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## JIM CROW'S DEMISE: THE UVa STORY

Paul M. Gaston

All over America today embattled universities are defending their affirmative action programs against right-wing assaults led by such improbably named organizations as the Center for Equal Opportunity and the Institute for Individual Rights. Shamelessly cloaking themselves with the mantle of Martin Luther King, Jr., these warriors in the army of reaction would undo the liberating achievements of the civil rights movement in the name of civil rights.

Part of the explanation for the widening arc of this counter reconstruction lies in the nationwide retreat, especially on college campuses but elsewhere as well, from the idealism of the 1960s. It is a retreat undergirded by the intoxication of the dotcoms' false promise of quick riches and the ease with which contemporary culture nurtures insulation from the realities of racial discrimination, the widening gap between rich and poor, and the concentration of privilege and power in ever few hands.

It may be that the tendencies of American style materialism and nationalism normally work this way, only to be challenged and ameliorated in rare moments such as the stroke for independence in the eighteenth century, the Abolitionist and Populist movements in the nineteenth, and the New Deal and Civil Rights Movement of the twentieth century. These burst of idealism and humane reform, important for their lasting achievements, also serve in history as enduring calls to a better society. They stand both as reminders of our best accomplishments as well as calls to action against the meaner sides of contemporary life.

The demise of segregation at the University of Virginia is one of those historic achievements whose story, fascinating in its own right, reveals how humane social change may occur in our democracy. It shows, I believe, that such change is not the characteristic handmaiden of public enlightenment and reasoned discourse. Not when the stakes are high. Not when privilege and power, habit and hubris, are threatened.

Let me get at this with a famous William Faulkner statement. He was speaking in 1955, a year and a half after the *Brown* desegregation decision, to the Southern Historical Association. This is what he said:

We speak now against the day when our Southern people who will resist to the last these inevitable changes in social relations, will, when they have been forced to accept what they at one time might have accepted with dignity and goodwill, will say, "Why didn't someone tell us this before? Tell us this in time?"

Faulkner knew his fellow Southerners well enough to know that there would be no dignity and goodwill in their fierce resistance to racial justice. The truth he would share with his audience of historians was one they really knew: that Southerners had been told, told often, and told in time—often with eloquence, nearly always with authority—told of the South's burdens and failures, obligations and opportunities, of the injustice and inevitable end of Jim Crow. With no effort at all I could reel off the names of scores of these truth tellers.

The telling did take place. What was lacking was the listening.

The listening was absent because those who needed to hear were deafened by the material and psychic advantages of white supremacy and by the comforting racist beliefs that accompanied it. An arsenal more powerful than eloquence and rational argument would be required to open ears and clear the vision. Only then would white Southerners question their beliefs by asking "Why didn't someone tell us this before? Tell us this in time?"

Frederick Douglass and Martin Luther King, Jr., both understood this. Douglass put it this way:

Those who profess to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation are men who want crops without plowing the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its waters. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did, and it never will.

This was King's way of saying the same thing:

History is the long and tragic story of the fact that that privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily. . . . We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed.

Historians of the civil rights movement know this to be true. The racist legal structure of the South—all of those laws prohibiting blacks from voting or occupying the same public and private spaces as whites—were not toppled by bankers or businessmen; preachers or professors; pundits or politicians; judges or juries; the leaders or the learned. All of these people would play a part, but never, or almost never, as initiators. Instead, they were brought into the process of change by the demands and power of the movement itself—the African Americans and their white allies who believed in thunder and lightning, who knew that power concedes nothing without a demand.

What is true of the civil rights movement generally is mirrored in the racial history of the University of Virginia, the story I turn to now.

