Expanding Educational Opportunities (EEO) at Macalester College, 1968 -1975

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1968 is often pinpointed as the dynamic year when the fragile social fabric of the United States and the world erupted into unrest and rebellion. Student activism, mobilized around broader civil rights and anti-war movements rocked college campuses. As a product of 1968, Expanding Educational Opportunities (EEO) was an early affirmative action program at Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota that reflected the goals of a self-consciously liberal campus environment. This daring and contentious program became deeply implicated in the negotiation of Macalester's identity in the 1960s and early 1970s. The story of EEO also interacts with broader national narratives of affirmative action, racial politics, and student activism. Finally, a recent public history survey conducted on Macalester's campus begins to reveal how EEO is remembered at Macalester and how it continues to inform and reflect current community identity.

The school, like the nation, is an imagined community. Benedict Anderson defines the nation as "an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign"[1]. He argues that the nation is a unifying and binding force that is also dependent upon boundaries that limit who can and cannot be considered a member of the nation. Similarly, a college like Macalester can be understood through this framework. In *Schools as Imagined Communities*, education scholars apply Anderson's idea of an imagined community to schools, explaining "many of the controversies over education policy in the past half-century have revolved around con-

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1   Anderson, Benedict R. O'G. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1991, 6.

flicts over the proper community of a school."[2] They argue that schools, like nations, employ language of inclusivity while simultaneously existing as an exclusive community. By framing Macalester College as an imagined community, the history of EEO provides insight into the negotiations of rhetoric as inclusion and the reality of exclusion in the late 1960s and early 1970s as well as in Macalester's current college community.

Macalester's Expanding Educational Opportunities (EEO) program was initiated in 1968 to bring socioeconomically disadvantaged minority students to campus and provide them with comprehensive financial and academic support. A brochure on EEO explains that the original proposal was the result of "prodding by about 40 black students" on campus.[3] The role of the existing black community on Macalester's campus reflects Joy Ann Williamson's observation that it was often "Black students who initiated demands for reform" on college campuses in the 1960s and 1970s.[4] President Arthur Flemming, who was in his first year of presidency at Macalester and had a prior history of advocating for racial equality, strongly supported the proposal that was ultimately crafted by the Faculty Advisory Council.[5] While liberal administrators and faculty seemed to be working in tandem with students of color in initiating the EEO program, it was the differing and sometimes conflicting goals, motivations, and approaches of these

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2   Cobb-Roberts, Deirdre, Sherman Dorn, and Barbara J. Shircliffe. *Schools as imagined communities: the creation of identity, meaning, and conflict in U.S.* history. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, 1.
3   *Toward a New Pluralism: the program to expand educational opportunity at Macalester College.* Macalester College. St. Paul, 1970.
4   Williamson, Joy Ann. *Black power on Campus: the University of Illinois, 1965-75.* Urbana:University of Illinois Press, 2003, 2-3.
5   "Expansion of Educational Opportunities Approved in Faculty Meeting Dec. 5," *The Mac Weekly*, December 6, 1968; Dan Gearino, "Unanimous Disunity," *The Mac Weekly*, March 12, 1998.

groups that defined the existence and later disappearance of EEO.

The roots of these tensions can be identified in the differing rationales used to justify the EEO program. One of the primary framings of the EEO program was the "remedial rationale" in which "race-based affirmative action is used as a remedy to past and current racial discrimination against students of color."[6] Characteristic of affirmative action policies of the 1960s and 1970s, the primary goals of this approach were to serve disadvantaged minority communities and develop leaders and role models within those communities.[7] This rationale was most visibly applied by leaders of color within the EEO program. For example, John Warfield, the executive director of the EEO program from 1969 to 1973, very explicitly employed the remedial rationale in his discussion of the program in an EEO brochure by emphasizing individual leadership potential and commitment, as well as the need for specialized support for students overcoming economic disadvantages.[8]

The remedial rationale worked in opposition to a "diversity rationale" that was also employed in conversations of EEO, often by white liberals on campus. The diversity rationale frames affirmative action in terms of how it can be beneficial to white students: it teaches students to be tolerant, creates "dynamic classroom discussions," and prepares white students for interacting with people of color in the workforce.[9] This rationale is perhaps best articulated by the Faculty Advisory Committee who drafted the proposal

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6   Yosso, Tara J., Laurence Parker, Daniel G. Solorzano, and Marvin Lynn. "From Jim Crow to Affirmative Action and Back Again: A Critical Race Discussion of Racialized Rationales and Access to Higher Education." *Review of Research in Education*. 28: 1-26, 2004, 8.

7   Yosso et al., 8.

8   *Toward a New Pluralism*.

