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# Authority's Last Stand: Mainline Protestants, Catholics, and Albany's Tumultuous Sixties

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# AUTHORITY'S LAST STAND:

Mainline Protestants, Catholics, and Albany's  
Tumultuous Sixties

By: Calley Quinn

In 1970, a mainline Protestant in the Capital Area Council of Churches officially reached his breaking point. "Students in vast numbers have risen in rebellion against conventional American society," Reverend Frank Snow stated to fellow Council members, "... The crisis, as we all know from observation, if not from personal experience, is real."<sup>1</sup> Serving as head campus minister for the State University of New York at Albany, Snow could not handle counseling one more student concerned with the Vietnam War and conscription laws. He made it very clear in the Annual Report of the Capital Area Council of Churches that he was far from pleased with the current situation on campus. Several miles down the road, Bishop William Scully of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany had avoided the University altogether. He chose to delegate Catholic ministry to the Newman Club, a Catholic student organization. Clearly the two clergymen had disagreeing approaches to campus unrest, but times were rapidly changing and both wanted to maintain whatever religious authority they had left.

Despite the differences between Reverend Snow and Bishop Scully, their reactions were equally motivated by a perception of declining authority – a harsh reality confronting many American institutions in the 1960's. Moral issues with birth control, race issues with the Civil Rights Movement, and campus unrest over the Vietnam War all represented social change that threatened conventional institutional authority. The federal government and higher education faced immense scrutiny from Baby Boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964) that resulted in their significantly weaker state by 1970. Yet, a similar experience was seen locally. As was the case with Reverend Snow and Bishop Scully, anyone associated with institutional authority was going to be challenged by the "question authority" ethos of young Americans. Moreover, while Snow was involved with rioting college students and Scully ignored it altogether, neither clergyman could mitigate the loss of their local authority, reflecting the difficulty of maintaining authority at all levels in the 1960's.

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<sup>1</sup> "Annual Report 1969- 1970," 1970. Capital Area Council of Churches Records, 1941-2012, Series 1: Administrative Files, Box 1, Folder 22, University at Albany M.E. Grenander Special Collections and Archives. CACC Records and Grenander archives will be used as abbreviations henceforth.

Scholarship on 1960's history and unrest focuses on the transformation from the Civil Rights Movement to the more radical movements later in the decade. Scholars largely agree that Civil Rights catalyzed the formation of student groups and New Leftist ideologies, the former acting as the prime facilitator for activist efforts and the latter acting as the source of inspiration.<sup>2</sup> By the mid-1960's, social divisions and disillusionment with society became increasingly prevalent as U.S. leaders were unable to meet the rising expectations of the nation that, in conjunction with military escalation in Vietnam, urban rioting, and new radical student group leaders, reached a climax in 1968.<sup>3</sup> Some historians attribute the election of Richard Nixon to the presidency in 1972 to the stamping out of social unrest of "the long sixties," but others argue that the splintering movements regarding Red Power, Chicano/Chicana rights, feminism, environmentalism, and gay liberation signify activist successes that continued well into the 1970's and even the 1980's.<sup>4</sup> Though recognizing the influence of Christian theology in New Leftist politics and the different political trends of mainline Protestants and Catholics, this discussion often excludes Christian institutions in the historical narrative on 1960's social unrest.<sup>5</sup> Rather, it highlights a few religious figures who were active in anti-war protesting and the Civil Rights Movement. Furthermore, this historical discussion recognizes social activism at the expense of declining authority, but does not connect the persistence of later activism (e.g. women's liberation) to weakened state of institutional authority from the 1960's.

When the history of mainline Protestantism and Catholicism in the 1960's is addressed by historians, the emphasis is put on activist theology and the Second Vatican Council. Their general

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<sup>2</sup> For more on social movements see Terry H. Anderson, *The Movement and The Sixties: From Greensboro to Wounded Knee* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), and for an international perspective see Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Detente* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2003).

<sup>3</sup> For a broad overview of 1960's history see Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s*. 5th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015) and Mark Hamilton Lytle, *America's Uncivil Wars: The Sixties Era from Elvis to the Fall of Richard Nixon* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> For case studies on 1960's movements see Van Gosse and Moser Richard, eds. *The World the 1960s Made: Politics and Culture in Recent America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003) and David Burner, *Making Peace with the 60s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

<sup>5</sup> For more on the Christian New Left see Doug Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

agreement for mainline Protestantism is that its emphasis on Social Gospel and its history of being part of American mainstream culture have enabled Protestant clergymen to engage in activist efforts at the national level.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, Catholics limited their “good works” to neighborhoods until Vatican II in 1965, which sanctioned cleric and lay participation in the national movements of the time.<sup>7</sup> However, this activism of mainline and Catholic clergy did more harm than good when considering Civil Rights and lay dissatisfaction. Mainline Protestants were involved with the Civil Rights Movement and played an integral part in the Freedom Summer of 1964, but failed to integrate their own churches and withdrew their support by the end of the decade.<sup>8</sup> Catholics had more success with the black community because they labeled minority rights activism as fulfilling their duty of good works. Vatican II complicated Catholic activism by politicizing racial and religious concerns, which brought white/black and Catholic liberal/conservative tensions to the forefront. Participating in the movements of the 1960’s was controversial for mainline and Catholic clergy and created distancing between the Church and the laity. Mainline parishioners disapproved of their clergy’s political involvement and Catholics were turned off by the papal stances on birth control and abortion.<sup>9</sup> Even though these historians acknowledge the social activism of mainline Protestants and Catholics, they do not explore their differing responses in relation to their perceived role of religious authority.

Therefore, this thesis addresses several gaps in historiography by localizing the authority crisis of the 1960’s. It investigates the responses to social unrest of mainline Protestant and Catholic

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<sup>6</sup> For case studies on mainline Protestant activism see Robert Wuthnow and John H. Evans, eds. *The Quiet Hand of God: Faith-Based Activism and the Public Role of Mainline Protestantism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: Regents of the University of California, 2002).

<sup>7</sup> For more on Vatican II see Philip Gleason, “Catholicism and Cultural Changes in the 1960’s.” *The Review of Politics*, America in Change: Reflections on the 60’s and 70’s, vol. 34, no. 4 (October 1972) and Dean R. Hoge, “Interpreting Change in American Catholicism: The River and the Floodgate.” *Review of Religious Research* vol. 50 (October 2008).

<sup>8</sup> For Protestant activism in the Civil Rights Movement see James F. Findlay Jr., *Church People in the Struggle: The National Council of Churches and the Black Freedom Movement, 1950-1970*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>9</sup> For more on Catholic clergy activism and lay disapproval see Kristen E. Heyer, Mark J. Rozell, and Michael A. Genovese eds., *The Dynamic Tension between Faith and Power*, (Washington, DC: George Washington Press, 2008) and for Catholic activism in civil rights see John T. McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries: The Catholics Encounter with Race in the Twentieth-Century Urban North* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996).

organizations from 1960 to 1973 at the local level of Albany, New York. It defines the mainline Protestant and Catholic interpretations of the political and social situation of the time and makes distinctions in their understanding of certain issues in relation to their churchly authority. By contrasting two Christian institutions, the Capital Area Council of Churches (CACC) and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany, this thesis demonstrates how different Christian denominations failed to maintain authority in the face of unrest (represented by students at the State University of New York at Albany, or SUNY Albany).<sup>10</sup> Most importantly, it demonstrates how authority loss during the 1960's was very likely. Mainline Protestants in the CACC reacted to authority threats by getting involved while Catholics in the Albany Catholic Diocese reacted through a policy of avoidance. In the end, both failed to maintain authority. Historians have contextualized this authority loss in one of two ways. Either unrest was stamped out by the election of President Nixon or activism persisted well into the 70's or 80's. I use the latter framework, but rather than focus on how activism persisted, I highlight how institutional authority weakened, allowing said activism to persist. This idea is crucial to understanding the larger narrative on the era and current history since it shows how the tumultuous sixties were defined by the Baby Boom cohort, who are very much alive today.

More specifically, I argue that mainline Protestant and Catholic clergy in the Albany area had different interpretations of and approaches to 1960's unrest. The Capital Area Council of Churches manifested its authority within American mainstream culture. In order to maintain authority, it had to maintain the relevancy of said authority. Changes in social problems and their threats to religious authority were therefore solved by active involvement. The CACC used campus ministry at SUNY Albany to relate its Church authority to campus unrest. In the early 1960's, it had little trouble with its hands-on approach, but as student culture and protesting radicalized, CACC ministry fell apart. CACC members

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<sup>10</sup> Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany is shortened to Diocese, Albany Diocese, and Albany Catholic Diocese throughout this paper.

applied a similar approach to black civil rights. They were active in the Civil Rights Movement, but struggled to maintain white authority in the face of increased cries for black leadership in the late 1960's. On the other hand, the Albany Catholic Diocese had a hands-off approach to activism. It delegated campus ministry duties at SUNY Albany to the Newman Club, and Newman members dealt with the brunt of student unrest. The separation hurt the Diocese since Catholics were venturing outside the Catholic parochial system and the Diocese was unable to relate its authority to its changing believers. In regard to black civil rights, the Albany Diocese continued its hands-off approach, with the exception of Bishop Reverend Maginn's Diocesan Development Fund. In this case, authority was lost among Catholic liberals (for inaction until 1968) and Catholic conservatives (for the Diocesan Fund). In any event, the Church could not hold on to local authority, despite the opposing strategies between the Catholics and the mainline Protestants. In a last attempt to save religious authority, the CACC inducted the Albany Catholic Diocese as a member in 1973.

My argument is presented in four sections, the first being a chapter introducing SUNY Albany from 1960 to 1970. Though recognizing and tying in the national narrative, it focuses on what was happening specifically in Albany regarding student protestors and campus unrest related to 1960's movements. The second chapter analyzes the Capital Area Council of Churches and the Albany Catholic Diocese chronologically, starting in 1960 and ending in 1973, and thematically with campus ministry. The purpose of this section is to contrast the CACC and the Albany Diocese in how they defined these issues and had different religious approaches. The third chapter analyzes black civil rights in the same format to highlight another area of contrast between the two institutions. Both sections reveal a loss of institutional authority from both the CACC and Albany Diocese. The last chapter is an epilogue about the CACC and the Albany Catholic Diocese coming together in 1973.

Albany, New York did not avoid the effects of the transformative 1960's, and realized this with expansion of the State University of New York at Albany in 1962. Previously located in the downtown area, the University moved to a bigger campus to accommodate increasing student enrollments. Together, the Baby Boom and the G.I. Bill more than doubled college enrollments since 1940 and enabled 44 percent of young Americans to attend college by 1965.<sup>11</sup> SUNY Albany indicated a similar demographic transition with the building of its new campus to which students brought the national issues and movements of the 1960's. Similar to the larger narrative, social unrest at SUNY first manifested in Civil Rights activism and expressions against *in loco parentis*, and later in the anti-Vietnam War and Student Power movements. By 1970, student protesting at SUNY Albany significantly diminished the institutional authority of university administrators. The scattered anti-Vietnam War demonstrations at SUNY and the Free Speech Movement at University of California, Berkeley both threatened and broke down the power of authority institutions, even if just the latter the made the national stage. For this reason, the story of SUNY Albany made an important contribution reflecting the larger historical narrative: The decline of conventional authority was not just a national phenomenon, it happened locally, as well.

Although university administrators at SUNY Albany did not face pervasive campus unrest in the early 1960's, they did face threats from the catalyst – the Civil Rights Movement. At first glance, student activism related to the Movement appeared benign to Northern universities. Civil Rights activists used non-violent protests and sit-ins to target legal segregation in the South and push for Civil Rights legislation, which challenged institutions still using Jim Crow as an authority system.<sup>12</sup> However, student groups founded during the Movement challenged even the “innocent” SUNY Albany administrators. In

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<sup>11</sup> Chafe, William H. *The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II*. Seventh ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. 106-7 and 307-8.