The story I am going to tell will be limited to the first two stages of the battle against Jim Crow, covering the decades of the 1950s and the 1960s. First was the era of Supreme Court litigation. The *Brown* decision of 1954 was the culmination a two-decade long NAACP legal campaign. Gregory Swanson, the first African American to enter the

University, was admitted to the Law School in 1950 as part of the fruits of that campaign. For the next ten years the University fashioned and followed a kind of rear-guard action of containment, to limit the reach of court decisions, hold down the number of blacks in the professional schools while maintaining segregation in the College of Arts & Sciences. The second stage—movement building in the student body—spanned the 1960s, climaxing with the student demonstrations of 1968-69 that inaugurated the new era of not only acceptance but of promotion of integration. The actual recruitment of black students and faculty followed from the student successes of 1968-69, eventually climaxing with a bold policy of affirmative action that is now under attack from outside as part of a national counter reconstruction. That part of the story will be left for another day. Today I will focus on the time when the log-jam of Virginian history was broken, opening the way for the positive actions of the following decades.

I call the first phase the era of containment, beginning in 1950 and ending a decade later. I came on the scene late in that period, joining the History Department in 1957.

The University was perfect for my desires. On the one hand, right along side its seductive charm and beauty, it had all the awfulness of the white supremacy society I entered the history profession to expose and oppose. On the other, you could say pretty much what you wanted to in the classroom or the community without being reviled, denied tenure, fired, or shot, which was not the case in my home state of Alabama or my wife's home state of South Carolina. I have never quite figured out whether this happy circumstance owed to the Jeffersonian tradition of tolerating any error or whether, instead, it derived from the comfortable Virginian belief that what professors said didn't matter much anyway.

In any case, white supremacy culture was deeply embedded in family values and regularly proclaimed to be just and benevolent by ordinary citizens as well as leaders in the Commonwealth and in the University.

At the turn of the century, Dr. Paul Barringer, Chairman of the Faculty (the last to hold that office before we started having presidents), wrote frequently about what he called the scientific proof of black inferiority. No longer slaves, black people would "return to barbarism," he wrote, just as the sow returned to "wallowing in the mire." They lacked, he added, all of the civilized characteristics valued by white people: "Comfort, health, self-respect, and gentility are as a rule nothing compared with the gratification of vanity, lust, the craving for drink, tobacco, the gaming habit etc." Supply a black man's "bodily wants, including a woman," Barringer wrote, "and he is happy under any social conditions." (Interestingly, one of the entrances to the old hospital still bears Dr. Barringer's name.)

The University's leaders had pretty much abandoned such crude racist language when I joined the faculty in 1957. But the faith that blacks were inferior to whites, unsuitable for study at the University, had not been seriously shaken. Former dean Ivey F. Lewis, for example, then recently retired from the Biology department, was receiving letters from his former students telling him that if only people understood what he had taught them in his Eugenics class about Negro inferiority the Supreme Court's 1954 school

integration decision would be universally condemned. Last month, as you may know, the General Assembly of Virginia expressed its regret for the state's part in the eugenics movement (though it was too shy to offer an apology).

With no such regrets in the mid-1950s, the state's political leaders, loyal followers of Senator Harry F. Byrd, promised to mount a "massive resistance" to racial integration of the schools and undergirded their promise with a long discredited doctrine of interposition coupled with strident reaffirmations of white supremacy. James Jackson Kilpatrick, editor of the Richmond afternoon paper, formulated the former and articulated the latter. "The Negro race," he wrote, "has never been able to build a civilization of his own, and it has debased every society in which its blood has been heavily mixed."

Colgate Darden was president of the University when I came, having taken the position a decade earlier. A man of uncommon dignity and humane sensibility, I admired his personal qualities and parts of his visionary leadership. His principal goal was to make the University the capstone of higher education in the state and to end its reputation as the party school to which Ivy-league rejects would migrate. I could see how diminishing the University's elitism might, in time, help to undermine its segregation. Mr. Darden retired two years after I arrived, to be succeeded by Edgar Shannon, a young associate professor of English. I never really got to know Mr. Darden, but I appreciated his disdain for inflammatory rhetoric. He knew the folly of massive resistance but, tragically for the Commonwealth—and lamentably for his place in history—he could not bring himself to speak against it publicly. The same was true of a two or three other notable state leaders, including future Supreme Court Justice Lewis Powell.

