

"WE'LL NOT BE IGNORED"



Dorothy Moore (left) and Frank Holder (right) led a group of "Now or Never" demonstrators in front of the Administration Building in 1972.



"Now or Never"

A new era of activism at Lawrence began with the formation of the Association of Black Americans (A.B.A.) in May 1969. The following year, the A.B.A. presented a list of demands known as the "Now or Never" list. A President, Curtis Tate, threatened out of the school's 20 Black students signed the list of demands.

The students demanded an increase in the number of Black students on campus. Black representation on the school's governing bodies was also a key demand. The list of demands, including the "Now or Never" list, led to the formation of a Committee on Black Student Affairs.

Due to a lack of campus-wide support and President Tate's decision to interpret the list as a series of suggestions, Lawrence changed very little, if at all.

According to the *Lawrence Alumnus* and *Post-Crescent*, the school had about 1,300 students at the time, meaning that Black students represented less than 1.5% of the student body.

The "Now or Never" list demanded changes that are now a part of many universities and represent contributions to the quality of students at Lawrence University today.



Black and white students gathered outside the Administration Building to give public support for racial equality on campus in 1972.

The late 1950s to 1960s saw an increase of student-led protests at many college campuses. From the Little Rock Nine in Arkansas to the sit-ins by Black students in Greensboro, North Carolina, all of these influenced local activism in Appleton.

Topics of discord focused on the Vietnam War but expanded into drug policy, free speech, environmental protection, and equality for members of various marginalized groups, including women, members of the LGBTQ community, and Blacks.

The Black Power movement inspired many students to become activists. In Wisconsin, protests regarding the unfair treatment of Black students were held on the campuses of Beloit College and UW Oshkosh, among other Wisconsin schools. Lawrence University was no exception.

Occupation of the Administration Building

Lawrence students made another attempt to increase Black student life on campus during the early morning of April 22, 1972. Five members of the A.B.A. barricaded themselves inside the Administration Building. Two young women produced President Thomas Smith and a student-led march to force the Administration building general intervention.

That afternoon, President Smith held a meeting that was open to the entire student body. Gilbert Bland, a member of the A.B.A., began the meeting by presenting their list of demands. Smith refused to sign the document. In the coming weeks, Smith faced additional pressure from faculty who cited "reverse discrimination" in his promise to all open faculty positions with Black students.

President Smith was able to implement a transitional program for increasing Black students in the summer of 1972. By the following year, Black representation on campus would be able to directly influence the future of Lawrence. Change would only occur with cooperation and an understanding of the needs of Black students.

Black Civil Rights leaders including Leon Finney and Jesse Jackson, visited Lawrence to encourage students to fight inequality on campus.



John Lewis, head of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, visited Lawrence to encourage students to become active in the Civil Rights Movement.



Gilbert Bland addressed supporters outside the Lawrence Administration Building in 1972.