<sup>12</sup> Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey*. 142- 7



April 1960, young activists at Shaw University broke apart from other Civil Rights groups, like the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and formed the separate Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Henceforth, students, including SUNY students, began controlling their activism through their own independent groups.<sup>13</sup> In the early 1960's, church ministers led Civil Rights activism at the University by hosting on-campus discussions, but soon lost that power to direct and control the conversation to student groups. By 1965, SUNY Albany's division of SNCC and the SCLC gave speeches while another student group, Summer Community Organization and Political Education group (SCOPE), held a voting rights rally.<sup>14</sup> Even though the students belonging to these groups were a minority, they still threatened local authority by directing their Civil Rights activism independently and apart from authority figures.

In addition to the growth of student groups, the Free Speech Movement challenged SUNY Albany's institutional authority. Officially beginning in 1964 at the University of California, Berkeley, the Free Speech Movement questioned universities' power over students and criticized their overregulation of activities under *in loco parentis*.<sup>15</sup> The policy granted college administrators the legal right to enforce strict rules on curfews, drinking, and co-ed visitation in dorms to fulfill the missing parental role.<sup>16</sup> With this authority, the Berkeley administration had restricted political activities on campus, and students retaliated with mass defiance.<sup>17</sup> The Free Speech Movement shook the nation by showing students would go so far as to protest against the rules in order to vocalize their point to administrators. A similar

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<sup>13</sup> Anderson, Terry H. *The Movement and the Sixties: Protest in America from Greensboro to Wounded Knee*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. 49- 51.

<sup>14</sup> "Minister to Discuss Civil Rights Position," *Albany Student Press*. 30 October 1964. Student Newspaper Collection, Series 6: 1964, Volume 50, Number 27, Grenander Archives (ASP and Student Paper will be used as abbreviations henceforth); "Director Discusses Negro Conditions," *ASP*. 12 February 1965. Student Paper, Series 6: 1965, Volume 51, Number 1, Grenander Archives; "SNCC Member Gives Speech; Braces Civil Rights History," *ASP*. 6 April 1965. Student Paper, Series 6: 1965, Volume 51, Number 11; "Civil Rights Leader to Speak in Page, Role of SNCC," *ASP*. 2 April 1965. Student Paper, Series 6: 1965, Volume 51, Number 10, Grenander Archives. "SCOPE to Sponsor Voter Rights Rally Sunday Afternoon," *ASP*. 9 April 1965, Student Paper, Series 50: 1965, Volume 51, Number 12, Grenander Archives.

<sup>15</sup> Lytle, Mark Hamilton. *America's Uncivil Wars: The Sixties Era from Elvis to the Fall of Richard Nixon*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006. 168- 73.

<sup>16</sup> Anderson. *The Movement and the Sixties*. 97- 101.

<sup>17</sup> Lytle, America's Uncivil Wars. 170- 1.

realization took place at SUNY Albany. In 1965, the Association of Women Students challenged *in loco parentis* by proposing later curfew hours and more freedom overall.<sup>18</sup> As with Berkeley students, it argued against the right of university administrators to impose arbitrary rules. Some students were less formal when expressing their discontent, and what was described as a “PDA” (public display of affection) epidemic broke out in student lounges and dorms. It got to the point where SUNY Albany’s president, President Evan Collins, arranged and participated in a panel discussing *in loco parentis*, his powers under the policy, and what it should mean to the University community.<sup>19</sup> Given the anxious reaction of university administrators, SUNY students definitely represented an obvious threat. If *in loco parentis* could not protect the University’s authority, then little else would.

By the mid 1960’s, student activism shifted from the Civil Rights Movement to the Vietnam War, presenting more challenges to institutional authority. An important force behind the activist changes was the campus group Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). In 1962, SDS at University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, drafted *The Port Huron Statement* and created the spirit of the New Left. The manifesto was against war, nuclear weapons, and Jim Crow segregation, but more importantly, it called for a “participatory democracy.” New Left beliefs galvanized college students to question authority and take action, as seen with Berkeley students and the Free Speech Movement. More importantly, the group itself promoted confrontational activist methods for anti-Vietnam protesting in the late 1960’s, and the new militancy significantly threatened institutional authority nationally and locally. For this reason, SDS and the Port Huron Statement were key developments in the 1960’s that influenced campus unrest and the breakdown of university control.<sup>20</sup> Even the SUNY Albany Administration could not avoid the effects of the Ann Arbor revolutionaries: In 1965, students created the University’s own SDS chapter.<sup>21</sup> The

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<sup>18</sup> “Make Haste Slowly,” *ASP*. 25 February 1965. Student Paper, Series 6: 1965, Volume 51, Number 4, Grenander Archives.

<sup>19</sup> “Student, Professor Call PDA Rule Farce, Propose Reform in Dorm,” *ASP*. 12 March 1965. Student Paper, Series 6: 1965, Volume 51, Number 7, Grenander Archives. “Collins-Panel Dialogue to Deal with Campus,” *ASP*. 12 March 1965. Student Paper, Series 6: 1965, Volume 51, Number 7, Grenander Archives.

<sup>20</sup> Isserman and Kazin, *America Divided*. 166- 70.

<sup>21</sup> Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties*. 61- 67.

formation of SDS indicated the growth of Student Power to SUNY administrators, a reality further underscored by activism against the Vietnam War.

Anti-Vietnam War activism followed the same pattern of Civil Rights activism on SUNY Albany's campus: First controlled by authority figures and later taken over by student activist groups. Before 1967, students mostly acted as participants in anti-war activities. They attended debates about the Vietnam War hosted by Forum of Politics, a student-faculty panel, and listened to Senator Wayne Morse, a politician known for his "vehement opposition to American actions" in the war.<sup>22</sup> The student activism temporarily deferential to the Administration's leadership would quickly break apart as it radicalized. In June 1967, President Lyndon Johnson issued an executive order putting nineteen-year-old men at the top of the draft. As a result, anti-draft demonstrations heightened throughout the country while protestors, influenced by SDS, used confrontational tactics.<sup>23</sup> During Stop the Draft Week and the March on the Pentagon, some draft resisters charged police lines and law enforcement rather than persist with non-violent protests.<sup>24</sup> The militancy significantly challenged federal authority and, back in Albany, students posed the same threats. They showed solidarity for the nationwide protest of Stop the Draft Week by burning their own draft cards and joined the March on the Pentagon.<sup>25</sup> Despite their small number, SUNY students engaging in the radical activism threatened institutional authority. In response, administrators would try to lead anti-war efforts to get in front of the students.

SUNY Albany Administration attempted to control draft resistance on campus, but failed in their endeavors. Since the draft had become a source of upset for college students, faculty members created the Teachers' Draft Counseling Committee in 1967. The University did not possess the resources to

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<sup>22</sup> "Morse to Discuss Vietnam Sunday, Tickets Sold out for Lecture," *ASP*. 20 May 1966. Student Paper, Series 6: 1966, Volume 52, Number 21, Grenander Archives; "Students, Faculty Discuss Vietnam during Forum of Politics Meeting," *ASP*. 20 May 1966. Student Paper, Series 6: 1966, Volume 52, Number 21, Grenander Archives.

<sup>23</sup> Isserman and Kazin, *America Divided*. 178- 83.

<sup>24</sup> Lytle, *America's Uncivil War*. 217, 240- 2.

<sup>25</sup> "Pentagon Under Siege, Oct. 21, 22, 1967," *ASP*. 26 October 1967. Student Paper, Series 6: 1967, Volume 54, Number 5, Grenander Archives.

educate students on the draft and did not want to cause any reason for protest, so faculty formed the Teachers' Draft Counseling Committee to fill in the gap.<sup>26</sup> President Collins gave the Committee his seal of approval as well as to a mass teach-in on campus. The teach-in hosted thirty speakers from institutions such as Princeton, Tufts, and Harvard, who spoke on the Vietnam War – of course Collins supported it. The activism was directed by university authority figures while quelling unrest.<sup>27</sup> Yet, as seen with other areas of student discontent, this control was short lived. In 1968, Students for a Democratic Society formed its own draft council, the Anti-Draft Committee of the Students for Democratic Society. Although it did not directly replace the Teachers' Committee, SDS's version provided the same counsel and offered training for students to work alongside the teachers' auxiliary.<sup>28</sup> In other words, through SDS, students trained themselves and other students to take over faculty-led draft counseling. They also took over on-campus activism. SDS and the Committee to End the War held an Anti-War Week that entailed a GI rally, poetry reading, and open dialogues. The activist groups wanted to not only inform students but also give them opportunities to express discontent.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, all students, not just those in SDS, exercised discretion in their anti-Vietnam War efforts, marking another moment of lost authority for SUNY Albany Administration.

The year 1968 saw significant social upheaval that challenged national authority and transformed student activism into Student Power. The Tet Offensive, for exposing the horrors of the Vietnam War, and the assassination of two political leaders, Dr. Martin Luther King Junior and Robert F. Kennedy, took away idealists' hope and gave New Leftists and student activists little reason to trust

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<sup>26</sup> "Assemblyman Kelleher Attacks Draft Counseling Group," *ASP*. 9 February 1968. Student Paper, Series 6: 1968, Volume 54, Number 13. Grenander Archives.

<sup>27</sup> "Pres. Collins Discusses Drugs; Draft Counseling," *ASP*. 9 February 1968. Student Paper, Series 6: 1968, Volume 54, Number 13, Grenander Archives. "Over 800 Reached at Teach-In Genocide, Draft Discussed," *ASP*. 3 May 1968. Student Paper, Series 6: 1968, Volume 54, Number 21, Grenander Archives; "Collins Lauds Teach-In, Makes War Comments," *ASP*. 3 May 1968. Student Paper, Series 6: 1968, Volume 54, Number 21, Grenander Archives.

<sup>28</sup> "SDS Forms Draft Council," *ASP*. 11 October 1968. Student Paper, Series 6: 1968, Volume 55, Number 5, Grenander Archives.

<sup>29</sup> "War Protest Week Examines Vietnam," *ASP*. 18 October 1968. Student Paper, Series 6: 1968, Volume 55, Number 7, Grenander Archives.

authority.<sup>30</sup> In fact, during a demonstration against Columbia University, student protestors barricaded several campus buildings against its expansion into Harlem. Their actions were important because they represented students exercising power over university property and over Columbia Administration. The Columbia protest drove FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover to target SDS and other radical groups with counterintelligence programs, while Yippies exacerbated government paranoia. Yippies, radical activists who promoted anarchy, counterculture, and anything against mainstream politics, gathered by the thousands in Chicago to disrupt the Democratic Convention. Similar to Hoover, Chicago Mayor Richard Daley responded very seriously and with a law enforcement team of 12,000 police, 6,000 National Guardsmen, and 7,500 Army troops.<sup>31</sup> In essence, whether it were student protestors at Columbia University or Yippies in Chicago, young activists had started threatening authority institutions less with their activism and more with their desire for increased control and violent physical action.

Likewise, SUNY Albany students demanded more power that challenged institutional authority beyond the University. In 1969, the New York State government proposed budget cuts across the SUNY system, meaning raises in tuition for students. Unsurprisingly, the news was not taken well, and the students decided to take action against the decision. The Confederated Student Government, the student representative body of all state universities of New York, called for a “one week strike of classes on all SUNY campuses accompanied by a mass rally in Albany.”<sup>32</sup> Between 13,000 and 15,000 SUNY students, 3,000 of which belonging to Albany, marched at the Capitol protesting the budget proposals. Several even met personally with Governor Nelson Rockefeller and state legislators.<sup>33</sup> While university

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<sup>30</sup> I differentiate between student activists and New Leftists because they were not always in the same group. Many New Leftists, for example, did not support the confrontational tactics in anti-Vietnam War protesting while SDSers did. SDS blueprinted the New Left ideology but the two were not synonymous.

<sup>31</sup> Isserman and Kazin, *America Divided*. 219- 32.

<sup>32</sup> “CSG Calls for SUNY Strike,” *ASP*. 25 February 1969. Student Paper, Series 6: 1969, Volume 55, Number 29, Grenander Archives.