Part of Darden's reluctance stemmed from the fact that, at bottom, he did not want public schools to become racially integrated. On the eve of the *Brown* decision, he wrote to the head of the Southern Regional Council, the South's front-line interracial organization, to tender his resignation. The Council advocated the abolition of segregation in the primary and secondary schools, a position, Darden wrote, "to which I cannot subscribe." Unlike the Byrds, Kilpatricks, Ivey Lewises—and light years away from the Paul Barringers—Darden understood that "segregation has been used time after time as the shield for discrimination and oppression." For that, he said, "there is no justification or excuse." What, then, was the remedy? The end of Jim Crow? He could not believe that. When he testified in support of segregation in the Price Edward case, he warned that its abolition "would impede rather than improve public education in the Southern states." He believed it possible, he said on another occasion, "to provide in the public school system an equality of opportunity for the segregated races if we are willing to do so." He must have known that the willingness to do so could never be extracted from the culture into which he was born and which he understood so well. That, however, was a truth he could not—or would not—acknowledge.

Thus, with both the best and the worst of Virginia's leaders on Jim Crow's side, it seemed to me at the time foolhardy to believe that segregation would be brought to an end by the respected men of authority and influence who possessed the power to effect change. Such a belief, though, was difficult for many good people to accept. They held strongly to

the faith that the spread of knowledge and accurate information along with rational argument could change minds. A democratic society has self-corrective powers, they argued. Shown the error of their ways and the enormity of the problem those ways had created, citizens and their leaders would mend their ways and change their society. Democracy would be vindicated.

It did not happen that way.

Alice Jackson, daughter of a Richmond pharmacist, was the first African American to apply for admission to the Graduate School of Arts & Sciences, in 1935. The dean rejected her application because, he wrote, her admission would violate "the long established and fixed policy of the Commonwealth of Virginia."

It was at about that time that the NAACP began its tenacious assault on "the long established and fixed policy" of segregated graduate and professional schools. Looking back on it now, it seems to me that what the NAACP lawyers did, over a period of two decades, was to conduct for the Supreme Court a kind of seminar on the meaning of equality. Everyone knew what "separate" meant, but the "equal" part of the "separate but equal" doctrine announced in *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896 had never been seriously examined. The NAACP forced that examination.

When Gregory Swanson applied for admission to the Law School in the spring of 1950 he was fortified, as Alice Jackson had not been, by the string of cases the NAACP lawyers had won whittling away at the old separate but equal doctrine. *Sweatt v. Painter*, the most recent of those cases, virtually concluded that equal educational opportunity could not be achieved so long as segregation remained in force.

For President Darden the lesson was clear: integration of the graduate and professional schools was inevitable. It was only a question of when and how much. The NAACP's suit on behalf of Swanson's admission was broad-gauged, looking for an order that would open the way for all applicants to all branches of the University. The University's lawyers, however, were successful in winning a court decision from District Judge John Paul that blunted that ambition. Judge Paul limited his order to the Law School. Swanson then became the first African American to attend the University, enrolling in the fall of 1950. Other blacks were denied admission, on dubious constitutional grounds, in the wake of Swanson's admission, but Walter Nathaniel Ridley, already a professor at Virginia State, with advanced degrees, enrolled in January of 1951. In 1953 he became the first African American to earn a doctorate at a major white Southern university, receiving an Ed.D from the School of Education. It would be seventeen years before Raymond Gavins would become the first black scholar to earn a Ph.D. from the Graduate School of Arts & Sciences.

When I arrived, seven years after Swanson sued his way into the University, there were twenty-two African American students enrolled in the various graduate and professional schools, most of them studying for advanced degrees in Education. The College remained the last Jim Crow bastion, still turning away applicants under the

discredited separate but equal ruling. It would not be until the middle of the 1960-61 academic year that Amos Leroy Willis was allowed to transfer from the Engineering School that the College became officially integrated. Because the integration of the College took place quietly and in the middle of the academic year the publicity that might have aroused alumni anger and protest was neatly avoided.

