

A NEW WAY OF LIVING TOGETHER: A HISTORY OF ATLANTA'S HIP COMMUNITY,

1965-1973

by

CHRISTOPHER ALLEN HUFF

(Under the Direction of Robert A. Pratt)

ABSTRACT

This dissertation discusses the history of Atlanta's hip community, a complex grouping of radicals, hippies, antiwar supporters, underground journalists, street people, college activists and progressive social workers that existed from the mid-1960s until the first years of the 1970s. This project explores how a true community developed in the face of the region's staunch social and political conservatism. While college administrators cautiously tolerated student activists, city officials attempted to rid the city of the hip district, the "Strip," that developed in Midtown. This opposition, combined with a shared belief that a new nation needed to emerge out of the racism of the Jim Crow South, the destruction of the Vietnam War and the conformity of suburban Cold War America, created a communal identity which manifested itself in student movements, an underground newspaper, a diverse antiwar movement and a belief that parts of Atlanta belonged to hips. Developing slowly in the years after 1965, the hip community experienced its zenith from 1968 to 1970 when thousands of people demonstrated against the Vietnam War, moved into the Strip, and came together in multiple ways to solve their own problems in their own way. The introduction of heroin and other hard drugs along with an increase in the Strip's population of addicts, vulnerable runaways and bikers threatened the

recently achieved successes in Midtown, leading hips, private social service agencies, and local churches to work together at solving these problems. A brief window of cooperation between hips and city leaders closed when the threat of a massive migration of new hips to the Strip in the summer of 1970 led the mayor and police to increase their efforts at controlling the hip community. These problems, along with an increase in violence in the Strip, the de-escalation of the Vietnam War and the acceptance by mainstream society of New Left and countercultural elements led to the slow decline of the hip community over several years and its complete demise by the first months of 1973.

INDEX WORDS: Atlanta, Emory University, Georgia State University, Students for a Democratic Society, Southern Student Organizing Committee, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Atlanta Workshop in Nonviolence, Draft Resistance, Antiwar Movement, Radicalism, Affirmation: Vietnam, Vietnam War, Committee on Social Issues, *Great Speckled Bird*, Underground Press, Peachtree Street, Midtown, Piedmont Park, Sam Massell, Lester Maddox, Heroin, Runaways, Hippies, Herbert Jenkins, Piedmont Park Riot, Police Harassment, Atlanta Police Department, Midtown Alliance

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2012

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DEDICATION

To Allison and Marlo, the reasons I finished this dissertation and the best two excuses for why it took so long.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The greatest part of graduate school (besides finishing) was belonging to such a fantastic community of scholars during my tenure at the University of Georgia. Some have become close friends I share life greatest moments with, while with others I share great conversation over a few beers at a conference every year or so. I cherish them all. Surely, I am not the first to have such thoughts but it is certainly my turn to acknowledge this great group of companions, colleagues and mentors.

The history faculty at UGA embodies professionalism and displays the greatest enthusiasm for the study of history. I have been lucky to work with so many talented and generous scholars, including James Cobb, David Roberts, Tom Dyer, Karl Friday, Kathleen Clark, Allen Kulikoff, Michael Winship and Peter Hoffer. I am particularly thankful to Paul Sutter, John Inscoe and Bethany Moreton for serving as readers for this dissertation. Robert Pratt has been the consummate advisor. Through both a master's thesis and a dissertation he has been unwaveringly supportive in innumerable ways. I can not adequately express my appreciation for his efforts, patience and guidance.

I have never faltered in my appreciation for the supportive and nurturing crew of graduate students who have come through the UGA history program. I enjoyed all of their company but wish to mention a few who were especially important to me during my time in (or at least near) Athens. Grad school would not have been nearly as fun, fruitful, or rewarding without Robby Luckett, John Hayes, Bert Way, Ivy Holliman-Way, Lesley-Anne Reed, Christopher Lawton, Chris Manganiello, Bruce Stewart, Justin Nystrom, Christina Davis, Barton Myers, Ed Hatfield,

Ichiro Miyata, Darren Grem, Mao Lin, Ken Shefsiek, Tore Olssen, Keri Leigh Merritt, Kiera Williams, LaShonda Mims, and Frank Forts.

The history department and especially the graduate program would grind to a halt without Laurie Kane. I cannot offer enough thanks for her nine years of help in negotiating the complexities of university bureaucracy.

While writing a dissertation is a lonely affair, researching one is a collaborative effort. I offer my most sincere gratitude and thanks to the staffs at the University of Georgia Library, the Hargrett Library, the Richard B. Russell Library, the Manuscript and Rare Book Library at Emory University, the Special Collections and Archives Department at Georgia State University, the Atlanta History Center, the Georgia Archives, the UGA Map Library, the Auburn Avenue Library and the Georgia Gwinnett College Library. They endured my repeated visits and seemingly endless questions and requests with an incredible depth of knowledge and boundless enthusiasm.

My thanks to the veterans of Atlanta's hip community who I have had the fortune to come into contact with and who graciously agreed to be interviewed, including David Simpson, Barbara Joye, Bruce Donnelly, Steve Wise, Henry Bass and Dwain Wilder. A special thanks goes to Alex Williams who opened up his home and private collection of material from Atlanta's hip community. This project benefitted immensely from his generosity.