<sup>33</sup> “SUNY March Will Go On,” *ASP*. 21 March 1969. Student Paper, Series 6: Volume 55, Number 36, Grenander Archives; “Students Meet Rocky in Save SUNY Effort,” *ASP*. 21 March 1969. Student Paper, Series 6: Volume 55, Number 36, Grenander Archives.

administrators supported the “Save SUNY” efforts (budget cuts meant bad news for them too), they felt threatened by the idea that thousands of SUNY students collectively organized against the state government. They realized students had considerable power and threatened all areas of institutional authority, from higher education to the government, from the national level to the local level.

By 1970, SUNY Albany Administration lost its institutional authority to the students, beginning with the dismissal of a professor. Acting University President Allan A. Kuusisto debated on renewing Gerald Wagner’s professorship in the Department of Rhetoric and Public Address. Before even making a decision, the Acting President had 200 students participating in a sit-in outside his office, protesting against Wagner’s dismissal. They presented Kuusisto with two requisites stating they would stay put until a decision was made regarding Wagner’s reappointment and, more importantly, for “complete faculty-student control of all aspects of University life.”<sup>34</sup> In other words, SUNY students during the early 1960’s wanted to direct their activism. Now they wanted control over local politics and the University Administration. Kuusisto realized this desire for control when he decided to dismiss Wagner and subsequently had windows broken by angry students in the Administration Building. Unfortunately this was just the start.<sup>35</sup> They stole artwork from buildings and dorms and conflated their cries for Student Power with their activist efforts. An 800-900 person meeting of campus groups, such as Women’s Liberation and the Black Panther Party, spontaneously wreaked havoc on the library when books were tossed the facility.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, a joint Black Power and anti-war demonstration in downtown Albany turned serious when the 3,000 protestors ended up closing the State Capitol.<sup>37</sup> In these instances, SUNY

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<sup>34</sup> “No Decision Yet,” *ASP*. 13 March 1970. Student Paper, Series 7: 1970- 1979, Volume 57, Number 9, Grenander Archives.

<sup>35</sup> “Senate Endorses Dialogue; No Classes Thursday, Friday,” *ASP*. 17 March 1970. Student Paper, Series 7: 1970- 1979, Volume 57, Number 10, Grenander Archives.

<sup>36</sup> “Stolen Art on Campus,” *ASP*. 28 April 1970. Student Paper, Series 7: 1970- 1979, Volume 57, Number 19, Grenander Archives; “Campus Factions Outline Strike Guidelines, Rationale,” *ASP*. 1 May 1970. Student Paper, Series 7: 1970- 1979, Volume 57, Number 17, Grenander Archives.

<sup>37</sup> “3000 Demonstrators March on Downtown,” *ASP*. 7 May 1970. Student Paper, Series 7: 1970- 1979, Volume 57, Number 18, Grenander Archives; “Federal Building Closed,” *ASP*. 13 May 1970. Student Paper, Series 7: 1970- 1979, Volume 57, Number 18, Grenander Archives.

students demonstrated that they were not activists solely for a social cause. They were activists for Student Power too, and throwing books and storming the Capitol were acts to show their independence from authority institutions. The acts also signaled the University Administration's inability to maintain institutional authority on campus.

The story of SUNY Albany proved that the authority crisis of the 1960's was seen at the local level. Beginning with Civil Rights activism and ending with Student Power, campus unrest at SUNY Albany threatened the conventional authority of university administrators and government officials. Authority loss was not isolated to the national level. The few SUNY students attending the voting rights' rally in 1965 and those who participated in the Columbia University protest both challenged conventional authority. Student activism had come to represent and embody a fight for increased power over authority institutions and, by 1970, institutional authority suffered nationally while locally it could not be maintained. Authority at all levels experienced immense pressure from Baby Boomers during the 1960's.

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### *On Campus Activism: CACC and Albany Catholic Diocese*

Similar to administrators at SUNY Albany, mainline Protestants in the Capital Area Council of Churches grappled with the authority changes caused by 1960's social unrest. They established an active campus ministry program at the University through which they sought to modulate threats from student protesting. To members there was no difference between the more radical campuses of Berkeley and University Michigan, Ann Arbor, and the campus at SUNY Albany, and they used the national stage to inform ministry. Campus ministry thus went to great lengths relating the Church to issues surrounding morality, the draft, and the Vietnam War in response to the changes challenging authority. Over time,

the two CACC ministers, Reverend Frank Snow and Reverend William Small, became extremely divided over the right approach to student issues as protesting radicalized. Even mainline Protestantism's history with activism and social reform did not prepare the ministers for the 1960's: By 1970 the damage was done at Albany. It was clear the power of the Church meant little to much of America's youth and the other instigators of cultural upheaval.<sup>38</sup>

The Capital Area Council of Churches (CACC) is a local branch of the larger National Council of Churches and World Council of Churches. The local ecumenical organization was founded in 1941 and consists of approximately ninety faith communities in the Albany area, most of which are mainline Protestant.<sup>39</sup> Mainline Protestantism consists of multiple Protestant denominations that have similar, but not the same, belief systems. These denominations tend to reflect liberal political ideology, emphasize using the Church to instill social reform, and were part of American mainstream culture. Mainline Protestantism vests authority in its relevancy to the larger society and adapts to social changes in order to stay relevant, hence its long history of social justice and public role in the United States. For instance, the rapid industrialization of the nineteenth century instigated the Social Gospel Movement, when mainline Protestants used the Church to support trust-busting and anti-child labor causes. In the 1960's, the CACC was no different and closely linked its institutional authority to the national stage.<sup>40</sup> In doing so, and by getting so involved, it lost significant authority amongst the upheaval of the decade, especially in regard to campus unrest.

In the beginning, the Capital Area Council of Churches had control over campus ministry at SUNY Albany. As one might expect, it first wanted a campus ministry with religiously-based objectives,

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<sup>38</sup> Hammond, Phillip, and Robert Mitchell. "Segmentation of Radicalism: The Case of the Protestant Campus Minister." *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 71, no. 2 (September 1965): 133–43.

<sup>39</sup> "History." *Capital Area Council of Churches*, n.d. <https://www.capareacc.org/history/>; The main mainline Protestant sects are Methodist, Baptist, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, and Lutheran

<sup>40</sup> The Social Gospel Movement took place from the late 1800's to the early 1900's. It emphasized using the Church for social reform; Thuesen, Peter J. "The Logic of Mainline Churchliness: Historical Background Since the Reformation." In *The Quiet Hand of God: Faith-Based Activism and the Public Role of Mainline Protestantism*, edited by Robert Wunthrow and John Hyde Evans, 23–53. Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: Regents of the University of California, 2002. 39- 46.



meaning a desire to bridge the Church and the University through programs rooted in Christian theology. In the early 1960's this approach made sense. While there were instances of Civil Rights activism on campuses and the creation of student activist groups, student protesting was not yet widespread or labeled a national threat.<sup>41</sup> To mainline Protestants, the challenge was religious diversity. The GI Bill combined with the coming of age of Baby Boomers guaranteed increased enrollments and naturally, increased enrollments of non-Protestant students. The election of John F. Kennedy, a Catholic, to the U.S. presidency in 1960 also indicated a less Protestant world to the Capital Area Council of Churches. Therefore, in 1963 Reverend Frank Snow announced a new plan for campus ministry addressing the religious diversity and larger student population expected at SUNY. He proposed ecumenical Sunday services to attract Jewish and Catholic students even though it "pose[d] both theological and practical problems of great complexity...and [would] require both vision and a willingness to experiment."<sup>42</sup> To match the larger number of students, the CACC purchased property adjacent to SUNY's new campus for ministry operations and hired Reverend William Small to assist Snow.<sup>43</sup> These religious and demographic challenges seemed small compared to what the late 1960's eventually brought, but they threatened the Protestant hegemony and the CACC needed to adapt to keep its religious authority intact and relatable to American culture.

By the mid 1960's, the Capital Area Council of Churches realized that students posed more threats with their Free Speech rather than their religious diversity. The Free Speech Movement broke out on campuses and although protesting still remained sporadic, the questions raised challenged ideas surrounding authority systems. Henceforth, appealing to students would be more daunting for the CACC. To remain relevant, campus ministry needed programs beyond religiously-based objectives that

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<sup>41</sup> Lytle, *America's Uncivil Wars*. 143.

<sup>42</sup> "Annual Report, 1963- 1964: Our Twenty-third Anniversary," Capital Area Council of Churches. 1964. CACC Records, Series 1: Administrative Files, Box 1, Folder 21, Grenander Archives. 5.

<sup>43</sup> "Annual Report, 1964- 1965: Our Twenty-fourth Anniversary," Capital Area Council of Churches. 1964. CACC Records, Series 1: Administrative Files, Box 1, Folder 22, Grenander Archives. 8.

addressed student concerns outside the Church. The ecumenical program ran by Snow only attracted a modest following among students, so in 1964 he created "Golden Eye." Golden Eye entailed weekly discussions and activities moderated by Snow and Small at the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church for SUNY students and faculty.<sup>44</sup> It purposely covered controversial topics that interested students and recognized the cultural changes taking place on campuses.<sup>45</sup> For example, the talk "The Absurd University" explored the Free Speech Movement and debated if the university system resembled a factory more than an institution of intellectual growth.<sup>46</sup> The panelists sympathized with the student argument and agreed that higher education needed to be recognized as a place for intrinsic development not as a means to an end.<sup>47</sup> Clearly, Rev. Snow was using this talk to relate to students at SUNY Albany, and even admitted that Golden Eye was a "somewhat less conventional undertaking."<sup>48</sup> The Capital Area Council of Churches hoped that by supplementing religious ministry programs with Golden Eye, it would develop a rapport with the student community and prevent its loss of authority.

In a final attempt to keep a religiously-oriented ministry in the face of rising campus unrest, the Capital Area Council of Churches sought to bolster its institutional presence at SUNY Albany with a multi-denominational campus ministry. By 1966, Snow's ecumenical services instigated the creation of the Albany Collegiate Interfaith Corporation, an organization with representatives from the CACC, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany, and Albany Jewish Community Council. Once realizing that SUNY Albany was "a major university in our midst," Snow and others created the Corporation to raise money and eventually build a bigger Interfaith Center closer to campus. In the early 1960's, when students posed threats with their numbers and religious diversity, the CACC enjoyed its monopoly over SUNY

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>45</sup> Annual Report, 1964- 1965: Our Twenty-fourth Anniversary," Capital Area Council of Churches. 1964. CACC Records, Series 1: Administrative Files, Box 1, Folder 22, Grenander Archives. 8.

<sup>46</sup> Lytle, *America's Uncivil Wars*. 168- 73.

<sup>47</sup> "Faculty Members Discuss 'The Absurd University,'" *ASP*. 15 December 1964. Student Newspaper, Series 6: 1960's, Volume 50, Number 37. Grenander Archives.

<sup>48</sup> Annual Report, 1964- 1965: Our Twenty-fourth Anniversary," Capital Area Council of Churches. 1964. CACC Records, Series 1: Administrative Files, Box 1, Folder 22, Grenander Archives. 9.

Albany ministry. Now it wanted other faiths to share duties and help maintain some type of theological presence at the University as students increasingly challenged authority institutions with protesting or activist groups related to free speech and *in loco parentis*. Snow proposed a similar idea on a smaller level – merging ministry programs with the Newman Club, a Catholic student club headed by Catholic chaplain priests.<sup>49</sup> The Capital Area Council of Churches wanted the Albany Collegiate Interfaith Corporation and other religious leaders to protect its local authority by enhancing its theological underpinnings at SUNY Albany. The project never went through, though, so the campus ministers opted for a more radical route they believed would effectively maintain Church power at the University.

Because Reverend Snow and Reverend Small worked directly with college students, they aimed to protect Church authority from campus unrest by getting involved and using pastoral care to focus on student issues. By 1967, anti-Vietnam War demonstrations, draft card protests, and counterculture became prominent on the national stage. Christian clergy were divided over the appropriate response to related activism, with some saying it was too violent and others joining in and burning draft cards.<sup>50</sup> Snow and Small decided to go with the latter approach and immediately changed their mission to address “genuinely significant issues,” which they defined as the Vietnam War and university reform.<sup>51</sup> They counseled SUNY students over the draft and created educational programs for clergy and teachers in classes entitled “The Public School and Black Power.”<sup>52</sup> In doing so, Snow and Small informed local authority figures about the national agenda of student activists and how to remain relevant to its objectives. They additionally refrained from prophesizing issues to depict the Church as an ally to the students and as an institution that supported them through pastoral counseling and classes about their

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<sup>49</sup> “Annual Report, 1966- 1967: Our Twenty-sixth Anniversary,” Capital Area Council of Churches. 1967. CACC Records, Series 1: Administrative Files, Box 1, Folder 24, Grenander Archives. 5.