The first chapter in the story of Jim Crow's demise here, then, is basically the story of a hand full of determined African American applicants in partnership with an increasingly successful group of NAACP lawyers, bringing the Supreme Court to a better understanding of the meaning of equality under law.

The next phase, spanning the decade of the 1960s, centered on the mobilization of the students into a force for change. Outside the University the black-led civil rights movement was transforming America. With television evening news showing the starkly contrasting images of white bestiality and black idealism and moral superiority the federal government moved to strike down Jim Crow legal scaffolding. The Movement also nurtured idealism and deeper understanding in white students. Here as elsewhere they became authentic agents of progressive transformation.

As I trace this transformation in the 1960s I will focus on what happened locally, but keep in mind that these events were informed, inspired, and shaped by the larger mass movement. Without that example students here would not have mobilized. The civil rights movement gave them (first just a few of them, later many more) a new vision and ideology—and provided the tactics to achieve their ends. It is in this sense that the larger civil rights movement was the motive force behind the demand of Virginia students for the eventual destruction of segregation.

When I joined the faculty I found it hard to believe that Virginia students would ever organize against racial inequality. In October of the year I arrived, for example, the editor of the *Cavalier Daily* railed against the NAACP for what he called its "subversive dealings." It was a communist-front organization, the editor declared, inciting hateful legislation and dictating to the President. In November the editor advised that "obdurate resistance to integration, without violence, is clearly the only way to stay the hand that is cramming this distasteful pill down our protesting throats."

I knew many students like this one in those years; some became frequent visitors to my office, eager to berate me for my liberal, integrationist leanings and Scalawag betrayal. A few of them were thoroughly objectionable human beings, well beyond redemption. Most, however, had a disarming charm and, wrong though I thought their views were, an engaging intellectual fervor. I welcomed them. After all, I had come here hoping that my teaching of Virginian and Southern History might challenge young men of the state and region to reevaluate the beliefs that made them feel morally secure at the top of the racial privilege pyramid.

Some of them accepted the challenge. The books they read and the discussions we held led them to concede that slavery was not benign; that segregation was instituted to

protect white privilege; and that their own good fortune was rooted in the long history of exploitation of blacks by whites. A few even came to question the sainthood of General Lee.

These students, however, were a small minority. For the majority, books, lectures, and discussions were weak opponents of the wisdom handed down from generation to generation by trusted family guardians of historical truth. My notes from the late 'fifties and early 'sixties are filled with examples of tradition thwarting scholarship. Confronted by *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, C. Vann Woodward's brief history of segregation (which you have read in preparation for this lecture), students rejected its findings because father and mother said they were false. More than one cited the authority of the family servant as proof that the "colored people" preferred to be separate from the whites.

One year I worked particularly closely with a tall, handsome, self-assured son of one of the First Families of Virginia. We had friendly, spirited exchanges in my office and agreed to read each other's favorite books. I was cheered by an essay in his final examination paper that acknowledged humane features of the New Deal. A few days later he strolled into my office to ask to change what he had written. He told me: "My father says I was wrong." I countered: "Do you mean that your father can wipe out in one conversation what I have been trying to establish for a whole year?" "Yes, sir," he replied with a broad grin. "That's about it."

Students like this one dominated the classrooms, the fraternities, the major organizations, and the newspaper in those days. I felt then, and feel now, that their central problem was not flawed character but the ignorance and inexperience born of their inheritance. One such person, writing later about his study of American History at one of the elite Virginia preparatory schools, wrote that it "concentrated largely on a detailed recitation of the horrors of Reconstruction and a careful exegesis on the constitutional rationale for the doctrine of nullification and interposition." Nothing in their rearing or schooling had caused them to question the hubris of race and class that they brought with them to the University.

Thus, it did not surprise me when, in the year the Governor invoked the massive resistance laws to close schools in Charlottesville rather than permit them to be integrated under a federal court order, the major student protest was over the presumed inadequacy of student parking space.

