” O’Connell made no mention of his own unilateral terminations in writing these comments, and clearly showed his hand when beseeching legislators to act, in the future, in a way which would avoid “attendant publicity and damage to the institution and others who are inevitably affected.”¹⁵³ The negative national exposure had, to an extent, taken its toll on the president’s thinking.

¹⁵¹ Letter from Thomas Hanna, Chairman, Department of Philosophy, to Dean Harry H. Sisler, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, February 18, 1969. Special Collections, University Archive, University of Florida (Gainesville, Fla.).

¹⁵² Letter from President Stephen C. O’Connell to Florida State Senator Tom Slade, March 7, 1969. Administrative Policy Records of the University of Florida Officer of the President (Stephen C. O’Connell), Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida (Gainesville, Fla.)

¹⁵³ Ibid.

The controversy soon passed, and O'Connell managed to keep the state legislature at bay. Despite the president's brief paean to the virtues of intellectual freedom, however, his subsequent actions made clear that his opinions on Megill specifically and radical faculty generally had not changed. In 1971, with the Slade confrontation firmly in the past, O'Connell personally rejected the Department of Philosophy's approval for Megill's tenure. A year later, O'Connell unilaterally fired Megill, citing irresponsibility and lack of the good judgment "indicative of the maturity expected of one occupying the special position of a university teacher."¹⁵⁴ The case went to the Board of Regents, the university system's highest governing body. The board's own examiner, after a painstaking hearing process, agreed with Megill's department and recommended his tenure be granted. O'Connell, however, in one of his last actions as president before retirement, urged the regents to reject this result, and in June 1973 the board agreed with O'Connell, negating both the professor's department and the state's own examiner in definitively denying Megill tenure.¹⁵⁵

A final flareup surrounding the Megill controversy was the revelation, published nationally by the *New York Times*, that O'Connell had ordered the creation of a confidential file on all of Megill's activities, as well as those of his activist associates. The report revealed that the O'Connell administration had constructed a network of administrators, police officers, public relations staff, and college deans to conduct surveillance on the movements of numerous campus radicals. For Megill, it was reported that a "wide range" of university officials had been individually assigned to trail him, and that they had written reports about his speeches, classes,

¹⁵⁴ Letter from President Stephen C. O'Connell to Dean Herman Spivey, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Florida, February 22, 1971. Kenneth A. Megill Papers, Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida.

¹⁵⁵ Associated Press, "Panel Urges No Tenure for 'Radical' Prof," *The Miami News*, July 25, 1973.

and meetings. In just two years, the file had grown to thousands of pages.¹⁵⁶ This atmosphere of suspicion, distrust, and clandestine machinations at the university's highest echelons did not cast administrators in a favorable light, and for many, it hearkened back to the extralegal processes of the Johns Committee. Certainly Megill's attorneys protested to the state that the administration had violated his First Amendment rights.¹⁵⁷ But such high-level chicanery merely served to erode confidence further between faculty and management. Political terminations had done nothing but escalate for a decade in spite of publicity, legal challenges, and censure. For its part, the administration felt a legitimate right to control faculty it perceived as dangerous or seditious—and certainly, being the controlling body of a public university, it felt considerable taxpayer pressure to maintain such vigilance. But years of public debate on the importance of tenure, due process, and freedom of thought had only increased the resolve of faculty, moderates among them, to organize in defense of their rights.

The political controversy surrounding Megill had effectively showed O'Connell's hand. Regardless of whether his personal opinions on Megill coincided with those of the state legislature, O'Connell revealed his unwillingness to place the university's autonomy in politicians' crosshairs for the sake of a tenure dispute. After dousing the conflagration in Tallahassee with idealistic rhetoric about the role of the university, he returned to clean his own house in Gainesville by dismissing Megill on his own terms. The temporary contradiction, however, identified for activist faculty the administration's chief vulnerability: threats, particularly of a political nature, from outside actors. In a matter of months, professors and instructors had begun to absorb the message—as championed by Megill for years—that their rights could only be protected through organization and political action. Radical academics fused

¹⁵⁶ "Florida Watched Scholar Closely: Hearing Reveals Professor Was Under Surveillance," *New York Times*, December 24, 1972.

¹⁵⁷ Reg Crowder, "UF Surveillance Bared," *St. Petersburg Times*, November 28, 1972.

the realms of culture and politics by concentrating their energies toward coordinated collective bargaining. By the early 1970s, countercultural dissent among professors began to transform into an organized, political push for legitimacy among educators of all types.

Collective Bargaining

In 1971, Megill wrote that, in his view, it was clear that “the only way to stop the continual departure of some of our best and most creative teachers is to have a strong local organization which can bargain with the administration in order to set a contract, which will provide procedures mutually agreeable to the faculty and administration.”¹⁵⁸ But Megill’s role in the unionization of faculty was not only as an advocate but as an example. Although his was only one in a long series of faculty dismissals, Megill’s clear academic accomplishments changed the dynamic of his case: In the minds of many of his colleagues, it was an unsettling fact that a scholar of his distinction could be summarily terminated as he had.

While still employed at the university, Megill had worked to bring the national American Federation of Teachers (AFT) to Gainesville, and had served as its local chapter president. After the AAUP’s censure of the university, Megill presaged the later unionization efforts in a statement released through the AFT, showing appreciation for the AAUP’s action but declaring it insufficient: “The teachers’ union has long argued that a fair grievance procedure is necessary to protect the rights of teachers... Conditions at UF will be corrected not by national reports but by a united teacher organization which enters into a collective bargaining agreement with the administration.”¹⁵⁹ Megill predicted at that time that the “machinery” for unionization at the

¹⁵⁸ Letter from Kenneth Megill, Assistant Professor of Philosophy, to unknown recipient (the letter is addressed only to “Editor”), February 16, 1971. Kenneth A. Megill Papers, Special and Area Studies Collections, University Archive, University of Florida.

¹⁵⁹ Associated Press, “AAUP Urges Censure of U of Florida,” *St. Petersburg Times*, January 22, 1971.

university would be available by 1972, and expressed confidence that the majority of faculty would vote in favor of it.¹⁶⁰

Despite this optimism, the institution of collective bargaining in Florida faced several considerable cultural and logistical hurdles. The most tangible of these was the nature of the state's public university system. While most nationwide institutions voted up-or-down for union representation individually, Florida required a system-wide agreement encompassing nine major campuses.¹⁶¹ Perhaps more problematic for faculty labor leaders, though, were the cultural barriers. Many Floridians were very much in accord with an ingrained anti-union sentiment found throughout the South. David Chalmers recalls that the impulse against unions was one of the most powerful social sentiments in the state: "I thought the strongest feeling that parents at least had was the anti-union feeling, [which was] very, very strong in Florida. The parents of our students would rather have them go to school with [black nationalist] Stokely Carmichael than [labor leader] Walter Reuther any day of the week."¹⁶²

But a decade of social engagement, innovative pedagogy, outspoken dissent, and community activism by educators from outside the South had proven that a convergence of cultural forces, like colliding weather fronts, could produce dramatic changes in the local social and political climate. Faculty had helped to transform the social acceptability of student radicalism, had drawn the community into civil rights issues, had lent legitimacy to the antiwar movement, and had played a major role in the evolution of the university campus into a venue for social, cultural, and political debate. The time had come to bring this influence to bear on the security of their own standing in society, as an intellectual class with the freedom to present their

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Helen Huntley, "University Faculty Voting on Unionization Is Ahead," *St. Petersburg Times*, Mar 24, 1975.

¹⁶² Transcript, David Chalmers. Oral history interview with Stuart Landers, June 2, 1992, p. 12, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program Collection, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

convictions without fear of unreasonable retribution. As the *New York Times* reported, “while only a small portion of Dr. Megill’s colleagues at the university seem willing to join faculty unions, the broad issue of freedom of speech in academic freedom has become a matter of wide concern.”¹⁶³

Despite the *Times*’s statement, the tide against organized labor was turning, a development aided by worsening everyday employment conditions for faculty across the state. Pay stagnation and budget threats from Tallahassee exacerbated these worries. Law professor David Smith told reporters in 1975 that mismanagement of university-faculty relations had rapidly eroded anti-union sentiment: “I think things are going so badly, I don’t think too much in the way of campaigning has to be done. This is politicizing some people who otherwise would say a union is unprofessional.”¹⁶⁴ Informal statistics seemed to support this conclusion. In May 1972, the state branch of the American Federation of Teachers sent a questionnaire to University College teachers, which revealed that 88 percent of the faculty polled believed they had not been duly included in academic decision-making processes, while 81 percent thought that the university violated constitutional guarantees of “orderly procedure.” The union concluded that the “entire university is impaired by such blows to the morale of educators who are ultimately responsible for the main function” of the institution.¹⁶⁵

Putting the “machinery” for collective bargaining in place took longer than Megill expected, but the wake of uncertainty generated by his dismissal had an indelible effect. In 1975, academics statewide voted in favor of representation by the United Faculty of Florida (UFF) for

¹⁶³ “Florida Watched Scholar Closely: Hearing Reveals Professor Was Under Surveillance,” *New York Times*, December 24, 1972.