9   Yosso et al., 8.

of EEO. They reasoned that the program would "improve the educational resources of Macalester College by expanding the diversity of the student body, faculty, and staff."[10] The diverging rationales for EEO foreshadow the campus conflict that emerged as the program was implemented.

Originally, the EEO program was designed to provide full financial support for seventy-five incoming minority and low-income students each year. Beginning in 1971 the annual number of incoming EEO students was reduced to forty. Nevertheless, by the fall of 1972, students of color represented nearly 15 percent of the Macalester's student population.[11]Although the program was scaled back from the original plan, the EEO program produced a notable impact on the demographics of Macalester's student population.

During the height of the program in the early 1970s, the Macalester campus was home to a vibrant and relatively large African American student population. A 1998 Mac Weekly Retrospective asserted that Macalester's Black House was "a hub of Twin Cities African-American activism and culture," home to the Black Liberation Affairs Committee (BLAC) and the black student newspaper, *Imani*. In fact, the retrospective also suggested that the African American presence at Macalester "overshadowed" the Mexican-American, Native American, and Puerto Rican students on campus. These latter student populations eventually responded with successful protests demanding more EEO funding.[12] EEO admissions not only altered

10   "Expansion of Educational Opportunities Approved in Faculty Meeting Dec. 5," *The Mac Weekly*, December 6, 1968.
11   U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education, National Center for Educational Research and Development. *Research on the Program of Expanded Educational Opportunities*. St. Paul, MN, January 1973, 24.
12   Gearino, Dan, "Multiculti-calester," *The Mac Weekly*, March 19, 1998.

the demographic landscape of Macalester, but also bolstered active student groups on Macalester's campus.

The activism of these student groups reflected empowerment ideologies that strongly influenced racial discourse in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Joy Williamson illustrates how wider social movements like Black Power were adopted and adapted by students on college campuses. Facing a "predominantly white" campus, students "demanded fundamental changes to campus curricula, policies, and structure."[13] Empowerment ideology compounded with a culture of student activism contributed to an expectation of active involvement in campus politics and culture during the era of EEO.

This empowerment ideology often clashed with the white liberal integration and diversity rationales. Earl Bowman, the Acting Director of Development in 1970, notes in *Toward a New Pluralism*, a brochure promoting the program, that EEO students "have not fallen into place and adopted the great white image...exchanges are taking place, some good, some bad, the latter because people still are thinking in terms of what minority students should be by white standards." In the same document, Warfield identifies campus relations as the most challenging component of EEO, citing "white racism, resistance to change, a lack of understanding about people who are different, [and] disgruntled alumni."[14] Indeed, there are numerous articles and letters to the editor in the campus newspaper, the Mac Weekly, in which students, staff, and faculty debate issues of race, inevitably incorporating the EEO program as point of contention.[15]

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13   Williamson, 1.
14   *Toward a New Pluralism*
15   Brummett, Barry, "Vested Interests and Frothy Chins," *The Mac Weekly*, October 22, 1971; "EEO Cutbacks: A Look Beyond the Ivory Tower," *The Mac Weekly*, September 4,

These negotiations of community often appear to take place with students of color on one side and administration and faculty on the other. This situation is similar to that which Williamson observes in her studies of the Black Power movement at the University of Illinois. The administration was interested in providing support to black students to diversify the campus, but balked when black student activists sought institutional change.[16] Within this apparent binary between faculty and students of color at Macalester, white students as a group played a convoluted role; sometimes they supported students of color while at other times they sided with white administration and faculty. What remains clear, however, is that while the EEO program succeeded to some extent in racially diversifying the campus, the Macalester community was far from a pluralist utopia.

To add to the tension on campus, Macalester was also experiencing a debilitating financial crisis in the 1970s due in large part to the withdrawal of support of DeWitt Wallace, a significant financial contributor of college. President Flemming resigned in January of 1971 and was replaced by James Robinson the following fall. In an effort to deal with the financial crisis, President Robinson and the board of trustees decided to significantly downsize the EEO program. During the summer of 1974, Robinson cut $250,000 from the operating budget as a whole, including $78,000 from the EEO budget. As a result, several EEO office staff and counselors lost funding.[17]

These cuts sparked fierce opposition from EEO students and staff, as

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1974; "EEO - Values, Verbiage, Validity," *The Mac Weekly*, October 2, 1970; Ann Kulenkamp, "Macalester Student Blasts EEO," *The Mac Weekly*, September 25, 1970; "Racism: a history, an example, a prediction," *The Mac Weekly*, October 15, 1971.

