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The Role of the Western Front During the BSU's Fight for Black Power and Liberation in 1968-1975

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Thesis

I argue that the Western Front’s marginalization of Black voices and any content related to the Black identity, fragmented representation of what the Black Student Union was and the Administration’s lack of transparency of the critical needs of Black students within the paper, has fostered a campus climate of exclusivity and whiteness.

Findings

1) Black voices and any content related to the Black identity were marginalized within the Western Front.

2) There was a fragmented representation of what the Black Student Union was and their involvement in the Western Front.

3) Through examining official documents between the BSU and Administration I noticed that there was an obvious lack of transparency of the critical needs of Black students.

- Articles regarding Black students were predominately placed toward the last few pages within a given issue.
- The student activism present within the Western Front primarily reflected frustrations about the Vietnam War and did not provide coverage of the work Black students were doing to fight against the racially unjust campus climate.
- Evident through the lack of consistency of coverage and distortion of what the BSU was facing during this time.
- Newspaper clippings from surrounding Washington state papers seemed to represent the BSU as a very powerful organization that was actively involved with the greater community and expressed concerns of issues the BSU was facing better than the Western Front.
- In response to BSU’S letter of demands president Flora states, “Letters are poor methods of communication. I look forward to the first of a series of meetings that will lead us into paths which will aid in the solution of the grave social problems that afflict all of us” (p. 1).
- The distorted representation of this communicative exchange of letters between the BSU and the Administration further exemplifies that the needs of Black students were not institutionally prioritized and that the Western Front did not play a role in helping liberate Black students.