¹⁶⁴ Helen Huntley, “University Faculty Voting on Unionization Is Ahead,” *St. Petersburg Times*, March 24, 1975.

¹⁶⁵ Letter from Norman M. Markel, President, Florida Universities Local 1880, American Federation of Teachers AFL-CIO, to Stephen C. O’Connell, President, University of Florida, May 23, 1972. Administrative Policy Records of the University of Florida Officer of the President (Stephen C. O’Connell), Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida (Gainesville, Fla.).

the university system's 5,431 faculty and staff, and nominated Kenneth Megill as the union's first president. Despite his own termination, Megill was jubilant, telling reporters, "we're drinking beer. We're union folk."¹⁶⁶ Much had changed in the fifteen years since the reign of the Johns Committee. Faculty had gradually chipped away at the region's prevailing anti-union ethos, but had been vigorously aided by missteps and overreach from management itself. The result was profound. The union's certification attenuated the pervasive attrition of dissenting faculty in Florida, and insulated due process from the whims of political actors (including the state-appointed university president) in the coming decades. Years of conflict over the right to nonconformity had brought about a sea-change in the community's intellectual culture, and ensured that Gainesville would remain a venue for outspoken dissent. One longtime radical resident reflected in 1996 that, although counterculture peaked in the early 1970s, "what I am saying is that there is some radicalism and it still continues... I think [the university] has been very good" at protecting freedom of speech.¹⁶⁷

The AAUP's censure was lifted in 1975 following negotiations between the organization's local chapter and the administration of new university president Robert Q. Marston, and several of the dismissed professors received financial compensation. Kenneth Megill continued his union activism, leading the United Faculty of Florida until 1983. Marshall Jones, meanwhile, received an appointment at Pennsylvania State University, quickly rising to the rank of department chair. From his new home, he remained "buoyantly" optimistic about the Gainesville movement, and in 1970 completed his dissertation on early activism at the University of Florida with the telling

¹⁶⁶ Associated Press, "'United Faculty' Elected Bargaining Agent," *Ocala Star-Banner*, March 5, 1976.

¹⁶⁷ Transcript, W.H. Abney. Oral history interview with Dirk Drake, April 7, 1996, p. 17-18, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program Collection, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

title *Berkeley of the South*.¹⁶⁸ His case was “satisfactorily settled” by the university’s offer to purchase \$6,000 worth of books about academic freedom and race tolerance, which were donated to the Law Library and inscribed with the names of Jones’s civil rights attorneys.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ Scott DeGarmo, “UF’s Radical Movement Called National Model,” *University Report*, Vol. 2 No. 21, February 6, 1969; and Marshall B. Jones, “Berkeley of the South: A History of the Student Movement at the University of Florida, 1963-1968,” (PhD diss., University of Florida, 1970).

¹⁶⁹ Gary Balanoff, “UF Censure ‘Likely’ to End,” *The Independent Florida Alligator* (Gainesville, Fla.), January 6, 1975; and Linda Wisniewski, “Professors Recommend UF Censure Removed,” *The Independent Florida Alligator*, June 2, 1975.

CHAPTER 6 BREAKAWAY INSTITUTIONS AND FREE UNIVERSITIES

In 1967, California psychiatrist Robert S. Berns wrote in a peer-reviewed academic journal that the explosive issues supposedly central to student unrest—exemplified by the Berkeley Free Speech Movement—were in fact secondary matters obscuring a single, critical theme: students’ problematic relationship with the structure and personnel of higher education in the United States. According to Berns, this conflict had three facets: first, “the difficulty of maintaining appropriate communication among and between administrative officers, faculty members, and students on large university campuses;” second, “the prevalent ambiguity over what constitutes legitimate moral authority for university students;” and third, “the prevalent ambiguity of purpose of higher education in the United States.”¹⁷⁰

Berns’s analysis perhaps oversimplified a complex array of youth motivations, but his conclusion that the university structure itself played a critical role in students’ cultural resistance was an accurate one. Across the nation, power relationships between students and universities were central to the process of movement acculturation and politicization, and Gainesville was no exception. The University of Florida’s size and regional influence—and its rocky recent history with matters of civil rights—provided an ideal foil for students’ frustrations. The seemingly faceless institution represented structure, establishment, and status quo, and provided a physical, convenient space in which students could feel engaged. The history of the 1960s abounds with ambitious national movements failing for want of cohesiveness; but in local contexts, where individuals could be known, heard, and understood by their peers—and could see tangible changes resulting from their activism—the feeling of futility that marked attempts at large-scale political changes was diluted. In short, the university as an institution, although producing

¹⁷⁰ Robert S. Berns, M.D., “The Berkeley Uprisings: A Study of the Conditions of Riotous Behavior,” *American Journal of Psychiatry*, Vol. 123, No. 9 (Arlington, Virg.: American Psychiatric Association), March 1967, p. 1165.

legitimate grievances, provided a surrogate focal point for a broader cultural disquiet among students, while the community surrounding the institution provided a relatively safe setting in which to express it.

Nevertheless, to the extent that the university served as a proxy for larger concerns, the campus situation itself produced unique tensions. As Berns had written, the “prevalent ambiguity” felt by students over the nature of legitimate authority led to increasing frustration with the most discernible one in their lives—the university administration. Thus students began to interpret the university as not merely a venue for the cultural change occurring around them, but central to it. As officials pushed back at these changes, understandably attempting to reassert control over their campuses and restore the influence they had long enjoyed, they inadvertently produced only a regressive and power-hungry image, delegitimizing themselves further in the eyes of many radicalizing students. This was the primary result of the communication breakdown noted by Berns. Moreover, officials’ attempts to limit off-campus civil rights demonstrations turned activists’ attention to the campus itself. Locally, the Reitz and O’Connell administrations’ blatant censorship of politically dissident faculty—many of whom served as mentor figures for counterculturalists in Gainesville—expedited the realization of Berns’s third point: ambiguity over the very purpose of higher education in the United States.

This marriage of cultural and ideological change culminated, by the late-1960s, in a frank public discussion about the natures of freedom, authority, and educational structure. From the editorial pages of major newspapers to the columns of fiery New Left leaflets, publications began to weigh in on matters of academic freedom and responsibility, and even university officials (up to and including Stephen C. O’Connell) became involved in the discourse. Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences Harry H. Sisler, for example, contributed his thoughts on the

importance of academic freedom to the inaugural edition of the independent newspaper *University Report* in 1968, writing that never before in his lifetime had there occurred “a period when the general public was as concerned as now with the policy of institutions of higher education. The interest of citizens in such matters as academic freedom, tenure, student rights, faculty rights, and the governance of universities is without parallel in the history of higher education.”¹⁷¹ Inextricably linked to these themes was the question of the role and legitimacy of the university itself, especially as national narratives on politics, civil rights, counterculture, and war evolved.

Moreover, students’ drive for higher education reforms was in many cases supported by their adult mentors. Addressing the Florida Philosophical Association in 1968, philosophy professor Herschel Elliott stated: “One of the reasons I am pleased by the antics and rebelliousness of the youth... is that they seem to display a new and healthy attitude about ethical, social, and political matters. That is, many young people, though still a small percentage of them, no longer seem awed by the values or actions of their parents and grandparents.”¹⁷² To Elliott, this was a healthy inquisitiveness which could result in positive social and cultural changes, as well as a rethinking of the service role of the university: “[Students] have come to question the military and industrial domination of most aspects of contemporary life. They question how a university can be a seat of learning and still encourage the recruiting and training of personnel in the techniques of biological and atomic annihilation. They have discovered, first hand, that the police and the courts all too often serve to maintain the authority of those

¹⁷¹ Dean Harry H. Sisler, College of Arts and Sciences, “Why Academic Freedom, Tenure?” *University Report* Vol. 1 No. 1, July 17, 1968. University Archive, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida.

¹⁷² Public address, Dr. Herschel Elliott, Professor of Philosophy, reprinted as “Question of Values,” *University Report* Vol 1. No. 12, excerpted from address given to the Florida Philosophical Association, Sarasota, Fla., November 2, 1968. Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida (Gainesville, Fla.).

individuals who hold power within the community, even when their support of these individuals is clearly in opposition to the law of the land.”¹⁷³

Students’ feelings surrounding the place of the university in their lives, and their frustrations with that they perceived as its hypocrisies, were quickly integrated into their emerging penchant for cultural rebellion. In the mid-1960s, this remained lawful, conscientious rebellion, and the result was thus a measured, reasonable attempt at academic experimentation. The rise of educational projects independent of the university represented a natural outgrowth of the youth impulse for separation and cultural reform during the period, and was strengthened by similar developments nationwide. With the Free Speech Movement not yet fully subsumed into a broader youth ideology, and with academic rights and university reform still a central narrative in the minds of many young activists, the creation of so-called ‘free universities’ was a logical ideological step, allowing students to declare independence from the existing tensions of the formal university and create a new system imbued with their idealistic ideas and goals. On a more personal level, many students wanted to fight against the *in loco parentis* policies which dictated many aspects of their social lives.

