

NYU Students Strike

Excerpts from a letter to Black & Red

Various Authors

November, 1968

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Comrades in Kalamazoo!

... Over the summer the black students looked around for a Director of the Afro-American Student Center. They chose John F. Hatchett, a man who was expelled from I.S. 201 after the whole uproar there. He was approved by the University Senate, and by Dean Whiteman (Dean White Man) under Hester's direction. (Hester is President of New York University.) The faculty was not consulted.

Almost immediately after his appointment, a furor was raised by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, by other Jewish and religious organizations, over an article that Hatchett wrote in Afro-American Teachers' Journal which was allegedly anti-Semitic. The article has been quoted out of context in numerous sources. The quote places the blame for the "poisoning of the minds of black children" on the "white Jewish teachers and Anglo-Saxon Blacks." Hatchett talks about the "genocide" of black and Puerto Rican children in the New York City Public School System...

Under enormous pressure from alumni, wealthy Jewish donors, faculty and outside pressure groups, Hester suspended Hatchett, but immediately reinstated him as a measure of good faith.

Obviously the pressure was enormously great to fire Hatchett then, but Hester couldn't afford a summer blowup of blacks against him. The occasion for Hatchett's actual firing didn't come until Thursday last (October 10), when the Times did a report and a seething editorial on a speech Hatchett gave the day before at the Uptown Campus, quoting him as calling Humphrey, Nixon and Shanker "racist bastards." HATCHETT WAS FIRED THURSDAY NIGHT.

What happened:

- Friday, October 11. Strike and mass pickets—maybe 60% effective.
- Monday. Strike. Very ineffective.
- Tuesday. Strike. Very ineffective.
- We started talking to classes, and getting professors to move their classes out of Main Building and into the dorms and Loeb Student Center.
- Wednesday. Mill-ins in Main Lobby—drums, flutes, dancing...
- There is no unity on the inside here—very depressing. There is even less politics behind our tactics.
- 7 people are now sitting in Hester's office. The mass of kids has decided to take Kimball Hall, an administration building...

We have lost innumerable opportunities through laziness, lack of coherent politics, lack of organization, to get through to the mass of students before polarization. Now the polarization is strong, and we'll have to make do.

L'IMAGINATION AU POUVOIR!!!

It's our only hope!

Latest: Kimball is occupied.

More news soon—

J...

Excerpts from Strike Leaflets

Why we strike

... It is no longer possible to speak glibly of racial harmony and not confront the realities of racial tension; it is no longer realistic to think that an emerging black consciousness will settle for programs created in their name that are actually in the control of administrators. It is inconceivable that students of any race will tolerate dismissals of anyone because his views run counter to those of the men in power...

We ask all faculty and students to take a stand today by staying out of classes and showing the administration that the university will not function until this issue of critical importance is resolved. We realize that for many people this will be their first involvement in protest at the university. But in times like these, one is either part of the problem or part of the solution.

Join us!

Radical Coalition

STRIKE

In America, we are told, a man cannot be attacked for his own political views. In America, we are told, the universities are value-free and safe from obligations from any particular interest group in society. Two days ago, John Hatchett said Humphrey, Nixon, and Shanker were "racist bastards". Yesterday he was kicked out by Hester...

The question of Hatchett is not a question of civil liberties, even though it is clear that Hatchett was fired for exercising his own freedom of speech. The real question is the question of power: power to dispose of people who stand up and try to change this country through their actions and thinking. The black students were told they had the power to choose the director of the Afro-American Institute, but that power was empty of content. The university administration is run not by the sentiment of people here, black or white, but by the powers to which they are beholden. The uproar over Hatchett was not caused by people on campus, but by the corporations and rich people who want NYU to function according to their interests...

Today we strike to say that we will not allow this situation to continue. We strike to say that racism will never end if we leave decisions up to the people that live off racism and refuse to address it honestly. We strike to show that power should reside with the people who live and work in a place like NYU and not the people with money and influence.

JOIN US! Our strength is in numbers and not in dollars. Black people are dying every day in America and Africa because of racism. They are fighting against it and we are all living inside it. We must take our stand now, too.

BLACK POWER

The demand is raised that black students and not the university administration must be the constituency to whom Hatchett is responsible—for he is the representative of the black students, and they must decide whether he is satisfying the requirements of the job. The second demand, for black control, is the same demand that black parents are raising at Ocean Hill-Brownsville and the Black Panthers are raising in the black communities. Because black people have historically been exploited in this society, they are organizing for control of their community...

STRIKE!
Radical coalition

CERBERUS STREET EDITION

“The newspaper belongs to the people”

Wednesday

Dateline 10am

Support Announcements:

School of Social Work—entire school; faculty and students on strike; no classes, no field work

School of Arts students—voted 175 to 25 on a resolution stating that if Hatchett is not reinstated they will resign from the university to form the FREE SCHOOL OF ARTS

Graduate dept. of Psychology voted overwhelmingly to strike

Faculty—many, many classes now meeting outside of Main to protest the issue committee set up to support strike and another to serve as liaison. Faculty for University Change, chaired by Professor Corso of WSC is supporting strike.

Letters of Support have been received from Dick Gregory and Father James Groppi as well as others...

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