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Black Activism Matters: Breaking Down The Racial Oppression of Predominantly White Institutions

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On November 18, 2015 at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign the Illini White Student Union was formed on Facebook in response to a Black solidarity rally that an organization that I am a part of, Black Students for Revolution, organized. The rally was meant to show solidarity with Black students across the country as well as bring Black students together on campus as a student collective to organize and plan our movement. Although the rally was a success, it created anticipated push back from White students who saw the rally as a threat to their hierarchy on campus. The group claimed their mission was to monitor Black students that have proven to be anti-White. The people who created the White student union Facebook page publically asked its followers to submit photos of Black students that attended the solidarity rally. The Illini White Student Union used the same tactics that the Klu Klux Klan historically used to terrorize Blacks and other people of color. Allow me to be very clear about this matter, I denounce the group and recognize it for what it truly is, a White supremacist hate group. In the year 2015 there is an open White supremacist group on an American college campus. I, as a Black graduate student, was not alone in acknowledging the group for what it truly was. The Black students that were aware of the creation of the Facebook page also recognized the potential safety concern for all Black students at the university.

This is the current reality for myself and many other Black students around the country. Historically, Black students have been marginalized at predominantly White institutions and have for far too long been isolated, alienated, and made to feel as if we are not a part of the university. However, this year movements across the country have begun to sprout from Missouri and Harvard to the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. These movements are led by courageous Black student activists who have grown weary of the status quo and have begun to dismantle years of unconcerned administrators, micro aggressions, and White supremacy that play a part of the collective marginalization of Black students at White institutions. Black students, historically, have been at the forefront fighting for Black rights, and that trend continues today. I stand in solidarity with all movements that attempt to radically remove White supremacy and the oppression of all people of color as well as LGBTQ. As a Black activist-scholar I support and encourage my Black brothers and sisters, because now, more than ever, Black students’ lives matter.

Image by Ryan McGuire

“It is our duty to fight for our freedom. It is our duty to win. We must love each other and support each other. We have nothing to lose but our chains.”

- Assata Shakur