In Gainesville, the roots of free university experiments lay in the 1965 founding of the Freedom Party, a splinter group of students who sought to reform the university’s existing Student Government. Members of the local civil rights movement, particularly the Student Group for Equal Rights, correctly perceived the powers invested in Student Government—long a political networking tool controlled almost exclusively by ambitious fraternity men—as a key means toward university reform. Election to Student Government meant control over funds, streamlined access to university administrators, and the power to adopt resolutions on behalf of the student body. In time for the February 1965 Student Government elections, the Freedom

¹⁷³ Ibid.

Party organized a comprehensive—and integrated—slate of candidates for more than twenty student offices, with radical student Jim Harmeling as its presidential nominee and Ed Richer as faculty sponsor. The party’s platform challenged the Greek-supported status quo, calling for the elimination of compulsory ROTC for all male students, the removal of administrative veto power over campus speakers, and an end to racial discrimination “in all phases of university life.”¹⁷⁴

Most students, however, were not ready for the party’s challenging ideas, nor for their focus on issues outside the traditional discussions of campus safety and social activities. The election results sharply rebuked the party: Harmeling finished in third place in the presidential polling, and only one of the 23 Freedom candidates won office.¹⁷⁵ The following year, Freedom presidential candidate Alan Levin performed even worse, receiving only 187 of 8,500 total votes cast.¹⁷⁶ By 1967, the party had disbanded.

The Freedom Party, however, was significant not for its vote tallies, but for its cultural impact on the tradition of dissent in Gainesville. Civil rights activists like Harmeling and Richer were not only seeking to influence Student Government; rather, they saw the organization effort as a conduit through which the apathy of the university’s students could be challenged. The Freedom Party represented an early example of the collision of cultural and political concerns within the institutional setting of the university. As historian Gregg Michel writes, a primary force pushing Student Government challengers to advocate for academic reform was “their desire to attract more students to progressive causes. They were convinced that raising university-related concerns would motivate many previously inactive students to speak out, and thus would constitute a first step toward drawing them into the larger movements of the day.”¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ “Florida Students Form Free University,” *Free Student* (New York, N.Y.) No.5, 1965.

¹⁷⁵ Michel, *Struggle For A Better South*, 97.

¹⁷⁶ Editorial board, “Attitudes on the Campus,” *Miami News*, February 16, 1966.

¹⁷⁷ Michel, *Struggle For A Better South*, 96.

The party's challenge to the apolitical status quo on campus was the first salvo in what would grow into a volley of localized rebellions.

But Freedom's impact was not merely symbolic. As a central organizational platform for the community's early radicals, it imparted lessons of organization, messaging, and ideology to its members. It also served as a catalyst for cultural changes on the campus, and its example demonstrated to students who were frustrated with the establishment but not yet radicalized (or willing to join rebellious youth movements) that change was possible. Inspired by the Freedom Party's example, an independent coalition of students with a platform centered on university reform finally toppled the decades-old Greek stranglehold on the Student Government in the 1967 election.¹⁷⁸

The Freedom Party served as an ideological precursor to at least three independent experimental colleges in Gainesville. These 'institutions' served as microcosms of the burgeoning youth movements from which they were created, and largely reflected the evolving ethos and confidence of the nonconformist community. As such, the earliest examples were well-intentioned attempts to expand the public discourse on social issues. As politics and culture collided in the latter part of the decade, however, militancy and radicalism became central to the projects' messaging. This is perhaps a reflection of the scope of the so-called 'institutions' themselves: Although they proclaimed themselves to be "universities" and were ostensibly dedicated to fulfilling the lost educational purpose of mainstream higher education, in reality these projects functioned more as workshops for committed radicals. 'Classes' involved less the transfer of knowledge from one mind to another than the formal gathering of already knowledgeable radicals for discussion and debate. Thus, the projects were largely ineffectual for cultural and political proselytizing, but served an effective organizational purpose.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

The first—and perhaps best coordinated—experimental college was founded after the termination of Ed Richer. Activist faculty both from the university and from city high schools joined with students from the Freedom Party (as well as other local civil rights figures) to officially incorporate the Free University of Florida as a legal non-profit organization. The group named Richer as its chancellor and elected a board of trustees, although this was comprised of individuals drawn from the same limited pool of faculty. Tuition was set at \$1 per course, per week. That the organization was born out of frustration with the lethargic process of social engagement on campus was succinctly revealed by its summary prospectus, which stated that “if the university as an American social institution is not as free as it might be, then not until the advantages of a free university are made sharply visible will students, faculty, and administration move in this generation toward significant academic reform.”¹⁷⁹ Despite being almost entirely comprised of leftists, the Free University was also the most conceptually nonpartisan of the renegade institutions set up in Gainesville—clearly a reflection of the still-nonmilitant period of its inauguration. FUF founders hoped to infuse the organization with the egalitarian ideals of their civil rights activism, and consciously incorporated principles of open-mindedness into its mission. Thus its literature proclaimed that “Birchers and Communists, evangelists and atheists, right, middle, left, are all welcome as teachers and students. That is what FREE means, and that is what a community of scholars must encourage if it means to take freedom seriously.”¹⁸⁰ This was a conscious break from the group’s notable precursor in Greenwich Village, the Free University of New York, which deliberately promulgated ideas of Marxism.

For a brief time, the Free University of Florida injected a level of excitement into the socially active hopes of its participants, creating a sense that real change was possible in the

¹⁷⁹ Ron Chiolak, “Free University Report,” *Students for a Democratic Society Bulletin* Vol. 4 No. 2 (Chicago, Ill.: Students for a Democratic Society, 1965).

¹⁸⁰ “Florida Students Form Free University,” *Free Student* (New York, N.Y.) No.5, 1965.

community. Focusing primarily on civil rights, FUF courses provided an ideal setting to draw together radical students and faculty, and to clarify their ideologies and strategy. Fletcher Baldwin, a prominent professor both in the UF law school and the Free University, remembers the progressive atmosphere of those “rather exciting and kinetic years.” In the “people’s university,” glimmers of a changing spirit and an emerging radicalism could be clearly seen. Like Marshall Jones, Baldwin began to perceive Gainesville as being a “southern Berkeley in terms of who it was attracting... That type of person congregated to our Free University. I never saw so many sandals and long robes and long hair in my life, but they were very delightful people. It was fun working with them. We were alive!”¹⁸¹

The excitement of Baldwin and others, however, belied the logistical and ideological difficulties the Free University actually faced. Despite ambitious, unrealistic dreams for the coming years—including an FCC-licensed educational radio station, a printing press, a theater, and an art studio—the Free University was doomed almost from its inception, regularly facing political opposition from conservatives and outright hostility from the community at large. Richer, in particular, became a divisive figure following his public dismissal from the University of Florida. As he ventured to find a permanent venue for his renegade organization, local landlords refused to rent him classroom space, and hotels denied the use of their facilities for registration events. Gainesville mayor James G. Richardson soon told Richer that nothing associated with his name would “ever be able to get off the ground in this town.”¹⁸² FUF was eventually compelled to hold its classes and events in church halls and teachers’ living rooms.

¹⁸¹ Transcript, Fletcher Baldwin. Oral history interview with Denise Stobbie, May 9, 1989, p. 18, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program Collection, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

¹⁸² Ron Chiolak, “Free University Report,” *Students for a Democratic Society Bulletin* Vol. 4 No. 2 (Chicago, Ill.: Students for a Democratic Society, 1965).

Over the course of a year, this situation became increasingly demoralizing, until practical concerns and internal divisions finally broke the organization apart in 1966.