Graduate school, and writing a dissertation, tests your sanity. Sometimes the only remedy is to take both feet out of the academic world and place them somewhere else. I am incredibly thankful for the people who have supported me and provided me with respites from my efforts when I needed them most. Almost all the following people began this journey with me and are probably as thankful as I am that it is now over. My thanks to Chris and Teri

Anulewicz, Mary and John Firth, Kristen and Nathan Garroway, Nicole Morgan, the gentlemen of Los Hombres Calientes, James Simpson, the Damn Millionaires, the ladies of the Atlanta Symphony Chorus, Eric and Kendall Peterson, Tom and Sarah Hains, and Shana and Chris Johansson. And thanks to Tina Fey and John Nettles for providing the right amount of comedic and dramatic relief whenever I needed it. And because my wife dared me to thank them.

Special recognition is due to Pamela Ribon, Vince Chao, Anna Beth Chao, and Jason Upton. I simply would not be in this place right now without them. At the moments when it mattered most they reminded me why I started down this road and always believed I would find the end of it, even when I had my doubts.

I am incredibly thankful to my family. They did not always quite understand what I was doing and why I would throw away a budding career in college financial aid, but they weathered the past nine years with love, patience and support. My mother-in-law has been incredibly helpful and supportive.

Spouses are the great unrecognized victims of graduate programs. My wife Allison has been unbelievably supportive during the past nine years. She has taken in stride dozens of weekends alone as I lingered in archives across Atlanta, wrote endless drafts and graded countless student papers and exams. I wish she could get some kind of degree as well. We also adopted our daughter, Marlo, during my time in grad school. Somehow having less time to work actually led to this dissertation getting done quicker. I'm still not quite sure how that happened. I've said it before and I'll say it again, all of this is quite meaningless when placed next to the both of them.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: YOU CAN DROP ME OFF AT PEACHTREE

*When I think of all the worries people seem to find,
And how they're in a hurry to complicate their mind,
By chasing after money and dreams that won't come true,
I'm glad that we are different, we've better things to do.*

["Live for Today,"](#) The Grass Roots

In the summer of 1968, David Simpson found himself at a crossroads. Two years earlier following a stint in the U.S. Navy the native southerner returned to his hometown of Athens and enrolled at the University of Georgia (UGA). As a youth Simpson had “absorbed the segregated world of white Athens” and opposed the civil rights movement that developed around him. His military experience outside the South helped change his views, however, and he came back to the region a supporter for black equality and other liberal causes. Following a trip to New York City in the fall of 1966, he founded a chapter of the radical organization Students for a Democratic Society at the university. Under Simpson’s guidance, the UGA SDS chapter spent the next eighteen months challenging the rules that governed student behavior, protesting the Vietnam War, assaulting racial boundaries and leading several large demonstrations, including a three day sit-in in the campus’s Academic Building. By the spring of 1968 university officials had reached their limit with Simpson. That May, they suspended him and several of his compatriots following a demonstration during the inauguration of the university’s new

president. Faced with the opportunity to reject his growing allegiance to radical leftist politics, Simpson instead turned his back on UGA and recommitted himself to activism.

Simpson emerged as a major figure in the Southern New Left over the next several years. Prior to being suspended, Simpson became involved in the founding of the *Great Speckled Bird*, Atlanta's underground newspaper. After leaving Athens, he moved to Nashville and became a campus traveler for the Southern Student Organizing Committee (SSOC), the region's most prominent organization for young white progressives. Less radical than its national counterpart SDS, SSOC spent several years in the 1960s attempting to rally white southerners around civil rights and numerous New Left causes. By the spring of 1969, the organization found itself under attack by several disgruntled members, including Simpson. Aligned with other SSOC radicals and members of the Revolutionary Youth Movement faction of SDS, Simpson helped lead a successful assault against the organization, which voted itself out of existence that June.¹

Returning to his home state, Simpson, along with several other radicals, established Atlanta as the headquarters for the short-lived Revolutionary Youth Movement II (RYM II), one of two groups that emerged out of the implosion of SDS during its national convention in July 1969. Firmly committed to communist doctrine by this point, Simpson and his colleagues inserted themselves into the local activist community. Most notably, they created tensions within the antiwar movement by constantly berating its less radical elements to adopt a more anti-imperialist position against the war. That August, Simpson also played a role in a riot in the Strip, the city's hip district. Following a raid by law enforcement agents looking for narcotics, he

¹ Michel, *Struggle for a Better South*, 202-219.

encouraged hippies to erect a barricade in the middle of Peachtree Street and then began “laying a heavy working class analysis of the situation” on a local policeman.²

RYM II failed to gain support and folded within a year. Undeterred, Simpson helped found the Georgia Communist League, part of the New Communist Movement of the 1970s. Committed to the working class, Simpson and Communist League members supported numerous labor strikes over the next several years, including one by Atlanta’s sanitation workers in 1970, and a 1972 wildcat strike at the Mead Packaging Company.³ Following the demise of the New Left in the 1970s, Simpson remained in Atlanta and stayed involved in local politics over the next several decades. He also had to make a living and in 1988 founded Coyote Trading Company, a retail store specializing in Native American jewelry and arts and crafts, located on Moreland Avenue. As of 2012, the store remains open in Little Five Points, one of Atlanta’s current countercultural districts.

