Columbia '68: What Happened?

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Finally, what long range goal is worthy of this rebellion? Obviously the question is not whether to work for revolution – armed, communist revolution – in America, but how, and what form it will take

– John Jacobs,
May 1968[1]

John Jacobs sat down to type this statement, part of his revolutionary manifesto for the University of Columbia protests of 1968, 'Bringing the War Home.' But even a man so enraptured by the inevitability of revolutionary change as Jacobs could probably not have predicted that more than 40 years later the chain of events this document helped catalyse would be remembered as a defining moment for the American New Left in the 1960s, particularly in organisational histories of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). Jacobs signed this document from his position as a member of the occupations of Low Library and Mathematics hall on the Columbia campus. In the wake of Tom Hayden's famous call to create "two, three, many Columbias" across global campuses, Jacob's words took on a prophetic tone in the immediate aftermath of the Columbia protests, when students from the Sorbonne in Paris sent the Strike Coordinating Committee (SCC), a telegram: "We've occupied a building in your honor. What do we do now?"[2] Jacob's plan unfolded further when he and fellow Columbia SDS militants Mark Rudd and Ted Gold helped found the

[1] John Jacobs, 'Bringing the War Home', May 1968; UPAC, Box 13, Folder 5, 1
[2] Tom Hayden, 'Two, Three, Many Columbias', *Ramparts,* June 15, 1968. Reprinted in *The New Left: A Documentary History,* Massimo Teodori (ed.) (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970), 345-6; Mark Rudd, *Underground: My Life with SDS and Weatherman* (New York: Harper, 2009), 113.

Weather Underground, the most notorious of the militant groups to arise out of the ashes of SDS. Jacobs' brief 'Bringing the War Home' bore a striking resemblance to the Weather manifesto 'You Don't need a Weatherman to Know which way the Wind Blows', which announced the creation of the organisation to the rest of the radical community in *New Left Notes* in June, 1969.[3] Weather members would remain underground after a series of non-lethal bombings on U.S soil throughout the 1970s and 80s, yet it was the self-inflicted death of three members in the Townhouse explosion in Greenwich Village on March 6th, 1970, which proved the most notorious Weather action when a bomb they were putting together accidentally detonated.

The Townhouse bombing has been described by John McMillan as one of a "series of symbolic end-points" of the New Left, a "death knell" for the movement.[4] Such 'death knells' included, amongst others, the 1968 Democratic National Convention, and the Weathermen's 'Days of Rage' in Chicago in 1969, and the Rolling Stones' notorious Altamont Speedway gig also in 1969. The link between the Columbia protests of the spring of 1968 and the Weather Underground has been a staple of New Left historiography since Alan Adelson's *SDS: A Profile* (1972) and Kirkpatrick Sale's *SDS* (1973), both organisational histories of the organisation. Sale read Columbia as a public staging ground for confrontational politics, which would provide the necessary foundations for Weather to delve deeper into their militant fantasies. Sale argues:

> The sequence of events that has passed in the history of the sixties simply as 'Columbia' has been told many ways, but perhaps most pertinent is to examine the central, though not necessarily controlling, role played by the SDS chapter...

[3] Karin Ashley, Bill Ayers, Bernardine Dohrn, John Jacobs, Jeff Jones, Gerry Long, Howie Machtinger, Jim Mellen, Terry Robbins, Mark Rudd, and Steve Tappis, 'You Don't Need a Weatherman to Know Which Way the Wind Blows', New Left Notes, June 18, 1969.
[4] John McMillan, 'You Didn't Have To Be There', *The New Left Revisited,* John McMillan and Paul Buhle eds. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 4.