The experiment, however, had given the local movement critical experience in activism and organization, and helped to focus radicals' energies toward correcting existing societal problems. The experience imparted the realization that that breaking away into a powerless splinter group actually made preserving the traditional order easier for the local establishment. As Marshall Jones, one of the first FUF participants to express skepticism over its future, recalled, "it seemed to us that we needed to contend for control in the existing places, not go elsewhere and do better. Higher education in America would continue as it was and more easily, if our energies were diverted into utopian educational experiments."¹⁸³

Concurrently with the collapse of the Free University of Florida, and perhaps having observed its mistakes, a small number of campus counterculturalists founded an organization driven by a completely opposite strategy: an exclusively student-run, volunteer group conducting relatively informal classes with the purpose of spreading nonconformist ideals and discussing the blossoming hippie culture that, as yet, had not taken hold in Gainesville. The organization was christened the U of F Annex, and the three-part mission statement for its "experiment" clearly demonstrated students' increasing interest in academic freedom and the rejection of traditional structure and hierarchy. The Annex sought to "provide a framework" in which, first, "it will be possible to question the basic assumptions of the established university system and disciplines;" second, "classes will be freed from all political control;" and third, "students and teachers will be freed from irrelevancies such as grades, arbitrary schedules, predetermined curricula,

¹⁸³ Jeffrey A. Turner, *Sitting In and Speaking Out: Student Movements in the American South, 1960-1970* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 160.

disinterested students, and roll books.”¹⁸⁴ The courses offered were indicative of students’ willingness to fuse their growing political concerns with their desire to reform the culture around them, and included ‘The Negro and the Novel,’ ‘Marxist Theory,’ ‘Hindi,’ ‘Cold War Economics,’ ‘Dance,’ ‘History of Southeast Asia,’ ‘Research Methods in Social Science,’ and ‘Figure Drawing.’ The U of F Annex’s inherent informality and spontaneity, however, proved to be its downfall. Operating under the haphazard organizational principle that “classes will be started whenever a group of students expresses an interest in some question or related questions and can find a teacher, or do without one,” the organization was all but guaranteed a fleeting run of success. The effort soon disbanded.¹⁸⁵

The failures of both of these educational projects discouraged the creation of any new experiments for several years, and had seemingly proven the concept’s ineffectiveness as an intellectual exercise in radicalism. However, the cultural changes that took place in Gainesville after 1966 (along with the fading legacy of the previous two failures) eventually gave a new generation of young activists the confidence to make another attempt at organizing an off-campus educational institution. Founded by four students in early 1969, the Florida Experimental College (FEC) ostensibly aimed to guide public discourse on academia while maintaining a reasonable air of moderation—a clear attempt to avoid the discrediting public scorn that befell its predecessors. The FEC’s central goals were the introduction of flexibility into the educational process and the elimination of bureaucracy and structure therein. Classes were to be guided toward relevance in individuals’ favored causes, in order to provide a reasonable example in the escalating debate over higher education in the community. In this way, the FEC occupied a middle ground, conceptually at least, between the education-centered Free University of Florida

¹⁸⁴ Dale Colberly, “The U of F Annex: An Introduction,” *The Crocodile* Vol. 1 No. 3, May 18, 1966. Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

and the freewheeling disarray of the U of F Annex. The chairman of the FEC, graduate student Douglas Tedards, said upon its founding that he was “very much interested in changing and reforming peacefully the present university system” which he described as merely “vocational.”¹⁸⁶ Similarly, the FEC’s mission statement spoke directly to perceived inadequacies in the mainstream university’s structure, stating that “learning is stultified when authoritarian, overly directive, or subtly coercive teaching methods are used. The Experimental College wishes to reverse these methods.”¹⁸⁷

This rhetoric, so different from the increasingly radical writings of New Leftists on campus, drew opportunistic attention and praise from both university officials and statewide media. For administrators and community leaders, the tolerant nature of the Experimental College was a convenient example of an organization which could be of interest to modern, open-minded students, but which was not poisoned by the machinations of ambitious and agitating outside radicals. The result was a sudden and unprecedented bestowal of public legitimacy to the enterprise. The editorial board of the *St. Petersburg Times*, for example, reported enthusiastically that the FEC was “peaceful and responsible” because “the impetus for change is coming from within, rather than by radical imposition from outside... Gainesville’s experimental college has not raised red flags of revolution or black flags of anarchy over the University of Florida campus. But it has raised a convincing demonstration of concern.”¹⁸⁸ Soon the University of Florida undergraduate catalog featured an official listing for the Experimental College, which represented an affirmation of legitimacy that FUF or the U of F Annex certainly never enjoyed. The catalog entry, next to a photograph of a female student wearing a hippie-like chain of flowers in her hair (and preceding an entry on the Peace Corps), described the casual

¹⁸⁶ Eunice Martin, “Experimental College to Open,” *St. Petersburg Times*, January 13, 1969.

¹⁸⁷ Published announcement, “Florida Experimental College,” *The Eye* No. 4, October 27, 1970.

¹⁸⁸ Editorial, “White Flag of Revolution,” *St. Petersburg Times*, January 14, 1969.

process of organizing courses, in which students met at the beginning of every quarter to nominate classes or shared hobbies, after which “the group is free to shape its content and direction.”¹⁸⁹ The organization established itself further by sending a representative to participate in a symposium on student educational engagement at the Southeastern Psychological Association’s annual meeting.¹⁹⁰

Despite these overtures to reasonableness and the positive publicity it produced, in practice the Florida Experimental College was scarcely different from its radical forebears. Its chartered publication, *The Hogtown Orifice*, was just as subversive and militant as its counterparts *The Eye* and *The Crocodile*. Its pages assured readers that “the lid is off Gainesville. The pressure cooker of subtle oppression has finally blown,” and insisted that the “common enemy and oppressor” of white and black youths was “the US ruling class.” It also gave insight into the supposed revolution to come: “To those who would say that a crisis does not exist on the University of Florida’s campus, I say after Norman Mailer and Eldridge Cleaver: THERE’S A SHIT STORM BREWING!”¹⁹¹

Meanwhile, the organization’s classes promoted the unabashedly radical agenda that its ‘students’ had adopted. The 1970 fall course listing gives a clear picture of the collision of political idealism, splintered New Left militancy, coalescing countercultural ideas, and wayward energies that had come together as the Gainesville movement. These courses, held for two hours weekly in local religious venues, included ‘War Machine;’ ‘History of Radical America;’ ‘Zen;’

¹⁸⁹ “Special and Experimental Programs: Florida Experimental College,” *Florida Handbook: The University Record* Vol. LXVI, Series 1, No. 7, July 1, 1971 (Gainesville, Fla.: University of Florida Administration). Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida.

¹⁹⁰ “Symposia: Students Turning Students On,” Proceedings of the Sixteenth Annual Meeting of the Southeastern Psychological Association, April 24-26, 1970, Louisville, Kent., published in Norman B. Anderson, PhD, ed., *American Psychologist* Vol. 25, Issue 9 (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, September 1970), p. 864.

¹⁹¹ Excerpted from: Editorial, “The lid is off Gainesville...” and “Sparks from SDS-RYM,” *Hogtown Orifice* Vol. 1 No. 2, December 7, 1969; and Larry Jordan, “UF Attacks Blacks,” *Hogtown Orifice* Vol. 1 No. 3, January 29, 1970. Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida.

‘Posters as Propaganda;’ ‘Expressive Movement;’ ‘Yoga and Meditation;’ ‘College Math Made Beautiful;’ ‘Helping Things To Grow;’ ‘Magic 123’ (taught by ‘Wonder Warlock’); and, perhaps most intriguingly, a class named ‘Nothing.’¹⁹² The eclecticism of these sessions notwithstanding—and in common with its ill-fated forerunners—the FEC lasted only several brief terms.

The short lives of these educational projects are indicative of the myriad frustrated energies young people expended in pursuit of their evolving ideals. As underground presses, co-ops, and other grassroots enterprises have shown, young people were willing to challenge the status quo but faced practical limitations in their abilities to realistically do so. Experimental colleges were founded with mainstream universities in mind as proxies for establishment and structure, but the conceptual impotence of loosely-organized breakaway schools soon exposed the real deficiencies in substituting the tribulations of Tigert Hall for those of Capitol Hill. To reform higher education was not, in reality, to revolutionize American society, just as the circulation of independent periodicals proved ineffective at challenging dominant corporate news outlets. Free universities thus took their historical place among countless frustrated youth experiments, in which the well-intentioned desire to enact social change washed upstream against the overwhelming currents of pragmatism and public opinion.

Experiments with educational secession also reflected the same impulse toward communitarianism that produced the off-campus co-ops and ‘people’s’ establishments. Questioning the purpose of the university as an institution in modern life did not symbolize doubt about the usefulness of education itself, but rather with the established university as many students perceived it: a bureaucratic machine run by political appointees, maintaining *in loco parentis*, and involved in war research. Docile institutional rebellions, from the Freedom Party to

¹⁹² Published announcement, “Florida Experimental College,” *The Eye* No. 4, October 27, 1970.

the Florida Experimental College, all shared the common goal of seeking to restore relevance to students' lives and convictions. As visible forays into cultural engagement, the experiments' failures only frustrated young people further, highlighting the practical limitations of both symbolic radicalism and students' localized attempts at ideological proselytizing. Eventually, manifestations of the same frustration—growing nationwide throughout the decade—turned culture into politics, SDS into Weatherman, reform into rebellion, and radicalism into militancy.