David Simpson’s story begins this dissertation for several reasons. First, in a very real sense, this project began with him. In August 2003, I came across Simpson during my first research trip to the university library to work on my first seminar paper during my first semester of graduate school. Initially hoping to write something on veterans and the GI Bill, I opened a file to find a picture of Simpson holding up an antiwar placard, taken during the 1967 Hiroshima Day march, an important demonstration in the history of Atlanta’s hip community, as this dissertation will show. Intrigued by the story of a southern veteran who turned into a left-wing radical, I followed his trail. It not only led to a thesis on the New Left at UGA but to this project as well.

² “No Pigs in Our Community!”, *Great Speckled Bird* II no. 22 (August 11, 1969), 2.

³ Max Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals Turn to Lenin, Mao and Che* (New York: Verso, 2002), 102.

Simpson's story also provides an excellent jumping off point because it embodies the sense of community that defined Atlanta's New Left and counterculture during the 1960s and early 1970s. Although he attended UGA, as a veteran he could also have chosen one of several local colleges if he moved to Atlanta instead of Athens when he returned from the Navy. Georgia State would have been a likely choice since its low tuition rates and flexible class schedule attracted many veterans and older students during the late 1960s. His participation in the student movement as an entry into political activism also echoed the experience of many in Atlanta's hip community. While less committed student radicals restricted their participation to campus groups, this dissertation will show that local colleges provided more enthusiastic activists a gateway to other movements and organizations in the city. Local groups attracted college students who, in turn, aided these organizations by arranging their use of campus facilities for events which brought both populations into close contact on a regular basis. Lastly, Simpson's membership in SSOC, his dedication to far left-wing ideologies, participation in the antiwar movement, and life in the Strip also represented the journey of numerous other activists in Atlanta.

Brought together initially by a commitment to political and cultural radicalism, these activists created in Atlanta during the last years of the 1960s the South's largest hip community. This community attracted students, hippies, political radicals, underground journalists, and other like-minded people from across the city, state, region and nation. Growing slowly over several years starting in 1965, it experienced its peak between 1968 and 1970. During these years, hips protested the Vietnam War on campuses and in the city, championed the civil rights movement, and worked to turn the Strip into a peaceful

haven in which people could live, work and play in a community that rejected the values and trappings of mainstream American society. The Strip also attracted runaways, motorcycle gang members and an increasingly dangerous drug culture. These elements created numerous problems and when combined with the de-escalation of the Vietnam War, the acceptance of New Left and countercultural practices in mainstream society, and the growing lack of support for revolutionary politics on area campuses, led to the community's downfall by the beginning of 1973.

The story of Atlanta's hip community illuminates limitations present in other studies of the New Left and counterculture. Often framed around one particular organization, campus or movement, they fail to incorporate the full and complicated experience of those Americans who challenged the political and cultural status quo during the Sixties. Just as a study that focused only on David Simpson's activities at UGA or in SSOC would necessarily ignore other important parts of his activist past, histories of just one organization or a single campus leave out key elements in the fuller story of the New Left and counterculture. As a result, the complexity of life in one of the nation's most turbulent decades disappears behind artificial boundaries that many participants at the time did not recognize or defiantly ignored. This study aims to overcome this problem by expanding the analytical borders used to understand the New Left and counterculture, both spatially and conceptually. This dissertation strives to reveal the connections people in the 1960s made across boundaries by exploring how activists, students, hippies, leftists and others created an alternative community in the South's largest urban environment. As I will show, the story of one part of this urban activist community cannot be fully understood without looking at its other parts.

In doing so, this dissertation will demonstrate that Atlanta's hip community developed across racial, class, ideological, movement and partisan lines. While scholars have documented the civil rights origins of the Southern antiwar movement, for example, this study shows that, in Atlanta, antiwar activity developed from the work of a far more complex set of participants. White religious pacifists, middle class liberals, black and white college students, black nationalists, and radical socialists and communists all contributed to the growth and expansion of this movement. In addition, a look at life in the Strip reveals not only the presence of hippies and political radicals but Baptist, Methodist and Catholic ministers, sympathetic police officers (at least a few), representatives from numerous social service agencies, and prominent members of the local medical community, all looking to help the Southeast's largest hip district solve its own problems in its own way. Atlanta's hip community can only be fully understood by looking at the relationships that developed within it as well as its connections to outside groups and persons while attempting to create a new way of living together.

In defining the New Left and counterculture in Atlanta as one hip community, this dissertation aims to challenge current thinking regarding the relationship between these two movements as well as emphasize the importance of grassroots experiences in creating a larger narrative about the Sixties experience. Early histories of the Sixties focused on the New Left as a national movement and saw the counterculture as a distinctly different experience, often barely worth mentioning. Instead of arguing that links existed between the two movements or that they both made equal contributions in challenging American life and politics, the first scholars of the New Left tended to view

the counterculture as a distraction to serious political work.⁴ Todd Gitlin offered one of the harshest critiques of the counterculture. The New Left, he argued, created the “template” for the counterculture and as political activism fell out of favor among the nation’s youth in the late 1960s, former radicals found it “an opportune moment to trade in their activism for a ticket to the less risky, more pleasurable counterculture.” The counterculture, in other words, provided little more than an escape from the real work of the decade. Furthermore, Gitlin and other early Sixties scholars considered the emergence of the Weatherman (a violent offshoot of SDS) and the May 1970 deaths of four Kent State students at the hands of the National Guard in Ohio as the end of the New Left. For these historians, 1969 marked the counterculture’s demise when, that December, members from the Hell’s Angels motorcycle gang killed a young African American man during a rock and roll concert at Altamont Speedway in California.⁵