> the history of the Columbia chapter is the history of many other SDS chapters at the time, writ larger, of course, and more flamboyantly, but in essentials, the same.[5]

Following Sale's lead, Columbia is often described in histories of the New Left in chapters or sections with headings inspired by Jacob's rhetoric ('Bringing the War Home').[6] Such representations of the protests are most often articulated by New Left participants who have chosen to autobiographically represent their experiences in the 1960s. These take the form of autobiography and memoir, such as disillusioned radical Dotson Rader's *I Ain't Marchin' Anymore* (1969 and) Columbia SDS leader Mark Rudd's *Underground* (2009), and also in the more formally academic participant histories, including Todd Gitlin's *The Sixties Years of Hope: Days of Rage* (1987), and James Miller's *Democracy is in the Streets: From Port Huron and the Siege of Chicago* (1988).

Such forms of remembrance foreground the experiences of the radicals in SDS at Columbia. Whilst, as Sale points out, this is a perfectly reasonable response to the protests, such a narrative obscures the history of many other groups involved, and paints the protests as a staging ground for militant protest, rather than a complex coalition of radical and liberal student groups, in conflict with a conservative administration and its student supporters, with a largely liberal faculty attempting to mediate between the two. Clearly building up a completely democratic portrait of an event at a university of over 20000 members, without counting faculty or other staff would be a monumental task. This brief essay seeks to do is highlight some of the diversity of the event, in politics, race, class, and beyond, and how the white, usually ex-SDS participants represent the protests.

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[5] Krikpatrick Sale, *SDS,* (New York: Random House, 1973), 430.

[6] Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage,* (Toronto, Bantam Books, 1987), (307-308); James Miller, *Democracy is in the Streets: From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1887), 290-292; Tom Haden, *Reunion: A Memoir,* (New York: Collier Books, 1988), 271-284.

The American publics' interest in the Columbia protests began when hundreds of students, led by members of the Student Afro American Society (SAS) and Columbia SDS began a series of protests on Tuesday April 23rd, 1968.[7] The initial call for this first day's protest at the Sundial, a central location on campus, was printed in the college newspaper, the *Columbia Daily Spectator.* Titled 'About Columbia Racism', the advertisement taken out by Columbia SDS called upon students to demonstrate against "Columbia's Racism, [the] Discipline of IDA [Institute of Defence analysis] 6, [and] Arbitrary Administrative Power."[8] The number of students that turned up was estimated at nearly 1000, demonstrating the widespread support for these demands on campus.[9] After an arrest at the building site for a prospective gymnasium in Morningside Park, used as a symbol of Columbia's neo-colonial attitudes towards Harlem, students then occupied Hamilton Hall, taking hostage, Dean Henry Coleman, who was released the next morning, on April 24th. Black students, led by SAS, decided to racially segregate the occupation on the first evening. Initially, white students were 'humiliated', but their resolve soon hardened as they occupied a further 4 buildings over the next week (Fayerweather Hall, Low Library, Mathematics, and Avery Hall).[10] The occupations continued until April 30th, when a police bust resulted in the arrest of 705 individuals, 522 of whom were students, the further 183 representing diverse outside

[7] Stefan Bradley's *Harlem Versus Columbia* provides some detail as to the history of community protesting in Harlem before this date. However, since this thesis is primarily concerned with how Columbia has been remembered, and almost all accounts either ignore, simplify or trivialise this history, my own brief introduction focuses on the most common aspects of the Columbia narrative. Where appropriate in the chapters, I deal with the simplifications of various authors and what this can tell us about how they narrate Columbia.

[8] Columbia SDS, 'About Columbia Racism', May 22, 1968**;** University Protest and Activism Collection, Box 13, Folder 8; University Archives, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Library. All further references to this archive designated by the acronym UPAC

[9] Robert Friedman and Jerry Avorn et.al, *Up Against the Ivy Wall*, 35.

[10] Ellen Kay Trimberger, 'Why a Rebellion at Columbia was Inevitable', *Tran-Action*, Vol.5, No.9, 52.

supporters.[11] Immediately after this, a campus wide strike, organised by the SCC, came into effect, closing Columbia for the remainder of the academic term.