CHAPTER 7 RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS AND SPACES

On a gray March afternoon in 1967, avowedly radical professor Kenneth Megill stood up before a congregation at the Episcopal Student Center near campus and delivered a speech entitled “On Being Free.” Megill told students of his belief that “Christianity has made the mistake of turning man—you and me—into an abstraction, into a transcendent being—a place which should be reserved for God—and has demanded that the Christian withdraw from the world and follow another set of principles... But to be a man means that you live in this world—in this world which is not Christian.” Peppering his speech with allusions to Karl Marx and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Megill explained his view of the contemporary relevance of congregants’ faith in the context of the current social and geopolitical situation: “The Christian, as a man, must fight against the war in Vietnam... He must sleep-in at Tigert when it becomes necessary, and he must be willing and able to protest and act when man’s freedom is at stake. Precisely because the Christian is in the world and because he is part of the Christian community, he cares—as Jesus cared—for what happens.”¹⁹³

During the immediate postwar period, the United States was an increasingly churchgoing society, especially in the South. A study of eight major Protestant denominations has revealed that between 1950 and 1960, church membership grew faster than the national population, and in Southern churches continued to grow until 1975.¹⁹⁴ Gainesville was therefore an overwhelmingly religious community, with considerable representation by major Christian denominations, Jewish temples, and by the 1970s, congregations dedicated to liberal Western theology and Eastern spiritual traditions. Houses of worship dotted the city’s leafy streets, and served as important

¹⁹³ Speech notes, “On Being Free” by Kenneth Megill, Episcopal Student Church, Gainesville, Fla., March 4, 1967. Kenneth A. Megill Papers, Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida.

¹⁹⁴ Hugh McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 208.

spaces where members of the community could come together to meet and socialize. Later, this would prove useful in overcoming the logistical challenges inherent to organizing nonconformist cultural and political radicals into a cohesive movement.

Theology scholar Richard Lints has written that religious belief and behavior was “caught in the matrix of ideological dissent and cultural change” in the 1960s. Religion and spirituality drove the ideals of many activists and the resolve of many conservatives, and was used as an intellectual weapon by both. As Lints writes, the “all-too-easy characterization of religious conviction as a ‘conserving force’ does not match with its reality in the decade.”¹⁹⁵ In Gainesville, theological concerns were determinedly important factors in the community’s cultural battles. Religious figures like Father Michael Gannon, Reverend John Talbird, Preacher Ulysses Gordon, and Reverend Thomas A. Wright held influential public positions, while religiously-affiliated civic spaces across the city provided regular venues for debate, dissent, and discussion. Religion and radicalism, however, were not inevitable bedfellows in early 1960s.

In fact, the fusion of theological influences with the counterculture largely owed its existence to a blending of the political and the spiritual by the civil rights movement in the postwar period. Indeed, scholars have analyzed the religious and theological aspects of the nationwide civil rights struggle and its leaders for nearly five decades. As Lints argues, civil rights “was in the first instance primarily a religious movement given legitimization by its retrieval of traditional Christian themes of the dignity of all human persons and the yearning for the justice of God in human communities.”¹⁹⁶ On a more practical level, churches were central meeting points where large numbers of African Americans could spend time with others who shared their opinions and goals. In Gainesville’s segregated Jim Crow society, the church was a

¹⁹⁵ Richard Lints, *Progressive and Conservative Ideologies: The Tumultuous Decade of the 1960s* (Farnham, U.K.: Ashgate Publishing, 2010), 32.

¹⁹⁶ Lints, *Progressive and Conservative Ideologies*, 33.

haven from the racist hierarchy of the public commons, and a place where important friendships and alliances could be formed. Charles Moore, who grew up in Alachua County, recalls the discipline with which his community unfailingly attended church and Sunday school each week. After services, dozens of men and women would proceed to Moore's house to spend Sunday afternoon together: playing sports; cooking and eating; talking; and sharing time and ideas. As dusk set in, everyone would return home, "and then the next weekend would be the same thing... It was just a big family atmosphere, and everybody had a good time. So that's what we did in our community."¹⁹⁷

This pleasurable socializing provided a readymade structure for later civil rights organizing, as when the Gainesville Women for Equal Rights joined black civil rights leaders in formulating action strategies in the community's African American churches. But allying with GWER was merely one manifestation of black parishes' increasing politicization, which had begun locally as early as 1948. In that year, a group of affiliates from African American churches in the community formed the Voters' League, which took advantage of the legitimacy of the local church establishment to involve the public in voter registrations, meetings, and civil rights efforts.¹⁹⁸ Later, when the threat of backlash from militant segregationists made public civil rights meetings unsafe, black churches—most notably Mount Carmel Baptist, on the city's northeastern side—served as safe venues for both black and white activists to organize.¹⁹⁹

While the city's black churches comprised an insulated civil rights network prior to the 1960s, soon their influence began to percolate into other Gainesville institutions and causes, a change which drew in increasing numbers of young white radicals. Activists soon applied the

¹⁹⁷ Charles Moore, recorded interview with Michael Falcone, November 23, 2010. Samuel Proctor Oral History Program, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

¹⁹⁸ Transcript, Savannah Williams. Oral history interview with Joel Buchanan, January 24, 1984, p. 10, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program Collection, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

¹⁹⁹ Transcript, Jean Chalmers. Oral history interview with Stuart Landers, April 22, 1991, p. 10, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program Collection, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

lessons of black church organizing to bring their social messages to white congregations. At first this was a difficult task, given the prevailing conservatism of white churchgoers during the period. David Chalmers recalls employing strategic protests to highlight what he considered to be the hypocrisy of members of the St. Augustine Catholic Church, who would attend Sunday mass until noon and then stream *en masse* to the segregated College Inn restaurant next door: “They would have Communion and bring Jesus in, and then would have segregated Sunday lunch,” ignoring the Student Group for Equal Rights picketing outside.²⁰⁰ Young students like Robert Canney and faculty like Ed Richer witnessed this firsthand, increasing the rebellious sentiment among early white radicals. Later, the institutions themselves began to change, as when the same Catholic parish, under Michael Gannon, opened the use of its facilities to SGER as a logistical headquarters for protest activities.

Although many mainstream denominations were slow to liberalize, certain white religious organizations had long worked for progressivism and civil rights in the community. In the summer of 1955, Gainesville’s Society of Friends (Quakers) organized a petition with the Episcopal Canterbury House, the Baptist Student Union, and the Methodist Gainesville Wesley Association to end racial segregation at the University of Florida, declaring that “admission of students now banned because of race will show the nation and the world that Florida answered the Supreme Court’s call for local leadership by a prompt and reasonable start toward full compliance.”²⁰¹ This rhetoric exemplified the central role church organizations played in exhibiting initiative and action in an atmosphere of conservatism and racial orthodoxy, as well as the organizations’ clear knowledge of that role and its implications. Churches were, in many cases, consciously at the vanguard of local social reform.

²⁰⁰ Transcript, David Chalmers. Oral history interview with Stuart Landers, June 2, 1992, p. 15, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program Collection, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

²⁰¹ Associated Press, “Religious Groups Ask End of Segregation at University,” *Ocala Star-Banner*, July 24, 1955.

Eventually, relations between predominantly white and black religious institutions improved sufficiently that productive interracial protest strategies began to emerge. In 1963, the Gainesville Ministerial Association of white churches opened its membership to black ministers, and publicly called for an end to segregation. It was a promising development, albeit a substantially delayed one, even by Florida standards: the association's Fort Lauderdale branch had long since formed an interracial desegregation council, while similar black and white ministerial groups in several coastal cities had merged and integrated in 1956.²⁰² The impetus for SGER extending their demonstrations to Jim Crow hotbeds like Ocala and St. Augustine, meanwhile, was through an entreaty from one of Ocala's black religious leaders, Reverend Frank Pinkston, Sr. His efforts in placing what then-Religion professor Austin Creel called a "Macedonian Call" for cohesive interracial activism convinced Marshall Jones to take up regional action with his students.²⁰³ It was a decision which would prove critical to the social engagement of participating students, as legitimate civil rights involvement was one of the driving forces behind the development of radicalism in a local context.

The liberalization and politicization of clergy went hand-in-hand with an increase of clerical participation in social and political causes. Increasingly, religious spaces opened their doors to radical and countercultural student organizations, welcoming debate and promoting ideological exploration. This development was aided by the logistical advantages enjoyed by churches: Being among the community's oldest and most rooted focal points, many ecclesiastical facilities occupied prime real estate abutting both the university campus and the city's major thoroughfares. In a single six-block stretch of West University Avenue, for example, houses of

²⁰² Helen L. Jacobstein, *The Segregation Factor in the Florida Democratic Gubernatorial Primary of 1956*, University of Florida Social Sciences Monographs, No. 47 (Gainesville, Fla: University of Florida Press, 1972), 11; and Transcript, David Chalmers. Oral history interview with Stuart Landers, June 2, 1992, p. 16, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program Collection, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

²⁰³ Transcript, Austin Creel. Oral history interview with Stuart Landers, August 27, 1992, p. 24, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program Collection, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

worship from Catholic, Jewish, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, and Episcopalian denominations all overlooked the campus. Such ideal placement, along with growing ministerial engagement with youth culture, provided a plentitude of optimal venues for political and cultural activities.