<sup>50</sup> Isserman and Kazin, *America Divided*. 243- 6.

<sup>51</sup> “Annual Report, 1966- 1967: Our Twenty-sixth Anniversary,” Capital Area Council of Churches. 1967. CACC Records, Series 1: Administrative Files, Box 1, Folder 24, Grenander Archives. 5.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-7.

concerns.<sup>53</sup> Snow and Small believed that immersing campus ministry into university life would underscore the Capital Area Council of Churches' relevancy and authority in Albany. They were wrong.

In 1968, profound cultural and political upheaval swept the nation that marked the breakdown of national authority. To avoid a similar fate, Reverend Snow and Reverend Small concluded that campus ministry in Albany must take a new direction to meet radical student culture, even if it meant addressing sexuality.<sup>54</sup> Small decided to get involved with dorm series covering topics such as "New Morality" and "Contemporary Sexuality." The Golden Eye discussions over politics and philosophy were no match for the difficulty of his new task, relating the Church to the sexual revolution. Struggling with the balancing act, Small called the world of the student "a happening-place, unfolding and exploding... in perplexing, even frightening dimensions."<sup>55</sup> Snow empathized. After working with individuals from the "activist camp" and the Teacher's Draft Counseling Committee, he concluded that students moved beyond simple questioning of the Vietnam War and were taking action through draft resistance.<sup>56</sup> He proposed creating an Institute for Religion and Ethics to "raise within the University a wide range of theological questions and concerns now all too often obscured or ignored."<sup>57</sup> Just two years ago, Snow wanted to educate clergy and teachers on student needs, but he started to realize this approach was turning campus ministry into an institution that facilitated students' rebellious behavior rather than one that prevented it.

The radical campus ministry of Reverend Snow and Reverend Small purposed with maintaining local authority backfired once unrest climaxed at SUNY Albany in 1970. The Capital Area Council of Churches relied on the two ministers to modulate student protesting and activism yet "well-publicized,

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>54</sup> "Annual Report, 1968- 1969: Our Twenty-eighth Anniversary," Capital Area Council of Churches. 1969. CACC Records, Series 1: Administrative Files, Box 1, Folder 25, Grenander Archives. 8.

<sup>55</sup> "Annual Report, 1968- 1969: Our Twenty-eighth Anniversary," Capital Area Council of Churches. 1969. CACC Records, Series 1: Administrative Files, Box 1, Folder 25, Grenander Archives. 9.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

recent incidents of vandalism and firebombing” still took place at the University.<sup>58</sup> Given the increased radicalization of students, Snow and Small began having major disagreements over the ministry’s next strategy. The latter minister favored their previous policy of appeasement towards students, arguing that institutions fueled their frustrations and religious responses to issues were a waste of time. Small thus called for a focus on pastoral counseling, ecumenical worship services, and dialogues on drugs, human sexuality, and politics. While he admitted campus ministry responded feebly at times, he saw its declining influence as a chance to “calculate more effective approaches to a University community.”<sup>59</sup> To put simply, Small still believed that being involved with student culture and connecting the Church to the University would preserve the CACC’s authority in Albany. Snow had completely different interpretation. The events on campus pushed him to spend six months in India for some peace, where he came to the conclusion that the CACC, or any ministry for that matter, was ill-equipped for the “emergencies of fundamental nature” presented by SUNY students.<sup>60</sup> Unlike Small, Snow couldn’t see religious institutions sustaining authority at the University and blamed the “fragmented, localized ministries, [both] Catholic and Protestant, in Albany New York,” for what happened.<sup>61</sup> To him, theology was the answer, but he was discouraged that the Albany Collegiate Interfaith Corporation made no progress in building a religious center. In sum, the two ministers had contrasting solutions to campus ministry. Small called for a ministry that sided with the students while Snow called for a ministry strongly rooted in religion. Both sought to protect authority at the University, including their own, but by different means.

In the early 1970’s, it became clear that the Capital Area Council of Churches was unable to maintain authority at SUNY Albany through campus ministry. In 1971, the organization terminated

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<sup>58</sup> “Annual Report, 1970- 1971: Our Twenty-eighth Anniversary,” Capital Area Council of Churches. 1971. CACC Records, Series 1: Administrative Files, Box 1, Folder 27, Grenander Archives. 8.

<sup>59</sup> “Annual Report, 1970- 1971: Our Twenty-eighth Anniversary,” Capital Area Council of Churches. 1971. CACC Records, Series 1: Administrative Files, Box 1, Folder 27, Grenander Archives. 8.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. 10.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

Reverend Small because of a “variety of problems [that] had developed” between the CACC and the Episcopal Diocese, the institution which originally installed the minister. With Small gone, Reverend Snow had to deal with the effects of the program they created together. He was stuck addressing student issues no matter how religiously threatening or immoral because he and Small had become secularized, admitting that “campus ministry has been part of at least some of this, explicitly or otherwise.”<sup>62</sup> By reaching out to students so aggressively, the ministers downgraded from religious leaders to campus counselors. This rude awakening prompted Snow to relocate to Rochester, New York, and he did not return for the 1972- 1973 academic year. Down two reverends, the CACC needed another faith organization to take over and sold the ministry building at SUNY Albany (Chapel House) to the Albany Collegiate Interfaith Corporation. Religious leaders from the CACC, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany, Jewish communities, and the Episcopal Diocese now controlled and split duties.<sup>63</sup> Ironically, after supporting a ministry aimed only at student culture, the CACC decided to turn attention back to religion, broke and defeated.

In sum, the Capital Area Council of Churches had a hands-on approach to campus threats at SUNY Albany and relied on campus ministry to maintain local power and modulate student opinions. In the early 1960's, campus ministry focused on religious diversity and increased enrollments since student protesting had not become a widespread problem. Rather, demographic changes in college-goers sparked concern for the CACC, whose members had to accept a less Protestant campus. By the mid 1960's, student discontent started reaching national prominence and campus ministry had to incorporate non-religious programs to reach out to students more effectively. The rise of anti-Vietnam War protesting, draft card burning, and counterculture required Reverend Snow and Reverend Small to

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<sup>62</sup> “Annual Report, 1970- 1971: Our Twenty-eighth Anniversary,” Capital Area Council of Churches. 1971. CACC Records, Series 1: Administrative Files, Box 1, Folder 27, Grenander Archives. 7.

<sup>63</sup> “Annual Report, 1972- 1973: Our Thirty-second Anniversary,” Capital Area Council of Churches. 1973. CACC Records, Series 1: Administrative Files, Box 1, Folder 30, Grenander Archives. 10.

fully detached from religion and become solely invested in student concerns. Their ministry imploded as a result. They facilitated unrest by unconditionally supporting student activism and culture regardless of how radical they had become. The CACC intended campus ministry to be an institution that reduced social upheaval, but its strategy failed when SUNY students instigated violent protests in 1970. This failure led to Small's termination, Snow's quitting, and the surrender of campus ministry to the Albany Collegiate Interfaith Corporation. The Capital Area Council of Churches did not sustain local authority in Albany through a socially conscience campus ministry in touch with the national discussion.

As with mainline Protestants in the Capital Area Council of Churches, Catholics in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany were threatened by campus unrest at SUNY Albany. However, they took the opposite approach to protect their institutional authority in face of such threats. When Reverend Frank Snow adapted the CACC to religious diversity with interfaith services, the Albany Catholic Diocese condemned Catholic students for attending secular universities and stepped back, allowing the Newman Club to take the place of Catholic ministry at SUNY Albany. When Snow and Small responded to anti-war protesting with draft counseling and to radical student culture with discussions on free speech and sexuality, the Albany Catholic Diocese remained out of touch with these changes, despite Vatican II calling on Catholic clergy to be activists outside the Church. By 1970, the Diocese realized that by staying isolated from campus life, the legitimacy of its institutional power diminished and could not be effectively conveyed to Catholic students. The Albany Catholic Diocese failed to maintain authority in Albany, by appearances, for failing to get involved with the issues raised by campus unrest. It was this failure and subsequent loss of authority that drove the Diocese to join the CACC in 1973.

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany (RCDA) was founded in 1847 and represents the Catholic churches in the Capital Region. Catholicism as a religion and as an institution distributes power via rigid hierarchy, with the pope at the top holding the most religious jurisdiction, followed by cardinals,

bishops, priests, and Catholic laity at the bottom.<sup>64</sup> The most important event contextualizing Catholicism during the 1960's was Second Vatican Council (1962- 1965). The pope convened the Second Vatican Council, or Vatican II, to modernize Catholic doctrine by making the Catholic Church a "Church of the People" and emphasizing ecumenism between Catholics and other Christian sects. Up until this point, Catholicism was an immigrant Church separated from the larger society. Most parish communities were located in cities and attracted large followings from the Irish and Italians, whose children were educated in Catholic parochial schools. After World War II, Catholic Americans experienced enough social mobility to enter the American mainstream, which was confirmed with the election of the first Catholic president, John F. Kennedy, in 1960.<sup>65</sup> The papacy responded with Vatican II doctrinal changes, the two most significant being *Gaudium et Spes*, or the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, and *Unitatis Redintegratio*, the Decree on Ecumenism. The former declared that the Church must "read the signs of the time and interpret them in the light of the Gospel" while the latter called for a restoration of Christian unity. Simply put, Catholic clergy and laity had to venture outside the Catholic Church, whether to address the national movements of the 1960's or work with non-Catholics.<sup>66</sup> The Albany Catholic Diocese would not apply the spirit of Vatican II to SUNY Albany.

In the early 1960's, when religious diversity at SUNY's campus challenged the mainline Protestant hegemony, it also challenged the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany's institutional power vested in Catholic parochial schools. The idea of Catholic students attending secular colleges, like SUNY Albany, was still largely foreign to Catholic clergy, and increased secularization of higher education during the twentieth century added to their skepticism. Thus, Catholic religious leaders felt threatened by secular institutions and saw parochial schools as the answer to, and an integral part in, maintaining

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<sup>64</sup> "Pastoral Center Organizational Chart." *Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany*,

2015. [http://www.rcda.org/offices/parish\\_services/pdf/Pastoral%20Center%20Organizational%20Chart.pdf](http://www.rcda.org/offices/parish_services/pdf/Pastoral%20Center%20Organizational%20Chart.pdf).

<sup>65</sup> Gleason, Philip. "Catholicism and Cultural Changes in the 1960's." *The Review of Politics*, America in Change: Reflections on the 60's and 70's, vol. 34, no. 4 (October 1972). 91- 8.

<sup>66</sup> "Major Documents of Vatican II." *U.S. Catholic Faith in Real Life*, 2017. <http://www.uscatholic.org/2012/09/major-documents-vatican-ii>.



Catholic institutional authority.<sup>67</sup> The Albany Diocese was no different. It did not get involved with SUNY Albany or seek to establish a more active campus ministry, even if two out of three Catholic students picked independent or public institutions over Catholic colleges by 1963.<sup>68</sup> It sought to protect Catholic authority by ignoring secular SUNY Albany altogether and letting the Newman Club maintain Catholicism at the University. As a result, Newman members became closer to 1960's social issues and student culture while the Diocese pushed itself further away.

Newman clubs were campus faith groups established in the early 1800's to promote the "intellectual, moral, social and religious standards" excluded from secular education.<sup>69</sup> Essentially, they meant to help Catholic students follow their faith while attending secular schools under the guidance of a chaplain priest. Although local church dioceses provided Newman chaplains, Newman was a student organization and chaplain priests remained separated from their diocesan provider. In 1960, when SUNY Albany expanded to its new campus and its growing secular presence challenged Catholic institutional authority, Bishop William Scully of Albany responded by personally writing to Catholic students attending the University telling them to join the Newman Club:

You are presently listed as a student of a secular college. Undoubtedly, you have good reasons for attending such an institution. Permit me, therefore, to remind you that from past experiences we know that you will have to face a serious challenge to your Catholic faith – a challenge which may affect your future moral life and perhaps endanger your eternal salvation.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Leahy, William. *Adapting to America: Catholics, Jesuits, and Higher Education in the Twentieth Century*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1991. 128-9; Evans, John Whitney. *The Newman Movement: Roman Catholics in American Higher Education, 1883- 1971*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980. 60- 72, 83.

