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## The R.I.G.A. Golf Protest of 1963 and the role of Providence College's Early Integration

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## Historical Importance on the National Level

Many golf clubs and courses were restricted to white players only, and African Americans were often denied access to golf courses, training facilities, and equipment. This discrimination was perpetuated by country clubs and associations, which had largely white membership and leadership. The effects of de facto segregation in golf were significant, as they limited opportunities for African Americans to engage in the sport and build social and professional networks in the golf industry. This exclusion contributed to the underrepresentation of African Americans in golf at all levels, from amateur to professional. It was not until the civil rights movement of the 1960s that efforts were made to challenge and dismantle de facto segregation in golf. From the bottom rightmost picture you can also see how President Kennedy's influence was playing into this narrative where the public was putting R.I.G.A. on the hotseat and calling for them to consider what our President at the time had stood for. It shows just how ignorant these club owners and board members were towards American society's wants and needs.

*C.I.C - Catholic Interracial Council*  
*R.I.G.A - Rhode Island Golf Association*  
*1963 is the same year as Dr. King's "I Have a Dream..." Speech*



# The R.I.G.A Golf Protest of 1963

## And the role of Providence College's Early Integration

By Ryan O'Sullivan

### How is PC involved?

A letter written by the Catholic Interracial Council and addressed to the Rhode Island Golf Association served as a notice to establish a picket line for an amateur tournament taking place in Rhode Island in 1963. The tournament was subjected to a boycott due to the de facto, or "legal segregation" still taking place both on this municipal course as well as in many areas around the US in the 60s. One black male standing in the center of the leftward picture below is holding a sign that reads, "PROV college, N.I.T. champs, good example for R.I.G.A!" The school was known to be one of the earliest to adopt racial integration and he is using this as a means of leveraging the golf association considering PC had taken a leading role in racial integration despite facing severe backlash from other universities and college members. Once the college began admitting African American students, it became clear that they were not conforming to the regular practices of other schools in that period - setting them apart from the rest. The college continued to push for integration and would not bar acceptance, and instead began to implement policies and programs aimed at promoting diversity and inclusion.

CATHOLIC INTERRACIAL COUNCIL, 1963, PROTESTING RIGA GOLF TOURNAMENT, B&W - 1055X832, FRIARSPROVIDENCE-MY.SHAREPOINT.COM, ACCESSED APRIL 2, 2023.

CATHOLIC INTERRACIAL COUNCIL, 1963, PROTESTING RIGA GOLF TOURNAMENT, B&W - 1012X844, FRIARSPROVIDENCE-MY.SHAREPOINT.COM, ACCESSED APRIL 2, 2023.

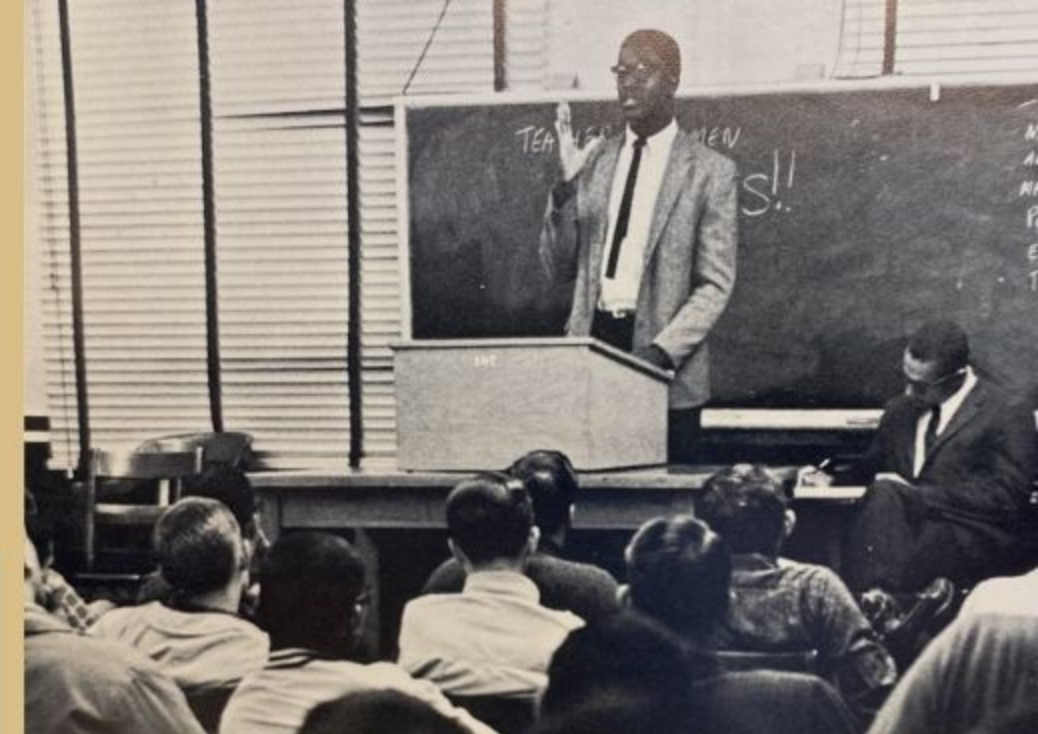


Image courtesy of Providence College yearbook, 1963, page 139, accessed April 2, 2023.

The Spectrum Club at Providence College was founded by a professor named Andrew Bell in 1963. It was once a useful tool in identifying and attacking certain social issues not only within the university, but also taking a look at what's happening around the world. In the picture above, we see student spokesman John Thompson, a young black American and renowned basketball player for Providence at the time, speaking at their very first program meeting with the topic being, "The Effect of Segregation on the Negro". What occurred after would be Prof. Bell elaborating on the subject of whether "legal segregation" is actually legal at all and the effect it has on the white and black communities in "today's world" - meaning what it looked like in the mid 60s.

De facto = legal segregation