The use of these sites was also an effective means to circumvent university administrators' control over student activities. The university's official policy was to require student meetings, events, and organizations to receive official institutional recognition and recruit a faculty sponsor before receiving an allocation of campus space. This had the desirable effect of preventing use of campus resources by militant groups like the Ku Klux Klan, but also enabled administrators to deny venues to organizations with which they disagreed, such as Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the Southern Student Organizing Committee (SSOC). Moving activities off campus and away from the watchful eyes of administrators liberated students from intellectual restriction and encouraged a blossoming culture of dissent. For their part, many leaders of religious institutions warmly welcomed organized radicals into their facilities. Episcopal, Presbyterian, and African American Baptist churches, for example, hosted the Human Relations Council and the Gainesville Women for Equal Rights, while the Free University of Florida, unable to find accommodations due to the radical reputation of Ed Richer, found a welcoming venue in the Methodist Student Center.²⁰⁴ Meanwhile, the Jewish Hillel facility provided space for cultural talks and political debates, and hosted Student Group for Equal Rights meetings.²⁰⁵ Gainesville's houses of worship bustled with cultural, social, and political activity.

²⁰⁴ Transcript, Jean Chalmers. Oral history interview with Stuart Landers, April 22, 1991, p. 10, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program Collection, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida; and Transcript, Fletcher Baldwin. Oral history interview with Denise Stobbie, May 9, 1989, p. 19, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program Collection, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

²⁰⁵ Transcript, Austin Creel. Oral history interview with Stuart Landers, August 27, 1992, p. 18, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program Collection, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

But beyond their passive role as merely venues, Gainesville's religious institutions were also active participants in the cultural activism and politicization of the community. Local religious leaders enthusiastically contributed to the public discourse on matters of war, race, education, and activism, and brought their unique perspectives on spirituality and morality to bear on contemporary issues. They also combined their social engagement with establishment gravitas. In common with academics like Manning J. Dauer, church leaders provided legitimacy to a range of causes via the esteem of their denominations and the respect—even among nonbelievers—of their profession. When the Gainesville Committee of 71 was launched, the immediate participation of Catholic Father Michael Gannon, First Baptist Church pastor Fred T. Laughon, Episcopal priest Earle C. Page, and others, provided the committee a stature inconceivable to other antiwar groups—however well established—run by radicals.²⁰⁶

In yet another symptom of the contradictory belief system held by an ill-defined radical movement, young counterculturalists welcomed religious leaders and invited them to participate in innumerable student events and organizations. In retrospect, radicals' embrace of local clerics indicates that to young people, status as an establishment figure was less a repulsion than common cultural and political convictions was an endearment. Although ostensibly reviling the status quo, countercultural students demonstrated no discomfort in holding their meetings under the roofs of religious houses, or in working closely with ecclesiastical leaders. On the contrary, men of the cloth were integral to many of the community's new cultural forms and political stances. When students founded the Florida Experimental College, their primary assistants were Dan Beardsley, minister of the United Church of Christ (on leave from Yale Divinity School); John Talmage, Presbyterian pastor; and the Unitarian Reverend Henry Gooch.²⁰⁷ And when

²⁰⁶ Editorial, "The Peace Crusaders," *Gainesville Sun*, April 17, 1971.

²⁰⁷ Eunice Martin, "Experimental College to Open," *St. Petersburg Times*, January 13, 1969.

shocked local youths gathered to memorialize the fallen students of Kent State University, it was Father Michael Gannon, Reverend Robert Smith, and Rabbi Michael Monson who led the vigil.²⁰⁸

In some cases, the changing scope of religion in society transformed the nature and scope of religious institutions themselves. In accordance with Kenneth Megill's insistence that Christianity engage with the social and political problems of the day, a group of religious people repulsed by the community's segregation sought to find members of the public interested in forming a liberal Protestant church. In 1964 they placed an advertisement in the *Florida Alligator* calling interested parties to an inaugural meeting in the campus's student union, and the group that responded formally organized into the United Church of Gainesville. In a period in which most regional congregations had not yet desegregated, the United Church's foundational premise of universal equality under God represented a consciously progressive break from entrenched local orthodoxies.²⁰⁹ In 1966 the group adopted "The Gainesville Compact," which bound together the "spiritual community" and vowed to worship God in any form; to "welcome into our church those of differing understanding and theological opinion;" to "learn from our religious heritage yet to grow by seeking new dimensions of truth;" and to act "in Christian concern for the welfare of all men." The new congregation soon began regular services at the Presbyterian Student Center, which gladly permitted the use of its space while the organization searched for a permanent home.²¹⁰ (In a similar display of religious solidarity, the Seventh Day Adventist Church allowed the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship to use its building for services for five years, from 1963 to 1967, until it could find permanent headquarters). Given the liberal

²⁰⁸ Terry Pitman, "UF Mourns Death of Kent State Students," *Florida Alligator*, May 7, 1970.

²⁰⁹ Jeff Tudeen, "United Church of Gainesville Turns 40," *Gainesville Sun*, April 9, 2005.

²¹⁰ Advertisement, "The Gainesville Compact of the United Church of Gainesville, Florida, prepared by the members of the church and accepted by the congregation, June 19, 1966," published in the *Florida Alligator*, May 5, 1967.

theologies of these new groups, it was clear that the overwhelmingly conservative religious ethos of the previous decade was losing its hegemony.

Youth Spirituality

For young people, personal theological exploration was increasingly becoming an acceptable and commonplace pursuit, resulting in a spirited change to the public discourse. While many moderate students viewed their faith as independent of political or cultural matters, radicals—particularly in the movement’s early stages—sought to use theological ideas as a way of making sense of their countercultural impulses. As it had for millennia, religion and spirituality helped to provide a framework for understanding the changing world order and for coping with and combating the ills of society. Students also sought to find theological angles to their new cultural notions, in order to buttress their political arguments and support their countercultural assertions. The university’s Department of Religion provided a key forum for this spiritual expansion, and soon swelled with counterculturalists influenced by the broadening worldviews of the music and media they consumed. In one incident, religion professor Austin Creel recalls the divided reactions among students when he directed his class into a conversation comparing the Hindu caste system to the social code of the American South. Some moderate and conservative students, sensing a challenge to the moral structure in which they had been raised, responded with clear resentment. But the idea gave others pause, as they pondered and questioned the origins of their own worldviews. The more committed radicals, meanwhile, “were excited. They agreed long before they came to that class that they were glad to have more ammunition. So there was a mixture of attitudes.”²¹¹

²¹¹ Transcript, Austin Creel. Oral history interview with Stuart Landers, August 27, 1992, p. 15, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program Collection, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

These ideas soon spread outside the church gates and temple doors, and into the spiritual explorations at the center of the burgeoning counterculture. Hippies formed the vanguard of this change, as they absorbed messages of open-mindedness, awareness, and wisdom from increasingly avant-garde mainstream artists like The Beatles. Interpretations of Hinduism and Eastern mysticism—fueled in part by the upsurge in consciousness-expanding drugs—were ostensibly integral to Hippie culture, but in most cases the most critical spiritual change wrought by pop and rock music was in its popular engagement with political, philosophical, and social subject matters. What had been corporation-driven pop a decade earlier suddenly flowered into a worldwide forum for cultural and political ideas, which legitimized an ethos of contemplative cultural and spiritual engagement among young people. The student newspaper *University Report* labeled this as a new “Rock Morality,” in which popular culture drove social philosophy and enabled progressive change: “And so finally it is open season on all previously unquestioned, untested values.”²¹²

‘Rock Morality’ lent legitimacy to explorations of spirituality and helped to push theological awareness beyond the borders of the Hippie movement. Religious thought appealed to rebellious counterculturalists in this period partly because the introduction of Eastern and alternative theological ideas challenged the Christian orthodoxy that seemed to surround and uphold the American capitalist establishment. Debate over fundamental religious meaning seemed to be as legitimate in questioning the status quo as any other form of youth dissent. For this reason, spiritual matters became natural counterparts to antiwar protests or Free Speech demonstrations. Comfortably placed alongside the radical courses offered by Gainesville’s experimental universities, ‘Zen,’ ‘Yoga and Meditation,’ and ‘The Church’ instinctively served