<sup>68</sup> Evans, John Whitney. *The Newman Movement: Roman Catholics in American Higher Education, 1883- 1971*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980. 60- 72, 83.

<sup>69</sup> Founding Constitution of Newman at Russell Sage. N.d. Albany Catholic Diocese Campus Ministry, Campus Ministry Chaplains, Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany Archives, Pastoral Center, Albany, New York. Henceforth, RCDA Archives will be used as an abbreviation.

<sup>70</sup> Bishop Scully to Newman Club Chaplains, Letter. 13 September 1960. Albany Catholic Diocese Campus Ministry, Campus Ministry Chaplains, RCDA Archives.

In other words, while the CACC altered their ministry in the face of student threats, Bishop Scully stepped away from the campus and simply instructed Catholic students to become Newman members. The bishop felt threatened by the fact that Catholics were attending secular universities and not Catholic schools (such as Siena College or Saint Rose, to provide local examples), yet he had no intention of maintaining Catholic authority through an involved campus ministry program. To him, it was best to remain isolated from the campus while Newman took over. Even when given a second opportunity to get on campus, Scully declined. In 1963, he met with the CACC regarding an interfaith campus ministry at SUNY and despite expressing “definite interest,” Scully still told the mainline Protestants to “take the initiative.”<sup>71</sup> When confronted by authority threats from SUNY’s campus, the Albany Diocese reacted through a policy of avoidance with the hope to thereby protect its institutional authority from secular concerns.

Consequently, it would be Newman dealing with the cultural changes of the 1960’s. Similar to the Capital Area Council of Churches, Newman realized early on that campus ministry rooted in Catholicism would not survive, and the club quickly adapted thereafter. In 1963, the Rensselaer Newman Association proposed the building of a Newman Center at a smaller, private institution in Albany, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI).<sup>72</sup> Through the Development Direction Inc., it conducted a study to determine whether or not the Center, which centralized Newman chaplains and represented a stronger commitment to Catholic teaching, would be economically feasible. Respondents to the project agreed it was too ambitious and that chaplains needed a pastoral role on campus, with one respondent saying “If I were a Catholic parent worried about my child retaining his faith at a secular university, I would simply send him to a Catholic college.”<sup>73</sup> Simply put, Catholics were insufficiently concerned with

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<sup>71</sup> “Memo on State University: Tri-faith Facility,” *Diocese of Albany*. 15 December 1963. Albany Catholic Diocese Campus Ministry, Interfaith Center SUNY at Albany, RCDA Archives.

<sup>72</sup> Chart of Established Newman Clubs in Albany. 1969- 1950. Newman Club, RCDA Archives.

<sup>73</sup> “The Newman Foundation at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institution, Troy, New York: Survey Study and Analysis,” *Development Direction Inc.* November 1963. Newman Club Memorabilia, RCDA Archives.

religious ministries and preferred pastoral services to address relevant concerns, most of which being secular. Some even claimed a Catholic ministry “would prove hurtfully competitive with the high technical standards.”<sup>74</sup> Catholics were moving beyond theology-based education and as a result, Newman clubs ventured outside the Catholic Church.

From 1964 to 1965, SUNY Albany’s Newman Club moved beyond the goal of maintaining Catholicism on campus to connect with students of other faiths. During the academic year, Newman members worked with Reverend Frank Snow and the Protestant group, the Campus Christian Council, on several occasions. They co-sponsored an ecumenical Bible study and held two ecumenical prayer services for Ash Wednesday and the Advent season, making it “the first time Catholics and Protestants at Albany State prayed together.”<sup>75</sup> Compared to the Albany Catholic Diocese, whose members did not form an official commission on ecumenism until 1967, the Newman Club was truly ahead of its time for reaching out to non-Catholics. Better yet, some of these students recalled their interfaith collaboration as “the highlight of the year,” implying that they wanted to continue working with their Protestant counterparts.<sup>76</sup> By interacting with non-Catholic religious organizations and ministers, the Newman Club reflected the mission Vatican II and the changes happening on SUNY Albany’s campus. The campus was becoming more diverse and Newman members knew the importance of stepping outside Catholicism’s borders to relate to students, unlike the Albany Catholic Diocese down the street.

Since the late 1960’s saw radical cultural and political change, the Albany Newman Club addressed secular concerns more aggressively. In early 1967, the Newman members collaborated with the Church of the University, a Protestant organization created under the Capital Area Council of Churches, to sponsor courses in theology for SUNY Albany students. Some classes included “A New Basis

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Annual Report, 1964- 1965: Our Twenty-fourth Anniversary,” Capital Area Council of Churches. 1965. CACC Records, Series 1: Administrative Files, Box 1, Folder 22, Grenander Archives. 9.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

for Sexual Morality,” which was given by CACC campus minister Reverend Small, and “Revelation-Genesis and Modern Science-Evolution.”<sup>77</sup> As pointed out before, Bishop William Scully detested secular education, and partly for having classes on modern science that challenged Christian teaching. Yet, Newman members actively engaged the topic in addition to changing sexual norms, as hinted by the title “A New Basis for Sexual Morality.”<sup>78</sup> They went from ecumenism and working with Protestants to secular issues. As best put by one member, “...Newman has become an action minded group involved with the social, cultural, educational...aspects of a student’s life.”<sup>79</sup> Similar to the CACC, the radicalization of student culture transformed the Newman Club into an organization dominated by secular concerns. By 1969 its agenda incorporated a talk on birth control, co-ed mixers, and discussions on popular music, all in an effort to connect with students, Catholic or not. At this point, the Newman Club had completely divorced itself from the mission of establishing Catholicism and became a student group.<sup>80</sup> In doing so, it enabled the Albany Catholic Diocese to stay isolated from the cultural changes taking place on Albany’s campus during the late 1960’s. At the same time, it no longer upheld Catholicism, as would be the case with many Catholic students, even those at Catholic colleges and universities.

The Albany Catholic Diocese’s ministries at local religious or private colleges demonstrated how obsolete its authority had become to Catholic students and the growing secular world. Even on the predominately Catholic campuses, Diocesan ministers struggled to remain relevant.<sup>81</sup> In the 1969- 1970

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<sup>77</sup> “Church of University, Newman Association Hold Theology Classes,” *ASP*. 29 February 1967. Student Paper. Series 6: 1960s, Volume 53, Number 5, Grenander Archives.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> “Newman Society Promotes Action and Involvement,” *ASP*. 1 December 1967. Student Paper. Series 6: 1960s, Volume 54, Number 10, Grenander Archives.

<sup>80</sup> “Father Smith Speaks About Birth Control,” *ASP*. 25 October 1968. Student Paper. Series 6: 1960s, Volume 55, Number 9, Grenander Archives; “Newman Society Promotes Action and Involvement,” *ASP*. 1 December 1967. Student Paper. Series 6: 1960s, Volume 54, Number 10, Grenander Archives.

<sup>81</sup> The Albany Catholic Diocese had ministries at Siena College, Skidmore College, Union College, and Saint Rose. These schools had more enrollments of Catholic students and/or were Jesuit, hence the emphasis on them and not SUNY Albany; Ermlich, Ferdinand. “Summary Report, Division of Campus Ministry.” 17 July 1970. Albany Catholic Diocese Campus Ministry, Campus Ministry Chaplains, RCDA Archives.

Summery Report on Campus Ministry, the Diocesan Director, Reverend Ferdinand Ermlich, summarized their struggles:

In a very short period of its recent history, campus ministry within the Diocese of Albany has witnessed a great range of activities.... and even deliberate attempts to promote anarchy.

Many of us have attempted to remain "in" on what is going on but that position becomes impossible in trying to follow the latest curve, peak or valley the college community chooses.<sup>82</sup>

In other words, Albany Catholic Diocese's authority vested in the parochial system could not avoid the cultural changes represented by SUNY Albany and other secular institutions. Catholic students at Catholic colleges participated in anti-war demonstrations and Black Power protests, and the Albany Diocese had little clue in how to respond to their "anarchy." To compare, Reverend William Small understood students' frustration over "the System" and tried to adapt campus ministry, but Reverend Ermlich couldn't even pinpoint the source of their upset, let alone justify their behavior.<sup>83</sup> Such cluelessness manifested in solutions based in theology only, with one campus minister trying to bridge the Church and university community through a Sunday Evening Eucharist.<sup>84</sup> This approach was taken by CACC and the Newman Club in the early 1960's when SUNY Albany's campus posed religious diversity. The Albany Catholic Diocese had an ill-informed approach to say the least.

Since the Albany Catholic Diocese isolated itself from secular concerns and campuses, it only knew how to relate its authority to Catholic issues, hence the theological approach. It did not have the experience of the CACC and the Newman Club to develop campus ministry programs rooted in secular concerns related to current student culture. Naturally, the Albany Catholic Diocese would fail in its approach to campus unrest. In the 1969- 1970 Summery Report, the Diocesan campus minister noted

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<sup>82</sup> Ermlich, Ferdinand. "Summary Report, Division of Campus Ministry." 17 July 1970. Albany Catholic Diocese Campus Ministry, Campus Ministry Chaplains, RCDA Archives. 1.

<sup>83</sup> "Annual Report, 1969- 1970: Our Twenty-ninth Anniversary," Capital Area Council of Churches. 1969. CACC Records, Series 1: Administrative Files, Box 1, Folder 27, Grenander Archives. 8.

<sup>84</sup> Ermlich, Ferdinand. "Summary Report, Division of Campus Ministry." 17 July 1970. Albany Catholic Diocese Campus Ministry, Campus Ministry Chaplains, RCDA Archives. 1.

that ministry to black students and sub groups were “hit and miss” and there was a “sharp decrease of interest” in Catholic programs and faith instruction among university students.<sup>85</sup> Reverend Ermlich even wrote to Bishop Edwin Broderick of the Albany Diocese, saying that he (Ermlich) “being white, blond, blue-eyed, and German had little credibility.... [in] resolving the hate within the black community.”<sup>86</sup> He then called on the bishop to find a black clergyman to instead fulfill that aspect of his ministry duty.<sup>87</sup> To put briefly, Reverend Ermlich approached campus unrest through a Catholic campus ministry with the hopes of maintaining authority. Once realizing his ineffectiveness in solving secular issues, such as race and student activism, he called on Bishop Broderick to find someone else more qualified. Ermlich was unable to convey the Catholic institutional authority he represented in the face of rising secularism and unrest. The Albany Catholic Diocese spent the past decade isolated from the cultural changes of the 1960’s and it was obvious its institutional authority had become irrelevant to the many Catholics undergoing such changes.

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany differed dramatically from Capital Area Council of Churches in its approach to campus ministry. Up until Vatican II, Catholicism discouraged activism in non-churchly matters and campus ministries at secular institutions. Thus, the Diocese was uninvolved with campus ministry and delegated the Newman Club the responsibility to maintain Catholicism at SUNY Albany and other non-Catholic universities. This caused the Albany Diocese to inadvertently push Newman Club members closer to secular student concerns and away from the original goal of establishing Catholicism, while it stayed away from the controversial issues brought on by campus unrest. Consequently, the Diocese could no longer relate its institutional authority to Catholic laypeople. Despite their opposite approaches, the Albany Catholic Diocese and the Capital Area Council of Churches

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid. 4.

<sup>86</sup> Reverend Ferdinand Ermlich to Bishop Edwin Broderick, Letter. 11 March 1970. Albany Catholic Diocese Campus Ministry, Campus Ministry Chaplains, RCDA Archives. 1.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

both failed to maintain authority in the face of campus unrest. It makes sense the two united in 1973 when the Diocese officially joined the ecumenical organization.