16   Williamson, 3-4.

17   Gearino, Dan, "The Takeover," *The Mac Weekly*, April 2, 1998.

well as from the student body at large. Students immediately organized to protest the cuts by defending EEO at trustee board meetings and disrupting new student orientation by picketing and questioning Robinson in the middle of convocation. Tensions continued to intensify as students felt they were being ignored. Robinson had already established a poor rapport with students, and student dissatisfaction was heightened by the belief that the EEO cuts were disproportionate, devastating, and underhanded. Finally, in September 1974 students chose to take action by occupying the college business building at 77 Macalester Street.[18]

Student protest and building occupations were common tactics in the 1960s and 1970s on college campuses. For example, according to Gern-Rainer Horn, in a two-month period in 1970, "32.4 per cent of all US college campuses witnessed 'incidents which resulted in the disruption of the normal functioning of the institution.'"[19] While those protests were generally exhibits of anti-war activism, they suggest a widespread familiarity with disruptive action as a tool of social change, and in the case of EEO, of negotiation.

Indeed, after 12 days of negotiations, Robinson and student protestors came to an agreement and the occupiers returned to class, leaving the business building undamaged. Later that fall, however, the board of trustees revoked the agreement, stating that Robinson didn't have the authority to engage in negotiation. The budget decrease went into effect, marking the beginning of a series of cuts that would effectively dismantle the EEO pro-

18   Gearino, Dan, "The Takeover," *The Mac Weekly*, April 2, 1998.
19   Horn, Gerd-Rainer. *The spirit of '68: rebellion in Western Europe and North America, 1956-1976.* Oxford: New York : Oxford University Press, 2007, 65.

gram in the following years.[20] Meanwhile, Macalester College regained Wallace's financial support and cultivated one of the wealthiest endowments in the nation.[21] The EEO program, however, remained a memory of the past. And yet, the memory of EEO continues to inform and reflect current Macalester community identity.

Investigating the memory of EEO and how it affects Macalester's contemporary community identity can become a meaningful public history project when the community is provoked to do the same in an informed and meaningful way. David W. Blight argues that the public inevitably develops an understanding of their history, often independently from the work of historical institutions. As a result, he argues that historians ought to directly address the question of public memory in order to be both publicly relevant and academically responsible.[22] When considering the public memory of an event like EEO, it is important to remember Michel-Rolph Trouillot's observation that "any historical narrative is a particular bundle of silences."[23] The objective of this public history project was to uncover silences in the public memory of Macalester College and to engage in a dialogue with the Macalester community to explore how the memory of EEO interacts with contemporary identity. It is the hope that such an informed discussion on the topic can, in the words of Denise Meringolo, "gently challenge a community to push its own sense of boundaries and exclusiveness."[24]

20   Gearino, Dan, "The Takeover," *The Mac Weekly*, April 2, 1998.
21   Gearino, Dan, "The Legacy," *The Mac Weekly*, April 9, 1998.
22   Blight, David W. "If You Don't Tell It Like It Was, It Can Never Be as It Ought to Be." In *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory*. Edited by James Oliver Horton and Louis E. Horton, 35-56. New York: New Press, 2006, 25-26.
23   Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. Boston, Mass: Beacon Press, 1995, 27.
24   National Council on Public History, "What is Public History?" http://ncph.org/cms/what-is-public-history.

The venue for this discussion was specifically tailored to garner efficient and meaningful participation from the Macalester community. This required a working knowledge of and reflection on the norms of the community. For example, the Macalester community is familiar with student projects that involve community forums, but students, faculty, and staff members are generally cramped for time in the final weeks of spring semester when the project was taking place. An online survey, however, is a commonly understood format on campus, as the community frequently engages in online practices that supplement, mirror, and influence offline social and academic pursuits. The survey is an accessible and convenient format, less limited by time and space than an in-person forum would be. It also provides the freedom for engaged participants to compose their thoughts in writing at their leisure. The online survey, then, is a useful tool to engage in a dialogue with this particular community. In addition, the survey served as a gateway to a website where members of the community could find more information and a public space to continue the conversation.[25]

The survey, shared with the Macalester community in April of 2010, elicited responses that uncovered complex relationships between community identity and campus memory of EEO. The survey engaged 78 members of the Macalester community who answered a series of questions about Macalester identity and the history of EEO. Participants were encouraged to elaborate on their responses in paragraph form. Many participants took the opportunity to write at length, and as a result there is a vast amount of valuable information about community memory and identity that can be gleaned from the responses. While the opportunities for analysis are great,

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25   The website is available at https://sites.google.com/a/macalester.edu/macalester-eeo/

for the purposes of this paper there are three particularly relevant areas for preliminary analysis: evaluations of diversity at Macalester, responses to the framing of the history of EEO, and the potential for public history to initiate meaningful community dialogue.