²¹² Peter Sweet, “Morality of Rock,” *University Report*, July 31, 1968. University Archives, Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida.

the purposes of promoting radicalism and nonconformity.²¹³ In some cases, however, these ideas (combined with vague notions of theological awareness) devolved into more outlandish attempts at organization, as when the “People of Hogtown” gathered “to combine their energies in the creation of a new way of life.” The ‘People’ teamed with other organizations to put together a “celebration of life—complete with free food, free music, and freedom.” Despite the unconventional mission of the People, the Methodist chapel near campus proved its tolerance by allowing the use of its facility for the meeting.²¹⁴

As young people grappled with these fundamental concerns, some spiritual establishments took matters of local debate and activism into their own hands. The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Gainesville, for example, held regular services in aid of their goal “to strive for a world community founded on ideals of brotherhood, justice, and peace.” Unitarian Universalist events combined music, discussion, prayer, and “coffee and conviviality” with an eclectic calendar of topical presentations on salient social and cultural issues, ranging from talks by Kenneth Megill (“Radicals, European Style”) to a speech on the relationship “between reaction in religion and reaction in politics” by UF religion professor Thaxton Springfield.²¹⁵ Meanwhile, the Gainesville Society of Friends, or Quakers, brought its centuries-old doctrine of pacifism to the community by demonstrating against Jim Crow and the Vietnam War. The group’s political activities ranged from congregation discussions to joining with the Student Peace Union to sponsor a speech on conscientious objection.²¹⁶

²¹³ Advertisement, “Florida Experimental College Courses,” *The Eye*, October 27, 1970; and Dale Coberly, Spokesman, “The U of F Annex: An Introduction,” *University Report* Vol. 1 No. 3, May 18, 1966, University Archive, Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida.

²¹⁴ Advertisement, “The first meeting of the People of Hogtown...,” *The Eye*, January 5, 1971. University Archives, Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida.

²¹⁵ Meeting program and event calendar, October 20, 1968, Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Gainesville. Kenneth A. Megill Papers, Special and Area Studies Collections, University Archive, University of Florida (Gainesville, Fla.).

²¹⁶ Associated Press, “Draft Objector Says Army Overmanned,” *St. Petersburg Times*, March 29, 1968.

In fact, the Society of Friends had long maintained a rich agenda of local social activism. Upon moving to Gainesville, activists David and Jean Chalmers were impressed by the theology, pacifism, and “spiritual core” of the Friends, and quickly became “convinced Quakers.”²¹⁷ By 1967, the Friends and their associates were more active than many student pacifists in organizing antiwar activities. In the middle of the ‘Summer of Love,’ the Quakers conducted a two-day peace vigil, drawing an estimated 400 people to their meetinghouse near campus. The event, comprising discussions, meditation, lectures, and an early iteration of guerilla theater (which would later become popular among activist radicals), drew overwhelming praise from the *Florida Alligator*, which noted that the Quakers were ahead of their youth counterparts as the vanguard of the antiwar movement: “The Society of Friends... showed Students for a Democratic Society and anyone else who cared to learn how to conduct a peace vigil last Saturday and Sunday. And quite a few people cared.”²¹⁸

Religious Traditionalism

While pacifist groups like the Quakers—as well as mainstream ones like the Catholic Student Center—provided energy and resources to the antiwar movement (and to student activities in general), religion also provided a considerable local center of gravity for establishment conservatism. Most notably, the First Presbyterian Church of Gainesville served as a traditionalist counterpoint to the progressive changes occurring on campus, and supplied an organizational and social center for community elites. University officials, city leaders, and politicians flocked to its venerable, white-columned church building downtown, which served not only as a place of ideological and spiritual support, but also as a key networking venue. Conservative Presbyterians occupied many of the key posts in the city government and the

²¹⁷ Transcript, Jean Chalmers. Oral history interview with Stuart Landers, April 22, 1991, p. 7, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program Collection, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

²¹⁸ “‘Peace Among Men’ Theme of Talk-Out,” *Florida Alligator*, May 9, 1967.

university administration, and through the decades constructed an unspoken network of mutual support and implicit political cooperation. David Chalmers drolly summarizes how the Presbyterian establishment habitually closed ranks around its own:

All of the university and much of the community elites belonged to First Presbyterian. Just about all of the university upper administrators were Presbyterians. It was not that we set out to hire Presbyterians; we set out to hire moral men, and they turned out to be Presbyterian. We did have one Baptist vice-president, and the stories were that he played the piano and played things other than hymns, that the glass of liquid on the piano was not absolutely transparent. So we dealt him off to be the president of Auburn and replaced him with a Presbyterian.²¹⁹

The driving force behind First Presbyterian's cultural and social dominance was the preacher Ulysses S. Gordon, who led the church from 1928 to 1969 and continued his association thereafter as Pastor Emeritus until his death in 1976. A native of Panola County, Mississippi, Gordon was steeped in the segregationist paradigm of the Deep South, despite his insistence that he had "many personal, warm [black] friends. I have the same old cook now that I've had for forty years. I have a great regard and affection for individuals in that race."²²⁰ David Chalmers recalls that, "as the minister most admired and revered, the most influential person in the city," Gordon was decidedly "not a help to race relations in Gainesville."²²¹ Upset by the integration process, Gordon predicted the issues would only end in "four or five hundred years" when "you'll have racial intermixing... But I won't be here; you won't be here—[it's] not going to be our problem."²²²

Nevertheless, Gordon commanded the respect of a wide swath of Florida's high society. Florida governors Reubin Askew and Lawton Chiles attended Gordon's services, as well as

²¹⁹ Transcript, David Chalmers. Oral history interview with Stuart Landers, June 2, 1992, p. 16, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program Collection, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

²²⁰ Transcript, Ulysses Short Gordon. Oral history interview with Dr. Samuel Proctor, July 10, 1973, p. 18, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program Collection, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

²²¹ Transcript, David Chalmers. Oral history interview with Stuart Landers, June 2, 1992, p. 16, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program Collection, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

²²² Transcript, Ulysses Short Gordon. Oral history interview with Dr. Samuel Proctor, July 10, 1973, p. 30, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program Collection, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

longtime congressman Don Fuqua and a number of university deans and presidents. Despite his insistence that he never brought politics into church life, Gordon was a close, personal supporter of former UF student George A. Smathers's run for the United States Senate (but "only as a friend"), played gin rummy with Florida Senator William A. Shands, and claimed to have recognized excerpts from his own sermons in Lawton Chiles's gubernatorial addresses.²²³

Gordon also received an honorary membership to the campus's elite bastion of future politicians, the Florida Blue Key. Thus, while he may have made efforts to avoid direct political advocacy from the pulpit, Gordon was certainly involved with the *crème* of local and regional politics.

On campus, Gordon had unparalleled access to University of Florida officials, even among those belonging to other denominations. The family of President John Tigert attended First Presbyterian, President J. Wayne Reitz was a church elder, and a young Stephen C. O'Connell, though Catholic, played handball with Gordon when he was an undergraduate. From the earliest stages Gordon recognized the importance of the university as a political locus, and over the decades constructed important relationships with its leadership: "As I got it, the university community was the teat that [citizens] had to suckle. The university people meant a vast amount to me in the church. Some of the finest people I've ever known in my church were from the university, and still are... I always had a very close tie with the faculty."²²⁴ Indeed, the preacher was awarded an honorary degree from the university, and after his death, Dean of Student Affairs Lester Hale wrote an effusive and sentimental 249-page biography entitled *Preacher Gordon, A Mischievous Saint: The Christian Charisma of a Man Called Preacher*.²²⁵

²²³ Ibid., p. 15 and 26.

²²⁴ Ibid., p. 18.

²²⁵ Lester L. Hale, with Perry A. Foote, Jr., *Preacher Gordon, A Mischievous Saint: The Christian Charisma of a Man Called Preacher* (Gainesville, Fla.: L. Hale, 1982).

The close association of local elites in a religious setting provided moral support for the law-and-order traditionalism of leaders like O’Connell. Officials, tangled in tiring frictions with student dissenters and faculty activists, found weekly reinforcement and soothing assent from like-minded community elders and their families, and used the church setting to fortify their struggles spiritually. Of course, this religious partisanship only served to deepen local schisms, particularly with regards to the city’s ongoing social problems. One pre-integration incident—when the university’s esteemed Latin American Studies program planned to hold an academic conference on campus in the late 1950s—brings this into sharp relief. One of the conference attendees, a black scholar of Caribbean origin, unknowingly caused a stir when conference organizers realized that he would be unable to find accommodation under Gainesville’s Jim Crow edicts. The Presbyterian Student Center, which like its neighboring religious youth facilities served as a “meeting place for just about everything that went on during the 1960s,” quickly stepped in and offered to arrange lodgings in its building. When word passed to First Presbyterian, however, the downtown congregation expressed clear displeasure at the renegade actions of the troublesome campus branch. Gordon quickly made it known that no accommodations were to be made for black scholars at a Gainesville Presbyterian establishment.²²⁶

Conflicts such as this highlighted both the parallels and the growing divisions between local activists and community leaders. Both groups found comforting ideological havens behind the doors of religious houses, used the legitimacy and cultural capital of their religious organizations to fortify their convictions, and applied faith toward the construction of a society based on their respective ideals. But their primary divergence was in the nature of those ideals.