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### *Off Campus: Civil Rights, the CACC, and the Albany Catholic Diocese*

Off SUNY Albany's campus, black civil rights posed additional challenges to the Capital Area Council of Churches. In the early 1960's, the Civil Rights Movement represented a moment of change in the United States, so long as it was within the liberal consensus. The liberal consensus characterized American politics during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and consisted of five principles, two of the most important being that American society, as it stood, did not have major problems and any problems it did have could be solved through incremental reform. The Movement fit nicely within the parameters of the liberal consensus. It aimed to bring down *de jure* segregation in Southern states through Civil Rights legislation and activists used strategies of non-violent protests and "sit-ins" to attain their goal. Therefore, the Civil Rights Movement did not severely threaten the Capital Area Council of Churches' white authority anchored by the liberal consensus, making it easier for the organization to support Civil Rights efforts. During the early 1960's, CACC members were very involved in the Movement on a national and local scale, and their activism was pivotal in the passing of the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act. Once the Movement split between more conservative Civil Rights activists, such as those in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and radical activists in the Students Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, black civil rights began calling for structural change. President Johnson's War on Poverty programs and the subsequent outbreak of urban rioting highlighted this transformation, all of which threatened white authority and the liberal consensus.<sup>88</sup> As the CACC progressively engaged

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<sup>88</sup> Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey*. 94-7 and 142- 7.

with black civil rights activism, and attempted to provide opportunities for black leadership, it became increasingly uncomfortable with the idea of losing authority to black leaders. Similar to campus unrest, the CACC sought to immerse itself among authority threats in an effort to maintain power. Also similar to campus unrest, it withdrew from the cause altogether in 1970 following collaboration with black clergy, signifying its biggest fear realized.

In the early 1960's, the Capital Area Council was very involved in the Civil Rights Movement. The Movement indicated change for America and such change meant activist involvement to maintain relevancy, and thus authority, for the CACC. To do so, it often collaborated with the National Council of Churches (NCC), which had considerable political connections. In 1963, the NCC mobilized religious leaders across the country for the March on Washington, the pivotal event when over 200,000 Americans gathered in Washington, D.C. to pressure legislators to pass a Civil Rights bill. Members also lobbied in Washington and wrote letters to Congress until a Civil Rights Act was passed in 1964.<sup>89</sup> CACC members contributed to these national efforts: Thirteen attended the March on Washington and several attended the meetings in D.C. preparing for the event.<sup>90</sup> By participating in the Washington affairs, the CACC lived out the mainline Protestant belief of authority and social change being inextricably linked. Back at home, it was just as active.<sup>91</sup> In 1963, the CACC added the Department of Social Education and Action to support Civil Rights efforts.<sup>92</sup> It called on members to inform government representatives about the Civil Rights bill while the Department itself met with local religious leaders to persuade other denominations to "write their senators in Washington" about the bill.<sup>93</sup> Whether it was through the

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<sup>89</sup> "March on Washington." *History.com*, 1991. <http://www.history.com/topics/black-history/march-on-washington>

<sup>90</sup> Findlay Jr., James F. *Church People in the Struggle: The National Council of Churches and the Black Freedom Movement, 1950-1970*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993. 14- 5; "Annual Report, 1964- 1965: Our Twenty-fourth Anniversary," Capital Area Council of Churches. 1965. CACC Records, Series 1: Administrative Files, Box 1, Folder 22, Grenander Archives. 5.

<sup>91</sup> "Annual Report, 1964- 1965: Our Twenty-fourth Anniversary," Capital Area Council of Churches. 1965. CACC Records, Series 1: Administrative Files, Box 1, Folder 22, Grenander Archives. 5.

<sup>92</sup> "Annual Report, 1963- 1964: Our Twenty-third Anniversary," Capital Area Council of Churches. 1964. CACC Records, Series 1: Administrative Files, Box 1, Folder 21, Grenander Archives. 17.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 and 4.



National Council of Churches or activist efforts in Albany, the CACC was very involved in the Civil Rights Movement. It was easier for members to be engaged and supportive because the Movement, although calling for legal change, did not challenge their white authority within the liberal consensus. As the 1960's progressed, the balance between white authority and black civil rights activism became harder for the CACC to maintain.

In addition to Civil Rights legislation, the Great Society and War on Poverty programs sought to address black civil rights during the 1960's and affected the Capital Area Council of Churches own approach to the cause. President Lyndon Johnson understood that dismantling legal segregation in the South did not address racism and poverty issues in the North, and hope that with the Great Society and War on Poverty, he could improve the lives of all Americans (within the liberal consensus of course). From 1964 to 1965, federal aid went towards numerous programs related to education, job training, healthcare (Medicaid, Medicare), and even arts and cultural centers. The idea was to alleviate poverty by providing certain resources rather than through income redistribution.<sup>94</sup> Acting as the centerpiece of the War on Poverty was the 1964 Economic Opportunity Act. The act established the Office of Economic Opportunity and Community Action Programs (CAPs), the latter of which intended to give poor and minority residents a say in how federal funding should be spent in their communities.<sup>95</sup> The Great Society programs represented the federal government's attempt to help the poor within the liberal consensus and the shift from abolishing Jim Crow to abolishing inner city poverty. This pushed the Capital Area Council of Churches to establish a platform in touch with the War on Poverty, but it also brought the organization closer to the reality that the dynamic between white and black authority was changing.

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<sup>94</sup> Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey*. 223 and 230.

<sup>95</sup> Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey*. 225- 7, 231.

In 1965, the Capital Area Council of Churches announced the creation of “the most dramatic, most effective community program to be known in Albany,” the Inter-Faith Task Force.<sup>96</sup> During the summers of 1965 and 1966, the Inter-Faith Task Force brought religious leaders from the CACC, the Jewish community, and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany to rebuild and improve inner city Albany. More significantly, it meant to foster community leadership, as with the Community Action Programs. The Inter-Faith Task Force encouraged “the organization of block organizations, led by residents” that together regularly sought enforcement of housing codes, street cleanliness, and removal of vacant or unsightly lots.<sup>97</sup> In doing so, it hoped to instill “a sense of dignity and hope” within poor neighborhoods.<sup>98</sup> The Inter-Faith Task Force was essential for several reasons. First, it gave inner city residents leadership opportunities. The lobbying efforts of the early 1960’s went towards legislation benefitting African Americans, but did not provide spaces for black leadership nor target Northern racism. Second, the Inter-Faith Task Force worked directly with black Albany residents, which demonstrated the increased involvement of CACC members. There was clearly a difference between sending letters to senators about a Civil Rights bill and spending hot summer days picking up trash in downtown Albany. Even so, the CACC created the Inter-Faith Task Force out of fear of declining white leadership.

When the Inter-Faith Task Force empowered downtown Albany residents, the CACC’s Social Education and Action Department sought leadership in black civil rights from conventional authority figures. Albany’s local government had not pursued federal funding from the Economic Opportunity Act to create a Community Action Program, so members in the Social Education and Action Department wrote to county legislators about the funds. They also met with local bankers, real estate agents, and

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<sup>96</sup> “Annual Report, 1965- 1966: Our Twenty-fourth Anniversary,” Capital Area Council of Churches. 1966. CACC Records, Series 1: Administrative Files, Box 1, Folder 23, Grenander Archives. 1

<sup>97</sup> “Annual Report, 1965- 1966: Our Twenty-fourth Anniversary,” Capital Area Council of Churches. 1966. CACC Records, Series 1: Administrative Files, Box 1, Folder 23, Grenander Archives. 1

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

insurance agents to discuss housing options for minority groups in Albany.<sup>99</sup> The discrepancy between the Inter-Faith Task Force and the Social Education and Action Department demonstrated the difficulty of simultaneously maintaining white authority and relevancy to the changing national stage. Both programs were part of the CACC and created in support of black civil rights, but the Social Education and Action Department canceled out the leadership mission of the Inter-Faith Task Force. Department members collaborated with local leaders to develop housing plans for minority residents living downtown. In essence, they laid out the preferred steps for the block organizations to take. The Inter-Faith Task Force organized community groups led by residents and encouraged them to seek justice in housing codes, vacant lots, and other neighborhood issues. Behind the scenes, the Social Education and Action Department had already negotiated with the necessary personnel to take control, effectively undercutting the community leadership promoted by the Inter-Faith Task Force. The CACC felt threatened by declining white authority. It would engage in Civil Rights activism, but only to a certain extent.

The CACC was beginning to experience what the National Council of Churches did in 1964. The NCC's work behind the 1964 Freedom Summer meant to unify blacks and whites in the fight for African American voting rights in the South, but significant power struggles broke out between black and white participants. Even before the Freedom Summer began, divisions formed. The previous spring, the NCC worked with SNCC and SCLC staffers to hold an orientation session for Northern students and attempted to have a supervisory role. In theory it wanted to let the black leaders train students since they experienced racism first hand, but some church leaders in the NCC opposed this exchange of power. In fact, the NCC general secretary, Edwin Epsy, gave all the names of those at the orientation sessions to the FBI as proof of subversive activity in black groups.<sup>100</sup> Ironically, the Freedom Summer meant to

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>100</sup> Findlay, *Church People in the Struggle*, 84- 7.

empower African Americans and their quest for voting rights, yet Epsy, a NCC leader, turned in the names of the people he was supposed to be helping. The Civil Rights activism of NCC members was genuine as long as their white authority remained unthreatened by black leadership. Once the focus of black civil rights went from legal equality to social equality, such threats were difficult to avoid.<sup>101</sup>

Urban rioting heightened the fears of authority institutions and transformed the meaning of black rights activism. During the summers of 1965 through 1968, urban rioting in predominately black neighborhoods broke out. The riots resulted from the strained relationship between white cops and black civilians, but news outlets incorrectly portrayed them as race riots and labeled black rioters as “thugs,” which fed into white suspicion and the fear of declining authority.<sup>102</sup> More importantly, urban rioting attracted national attention to *de facto* segregation and police relations in inner cities that went unresolved by the Great Society and the War on Poverty. President Johnson created the programs to specifically improve poor, inner city America, and yet people living in those areas were rebelling. The riots made Johnson and other conventional authority figures realize that urban issues could not be solved by legislation or any other method within the liberal consensus; they required structural change. Henceforth, the Capital Area Council of Churches struggled immensely with black civil rights as structural change clearly indicated the decline of white authority.

From 1967 to 1970, Capital Area Council of Churches could no longer balance engagement in black civil rights while holding onto white power. Related activism called for increased black leadership, and many whites distrusted that idea, including those in the CACC. Their distrust manifested in classes given by the CACC, such as “Poverty, the Urban Crisis and the Church” and “The Black Revolution: What’s Happening to Black People in America Today and the Consequences for the Larger Society.”<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Wittern-Keller, Laura. “Urban Rioting.” Lecture, April 2016.

<sup>103</sup> Annual Report, 1968- 1969: Our Twenty-eighth Anniversary,” Capital Area Council of Churches. 1969. CACC Records, Series 1: Administrative Files, Box 1, Folder 26, Grenander Archives. 31.

The classes indicated two things. First, based on the title of the second one, the CACC felt extremely threatened. The phrase “Black Revolution” characterized black civil rights as dangerous and violent while “Consequences for the Larger Society” implied it as destructive to whites since they made up the larger society. Second, the CACC held classes in place of active engagement, despite the Social Education and Action Department Chairman saying “...the educative value of such a workshop is difficult to assess...the magnitude of the problems facing our cities.”<sup>104</sup> The CACC was conflicted. It did not want to give up its white power, but it also felt compelled to address social issues, given its authority vested in social justice and the changing needs of society. It realized that to engage in black civil rights, it could no longer be a leader. In 1969, the Social Education and Action Department began having monthly breakfasts with clergy from all over the Capital Region to ensure that “black and white leadership” was presented.<sup>105</sup> The Department’s new objective represented lost authority to black clergy and the lunches admitted the CACC’s having lost control over black civil rights.