In the first meeting of student leaders in Hamilton Hall, a list of 6 formal demands was decided upon. These were:

1. All disciplinary action now pending and probations already imposed upon six students [the IDA six] be immediately terminated and a general amnesty be granted to those students participating in this demonstration.
2. President Kirk's ban on demonstrations inside University buildings be dropped
3. Construction of the Columbia gymnasium in Morningside Park cease at once
4. All future disciplinary action taken against University students be resolved through an open hearing before students and faculty which adheres to the standards of due process
5. Columbia university disaffiliate, in fact and not merely on paper, from the Institute for Defence Analyses; and President Kirk and Trustee William A.M. Burden resign their positions on IDA's Board of Trustees and Executive Board
6. Columbia University uses its good offices to obtain dismissal of charges now pending against those participating in demonstrations at the gym construction site in the park.[12]

The ban on indoor protesting was one of the sparks for the whole event. On March 27, Columbia SDS had organised a noisy and disruptive protest in Low Library, once again against involvement in the IDA, intentionally defying the ban.[13] The administration chose six leaders to discipline but students considered this decision political entrapment as previous infringements on the ban had gone unpunished. This linked to calls for amnesty, which rested on the belief that their demands were "just", and therefore their actions legitimate; that amnesty was a "vital precondition for negotiation" on other issues, which would not be the case "while the administration threatens" reprisals; that the administration's rules were "not legitimate", representative of an "unconstitutional" government that was answerable

[11] Robert Brookhart, 'Police Arrest Report', May 4, 1968; UPAC, Box 1, Folder 8.
[12] Friedman et.al., *University in Revolt*, 52-3.
[13] Friedman, ed., *University in Revolt,* 32.

only to the trustees; and, finally, that the administrative rules were "inconsistently enforced," referring to previous lack of punishment.[14] Ostensibly, amnesty was initially about safeguarding the political integrity of the other demands of the protest, whilst it would be naive to believe that it was not motivated partly though self interest.

The issue of gym pertained to the University's role within the neighbouring locale of Morningside Heights. Columbia had a history of expansion into Harlem. The University had built softball courts on Morningside Park early in the 1960s, and had signed a contract with the New York City council for lease of land in Morningside Park for the building of a gym in August 1961, with construction to start no later than August 1967.[15] Initial disquiet against the gym came from within City Hall itself, as Park Commissioner Thomas P. Hoving argued that it was an illegitimate use of New York's limited green space.[16] When construction first began in February 1968, the rise of the Black Power movement in Harlem contributed to the first community protests at the gym site.[17] White student groups were the last to latch on to the issue in 1968, arguing that the prospective gym was a symbol of Columbia's quasi-colonial disdain for the local community. Student groups such as Columbia SDS who opposed this gym dubbed the administration's attitude 'Gym Crow', describing its facilities as "separate but unequal", as the community were to be allotted a tiny proportion of the gym despite it being built in the community's park.[18]

This 'gym crow' issue was also intrinsically tied to power relationships in liberal capitalist society; the University had contracted a huge tract of valuable New York real estate for the relatively meagre rent of $3000 a year, mainly through the University

[14] SCC, 'The Question of Amnesty', 28 April, 1968; UPAC, Box 11, Folder 41.
[15] Roger Starr, 'The Case of the Columbia Gym, *The Public Interest*, No.13 (Fall 1968), 102-121.
[16] Roger Starr, 'The Case of the Columbia Gym', 113-114.
[17] Roger Starr, 'The Case of the Columbia Gym', 117-118.
[18] 'Gym Crow', student ephemera, May 1968; UPAC, Box 49, Folder 1.

Trustee's links to local business and politics.[19] This issue was also tied to accusations of Columbia's role as a "slum lord" of University-owned local housing and of carrying out forced evictions borne out of a desire for land for expansion, as well as of making moves against unionisation of the University's service staff drafted from the largely African American and Puerto Rican citizens of Harlem.[20] After the protests and strikes, when the University cancelled construction of the gym, some radical students saw this as an attempt to divert student interest away from the broader issue of slum clearance in Harlem.[21] Whilst not all students were aware of the history of Columbia's involvement in Harlem, the issue of the gym provided a catalytic symbol of institutional racism. Another relatively well publicised protest which involved police clearance of Harlem residents occupying a Columbia owned "slum", as well some of the "over 1000" students and locals protesting outside in solidarity on West 114th street on May 17, was mounted in protest at appalling living conditions and coercive tenant removal.[22] For students involved this illustrated that the gym was simply a totem of Columbia's exploitative and dismissive relationship with its disenfranchised neighbours.