²²⁶ Transcript, David Chalmers. Oral history interview with Stuart Landers, June 2, 1992, p. 16, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program Collection, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

Historian James Farrell has written that twentieth-century American radicalism was influenced by European Christian personalism, which fused the quest for personal wholeness with theistic notions of fellowship and service: “Emphasizing spiritual and communitarian dimensions of human personhood [and] deeply rooted in religion, personalism considered Christianity ‘the most radical of counter-cultures’ and tried to bring the spirit of radical Christianity into contemporary politics and society.”²²⁷ Similarly, Douglas Rossinow places Christian existentialism at the center of 1960s youth’s quest for authenticity, arguing that theological discussions of morality, brotherhood, and social responsibility helped to fuse the idea of salvation with notions of personal validation.²²⁸ The deeply ingrained religiosity of the South amplified these feelings, providing a familiar cultural and spiritual framework in which young people could develop a value system of social justice and pacifism. Also, Christianity held no exclusive franchise on spiritual guidance for ambitious and impressionable young cultural dissenters: the tenets of Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and even Unitarian Universalism also provided comfort and intellectual nourishment for the expanding consciousness of American youth.

These values, however, represented only half the story. Religious institutions also provided an important practical focal point for radical energies, many of which were firmly secular in scope. Pragmatism, after all, was an important impetus for associating with houses of worship. Outside of churches, temples, and other religious meeting places, the community provided young people with very few substantial public venues outside the control of university administrators. Liberalizing spiritual leaders like John Talmage of the Presbyterian Student Center thus provided not only guidance to their young flocks, but also space and legitimacy. Religion—its tenets, its

²²⁷ Farrell, *Spirit of the Sixties*, 10.

²²⁸ Rossinow, *Politics of Authenticity*, 82.

structure, its facilities, and its spiritual gravity—was ideally placed to give counterculture and radicalism both practical accommodations and a philosophical anchorage. Far from being an irreligious movement, the cultural activism of the 1960s sought, as the Gainesville Compact outlined, to “learn from our religious heritage, yet to grow by seeking new dimensions of truth,” and to “follow, even imperfectly, the way of Jesus in personal involvement with each other,” acting with religious and spiritual concern to improve the welfare of all.²²⁹

²²⁹ Advertisement, “The Gainesville Compact of the United Church of Gainesville, Florida, prepared by the members of the church and accepted by the congregation, June 19, 1966,” published in the *Florida Alligator*, May 5, 1967.

CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSION

Every four years, major university communities across the country undergo mass-scale population turnovers. As thousands of impressionable young people arrive to explore adulthood and develop as citizens, thousands more depart, hopefully more world-wise than when they began and with heightened senses of self-identity. It is an unending social process that transforms not only communities, but the individuals within them.

In the 1960s, this cycle played a major role in fueling the swift and unprecedented development of youth counterculture and radicalism. Eighteen year-olds arriving in cities like Gainesville—places of youth energy, social experimentation and collective awareness—spent their years constructing a legacy of nonconformity, radical thought, academic dissent, and social activism. Their efforts were validated by the participation of newcomers: When bright-eyed freshmen arrived on campus in 1968, 1971, or even today, they had no reason to suspect that the complex local culture before them had ever been different. Seeking social interaction and influenced by the exciting and challenging intellectual stimuli around them, young arrivals quickly forged places for themselves in the cultural *mélange* of their new homes. Before long, they themselves became the torchbearers for the community, responsible for carrying forward the lessons, conflicts, setbacks, and achievements of previous generations. Together with national and international changes in youth identity, cultural awareness, and social conventions, the freedom and flux inherent to university communities provided fertile and ever-shifting grounds for experimentation, engagement, dissent, and debate.

In May 1970, approximately 1,200 students marched on the UF administration building in protest of student deaths at Kent and Jackson State universities. Another 6,000 gathered for a

candlelight vigil on the Plaza of the Americas, forcing suspension of classes.²³⁰ The following year, a coalition of white and black students staged a sit-in demonstration in the offices of university president Stephen C. O’Connell, demanding equitable conditions for African American students and faculty; the result was a mass withdrawal of black students from the university, some of whom never returned.²³¹ Observing the 1972 anniversary of the Kent State violence, more than 2,000 young people took to the streets in protest, and only a week later—after Richard Nixon’s announcement of the mining of Hải Phòng Harbor in North Vietnam—raging violence erupted in the city. Students seized campus buildings, radicals provoked the crowds with fiery speeches, and police turned clubs, tear gas, and fire hoses on protesters.²³² By the time of this unrest, Gainesville had become both a focal point for public activism and a breeding ground for heightened social consciousness. Its status as a sleepy Southern college town had become a distant memory.

What had changed in the space of a few short years? More than anything else, it was culture. While Vietnam and partisan politics were polarizing and frustrating issues, young people were influenced above all by the groups they associated with, the events they attended, the media they consumed, the people they admired, and the cultural assumptions they forged. Through communal enterprises, drugs, social gatherings, religious institutions, and other cultural forms, young people fashioned a new, unique set of values—dynamic, uncertain, and at times contradictory values, but meaningful nevertheless. These new youth maxims established new and thrilling philosophical and intellectual connections between people, and were instrumental in radicalizing, politicizing, and mobilizing them.

²³⁰ Terry Pitman and Rick Roskove, “O’Connell Dismisses All Classes,” *Florida Alligator*, May 8, 1970.

²³¹ Transcript, Betty Stewart-Dowdell. Oral History Interview with Abram Marsh, March 15, 1995, p.9, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program Collection, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

²³² Elli Moss, “2,000 Attend Antiwar Rally,” *Florida Alligator*, May 5, 1972; and Joseph Margetanski, “The May 1972 Protests in Gainesville,” *The Gainesville Iguana*, May 2002; and “Antiwar Demonstrations Rip UF,” *Florida Alligator*, May 10, 1972.

Although this process was loosely organized and organic, it was also aided by the examples of role models and committed counterculturalists, both of whom actively used local culture and community building as avenues toward ethical and political proselytizing. Open-minded (and in some cases definitively radical) faculty, religious figures, and community leaders turned their reputations and cachet toward social reform, and the result was the transformation of struggles over academic freedom and tenure into central battlegrounds in the crusade for open public discourse and the legitimacy of radical thought. Young nonconformists, meanwhile, transformed cultural constructions—shops, drugs, music, even the community itself—into a means of political communication, altering public consciousness such that the varying strands of evolving youth culture had consolidated, by the time of Hải Phòng, into a precarious union of activism, disaffection, and frustration. The people on the receiving end of fire hoses and tear gas canisters were no longer freaks, hippies, radicals—they were youth, politically active and culturally engaged.

But in grappling with the competing instincts of activism and disaffection, radicals struggled to maintain the bonds of cohesion within an inherently nonconformist faction. The solution was an expansion of their scope, a search for legitimacy, and a turn toward community engagement. As self-styled cultural missionaries, local radicals sought to reimagine Gainesville in their own revolutionary image. But while the quest for authenticity was collective, it also required a process of seduction and induction on the individual level—an acculturation of young people which would, it was hoped, awaken them to new social and political realities. To achieve this end, the use of local culture provided both a setting and a mechanism for expanding messages of radicalism, pacifism, nonconformity, and dissent.

But it was an expansion which would prove to come at great cost to the realization of the humanistic ideals of the movement. Counterculturalists' fundamental desire for legitimacy and growth undermined the nonconformist ideas that drove their ideology in the first place. Radicals co-opted trends and prevailing tastes, until the pools of popular and alternative culture splashed together into a disorganized blur of energies and creeds. This helped to foster political consciousness among the youth, but it also ironically turned the counterculture into a conformist, mainstream commodity. The disintegration of both would rapidly follow.

Despite the dramatic collapse of the tangle of concerns traditionally labeled the New Left, the Sixties notion that political messages could be realized through nonpolitical means endures as a lasting legacy. While certainly many iconoclastic political revolutionaries resisted the overtures of counterculture, and many cultural nonconformists found political concerns equally unappealing, the slow tango danced by these two factions resulted in a union—tentative at first, but eventually unmistakable—of previously separate ideological and social spheres. The transformation of community, a slow, localized, painstaking process, resulted in the transformation of the individuals within it, and the permanent expansion of the cultural and political horizons of American youth.

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