The early 1970’s depict an activist retreat for the Capital Area Council of Churches. The only project it organized related to black civil rights was promoting a special viewing of a Martin Luther King Junior documentary as part of a nationwide tribute. Through the National Council of Churches, it secured a movie theater for the viewing while members delivered tickets to people and publicized the event. Their “intensive campaign” paid off, with over 1,000 people attending the viewing and raising \$5,000 for the M.L.K. Jr. Special Fund that went towards work against poverty, racial injustice, and illiteracy.<sup>106</sup> Even though this activism was ostensibly in support of black civil rights, the CACC was mainly just participating in a national effort honoring Dr. King. For the most part, it retracted from the cause, going from the March on Washington to movie nights on Madison Avenue.

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<sup>104</sup> “Annual Report, 1967- 1968: Our Twenty-seventh Anniversary,” Capital Area Council of Churches. 1968. CACC Records, Series 1: Administrative Files, Box 1, Folder 25, Grenander Archives. 20.

<sup>105</sup> “Annual Report, 1969- 1970: Our Twenty-ninth Anniversary,” Capital Area Council of Churches. 1968. CACC Records, Series 1: Administrative Files, Box 1, Folder 27, Grenander Archives. 17.

<sup>106</sup> “Annual Report, 1969- 1970: Our Twenty-ninth Anniversary,” Capital Area Council of Churches. 1970. CACC Records, Series 1: Administrative Files, Box 1, Folder 27, Grenander Archives. 15- 6.

The Capital Area Council of Churches' approach to black civil rights reflected an authority crisis experienced by many conventional authority figures throughout the 1960's. During the Civil Rights Movement, CACC members actively pursued solutions to segregation because the Movement instilled change through legal means and established systems. It did not threaten authority of CACC members living in the North. When the national focus transitioned to the War on Poverty, the CACC formed the Inter-Faith Task Force, which strongly mirrored Johnson's Economic Opportunity Act. Although both programs had a community-based approach to poverty, they still put control in the hands of the government or the CACC, and not black leaders. Urban rioting revealed the pitfalls of Johnson's Great Society and more importantly, declining white authority. Legislation and anti-poverty programs failed to handle race problems and new solutions meant putting blacks in charge of institutions. The CACC thus downgraded activist efforts, but only after working with black clergy, indicating a loss of white authority to African American churches. By the early 1970's, the CACC rarely participated in black civil rights unless it was part of national phenomenon.

Albany Catholic Diocese had a difference experience from the CACC and refrained from direct involvement with the Civil Rights Movement in order to protect its institutional authority. During the 1960's, Civil Rights activism had come to represent the cultural changes within American Catholicism. Catholic liberals started questioning the parochial system inspired by their Civil Rights activism and Vatican II. As a result, a new emphasis on the individual and how he/she can affect the Church replaced how the Church, an authoritative structure, affected the individual. In addition, Vatican II politicized activism and transformed Catholic good works, such as helping black citizens, into political statements. As was the case with most dioceses, the Albany Catholic Diocese had local political connections that it did not want to challenge through overt black civil rights activism.<sup>107</sup> Thus, in the early 1960's, the

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<sup>107</sup> McGreevy, John T. *Parish Boundaries: The Catholics Encounter with Race in the Twentieth-Century Urban North*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996. 132, 205, and 245.

Albany Catholic Diocese chose to step around the race issue to maintain its local authority. It supported Civil Rights efforts but remained unaffiliated with the cause, which resulted in backlash from Catholic liberals. After years of being pressured, one bishop created a fund that went towards inner city Albany. He, too, received backlash from unhappy parishioners for being overly ambitious. By 1970, the Albany Catholic Diocese lost legitimacy among Catholics across the political spectrum due, in part, to its approaches to black civil rights.

In the early 1960's, the Albany Catholic Diocese supported, but did not formally commit to, Civil Rights. Catholic liberals and clergy engaged in activist efforts through the Catholic Interracial Council of the Diocese of Albany (CIC).<sup>108</sup> The CIC structurally resembled the Capital Area Council of Churches. It was the local branch of the National Council Conference of Interracial Justice, which consisted of other Catholic Interracial Councils in Northern cities, and was very active in the Civil Rights Movement. CIC members sent letters and telegrams urging the passing of the Civil Rights Bill, and grew from twenty-five people in 1963 to over two-hundred by 1965, indicating the significant amount of Catholic support behind Civil Rights.<sup>109</sup> Even so, the CIC never became a department directly under the Albany Catholic Diocese and instead formed under the blessing of Bishop Edward Maginn, the Diocesan auxiliary bishop.<sup>110</sup> The difference between the two was very important. A department would imply that the Albany Diocese officially committed to the Civil Rights Movement, meaning its clergy, its treasury, and its parishes would also be committed. A bishop's blessing meant that the Albany Diocese supported the CIC and its mission, but was not making a political statement about the cause. CIC members were fighting on behalf of racial equality, and the Catholic Church emphasized helping one another and doing

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<sup>108</sup> Gleason, Philip. "Catholicism and Cultural Changes in the 1960's." *The Review of Politics*, America in Change: Reflections on the 60's and 70's, vol. 34, no. 4 (October 1972). 92- 6.

<sup>109</sup> Doris M. Quinn to Rev. Edward J. Maginn, Letter, *Catholic Interracial News*. 19 July 1968. Diocesan Council for Racial Justice, Folder 1, RCDA Archives. 1- 2.

<sup>110</sup> Drysdale, Emil. "Annual Report to the Bishop," *Catholic Interracial Council Diocese of Albany*. January 1965. Diocesan Council for Racial Justice Records, Folder 1, RCDA Archives. 1- 2; Reverend Nellis Tremblay to Reverend William Scully, Letter. N.d. Diocesan Council for Racial Justice Records, Folder 1, RCDA Archives.

good works for others. Therefore, by keeping the CIC independent with Bishop Maginn's blessing, the Albany Catholic Diocese avoided official commitment to the Civil Rights Movement in an effort to protect its institutional authority.<sup>111</sup> One activist priest tested this approach when he publically commented his take on the issue.

In 1965, Father Bonaventure O'Brien challenged the Albany Catholic Diocese's decision to remain disassociated with Civil Rights activism. The Catholic priest had spent the summer volunteering for the Inter-Faith Task Force, the anti-poverty program created by the Capital Area Council of Churches. Like other religious leaders involved in the project, O'Brien dedicated his work towards improving Albany's South End community, which made him realize the necessity of such programs.<sup>112</sup> He thus started pushing Albany residents to join organizations similar to the Inter-Faith Task Force. More drastically, he openly criticized Albany Mayor Erastus Corning for not aggressively pursuing federal funding from the 1964 Economic Opportunity Act to use towards ameliorating local poverty. On Election Day, O'Brien further broadcasted his frustration when he aided South End residents to poll watch to prevent infringements on their voting rights and ensure that Mayor Corning's re-election was not a result of Albany machine politics. The Albany Catholic Diocese did not appreciate O'Brien's outspokenness. It supported his efforts in the Inter-Faith Task Force, committing both personnel and funding for the project, but the priest crossed a line by making overt political statements and interfering with local politics. In response, the Diocese silenced Father O'Brien, even though the idea of Catholic good works was all about improving the lives of the poor.<sup>113</sup>

The Albany Catholic Diocese failed to recognize the growing power of Catholic liberals during the 1960's. When it silenced Father Bonaventure O'Brien, it received backlash from the Catholic community

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<sup>111</sup> McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries*. 131- 5.

<sup>112</sup> "Annual Report, 1965- 1966: Our Twenty-fifth Anniversary," Capital Area Council of Churches. 1966. CACC Records, Series 1: Administrative Files, Box 1, Folder 23, Grenander Archives. 18; McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries*. 192- 3.

<sup>113</sup> McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries*, 192- 3.



that diminished its institutional authority. Upon hearing the request for O'Brien's departure, the Catholic Interracial Council argued that the Diocese contradicted Catholic teaching. CIC members referenced Saint Francis of Assisi as proof that Catholic troublemakers not only deserved forgiveness, but also can still live a saintly life.<sup>114</sup> Prior to the incident, the Albany Diocese went unquestioned by the CIC. Bishop Maginn gave his blessing to the organization while Bishop William Scully, the same person who silenced O'Brien, received a letter expressing the "[CIC's] gratitude for his support... and for the support received from the Chancery office."<sup>115</sup> Now, the Diocese was being challenged and criticized by the same Catholics. It was true the Civil Rights Movement inspired Catholic liberals across the country to rethink the parochial hierarchy, but for Albany Catholics the catalyst came from Father O'Brien. In addition to the CIC, four-hundred students at Siena College expressed their discontent with the Diocese by gathering for a prayer service honoring the activist priest.<sup>116</sup> The Albany Catholic Diocese continued to lose institutional authority over its inaction over black civil rights.

As the 1960's went on, the Albany Catholic Diocese faced more scrutiny from Catholics unhappy with its hands-off approach to black civil rights. Following Vatican II, Catholic clergy and institutions were expected to be activists outside the Church. The Diocese failed to apply the new mindset, and many Catholics noticed its failure to do so. After a year of inaction, CIC president called on Bishop Maginn to solve the "Catholic Dilemma," that is, adhering to Catholic tradition in light of changing times. Vatican II posed difficulties and confusion for Catholics, especially since the pope now called for engagement outside the Church after denouncing secularism and ecumenism for hundreds of years. Thus, the CIC president pressured Diocesan officials for help, additionally stating that he "cannot overstress the

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<sup>114</sup> Saint Francis of Assisi (b. 1181) was a huge partier and lived lavishly off his father's money before giving up his wealth and vices to devote his life working for God as a friar. For Catholics, his story represents how any person, no matter how sinful his/her life was, can live a pious life.

<sup>115</sup> Drysdale, Emil. "Annual Report to the Bishop," *Catholic Interracial Council Diocese of Albany*. January 1965. Diocesan Council for Racial Justice Records, Folder 1, RCDA Archives. 2.

<sup>116</sup> McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries*, 193; "Citizens Protest Silencing of Priests," *ASP*. 19 November 1965. Student Paper, Series 6: 1960- 1969, Volume 51, Number 41, Grenander Archives.

importance of the visible involvement of not only [Maginn], but all priests and religious.”<sup>117</sup> The CIC’s request that all the Diocesan priests handle this concept of a modern Catholic Church indicated that many Catholics, not just liberal Catholics, wrestled with Vatican II changes, meaning they at least recognized them. For the Albany Catholic Diocese to remain relevant to its parishioners, it needed to change as well. Catholics sought guidance balancing the old Catholic Church with the new, but the Diocese was still stuck in the former, unwilling to address the latter. Moreover, the CIC also requested that Bishop Maginn hold a public forum on low-income housing in Albany because “a direct approach to the public... [was] the only means which will produce significant results.”<sup>118</sup> On top of adjusting the Diocese to modern times, the CIC wanted Maginn to formally commit to black civil rights and use the Church to facilitate activism. This request challenged the Albany Diocese, whose leaders silenced Father Bonaventure O’Brien for doing the same thing. The pressure placed on Maginn from CIC members, Vatican II changes, and the overall Catholic population drove him towards more active involvement.

In 1968, Bishop Maginn developed a more ambitious plan regarding black civil rights activism: The Diocesan Development Fund. It committed \$100,000 of Diocesan funds towards improving black neighborhoods so that Catholic liberals and Vatican II enthusiasts couldn’t criticize the Albany Diocese for inaction. As with the case of campus unrest, Maginn delegated responsibilities to another party. He created the Diocesan Commission for Racial Justice to determine how to allocate the funds and the team came up with over ten local organizations that benefitted inner city residents: \$30,000 went to three organizations for housing, \$25,000 divided among childcare facilities, \$12,500 for centers of rehabilitation, and the rest went to education and supporting free legal services.<sup>119</sup> In essence, the

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<sup>117</sup> Walter B. Langley to Reverend Edward J. Maginn, Letter, *Catholic Interracial News*. 29 June 1966. Diocesan Council for Racial Justice, Folder 1, RCDA Archives. 1- 2.

<sup>118</sup> Walter B. Langley to Reverend Edward J. Maginn, Letter, *Catholic Interracial News*. 25 July 1966. Diocesan Council for Racial Justice, Folder 1, RCDA Archives.