I remember reading back then a statement of George Bernard Shaw's that helped me to understand these things. This is what he wrote: "The villainous moral conditions on which our social system is based are necessarily in constant contact with our moral mucous membrane, and so we lose our sense of their omnipresent meanness and dishonor." "Lose" may have been the wrong verb because few ever had a sense of the social system's "meanness and dishonor" to lose, but that phrase about the "constant contact with our moral mucous membrane" stayed with me. What was necessary was contact of another sort, a jolting counter experience that would expose the "moral mucous membrane" to new possibilities for the social system.

The story of how this happened is long and multi-faceted. When it is properly told it will be one of the most illuminating chapters in the University's history. It is a subject awaiting its historian. For now, I lay out for you what I believe are the main signposts along the way.

First came the theater boycott of 1961. There were twenty-five black students enrolled that year. One of them, Virginius Thornton, was the first to be a history graduate student. Already an activist when he arrived (among other things he had led a sit-in at a Petersburg library), Thornton was pointedly insulted by one of his professors, but more pained by the absence of student protest against the refusal to recruit and welcome black students and by the hostile conditions at the Corner. There was a movie theater there in those days, the only one convenient to the students. Without a balcony for black viewers, it had no arrangement for segregation. Blacks simply were denied admission. In March Thornton, three other black students, and twenty-five white students, faculty, and spouses went to the theatre where the whites were sold tickets but the blacks were not. Picketing and negotiations followed, to no avail. The boycott followed, highlighted by a list of supporters' names published in the *Cavalier Daily*.

It is always risky to pinpoint the beginning of a movement, but I take the risk by citing the boycott as one of the two events in the spring of 1961 that originated a movement that would climax in victory eight years later. Boycott supporters became better acquainted with each other, developed a keener understanding of the harshness of the segregationist mentality, and began to urge others to join them to oppose it.

A month after the boycott was launched a small group of students, with two faculty members serving as advisors, organized a chapter of the Virginia Council on Human Relations, a state branch of the Southern Regional Council established to build support of school desegregation and better race relations. Founders of the UVa chapter hoped to sponsor discussion of racial issues, bring to Grounds speakers and viewpoints favorable to integration, and provide a rallying center for sympathetic students.

At this time, however, sympathetic students made up only a tiny portion of the student body and were without power or influence. Those with power and influence regarded them as a menace. The *Cavalier Daily* editor accused the theater pickets of breaking Virginia law (which they had not) and, in his eyes more objectionable, of sullyng the reputation of the University. Reputation was at the core of the southern concept of honor, and, as the *CD* editor put it, honor, the heart of the University's ethos, was violated by picketing to promote integration.

Student Council adopted less inflammatory language in denying the Human Relations Council's right to exist on Grounds. Professing to be uncertain "as to the means by which this group intends to pursue a moderate approach toward human relations," Council withheld the request for recognition until such time as it could be certain that the human relations group was "worthy of the University and of Student Council approval." The following fall we learned what the Student Council meant by "worthy": the group was



accorded recognition only after amending its by-laws to exclude boycotts and picketing from its activities. Two years later, with a black Engineering student as president (he would later become a faculty member), the group persuaded Council to remove the direct action prohibition, but only by a two-vote margin.

Meanwhile, the Human Relations Council put on discussions of current racial issues, conducted polls, and brought several important speakers to Grounds. In 1964 it reported that a poll of 1,045 students showed that 15% objected to blacks attending the University while 56% said they would not wish to live next door to an African American. The most notable of the imported speakers was Martin Luther King, Jr., who came in March of 1963. Cabell hall was packed by students, faculty, and a goodly number of townspeople. Several students, impressed by what they saw and heard, joined the HRC afterwards or in other ways gingerly gravitated toward the movement for change. Revealingly, however, apart from Dean of Admissions Marvin Perry, no member of the administration and almost no senior faculty members were present and King received no official welcome during his visit. Five years later, following his assassination, President Shannon led a University wide memorial service, a visible sign of the change in circumstance and attitude between the early and later 'sixties.