Survey participants were first asked whether or not they considered Macalester to be diverse, and then whether or not they considered Macalester to be exclusive. Both questions encouraged explication of their choice. The responses suggest a strong consciousness of the paradox between rhetorics of inclusivity and the reality of exclusivity inherent in imagined identities. Those who did consider Macalester to be diverse often cited the high number of international students on campus.[26] And yet, even many of those who considered the Macalester community to be diverse also recognized it to be exclusive.[27] Respondents most often identified class and race as weaknesses in Macalester's stated claim to diversity. They described a primarily upper-middle to upper class student body and limited domestic diversity as evidence that Macalester is not sufficiently diverse. The pervasiveness of left-leaning political views was also expressed to be a non-inclusive aspect of the community.[28] The responses to questions of diversity and exclusivity reveal a common understanding that Macalester College as a community is exclusive, particularly in regards to race and class, even as it claims to be diverse because of the high numbers of international students.

Half-way through the survey, participants were asked to read a four-

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26   25 people mention international students as evidence of diversity.
27   70% (38 out of 54) of respondents who said Mac was diverse also identified Mac as exclusive
28   17 people mentioned domestic diversity; 17 others mention race more broadly; 15 mentioned class; 6 mention politics.

paragraph summary of the history of EEO, based on the research documented in the first part of this paper. After reading the summary, participants recorded a range of strong reactions. Among student responses, there were many expressions of resentment that conflated past and present administrative policies:

> "Damn the 1970s Board of Trustees. That explains the lack of domestic diversity." - Student '11

> "It makes me think that the low numbers of domestic students of color on campus is very intentional." - Student '10

> "It doesn't surprise me. Paying more attention to investors than students. Not much has changed." - Student '11

> "It's bullshit that the college retracted an agreement with students, and I'm pissed. However, as a black student at Macalester, I'm not surprised." – Student '12

> "It confirms what I already knew, that Macalester is concerned first with what it believes to be sound business practices, and only after that with our commitments to multiculturalism and diversity." – Student '10

These responses uncover a sense of cynicism or even anger among some students on campus. Such students were quick to associate the history of EEO with what they perceived as a continued institutional history of racial and socioeconomic injustice. The responses emphasize a reality of exclusion within the Macalester community.

In contrast, faculty, and, to a greater extent, staff responses exhibited

detachment, inspiration from the summary, or skepticism of a perceived bias in the writing of the summary:

> "I do think your summary is a bit misleading, however. Macalester took quite a while to regain Wallace's support after the end of the EEO program. Ending the program did not cause Wallace to return his support; the college getting onto a more sound financial footing did that…Macalester wanted to do something big and significant and make a difference, and it tried. It didn't succeed, but I see in that program the seed of future movements towards greater diversity here. It has been an ongoing struggle, two steps forward and one (or two) back, but there has been a continuing push at Macalester for progress." - Faculty

> "I see many other progressive moves by the College which would supplant the need for the EEO program as described." - Staff

> "It made me think that you're less interested in WHAT we know and that this survey is merely a device to bring about some hoped for social change. It suggests to me that you have a political agenda." - Faculty

> "I am proud that Macalester hosted such a program, and I hope that it helped change the institution toward its current high value on diversity at a faster pace than would otherwise have occurred." - Staff

> "This sounds like a one-sided story. I'm not going to take it as an accurate picture until I gather more information from other sources." – Staff

The qualitative difference in responses between faculty and staff as a group and students is reminiscent of the diverging views of students and administration during the time of EEO. The faculty and staff responses are also quicker to embrace rhetoric of inclusion rather than emphasizing a re-

ality of exclusion. The contrasting and often strong responses to the history of EEO demonstrate how the history of EEO continues to affect Macalester identity and reveals existing tensions within the community.

The survey further confirmed that publicly addressing silences in community memory can impact the shaping of community identity. Forty-five percent of survey participants stated that they learned new information about EEO and that the history of EEO affects their opinions of Macalester College. Therefore, their knowledge of EEO was affected, and that very knowledge affected the audience's understanding of Macalester. Not only does this data confirm that the project's objective was met, but it also suggests an opportunity to further establish the link between the historical topic of EEO and community identity; in short, the survey validates the role that public history can take in memory formation.

However, this survey and the associated website is only the first step in the process of a meaningful public history project. First of all, the data begs for a more systematic and thorough analysis. In addition, a thoughtful review of the summary of the EEO history could provide insight into why students identified the narrative with continued injustice and why so many staff and faculty responded to the narrative with loyalty to a positive framing of the college. Furthermore, rather than being a sociological tool of data collection, the survey was designed to be the beginning of a continued discussion within this community. It is the hope that a historical narrative of EEO, firmly based the historical record and bolstered by strong academic analysis, can continue to catalyze discussion on the Macalester campus about the rhetoric of inclusion and reality of exclusion that shapes its community identity.