Starting in the 1990s a second generation of historians questioned the conclusions of these scholars. In several grassroots studies, they examined movements in locations far removed from coastal and Upper Midwest activist enclaves.⁶ Their work explored the

⁴ See Peter Collier and David Horowitz, *Destructive Generation: Second Thoughts about the 60s* (New York: Free Press, 1996); Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*. (New York: Bantam Books, 1987); Wini Breines, *Community and Organization in the New Left, 1962-1968: The Great Refusal*. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1989); Maurice Isserman, *If I Had a Hammer. . .: The Death of the Old Left and the Birth of the New Left*. (New York: Basic Books, 1987); James Miller, *Democracy is in the Streets: From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987); and Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS* (New York: Random House, 1973).

⁵ Gitlin, *The Sixties*, 4, 427. Breines proves the exception to this assessment, noting that few scholars of the New Left paid attention to the relationship between politics and culture. See *Community and Organization*, 20.

⁶ See Beth Bailey, *Sex in the Heartland* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999); Kenneth J. Heineman, *Campus Wars: The Peace Movement at American State Universities in the Vietnam Era* (New York: New York University Press, 1993); Robbie Lieberman, *Prairie Power: Voices of 1960s Midwestern Student Protest* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004); Rusty L. Monhollon, “*This is America?*”: *The Sixties in Lawrence, Kansas* (New York: Palgrave, 2002); Doug Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); and Mary Ann Wynkoop, *Dissent in the Heartland: The Sixties at Indiana University* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).

New Left and counterculture in America's heartland and argued that the Sixties had lasted longer and been more successful than previously thought. Examining the environmental movement, the sexual revolution, the rise of feminism, and the gay liberation movement, scholars proclaimed that the era's successes could be more easily seen by broadening the definition of "political activity" and following it into the first years of the 1970s. These studies also paid closer attention to the interactions between the New Left and the counterculture. Mary Ann Wynkoop noted that a "symbiotic relationship" existed between hippies and the New Left in the university town of Bloomington, Indiana. "Politicos" relied on hippies to show up at demonstrations while hippies would provide entertainment in the form of rock bands and guerilla theater performances. In his study of the counterculture in Los Angeles, David McBride argues that the physical proximity of political and cultural radicals meant that "the intersections where their paths crossed very often seemed muddy and indistinguishable." Rusty Monhollan, looking at Lawrence, Kansas in the 1960s, mixed politics and culture together almost indistinguishably and considered "freaks, street people, radicals, revolutionaries, and hippies" all part of the counterculture.⁷

Doug Rossinow pushed this argument further in his study of the New Left and counterculture in Austin, Texas. According to Rossinow, in the last years of the decade the New Left embraced the potential of "cultural activism." Referring back to Lawrence Goodwyn's argument that the Populists of the late 19th Century had created a "movement culture," Rossinow concluded that the New Left "wished to create through self-conscious effort an authentic community, which was set against the artificiality of life in the

⁷ Wynkoop, *Dissent in the Heartland*, 154, David McBride, "Death City Radicals: The Counterculture in Los Angeles," in John McMillian and Paul Buhle, *The New Left Revisited* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 113; Monhollan, "*This is America?*" 139.

‘received, hierarchical culture.’ To phrase this belief slightly differently, the New Left, like the counterculture, understood their activities by the end of the 1960s as part of a “cultural revolution” that “could circumvent the differences in conventional methods of political change.”⁸ Despite this shared belief in the radical potential of new cultural forms, Rossinow argued against considering the New Left and counterculture as one movement or community, instead labeling it a “screwy alliance.” To support his case, Rossinow described tensions and divisions between these two local movements and used this evidence to make a more general conclusion about the national narrative of the New Left and counterculture

Two problems exist with Rossinow’s assessment. First, several scholars have concluded that attempts to create a singular narrative may prove a difficult (and perhaps futile) task since the Sixties era is best understood as a diverse set of local experiences loosely connected to a few national organizations rather than as a few leaders issuing directives to local groups from offices in distant cities. The Sixties experience varied greatly from one place to the next. In other words, what proved true in Austin may not hold for other locations. Robbie Lieberman and David Cochran argue that “there is no dominant narrative that fits every case; what local stories tell us is that the supposed anomalies are the story.” Wini Breines concurs when she states that “there were many centers of activism in the movement, many actions, many interpretations, many visions, many expectations. There was no unity because each group, region, campus, commune, collective an demonstration developed differently. . . .”⁹

⁸ Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity*, 250-251.

⁹ Robbie Lieberman and David Cochran, “‘It Seemed a Very Local Affair’: The Student Movement at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale,” in McMillian and Buhle, *The New Left Revisited*, 23; Winifred Breines, “Whose New Left?,” *The Journal of American History* 75 no. 2 (September 1988), 543.