As the HRC gained a measure of respectability, recruiting a few more members each year, more activist-oriented students began to organize. First there was the Students for Social Action (SSA) that then merged with the Southern Students Organizing Committee (SSOC), founded in 1964 to mobilize white students on campuses across the South to work for racial justice and international peace. UVa students were prominent among its founders and leaders. A few members of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), a northern-student radical group, also livened up the discourse.

Many of the students from these groups were energized and fortified by their study of southern history, especially the writings of C. Vann Woodward. From him, as well as from their classes here, they learned a version of history sharply at odds with the story of white solidarity, black contentment, and Yankee perfidy that had been the staple of their predecessors and the diet of their elders. It was not just that the many dimensions of white supremacy and class division were exposed and dissected; equally important was the discovery of inspiring protest movements, some across the color line, that had emerged before, during, and after the Civil War, all supplying both precedent and promise for similar movements in the present. Most importantly, the southern students learned that they could oppose the South's racism without abandoning their Southern identity. As one of them wrote years later, in the preface to his first book, "As a student at the University of Virginia in the 1960s, I learned...that one could be a Southerner, take pride in the South, and not feel compelled to defend the indefensible."

The slowly growing indigenous movement was strengthened by its understanding of the southern past, but even more by the example of the black-led civil rights movement. Increasingly in the middle 'sixties, Virginia's activist students came into contact with civil rights veterans, whether in a local sit-in or in state or regional workshops and summer voter-registration projects. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), was

an especially close connection and important guide. Each year, then, there were more UVa students who brought to their groups on Grounds accounts of the experiences they had and understanding they received from the movement outside.

Both the expanding size and influence of the local movement and the long distance it had yet to go were vividly illustrated by events surrounding the 1965 Selma demonstrations.

The horrendous beatings by the Alabama state guard of defenseless men and women on the Pettus Bridge electrified the nation and sent hundreds of supporters to Selma and, later, to Montgomery to join the last stage of the Selma to Montgomery march. Several Virginia students were among those who went. Here on Grounds one of the student groups sponsored a "sympathy for Selma" demonstration attended by scores of Virginia students, faculty, and spouses who marched from Cabell Hall under the colonnades to the north side of the Rotunda where they were met by townspeople who had marched through the city to join them.

Merrill D. Peterson, the recently-arrived Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation Professor of History, was the principal speaker. Standing on the Rotunda steps, looking out at the Jefferson statue, a huge throng below him, Mr. Peterson did what no prominent University of Virginia faculty member or administrator had ever done before: he linked the southern civil rights movement to the mission of the University and the spirit of its founder. "In honoring those men and women who have worked, suffered, bled, and died in Selma," he said, "we also renew our faith in the enduring values of the founder and spiritual head of this University." Selma, he said, was "a vital link in the heritage of American liberty." Then he added: "No University...has a clearer title to speak for that heritage in the present crisis than the University of Virginia. And it is high time (long past time) we were heard from!" It was almost as though he had conjured up Mr. Jefferson himself to stand beside John Lewis and Martin King to speak his truths from the Pettus Bridge.

Sympathy for Selma bespoke the widening arc of the civil rights movement here, but the Administration's response was a warning not to be too confident of real change. A student who had gone to Montgomery carried a posterboard with him. On it he had printed a line from Jefferson—"all eyes are opening to the rights of man"—and below that, so people would know where he was from, "UVa." A news photographer captured the image and the picture appeared in the local press. On his return, the student was called into a dean's office to be reprimanded. The dean explained that the posterboard implied that the University was an official part of the march, which it was not. "We can't just have anyone going out and putting the University's good name into the public debate on controversial issues," was what the student later recalled the dean saying to him.

Oddly enough, or perhaps reflecting the University's sense of hierarchy, Mr. Peterson, having done precisely what the dean said should not be done—putting the University's good name into the public debate on controversial issues—received no

criticism; nor, he reports, did he receive any private acknowledgment or thanks from people on high.

