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*Morrill Hall
Takeover*



Transform Minnesota

MORRILL HALL TAKEOVER

This month, Sankofa at Home visits the University of Minnesota to remember the Morrill Hall Takeover.

On January 14, 1969, Black students from the University's Afro-American Action Committee (AAAC) occupied the bursar's and records office in Morrill Hall, located on Northrup Mall. The overnight takeover served as the culmination of events on campus following the assassination of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on April 4, 1968.

On April 11, 1968, students from the AAAC presented a list of seven demands to university leadership. This list included scholarship and tuition considerations for Black high school students from Minnesota; a review of recruitment and related policies for Black students and athletes; and amended curriculum representative of Black history and contributions in America.

Despite setting up a task force to study the issues, the University was slow to make progress related to any of the issues identified by the AAAC.



Morrill Hall

100 Church St SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455
located at the University of Minnesota

After little action was taken for nearly nine months, the AAAC resolved to seek immediate action from the University. On January 13, 1969, the AAAC presented a revised list of three demands to the administration. After a 1:00 meeting with the President the following day showed no signs of progress, a reported 70 Black students led by AAAC President Rose Freeman and Vice President Horace Huntley occupied Morrill Hall*. Employees were allowed to leave as the students prepared to stay the building until their demands were met.

"Over that weekend that followed (the assassination of MLK), the nation exploded. Our student organization tried to figure out how, as we as a student group, could respond in a way that would respect and honor Dr. King and contribute constructively to change at the University."

-Dr. John S. Wright

Wright, who drafted the initial list of demands as a student, later became a professor at the U of M

AAAC leadership continued negotiating overnight with the President and administration. The following day, University of Minnesota President Malcolm C. Moos agreed to accept the demands which he described as "immanently reasonable."

January 1969 demands:

1. Establishment of an Afro-American Studies Department, to begin fall 1969
2. Contribution by the University of half the cost Black student conference to be held on campus
3. Changes to MLK Scholarship Board, placing it in the hands of an agency of the Black community

While some white students joined the occupation in solidarity with the AAAC, a crowd of several hundred white individuals formed outside the building in resistance to the negotiations. This led the Black students to leave the building via the tunnel system following the conclusion of the takeover.

*this number is disputed by the participants, who state that the number was closer to 30-40 students. Either figure represents a significant percentage of the 87 Black students attending the school at the time.

IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH

The three demands from students were met within months of the takeover. A national conference, “Which Way Black Student,” was held in February 1969, with \$5,260 contributed by the University. Seven representatives from poor communities were added to the Martin Luther King, Jr. scholarship board, and the first classes in the Afro-American Studies department (now the Department of African American & African Studies (AAAS)) were held in the fall of 1969.

In March 1969, three students were arrested and charged in connection with the takeover: Freeman, Huntley, and Warren Tucker. The indictments were met with vocal backlash from the University community and across the Twin Cities, with many noting the seemingly arbitrary choices of the three students. Originally charged with felonies, including aggravated criminal damage to property and incitement to riot, Freeman and Huntley were convicted of misdemeanors (unlawful assembly) and received one-year suspended sentences. Warren Tucker was acquitted of all charges.



Information sign outside Morrill Hall



“Rose Freeman, Horace Huntley, and Warren Tucker after the Morrill Hall occupation, 1969.” Dr. Huntley later mused that this photo may be the reason these three were charged in connection with the takeover.

Shortly following the creation of the African American Studies department, the University also opened the first American Indian Studies (AIS) department in the country. While the Morrill Hall takeover likely assisted the University's decision to create the AIS department, the vision for the department began with a 1966 report which stressed the need to create a link between the University and Minnesota's native tribes and students.

The Morrill Hall takeover and creation of the AAAS department also influenced the creation of the Chicano Studies department. On October 26, 1971, twenty students led by the Latin Liberation Front student group took over Morrill Hall. At a two-hour meeting with officials, students called for the establishment of a department within 72 hours. If action was not taken, the students would then call for a strike of the University. Within three days, University committees approved the establishment of a freestanding Chicano Studies department**.

The legacy of the takeover also continues on campus with the Huntley House. Named for Dr. Horace Huntley, the Huntley House is one of five Multicultural Centers for Academic Excellence (MCAE) at the University of Minnesota. These centers provide a supportive community where first year, first generation BIPOC students can live, study, and participate together in extra-curricular activities. The Huntley House specifically supports Black and African American men in their academic, social, and personal endeavors.

**This department was renamed the Chicano & Latino Studies department in 2012 to reflect the continuing focus on Americans of Mexican descent while also studying the growing of populations from other Latin American countries.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

“Nerve Juice” and the Ivory Tower Confrontation in Minnesota: The True Story of the Morrill Hall Takeover

Marie Braddock Williams, Rose Freeman Massey, and Horace Huntley

“Student leaders Rose Mary Freeman, (B.A., ‘70) and Horace Huntley (B.A., ‘70) led the Morrill Hall takeover on January 14, 1969, when demands they delivered to University President Malcolm Moos a day earlier were not met...This is our story, told and interpreted by us, in light of our collective unique backgrounds and experiences.”

Taking Over the Ivory Tower

Dusty Road Productions

This short documentary created for the Minnesota Historical Society’s 1968 Film Competition tells the story of Rose Mary Freeman and her leadership during the Morrill Hall Takeover

John Wright | Campus Protests, Representation, and Educational Reform

University of Minnesota
Institute for Advanced Study

UMN Students stood Their Ground for Racial Justice in 1969

Twin Cities PBS

Morrill Hall Takeover, University of Minnesota MNOpedia

Remembering the Morrill Hall Takeover

University of Minnesota
Alumni Association

The Morrill Hall University of Minnesota Takeover, Dr. Horace Huntley

African American Registry

Former ‘U’ Students Talk Societal Impact Of Morrill Hall Takeover

WCCO

The civil rights protest that changed the University of Minnesota

Fox 9

African American & African Studies History

University of Minnesota

American Indian Studies History

University of Minnesota

Chicano & Latino Studies History

University of Minnesota

Department of Chicano & Latino Studies, University of Minnesota

MNOpedia

The Legacy of the Morrill Hall Takeover

MPR News

Examining the lasting legacy of the Morrill Hall takeover

The Minnesota Daily

The History of Black affinity groups on the UMN Campus

The Minnesota Daily

Martin Luther King in Minnesota

TPT Originals

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

As you visit Morrill Hall and the U of M campus:

- What do you feel?
- What's new to you?
- How can white individuals show support and solidarity in Black-led initiatives for justice?
- Why can it be difficult to make "immanently reasonable" changes to institutions?
- Students who took part in the Morrill Hall takeover were influenced by the non-violent, direct action modeled by Dr. King
 - How has this model brought change in the United States?
 - How have student protests brought change in the United States?



Transform Minnesota

COMPLEX ISSUES. BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE.

This resource list is part of Transform
Minnesota's Sankofa @ Home series

Inclusion of a resource on the list does
not represent a full endorsement of
stated beliefs