More importantly, Rossinow may also have dismissed too readily the complexities of community formation in his examination of Austin, especially in his argument that tensions between the New Left and counterculture provided evidence that these two movements could not exist together as part of a larger whole. I would argue that a community comprised of both the New Left and counterculture could indeed have existed in Austin. What Rossinow defined as “screw alliance” may well have been the expression of a complex communal connection that held hippies and political radicals together during the late 1960s and early 1970s, despite their differences.

To explore the importance of community to grassroots movements in the Sixties, particularly in the years after 1967, this study posits a different model for understanding the New Left and counterculture at the local level. A community study of late sixties activism provides a more complete view of how people became involved in the various movements of the decade and how these movements interacted with each other. This analytical framework also overcomes the problem of intra-movement conflict by showing that while ideological and strategic tensions existed between activists and organizations, they still shared a common sense of purpose and vision of a new America.¹⁰

Thomas Bender’s work provides the analytical foundation for this model. In *Community and Social Change in America*, he presented a new way of looking at community during the years that the nation moved from being a loose collection of small towns to an integrated complex society. He posited that social theorists incorrectly

¹⁰ Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle, eds., *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Tim Hodgson, *Manhood in the Age of Aquarius: Masculinity in Two Countercultural Communities, 1965-1983* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009); Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo, *Daughters of Aquarius: Women of the Sixties Counterculture* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009); John McMillian and Paul Buhle, eds., *The New Left Revisited* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003).

understood this change as the destruction of community. Instead, Bender argued, communities and societies co-existed. Communities continued to flourish within larger societies because of their fundamental nature. Rather than being physical places (an incorrect assumption made by social theorists) communities are sets of social interactions. More simply, community is an experience rather than a place. Bender defined community as “a network of social relations marked by mutuality and emotional bonds” which “may or may not be coterminous with a specific, contiguous territory.”¹¹

He pushed this argument further in a manner that reflected the communal experience of post-World War II activists from the 1950s through the 1970s. “Far from being a microcosm of the whole society,” he explains, “it has a special quality that may result in tension with larger social aggregates.” Martin Luther King’s vision of the beloved community, while a global vision of inclusion and acceptance, certainly existed in opposition to a society committed to racial boundaries, hierarchies and exclusion. Furthermore, the wave of communes founded by countercultural adherents during the late 1960s and 1970s were inspired by a desire to exist as an alternative to modern society.

Finally, Bender addressed the issue of conflict within communities. He concludes that the “solidarity that characterizes communities does not mean . . . that all is unity and harmony. Many commentators err . . . by insisting that absence of conflict be a part of the definition of community. Communal conflict, like the family conflict we all know, is real.”¹² Interestingly, many communal groups of the era defined themselves as families. Armed with this understanding of community, it can be argued that in some cases the

¹¹ Thomas Bender, *Community and Social Change in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 6-7.

¹² *Ibid*, 8.

conflicts that arose between countercultural adherents and New Leftists at the grassroots level reflected not fundamental divisions between them so much as an ongoing dialogue.

In Atlanta, the hip community existed as an experience partly tied to a physical location and certainly had its share of internal disagreements. Hoping to carve out a space for themselves from the rest of society, the city's hips attempted to create a haven in Midtown for like-minded travelers. For several years during the late 1960s and early 1970s, hip community members started businesses, founded community organizations, addressed social problems and, when necessary, battled openly with the police to protect the space they viewed as their own. The community, however, existed beyond the confines of a small section of Atlanta. The "we-ness" and emotional bonds that Bender considered key components to community developed in a variety of ways around the city. The experience of protesting the Vietnam War, working for an underground paper, fighting for student rights, attending rock concerts, resisting the draft, sharing a crashpad and supporting each other after yet another arrest on trumped-up charges did far more to develop and strengthen communal bonds than simply living in close proximity in the same neighborhood could ever do. Indeed, when it started to become clear that the fight to maintain a claim of ownership over the Strip would fail, several members argued that the survival of the hip community meant abandoning the physical locations most closely associated with it.

These shared communal experiences did not remove the potential for disagreement and division. Numerous conflicts existed within Atlanta's hip community but its members largely considered these part of the process of building something new and radical rather than fundamental divisions. For example, by the late 1960s the

antiwar movement struggled mightily over issues of ideology and political dogma but remained committed to working together. Just a few years later, the *Great Speckled Bird* almost ceased publication over similar issues but held on and moved forward. By the early 1970s the role of drugs among hips had changed and those striving to maintain “positive vibes” in the Strip struggled with those looking to make a profit or spiraling into addiction. And, throughout the hip community’s existence, “politicos” continually tried to make politics relevant to hippies. While these disagreements could become heated, they rarely did permanent damage to the community. In fact, these struggles paled in comparison to the ones the hip community waged with the forces aligned against it. In addition to the positive elements that built Atlanta’s hip community, negative ones played an equally important role. The constant harassment by police, the physical attacks and sexual assaults against longhairs, and the repeated firebombing and arson attacks on hip businesses and homes all played a significant role in creating communal bonds. Indeed, in Atlanta it seemed the belief of “us vs. them” held the community together longer than if no outside pressures had been placed on it at all.