A third signal, this one from President Shannon, was sent through channels to the associate professor who had written a letter inviting his fellow faculty members to attend the student-sponsored event. Because he had signed his rank to the letter he created (at least in the mind of the President) the impression of University approval. That was not an appropriate impression to give. The professor was admonished to act with more discretion in the future.

Remaining aloof from civil rights issues—perhaps, as Frederick Douglass might have said, wanting rain without thunder and lightning—President Shannon did not act on the Jefferson professor's admonition—"It is high time (long past time) we were heard from!"—and the rare moment for bold leadership passed him by.

By that time the balance of opinion among student leaders and opinion makers, as well as in the student body generally, was moving away from the die-hard segregationists. Determined blacks, though still small in number, were now making their way into the student body; the national mood was shifting dramatically; far-reaching civil rights laws had been passed; the national civil rights movement seemed to have washed away myths that had undergirded segregation; and the cadre of progressive students and faculty grew to the point where a movement for change could be sustained. By 1967 and 1968 *Cavalier Daily* editors blasted the University for its "tolerance of prejudice" and the "furtherance of a sick heritage," opinions that turned on their heads the editorial pronouncements of only a few years earlier. And the Student Council, instead of harassing and harnessing interracial and progressive groups now launched investigations of racial discrimination within the University and churned out resolutions demanding positive action on every front.

The number of dissident organizations increased both in variety and members. By this time, in addition to the Human Relations Council and SSOC there was a Radical Student Union, the *Virginia Weekly* collective (radical student publishers of a vocal alternative newspaper), and the Virginia Progressive Party (which would sweep the College elections in 1969).

During the 1968-69 academic year the student movement reached the peak of its moral and political persuasiveness. Fifty-two full-time black students were now in residence. A student coalition comprising the newly-formed Black Student Union, the several radical groups, and the larger moderate group of more traditional leaders set the agenda for University change and charted the course to the future. The year was studded with marches, demonstrations, demands and counter demands, all bespeaking a new form of life at the University. Tradition, however, was not wholly discarded, a fact that was indicated by *The New York Times* description of the marches as the "coat and tie" demonstration.

After one of its many all-night meetings, the Coalition issued a bold call for action:

In times like these rational and compassionate men cannot afford to tolerate bigotry. Thus we of the University community feel it to be our moral obligation to press the Board of Visitors, the Governor of the State of Virginia, the Legislature, as well as citizens of the state, for immediate action in the area of race relations. The days are gone in which progress can be measured by minute degrees. The days are gone when apologies are sufficient.

The Governor—a massive resistance leader named Mills Godwin—dismissed the students rudely when they called on him, making it clear that the culture of segregation would not be dismantled by the state's elected leaders. (Not until Linwood Holton, in 1970, would that circumstance be modified.) On the University Grounds, however, the Coalition shaped Student Council action, set the tone for editorial writing and news reporting, and won critical support from the Inter Fraternity Council. Drawn into this heady ferment, President Shannon now became a partner in the student movement for change. Before the year was out he accepted most of the Coalition's demands. The governor and the legislature were bypassed and the Board of Visitors did not rein in the President. The University would never be the same again.

The President made commitments that year to begin actively to recruit black undergraduates. As a modest move in that direction he gave a young black graduate student the job of traveling about the state to encourage African Americans to apply for admission. The era when blacks were recruited only unofficially and secretly by the dissident students groups had ended. The President and the faculty also promised to seek black faculty members, to teach a course in black studies, and to inaugurate an interdisciplinary Afro-American Studies program. When the new course was introduced the next year, President and Mrs. Shannon attended the first lecture, a potent symbol of their support for the new era.

It was a small beginning, and, in fact, it would be another decade before the number of black students exceeded one per cent of the student body. But it was a beginning. The log jam of the past had been broken. The way for the next generation to create new structures and act on different sets of values was now open. In time the new informing values would be rooted in a more capacious Jeffersonian vision of a democratic society and open university than had ever existed before.

The victory belonged most immediately to the students. Beyond and behind them lay the larger civil rights movement.