The IDA was a symbol of one of the most burning issues of the late-1960s, the war in Vietnam. The April 22nd sundial flyer conflated the issue of the IDA and discipline, yet student opposition to the IDA was also a separate issue. Opposition was based on student analysis of societal power structures, as they believed the IDA implicated the University within the Vietnam War specifically, and that it was symbolic of its ties to the military industrial complex. Graduate student Bob Feldman had discovered the University's ties to the IDA when researching in University archives in March 1967, a full year before the

[19] Gym Crow', student ephemera, May 1968; UPAC, Box 49, Folder 1.
[20] SAS Newsletter, 'University Seizes Community Land', March 7, 1968; UPAC, Box 14, Folder 15.
[21] Columbia SDS, 'Why Strike: 8 Good Reasons'; UPAC, Box 13, Folder 7.
[22] SCC, press release, May 18, 1968; UPAC, Box 12, Folder 1.

strikes.[23] The IDA was a federally funded non-profit research organisation that advised the federal government on issues of national security, in which Columbia had been involved since 1959. President Kirk and a Columbia trustee were initially on the IDA board, and the administration claimed that Columbia has "only one small contract in the electronics area" with the IDA.[24] Such claims were futile, as the symbolic damage was done. Students presented a petition signed by over 300 students in a letter to President Grayson Kirk demanding the end of the "university's sponsorship of IDA" which went unanswered on October 23, 1967.[25] In November 1967, Columbia SDS challenged Kirk to a debate on the issue, as well as to discuss the presence of Dow Chemical recruiters on campus, angry that their petition had been unanswered.[26] The election of Mark Rudd to leader of Columbia SDS in March 1968 spurred the organisation towards increased confrontation tactics, organising the March 27 demonstration which resulted in the disciplining of 'the IDA six.'

The issue of University discipline, including that of the 'IDA six,' was representative of arbitrary administrative power. This demand was tied to a history of student disquiet first announced to the public at the Berkeley protests of 1964. Ostensibly, the demand related to the disciplining of 6 students for an earlier indoor protest against the University's ties to the IDA; as the protest developed, this demand branched out into amnesty for all protesting students. These sentiments were tied to the rejection of the technocratic multiversity, a term which related to the university's role as a machine designed to educate students to be part of the military industrial complex.[27] Mario Savio's speech in front of Sproul Hall in 1964

[23] Bob Feldman, 'Chapter 8: Discovering IDA, 1967', *Sundial: Columbia SDS Memories*, (online content) http://bfeldman68.blogspot.com/2007_02_13_archive.html
[24] Columbia Office of Public Information, Background reports on Issues, 1968; UPAC, Box 3, Folder 7.
[25] Friedman, ed., *University in Revolt*, 31.
[26] Columbia SDS, 'A Challenge to Debate', November 1968; UPAC, Box 38, Folder 10.
[27] Carl Davidson's 1967 pamphlet *The New Radicals and the Multiversity* provided a theoretical mapping of this idea. Carl Davidson, *The New Radicals in the Multiversity*, (Chicago, Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 1990).

at the Berkeley protests was perhaps the most famous manifestation of this sentiment. He railed against "the machine" and stated that if Berkeley

> is a firm, and if the Board of Regents are the board of directors, and if President Kerr in fact is the manager, then I'll tell you something: the faculty are a bunch of employees, and we're the raw material![28]

Such sentiments were echoed by Columbia students who rejected what they saw as the intransigent and despotic machinations of the Columbia administration as symbolised by President Grayson Kirk. Arbitrary disciplinary power represented for them a complete lack of democracy, which was then tied to the University's apparently immoral role within broader society. Student resentment was underscored by a broad discontent with the University's In Loco Parentis role, as the youth movements of the decade inspired students into greater independence and self-expression.[29] As products, students were powerless, and often subject to patronising rules, such as the enforced gender segregation of campus halls. Central to this demand was one of the key tenets of Participatory Democracy, the New Left core philosophy, and self-determination, the right to have a hand in making the decisions that affect your own life.

