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It's in the Air:

Race, Activism, and Power



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ing the fact that you can only make things better, but not necessarily radically change them. This mindset is to aid in ensuring that those involved in the work do not get discouraged at being a part of the process and not seeing the instant results that they desire. However, it also fosters complacency and an unconscious disbelief that true change is ever within grasp; the Sisyphus of all activist work. The effective student protests that have been happening across the country helped remind me that the goal is in reach. We can win. Their victories are what have spurred the victories in the same fight on different campuses. As the Negro spiritual says, you must wade into the water while it is troubled. The time for change on our college campuses is now. We had no choice but to engage it head-on. It is in the air everywhere.

It is within my organizer space that I have learned how crucial it is to recognize that the direct action methods with which we intend to make change is as important as recognizing the issues and that change needs to occur. Even in the midst of being around those who would see themselves as change agents, there can be negative discourse surrounding the methods and the focus of the movement at hand. While this is true for



Image Source: US National Archives

And the power of their voices, their insistence that enough was enough, propelled myself and others on campus to finally take a firm stand and no longer settle for mediocre administrative band aids and surface campus events regarding diversity, inclusion, and equity over addressing the issues within our community directly.

every social movement, it is not something that one can completely understand or know how to handle until they are faced in that moment with the movement and their co-organizers. As a young activist it has raised many personal questions for me. Is there a wrong way to organize? Can two different methods combined help elevate the debate or distract from the greater goals? These are questions to which I am eager to continue my quest to find answers.

Through my activism work I have been able to find myself. I have begun to understand what it means to be a part of something that is greater than myself. I have found my voice. And even when it shakes, even when it does not have all the answers, I know that it is still important to speak. To show up with a heart and mind that is ready to listen, learn, understand, and move towards effective change that will create a better opportunity for the entire community.

We, the organizers, are continuing the work that has been started. Our goal is to create an inclusive space where all who wish to be involved in this process can do so. It is our hope that many will. Together we can. Together we will.

Masses of people. Curious faces. Glimpses of optimism. A palpable excitement.

We took a stand today against incidents of racism and xenophobia on our campus. This situation felt all too familiar, though. A year and a day ago this time last year, we were in the same space marching to hold our administration and our campus community accountable for their lack of action. Unfortunately, there was no substantial accomplishment to show from last year. But this year it feels differently. Now we have our brothers and sisters standing with us across the country. From Missouri, to Georgia, to California to Connecticut. And while the nationwide focus may have solely been articulating racism being perpetuated on campus, these protests reinforced the fact that all oppression is interconnected. To take a stand against racism is to take a stand against sexism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and all other forms of oppression. And the power of their voices, their insistence that enough was enough, propelled myself and others on campus to finally take a firm

stand and no longer settle for mediocre administrative band aids and surface campus events regarding diversity, inclusion, and equity over addressing the issues within our community directly. Our speak-out was an empowered healing space, edged with the angst of wanting to do more than just continue to have conversations. Our march symbolized the multicultural voices and feet of many joining as one with a righteous anger and passion for change.

It is within this space that I have become acutely aware of how powerful we, the students, are and in turn how powerful it is to take a stand for what you know is right. It has been a realization that is equal parts frightening, empowering, and groundbreaking. Being a part of social justice work comes with the awareness that the struggle always continues. While the ultimate goal is to eradicate oppressive systems and make permanent change, there is an underlying awareness that all activists foster that being involved in the work and furthering the movement is as close to achieving the ultimate goal that they will experience in their tenure in the trenches. There is a subtle emphasis on accept-