In addition to furthering discussions about the New Left and counterculture, this dissertation also aims to address the role of the hip community within Southern history. First, it contributes to the growing body of work on the New Left and counterculture in the South. Largely marginalized in the first wave of New Left and countercultural studies, several recent works have inserted the South into discussions of radical political and cultural change during the 1960s. These works have done a particularly good job at looking not only at the civil rights origins of many southern New Leftists but also the continued relationship of activists across the color line following the rise of Black Power

and the movement of the freedom struggle out of the South following the passage of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts in 1964 and 1965, respectively.¹³

As part of the diverse body of work on Atlanta, this study also argues that historians need to pay closer attention to the role that the New Left and counterculture played in local affairs during one of the city's most crucial periods of development. As the home of Martin Luther King, Jr., and headquarters of both the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, historians have justifiably focused on Atlanta's issues with race in the post-WWII years and its role in the larger civil rights movement.¹⁴ Scholars of the New Right have also found much to discuss about Atlanta's race relations in the rise of the modern conservatism.¹⁵ In addition, studies that focus on the city's history of urban expansion and electoral politics have either ignored the hip community altogether or provided passing reference to

¹³ William J. Billingsley, *Communists on Campus: Race, Politics, and the Public University in Sixties North Carolina* (Athens, Ga., 1999); Gregory Duhe, "The FBI and Students for a Democratic Society at the University of New Orleans, 1968-1971," *Louisiana History* 43 (2002): 53-74; John Ernst and Yvonne Baldwin, "The Not So Silent Minority: Louisville's Antiwar Movement, 1966-1975," *Journal of Southern History* 73 (Feb. 2007): 105-142; Andrew Grose, "Voices of Southern Protest During the Vietnam Era: The University of South Carolina as a Case Study," *Peace & Change* 32 (April 2007): 153-167; Alex Macauley, "'An Oasis of Order': The Citadel, the 1960s, and the Vietnam Antiwar Movement" *Southern Cultures* 11 (Fall 2005): 35-61; Gregg Michel, *Struggle for a Better South*; Douglas C. Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity*; Jeffrey A. Turner, *Sitting In and Speaking Out: Student Movements in the American South, 1960-1970* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010); Stephen H. Wheeler, "'Hell No—We Won't Go, Ya'll': Southern Student Opposition to the Vietnam War," in *The Vietnam War on Campus: Other Voices, More Distant Drums*, ed. Marc Jason Gilbert (Westport, Conn., 2001), 149-157.

¹⁴ Clayborne Carson, *SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995); David J. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (New York: Vintage Books, 1986); David Garrow, ed., *Atlanta, Georgia, 1960-1961: Sit-Ins and Student Activism* (Brooklyn: Carlson, 1989); Winston A. Grady-Willis, *Challenging U.S. Apartheid: Atlanta and Black Struggles for Human Rights, 1960-1977* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Melissa Fay Greene, *The Temple Bombing* (New York: Ballantine, 1996); Jeff Roche, *The Sibley Commission and the Politics of Desegregation in Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998); Laura Wexler, *Fire in a Canebrake: The Last Mass Lynching in America* (New York: Scribner, 2003).

¹⁵ Kevin Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Matthew D. Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

Atlanta's "hippie ghetto."¹⁶ During the late 1960s and early 1970s, however, the hip community became deeply engaged in civil rights issues that affected black Atlantans, encouraged bi-racial activism and challenged the vision of urban expansion put forward by civic leaders. White activists routinely participated in demonstrations which supported civil rights issues and black workers while the *Great Speckled Bird* maintained constant pressure on city officials to address problems that plagued black neighborhoods, especially in the areas of housing and education. The hip community continually challenged civic leaders and encouraged city residents to care about changes planned for Atlanta, including the expansion of highways, urban renewal schemes and the development of a light rail system. While the hip community ultimately possessed little real political power, for several years in the late 1960s and early 1970s it existed as an important voice in the city's charged political climate.

Several key themes thread their way through this dissertation and support its primary arguments. First, Atlanta activists tended to avoid or weaken organizational loyalties as often as they reinforced them. Activists often crossed lines of race, class, religion and ideology in coming together to fight for social and political change. These complex connections discouraged allegiances to organizations. In Atlanta, where groups such as SDS or the Young Socialist Alliance failed to build lengthy membership rolls and the proximity of civil rights organizations encouraged bi-racial activism, people found themselves continually drawn together for causes, not divided by membership cards.

¹⁶ Frederick Allen, *Atlanta Rising: The Invention of an International City, 1946-1996* (Atlanta: Longstreet Press, 1996); Alton Hornsby, Jr., *Black Power in Dixie: A Political History of African Americans in Atlanta* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2009); Larry Keating, *Race, Class, and Urban Expansion* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001); Charles Rutheiser, *Imagineering Atlanta: The Politics of Place in the City of Dreams* (New York: Verso, 1996); Clarence Stone, *Regime Politics: Governing Atlanta, 1946-1988* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1989).

The struggle over contested space also plays an important part in this story. While scholars of gender and sexuality have discussed in depth the importance of spaces and places to the development of the women's and gay liberation movements of the 1970s, scholars of the New Left and counterculture have rarely done so.¹⁷ This study helps push Sixties scholarship further towards this issue by emphasizing the important role contested space played in the story of Atlanta's hip community. Politicos and hippies, drug sellers and bikers all understood on some level that part of sustaining the hip community included controlling and defending places around the city most important to it. Politicians and police also understood the importance of controlling space as Piedmont Park and Peachtree Street became the primary battlegrounds between straight and hip society.