The importance of SAS's insistence on black self-determination cannot be overstated, yet it is the facet of the strike most often overlooked. Black students initially decided upon separation for a number of issues. SAS leader Ray Brown suggested that:

> [SAS] thought our ability to be disciplined was encumbered by having white students who were irregular. There were all kinds of groups and they were

[28] Mario Savio, Sproul Hall, Berkeley, December 2, 1964: http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/MRC/saviotranscript.html (accessed 12/12/09).

[29] The Columbia Statement, a pamphlet summarising the students' demands released by the Strike Coordinating Committee included a caricature of an ivory tower nursing three students, underneath the legend 'In Loco Parentis'. The paternalistic and patronising attitude of the outmoded form of University governance was thus parodied. Columbia SDS, 'The Columbia Statement', September 1968, 3; UPAC, Box 14, Folder 1.

> smoking reefer and doing all kinds of things that we thought endangered what could be an important political moment. So for social reasons we couldn't keep everybody togethe, and secondly for strategic reasons.[30]

Whilst fellow SAS member Carolyn Brooks argued that:

> They really didn't understand how repressive the police could be if something really did happen. More of the black students were very aware of what could possibly happen in a situation like this. We tried very quickly to create some order in the building.[31]

Countercultural drug-use and a political naiveté reflected the clear cultural divide between the middle-class white students and their African American colleagues. SAS's insistence on discipline reflected the military style of the Black Panthers, whose vanguardist model contrasted heavily to participatory democracy, if the former was practiced fully. Clearly, the militant, self-determinist tone of African American politics had a big part to play in how the protests unravelled.

The tactical decision proved to be a master stroke. Columbia professor of sociology Immanuel Wallerstein argued in a 1968 interview that "if it has just been Mark Rudd and his friends going into Low Memorial Library, we would have had the police on campus in thirty minutes."[32] Columbia president Grayson Kirk claimed the administration's request for selective removal of white students only was turned down, and that "city hall would not be very happy" about further calls for police action until "they had made some assessment of attitudes in Harlem." [33] African American urban unrest, which had been evidenced as recently as March in Harlem in response to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination was an undeniable force that allowed the perpetuation of the protest, and thus cemented its place within the history of the New Left. SAS also remained an important force on campus after

[30] Ray Brown, in Paul Cronin, *A Time To Stir*, illustrated dialogue transcript of forthcoming documentary (Sticking Place films, 2010), 58.
[31] Carolyn Brooks, *A Time To Stir,* 58.
[32] Immanuel Wallerstein, in Steven Donadio, 'Columbia: Seven Interviews', *Partisan Review*, Vol.35, No.3 (Summer 1968), 356.
[33] Reminiscences of Grayson Kirk, October 3, 1968, *The Columbia Crisis of 1968 Project* in the CUOHROC, 4.

the strikes. In 1969 they continued to demand a black studies programme, asking for a $100,000 budget and denouncing what they saw as Columbia's neo-colonial attitudes towards Harlem.[34] Whilst the first African American history programme at Columbia was chaired by a white teacher, historian Eric Foner, SAS had made some inroads with their demands. [35] However, it took until 1986 for the School of Arts and Sciences to formally recognise a black studies programme, from which point Columbia employed more African American professors than any other Ivy League institution.[36] SAS played a pivotal role in the Columbia strike, not simply, as many commentators would suggest, by spurring on white militancy, but a significant one for African American self-determination, as the students continued to battle for racial equality at Columbia for years to come.