<sup>119</sup> “Diocesan Council for Racial Justice, Third Meeting,” Meeting Minutes. 2 July 1968. Diocesan Commission for Racial Justice, folder 1, RCDA Archives. 1- 3; Full report: \$10,000 to Albany Better Living, \$10,000 to Better Neighborhoods, Inc., \$10,000 to Troy Rehabilitation and Improvement Program, \$2,500 to Providence House (center for abused or neglected children), \$5,000 to St. Vincent’s Child Care Facility, \$5,000 to Kenwood Academy Day Care Center, \$5,000 to Y.M.C.A. of Hudson for day care

Diocesan Development Fund gave institutions money with the hopes that they in turn would help inner city Albany and carry out the Albany Catholic Diocese's mission. Neither Maginn nor the Diocesan Commission for Racial Justice would physically take part in the activism. Ironically enough, Maginn still failed in this endeavor in using \$100,000 from the Diocese's treasury. The bishop angered "a surprisingly large percentage of people in the diocese" (letters received by Maginn from Catholic laypeople were only "20 to 1" in favor") and received angry phone calls from parishioners against the fund.<sup>120</sup> For Maginn to openly commit to black civil rights on behalf of the entire Diocese was risky given the political statement and amount of money involved. Unsurprisingly, the number of gifts from individuals went down. The institutional authority of the Diocese lost legitimacy to Catholic liberals with Father O'Brien and to Catholic conservatives with the Diocesan Development Fund.

The relationship between Catholic institutional authority and black civil rights was complicated for the Albany Catholic Diocese. In the early 1960's, Vatican II politicized Civil Rights activism, turning the performance of Catholic good works in black communities into a political statement. For this reason, the Albany Catholic Diocese supported the efforts of the Catholic Interracial Council, but refused to fully commit. Many Catholic Church Dioceses had connections to local political leaders and getting political jeopardized these relationships, hence the Albany Diocese's silencing of Father O'Brien. Its inaction frustrated Catholic liberals and as the 1960's progressed, the Albany Diocese was pressured to get more involved in the Civil Rights Movement. In order to maintain authority in the face of such pressures, Bishop Maginn created the Diocesan Development Fund. It committed \$100,000 to bettering Albany's inner city community and allocated the monies to different organizations. Despite placing the

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center, \$10,000 to Urban League for childcare, \$10,000 to Ful-Mont Facility Inc., for community operations, \$5,000 to City of Albany outdoor basketball facility, \$10,000 to Hudson Valley Community College for financial aid purposes, \$3,000 to Legal Aid Society of Albany, \$2,500 to Legal Aid Society of Schenectady, \$5,000 to formation of "Build Baby Build" corporation, and \$2,500 to corporation formed under Albany Legal Aid Society and Soul Business Assistance Committee

<sup>120</sup> Joseph A. Dubee to Bishop Maginn, Letter. 30 April 1968. Diocesan Council for Racial Justice, Folder 1, RCDA Archives. 1- 2.

responsibility on separate parties, Maginn still received heat from conservative Catholics for officially committing the Diocese to black civil rights through the fund.

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*Unlikely Allies: The CACC, the Albany Diocese, and the Effects of the 60's*

The Capital Area Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany struggled to maintain authority in the face of 1960's unrest. From SUNY students to Newman Club members, from the Civil Rights Movement to urban rioting, both Christian institutions lost a significant amount of authority by 1970. Their approaches to social issues and interpretations of authority vastly differed from each other, but in 1973 they came together as a last "Hail Mary" to sustain local Christianity. The tension between the CACC and the Albany Catholic Diocese prior to uniting revealed how desperate they were to join forces, especially coming from the end of the Catholics.

In the 1960's, the Albany Diocese's opinions towards Protestants was skeptical at best, even following Vatican II's calls for ecumenism. One reverend of the Albany Catholic Diocese perfectly summed it up when he said, "I grew up with a particular attitude towards other Christian communions ... as if in some way they were evil."<sup>121</sup> The reverend was not alone in his feelings towards Protestant believers: A whole committee of Catholics in the Commission on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs expressed similar bias. In 1967, the Albany Catholic Diocese created the Ecumenical Commission to meet Vatican II demands for interdenominational work, but its officials blatantly ignored Protestant outreach and focused on relationships with other denominations.<sup>122</sup> By its seventh meeting, the Ecumenical Commission had formed separate committees dedicated solely to Jewish communities and

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<sup>121</sup> Willi, Reverend Robert. "A Catholic Theology of Ecumenism." N.d. Ecumenism, Ecumenical Commission Position Papers, RCDA Archives. 1.

<sup>122</sup> Father Russell to Bishop Maginn, "Regarding: An Ecumenical Commission," Memorandum. N.d. Ecumenism, Ecumenical Commission Formation, RCDA Archives. 1-3.

Christian orthodox churches to develop “better understandings” with their followers. Two Committee members even went so far as to attend Jewish-Christian workshops in Chicago and Toronto, stating that “this area of inter-religious activity was very important for [the Diocese’s] attention.”<sup>123</sup> For mainline Protestants, this type of commitment was not given.

In the rare instance the Ecumenical Council attempted outreach to Protestants, it produced more conflict in the Diocese than with any other denomination. In 1969, the Ecumenical Commission added an ad hoc committee designated for mixed marriages between Catholics and other Christian denominations. Unlike those in the Jewish and Christian Orthodox committees, the Mixed Marriage committee members struggled with their purpose of creating marriage procedures for Christian couples that met the tradition of Catholicism and Protestantism.<sup>124</sup> After six months of stalemate, Commission member Father Howard Hubbard recommended that “a committee of pastors and theologians, representing the Catholic, Episcopal, Reformed, Lutheran traditions... discuss the theology of marriage.”<sup>125</sup> Simply put, it was not so much the idea of mix marriage stumping the Albany Catholic Diocese, but rather the level of cooperation needed between Catholic and Protestant leaders to handle this particular matter. The fact that Father Hubbard and other Ecumenical Commission members waited months before proposing to work with Protestant denominations on an issue directly involving their clergy and laity revealed their suspicions towards Protestants. However, after losing significant authority over campus unrest and black civil rights, Catholics eventually warmed up to the idea.

In 1971, the Albany Catholic Diocese started more meaningful collaboration with Protestant denominations. The Mixed Marriage committee hosted joint dialogues and workshops on mixed marriages with the Episcopal Diocese and finalized clergy protocol for conducting mixed marriages. This

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<sup>123</sup> “Minutes of the Seventh Meeting, Commission for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs,” Meeting minutes. 15 September 1968. Ecumenism, Ecumenical Commission Meeting Minutes, RCDA Archives. 1-2.

<sup>124</sup> “Minutes of the Fourteenth Meeting, Commission for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs,” Meeting minutes. 4 May 1969. Ecumenism, Ecumenical Commission Meeting Minutes, RCDA Archives. 1- 2.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

was a stark contrast to several years prior, when the Albany Diocese completely excluded Protestant leaders from the discussion. Perhaps even more indicative of changed attitudes was the Ecumenical Commission sending Diocesan representatives to a Reformation Rally honoring the Protestant Reformation at St. John's Lutheran's Church at the request of Pastor Alvin Butz. Shared prayer services were progressive enough for Catholics, but for the Diocese to support an event celebrating the creation of Protestantism clearly showed it wanted closer relations with Protestant churches at this time.<sup>126</sup> By 1972, the Ecumenical Commission began talks with the CACC regarding membership, and "the tone of the discussion seemed to indicate that it [was] desirable that the association between Roman Catholic congregations and Protestant, Episcopal, and Orthodox congregations [was] encouraged."<sup>127</sup> To facilitate the merge, the Diocese even lifted its "current restriction against membership in the council of churches."<sup>128</sup> Essentially, what the Albany Diocese understood as suspect and negative following Vatican II was now happening at its discretion – an alliance with Protestants.

The Catholic-Mainline Protestant union was an international and national phenomenon. In addition to the Capital Area Council of Churches, the World Council of Churches and National Council of Churches pushed for Catholic entry into the organization. In preparation for the union, the NCC published and presented "A Report on Possible Roman Catholic Membership in the NCC" in 1972 that studied the "Threats and Possibilities" of letting Catholic churches join.<sup>129</sup> It concluded that both sides would have to overcome many areas of disagreement surrounding aid to parochial schools, the Pill, divorce, abortion, as well as other anxieties: For Protestants, papal influence on the NCC and decreased

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<sup>126</sup> "Minutes of the Thirty-Fourth Meeting, Commission for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs," Meeting minutes. 19 September 1971. Ecumenism, Ecumenical Commission Meeting Minutes, RCDA Archives. 1- 2.

<sup>127</sup> "Minutes of the Thirty-Sixth Meeting, Commission for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs," Meeting minutes. 16 January 1972. Ecumenism, Ecumenical Commission Meeting Minutes, RCDA Archives. 1-3.

<sup>128</sup> "Minutes of the Thirty-Seventh Meeting, Commission for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs," Meeting minutes. 26 March 1972. Ecumenism, Ecumenical Commission Meeting Minutes, RCDA Archives. 2.

<sup>129</sup> Bowman, Reverend David J. "Possible Roman Catholic Membership in the National Council of Churches: Summary and Analysis of the Study Committee Report," *National Council of Churches*. 11 February 1972. Ecumenism, Ecumenical Commission Position Papers, RCDA Archives. 1-2.

donations from member churches against Catholic membership and, for Catholics, the loss of their Church's claim to "uniqueness."<sup>130</sup> In sum, both denominations had to risk changes in doctrine and behavior into which they had previously vested their institutional authority. The CACC vested its authority in the context of American mainstream culture. By allowing Catholics to join, traditional beliefs surrounding birth control and sexuality would impede its more liberal beliefs connected to the changing society. The Albany Catholic Diocese would have to sacrifice its parochial schools and uniqueness, the two defining features of its authority. Despite knowing these setbacks, the Albany Catholic Diocese became an official member of the Capital Area Council of Churches in 1973.

During the 1960's, conflict between the Capital Area Council of Churches and the Albany Catholic Diocese prevented their union. As was the case with campus unrest and the Civil Rights Movement, Diocesan officials hesitated to apply a Vatican II mindset to their work. They did not get involved with secular student affairs at SUNY Albany and waited until the late 1960's to make an official statement regarding black civil rights. The mainline Protestants in the CACC were no exception to such treatment. The Albany Catholic Diocese struggled to draft a new protocol for marrying couples of different Christian denominations, and the root of its struggles came from close cooperation with Protestant clergy to address the matter. Nonetheless, by 1971 a more meaningful effort to collaborate can be seen between mainline Protestants and Catholics, leading to their merger in 1973.

The alliance between the two Christian institutions was no coincidence. Both were confronted by immense pressures and challenges from 1960's issues on-campus at SUNY Albany and off-campus in downtown Albany. More importantly, both failed in their endeavors to maintain authority in the face of such threats, even though they took opposing approaches. The CACC applied a hands-on approach to campus unrest, only to succumb to rising Student Power manifesting in a campus ministry program totally controlled by the agenda of student activists. It applied the same approach to black civil rights,

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 3.

but realized the cause increasingly called for black leadership, and the mainline Protestants in the CACC could no longer hold onto their white authority. The Albany Catholic Diocese applied a hands-off approach, delegating campus ministry to the Newman Club and Civil Rights activism to the Catholic Interracial Council. Neither were directly associated with the Albany Catholic Diocese because Diocesan leaders did not want to associate the Diocese with secularism and overt political statements, both of which threatened Catholic institutional authority in Albany. By 1970, the Albany Diocese was in the same weakened state of the CACC, yet this time it was for lack of involvement in 1960's issues.

Regardless of the approach taken to quell authority threats, the loss of institutional authority was most likely going to occur during the 1960's. Furthermore, the fact that the Albany Diocese went from avoiding mainline Protestants to joining the Capital Area Council of Churches, proved that the authority loss of these two institutions was considerable, especially in the small timeframe of 1965 to 1970. The 1960's decade was historic for many reasons. Most notably, it was historic for showing how a generation of people, and their rallying cry of "question authority," significantly transformed modern American society. The Baby Boom cohort will continue to shape American history and wield its power no longer through conventional authority institutions such as the Government and the Church.