Finally, the issues of urban development and the city's goal of becoming an economic powerhouse in the Sunbelt South remain largely in the background throughout this study but impacted Atlanta's hip community nonetheless. Beginning with Henry Grady's New South boosterism in the late 19th Century, Atlanta's civic leaders had worked diligently to bring business and industry to the region's "Gate City." In the post-World War II years as the nation's population and businesses began a southern and westward migration, Atlanta's leaders aimed to capitalize on these changes and turn the city into one of the nation's premier urban environments. As one historian has noted, "if

¹⁷ Anne Enke, *Finding the Movement: Sexuality, Contested Space, and the Feminist Activism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Marc Stein, *City of Sisterly and Brotherly Loves: Lesbian and Gay Philadelphia, 1945-1972* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 200); John Howard, "The Library, the Park, and the Pervert: Public Space and Homosexual Encounter in Post-World War II Atlanta," and Meredith Raimondo, "Dateline Atlanta: Place and the Social Construction of AIDS," in *Carryin' On in the Lesbian and Gay South*, ed. John Howard (New York: New York University Press, 1997).

entrepreneurs were searching for the Sunbelt, Atlanta's promoters wanted them to find it in Georgia's capitol city."¹⁸

Urban renewal became an important part of making Atlanta more attractive to non-southerners. By the early 1960s, city leaders had embarked on an ambitious slate of projects focused on revitalizing and expanding the downtown area, a process that involved razing numerous African American neighborhoods. By the second half of the decade, the process had moved north into Midtown. *The Great Speckled Bird* experienced this process most directly, losing its first office to the Colony Square project at 14th and Peachtree Street and its second to the Bedford-Pine renewal project. While resistance from residents and a recession in the early 1970s slowed this steady march up Peachtree Street, developers, in addition to the police, remained anathema to the hip community.

My use of the term "hip" to describe a community composed of both political and cultural elements requires some explanation. In its common usage, hip addresses cultural movements, attitudes, people and places. The term has complex origins with etymological roots in the Wolof language of West Africa, specifically the words "hepi," which means "to see," and "hipi," meaning "to open one's eyes." In America it became a term used to describe being enlightened or in possession of knowledge hidden from mainstream society. By the 20th Century its definition had broadened, becoming an "umbrella term for particular forms of popular dissent."¹⁹ Being hip meant not only

¹⁸ Bradley R. Rice, "Searching for the Sunbelt," in *Searching for the Sunbelt: Historical Perspectives on a Region*, ed. Raymond A. Mohl (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1993), 219.

¹⁹ Stuart Henderson, *Making the Scene: Yorkville and Hip Toronto in the 1960s* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2011), 13-14.

being more enlightened than the rest of American society but also rejecting its values and living in opposition to it.

The development of large urban areas in America created spaces that attracted hip people and allowed them to live on their own terms. In some cases, these districts hosted people pushing the social and sexual boundaries, such as the bohemians of Greenwich Village in early 20th Century New York City. More often, these areas became places in which curious whites could partake in black culture, like Harlem in New York City. After World War II the Beats, a small group of poets, novelists and artists, embraced African American cultural forms, particularly jazz, and followed them into nation's black neighborhoods. In a controversial 1957 essay, Norman Mailer labeled the Beats, as well as their pre-war predecessors, "white negroes" and "hipsters." In San Francisco's North Beach neighborhood, Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsburg, Lawrence Ferlinghetti and others combined their love of African American culture and bohemianism to create the nation's most important, pre-1960s hip district. As North Beach faded by the middle of the 1960s, hipsters began moving to the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood, where journalist Michael Fallon altered Mailer's term, calling the new generation of rebels "hippies."²⁰

But, while hippies and the utopian philosophy of "peace and love" they espoused originally became the most visible part of 1960s hip existence (many hip communities during the era, including Atlanta's, were often referred to by straight society as "hippie" districts), other groups during the era could be considered hip as well, including non-hippie drug users, runaways, musicians, motorcycle gang members, black revolutionaries or any male who grew his hair long. Hip districts around the country generally welcomed

²⁰ Jay Stevens, "The Counterculture," *Witness*, II no. 2/3 (Summer/Fall 1988), 130.

them all in an effort to build new authentic communities which existed in opposition to a modern society based on materialism and soul-crushing suburban conformity.

The 1960s hip tent was indeed big, but political activists often had problems getting into it, both during the era and afterwards. In his exploration of hip's history, John Leland had a difficult time offering a succinct definition of the term but did say without equivocating that it applied to culture, not politics. Hip, he argued, "is ill-equipped to organize for a cause. No one will ever reform campaign finance laws under hip's banner, nor save the environment." To support his case, he cited author and early Sixties hip icon Ken Kesey's rejection of antiwar activism during a rally at Berkeley in 1965.²¹ He could also have chosen LSD high priest Timothy Leary's famous phrase, "Tune In, Turn On, Drop Out," a simpler and more fundamental rejection of political activism. Or he could have turned to Atlanta, where hippies occasionally took issue with activists attempting to politicize the good vibes available on the Strip and in Piedmont Park.