A second occupation of Hamilton Hall occurred on May 21st, of approximately 500 people, including parents of disciplined students, with demands mostly pertaining to the continued legal and university disciplinary actions facing both SDS leaders and other strikers.[37] This was broken up by a second, even bloodier, police bust in which innocent bystanders all over the campus were injured by police violence.[38] Alongside the strike, students organised a number of counter-institutions, including liberation classes and a counter-commencement. The former were democratic, bordering on anarchistic, approaches to education whereby anyone could lecture on any given subject and where all

[34] Student Afro-American Society, 'Demands', March 5, 1969. UPAC, Box 38, Folder 7.
[35] Eric Foner, *Who Owns History? Rethinking the Past in a Changing World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2002), 11-12
[36] Stefan Bradley, *Harlem Vs. Columbia – Black Student Power in the Late 1960s* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 131.
[37] Strike Coordinating Committee, Press release, May 22, 1968; UPAC, Box 12, Folder 1.
[38] Releases by the Columbia administration blamed this violence on "1000 people ranging through the campus in uncontrolled violence," stressing the damage caused to buildings, and the burning of Professor Orest Ranum's research notes. Student releases admitted to some student vandalism, but condemned the "brutal actions perpetuated" by the Columbia University and stressed the brutality of the police's response. Columbia University Office of Public Information Statement, May 22, 1968; UPAC, Box 34, Folder 4; Strike Coordinating Committee, Press release, May 22, 1968; UPAC, Box 12, Folder 1.

participants had the right to a voice an opinion. At one "liberated artists and writers event" poetry was read by Allen Ginsberg.[39] Another teach-in described itself as "open ended," willing people to "bring their ideas" on a discussion of "student power and the community", with Columbia professors including Eric Bentley taking part.[40] The counter commencement was organised to coincide with the June 4rd official graduation ceremony, which had been relocated from the customary location on campus to the Cathedral of St. John the Divine to minimise the potential for disruption, with Richard Hofstadter taking over the oratory from President's traditional address. Students, following SDS leader Ted Kaptchuck, walked out of the ceremony as Hofstadter began to speak, relocating to Low Plaza on campus where Dwight Macdonald and Eric Fromm addressed the counter-crowd.[41] This tradition was repeated. On June 3rd 1970, the counter-commencement included speeches from Howard Zinn and Paul Starr.[42]

Issues of discipline became one of the most divisive amongst white students. Knowing this during the first occupations, SCC and Mark Rudd sent around memos to occupied buildings, including a "vague consensus" from SCC which suggested the students must maintain "political clarity" and stick by amnesty because of the "essential political point" that the administration was "illegitimate."[43] Dropping amnesty thus became a political concession they believed the illegitimate authority should be forced to make instead. More moderate student groups focused their attention on university reform. SCC, which had been set up on April 24th, released various sets of demands, which reflected these lack of consensus. One such list read:

[39]'Poetry Reading', May 1968; UPAC, Box 10, Folder 24.
[40] 'Teach-In: Student Power and the Community', May 2, 1968; UPAC, Box 10, Folder 24.
[41] Friedman ed., *University in Revolt,* 279-281.
[42] 'Counter Commencement Exercises', June 3rd, 1970; UPAC, Box 10, Folder 26.
[43] SCC, 'Internal Memo on Clarifying our Politics'; UPAC, Box 11, Folder 41.

1. Construction of the gym must be terminated
2. The University must break all ties with the I.D.A
3. The ban on indoor protests must be revoked
4. A permanent student faculty commission, democratically elected, must be established to hear and pass binding judgement on all future disciplinary action
5. The University must use its good offices to have the city of New York drop all charges made against those having demonstrated on the gym site and on campus[44]

Foregrounding the gym issue, and clarifying the faculty/student disciplinary committee, this list of demands evidenced the rifts that were developing in SCC, as agreement could not be reached about how to prioritise demands.

Demands for university reform were commonplace amongst the occupiers; students in Fayerweather Hall submitted to the Strike Coordinating Committee what became known as the Fayerweather proposal, a revision of the demonstration's main demands which put the formation of a bi-partite disciplinary committee (five students and five faculty members "selected by the students") at the top of a list of five demands, all of which related directly to university policy.[45] The proposal demonstrated an acute attention to detail in regards to specific university reform. Groups such as Students for a Restructured University (SRU) and Students for a Free Campus (SFC) sprang up as a result of SDS manipulation. These separate agendas from the occupied buildings, dissident students argued, represented a "much more democratic" form of representation than the SDS-dominated Strike Coordinating Committee.[46] Rusti Eisenberg, the only female member of the Strike Coordinating Committee (SCC) wrote an article for *Ripsaw,* a graduate student political magazine. In it, she condemned radical manipulation within SCC, and its dominance by an

[44] Strike Coordinating Committee, 'The Strike Demands', May 1968; UPAC, Box 11, Folder 41.
[45] 'The Fayerweather Proposal', April 1968, UPAC, Box 11, Folder 21.
[46] Johnathan Shills quoted in *A Time to Stir*, 135. Cronin's documentary is an in-depth analysis of the events at Columbia, drawing on interviews with more than 200 participants.

aggressive SDS cohort.[47] She later relived these claims in interviews for Paul Cronin's documentary *A Time to Stir*, where she argues that SCC was dominated by people trying to prove their commitment ("We're strong and we're revolutionary"), asserting that the revolutionary tenor got "crazier and crazier", and that this attitude was derisory to the positive participatory grass-roots dimension to Columbia, which should have been "something to build on, not something to destroy" with vanguardism.[48]

On May 6th, SRU broke off from the SDS dominated Strike Coordinating Committee in order to focus on reform. SRU was founded on the belief that "American education as it exists today, is destructive of human life" and that a change "in American higher education is a necessary prerequisite... to change society."[49] In the speech announcing SRU's breakaway on May 16, 1968, John Thomas, chairman of the new organisation, thanked SDS and SCC's leadership, and emphasized solidarity, but questioned the continued use of polarising tactics, particularly after the "symbols of the strike", the police, the barricades, the destruction, had left campus.[50] They instead affirmed a belief in the university as a comparative realm of freedom. In the first edition of SRU's newspaper, *The Student Voice*, the front page story emphasised moderation and reform, describing "super-hawks on both sides... determined to fight on until total victory."[51] Clearly the revolutionary rhetoric espoused by Jacob's and his cohort in the Action Faction held no sway with this liberal reformist organisation. The Executive Committee of the Faculty, a body established by the faculties and endorsed by the administration to look into reform was the chief result of this

[47] Rusti Eisenberg, 'The Strike: A Critical Reappraisal', *Ripsaw*, Vol.1, No.1 (December 1968); UPAC, Box 26, Folder 7
[48] Carolyn Eisenberg, in *A Time to Stir*, 144, 183, 144.
[49] SRU, 'A Clarification', May 1968; UPAC, Box 14, Folder 9.
[50] John Thomas, SRU Speech, Wollman Auditorium, May 16, 1968; UPAC, Box 14, Folder 9.
[51] SRU, 'Editorial: The Only Path to Peace', *The Student Voice*, vol.1, no.1, August 9, 1968; UPAC, Box 14, Folder 11.

liberal pressure. It submitted a proposal for a University Senate on March 20, 1969, which was passed and implemented for the following academic year. This included student, faculty, and university employee representation.[52] SRU itself submitted reports on the preliminary proposal for the senate and were involved in the process.[53] Their liberal approach, which included negotiation and cooperation with the faculty and administration, inevitably had more success than the radical line. The creation of the university senate, along with the cessation of gym construction, was one of the lasting legacies of the protests.

If SRU were in agreement with radicals in SCC on some of the strike's demands, conservative groups such as the Majority Coalition represented the antithesis of the radicals in almost every regard. The Majority Collation called upon students to 'Defend Peace, Defeat SDS', describing the protests as "deliberate illegal action... criminality, a form of violence against the laws, the people, and the city of New York."[54] Placing concern for law and order at the top of their list of violence, the group outlined their conservative credentials perfectly. Illustrating the sophism of their peaceful rhetoric, the Majority Coalition also organised cordons of occupied buildings in order to prevent reinforcements and resupplies. They asked their counterdemonstrators to wear "coats and ties" in their cordon of Low Library to prevent access to the occupied Low library, symbolically differentiating themselves from the radical students through the respectability of their attire.[55] The outbursts of violence that occurred at these cordons have been used by some commentators as one of the administration's chief concerns, along with racial violence,

[52] The Executive Committee of the Faculty, Public Statement, May 15, 1968; UPAC, Box 8, Folder 16. The Executive Committee of the Faculty, 'Proposal for a University Senate', March 20, 1969: UPAC, Box 40, Folder 10.
[53] SRU, 'On the Executive Committee Proposal for a University Senate at Columbia', February 22, 1969; UPAC, Box 14, Folder 9.
[54] Majority Coalition, 'Defend Peace, Defeat SDS' student flyer, April 1968; UPAC, Box 11, Folder 9.
[55] Majority Coalition, 'Silent Vigil' flyer; UPAC, Box 4, Folder 13.

which made the situation more complex, and perhaps helped perpetuate the strike through administrative indecision.[56]

Whilst the Majority Coalition was the most visible conservative group on campus, they were not the only one. Students for a Free Campus campaigned against both SDS and SRU, claiming that the latter was merely a front for the former.[57] They campaigned against amnesty as an "invitation to chaos" and generally bemoaned the lack of clarity in the political representation afforded by the dominant student groups, particularly discrediting SRU when they endorsed any SDS or SCC position.[58] Factionalism on campus spread after the main protests, in a pattern that confirmed the transience of SDS's polarising tactics, as students, initially 'radicalised', turned away from their influence once the situation had normalised. In response to the factionalism, students on campus created a series of armbands which designated allegiance and were worn by many for the academic term. Blue arm bands of peace were soon co-opted by the Majority coalition, "reaction, the status-quo, the war; green arm-bands for amnesty; red arm bands for "revolution"; white arm bands for faculty.[59] Whilst this in no way reflected a true cross-section of student opinion on campus, it did demonstrate the desire of many students to make their political affiliations known. As literary critic and Columbia professor Lionel Trilling remarked, for "young people now, being political serves much the same purpose as being literary has long done – it expresses and validates the personality."[60] There could be little doubt that on the Columbia campus

[56] Robert McCaughey. *Stand Columbia.* 442, 445.
[57] Students for a Free Campus, 'What is SRU?', September 25, 1968; UPAC, Box 14, Folder 8.
[58] Students for a Free Campus, 'Amnesty: Invitation to Chaos', February 1969; UPAC, Box 14, Folder 8.
[59] Robert Freidman ed., *University in Revolt: A History of the Columbia Crisis*, Jerry L. Avorn and the *Columbia Daily Spectator* staff, (London: Macdonald, 1968), 293-4. (First published in U.S as *Up Against the Ivy Wall: A History of the Columbia Crisis*).
[60] Interview with Lionel Trilling. Stephen Donadio. 'Columbia: Seven Interviews.' *Partisan Review* Vol.35, No.3 (Summer 1968). 387.

politics and culture intertwined giving students a clear sense of belonging and identity to whichever factions they felt the closest affiliation to.[61]

That many of the issues seemed to conflict was not accidental. For radical students all the demands coalesced in a systematic critique of the university's structure and position within society. In a document pack released by SCC, which brought together documents located within Grayson Kirk's office during the protests and other material, the radical students described the trustees as "the Power Elite," arguing that "corporate interests dictate policy" on the Columbia campus. The documents revealed the "corporate links" of Columbia's trustees, bringing together all the main demands of the protests in order to argue for a revolution in which the university was to be used as a staging ground for a complete overhaul of a society controlled by corporate rather than human interests. Whilst this position was firmly radical, it did demonstrate a systematic analysis of the students' demands, which could be linked through C. Wright Mill's concept of the military industrial complex, as articulated in *The Power Elite* (1956), a text which had a clear impact upon the thinking of those in Columbia SDS.

Whilst this summative model of the protests ignores long histories of grass roots activism in Harlem and on campus, it does provide a framework on which most accounts of the protests are based.

Trilling, 'Columbia: Seven Interviews', 387.