The dichotomy Leland attempts to establish between politics and culture, however, obscures rather than clarifies the Sixties hip experience. These moments certainly revealed points of contention between the New Left and counterculture, particularly in the mid-1960s, but as the ideology and outward symbols of both movements began to blend later in the decade, it became harder to make such a clear distinction. Political activism took on cultural meaning just as the counterculture became politicized. By the late 1960s, protesting the Vietnam War or joining a Marxist collective became almost as hip as taking LSD, embracing free love and attending a Grateful Dead concert. Indeed, recent events support the argument that political activism can indeed be

²¹ John Leland, *Hip: The History* (New York: CCCO, 2004), 8.

considered hip and suggest that politics and culture may converge in a particularly hip manner at certain key moments. In 2008, Barack Obama's presidential campaign became hip by mobilizing young, progressive volunteers, manipulating new social media systems, and hiring cutting-edge artist Shepard Fairey to design the well-known "Hope" campaign poster. The recent Occupy movement can also be considered a marriage of culture and politics in a hip way, as protestors prevent home foreclosures by camping on front lawns and performing in drum circles. People can now be considered environmentally hip by purchasing eco-friendly light bulbs, consuming locally grown organic food or driving a Toyota Prius. Indeed, these examples emphasize the power of the term hip itself which, as Leland noted, is often defined by what it is not as much as by what it is.²²

The problems associated with defining what it means to be hip carry over to attempts at delineating membership in Atlanta's hip community. Unlike studies focused on formal organizations like SDS and the Young Socialist Alliance that collected dues and issued membership cards, the historian studying this (or any) hip community has a more difficult task in identifying participants. Indeed, even at the time, hips themselves would have disagreed over who belonged in the community and who existed outside of it. A moderately liberal Emory undergraduate who opposed the Vietnam War may have felt little connection to hippies in the Strip beyond a shared opposition to the nation's war policy. In addition, the members of motorcycle gangs that resided in the Strip would likely resist being placed into the same general category as Atlanta's flower children. Furthermore, the nature of living a hip life in the 1960s presents challenges to the researcher attempting to understand one location. Hips embraced the freedom of being

²² Leland, *Hip: The History*, 4-5

constantly on the move, unshackled from the constraints imposed by mainstream society such as employment, material possessions and a permanent home. As a result, the population of hip communities constantly fluctuated.

The problems presented by shifting populations and how participants understood themselves and their roles can prove frustrating for anyone attempting to understand the dynamics of life in Sixties Atlanta. In order to maintain analytical cohesiveness but without becoming overly reductive, this study places people in the hip community if they were ideologically opposed to mainstream society, either culturally and politically, and made the decision to associate in some way with those who possessed the same views, even if for a brief time. In other words, opposition to the mainstream itself did not determine community membership, hips also had to actively seek out and associate with the larger hip population. As with any community, some hips embraced their communal role and became actively involved in organizations and agencies (making them easy to identify), while others did little more than make the initial effort to become part of a wider cohort. The level or length of activity, however, does not dismiss or discredit claims on hip community membership. Particularly in the conservative South, simply making the decision to join an antiwar group or move in to the Strip held out the possibility of conflict and alienation from friends and family. While not everyone who participated in Atlanta's Sixties experience may agree with this definition, it does accurately reflect what being hip meant during the era.

Language proved vitally important to the experience of being in a hip community. Like long hair, drug use and rock music, the correct deployment of certain terms acted as a signal that a person was hip. More importantly the incorrect use of hip

language often identified those that did not belong to the community or, even worse, those who endangered it. For example, using the term “narc” (meaning narcotics agent) meant that the speaker was part of the hip community (thus worthy of being trusted), and that the person being identified as a narc could not be trusted. As the list of new terms grew, difficulty in mastering the hip language further separated hips from non-hips. By the late 1970s, hips could easily explain the difference between a drug *dealer* (a good hip providing a needed service and earning a little cash on the side, mainly through the sale of “soft drugs” like marijuana and LSD) and a drug *pusher* (a bad hip or outsider exploiting the community for profit through the sale of “hard drugs” like heroin and amphetamines). Non-hips often failed to understand these linguistic differences.²³ The use of a specialized vocabulary that proved increasingly difficult to master mattered a great deal in communities that the federal government repeatedly tried to infiltrate, discredit and destroy during the 1960s.

Hip language can also create obstacles in reaching an understanding of the Sixties for those not familiar with its vocabulary and usage. As a result, this dissertation generally avoids its use unless it proves necessary to making a larger argument or is located in a quote. This has greatly shortened the list of hip terms used but those that remain do require definitions. I use the term “straight” to define anyone not considered hip (politicians or church leaders, for example, were “straights”) as well as things hips were not involved in, such as “straight” society or “straight” social service agencies. Several groups within straight society opposed the hip community in a particular way and received their separate term. The one I distinguish most prominently are “rednecks.”

²³ The rock band Steppenwolf helped alleviate this confusion for non-hips with its song “The Pusher,” in which lead singer John Kay states “you know the dealer, the dealer is a man/ with the love grass in his hand/ Oh, but the pusher is a monster/ Good God, he’s not a natural man.”

Rednecks were working class residents living in Midtown that shared the Strip with the hip community and, on occasion, fought with them. Hips in Atlanta came to identify anyone who committed violence against the community as rednecks but I have avoided using this broader definition.

I have also attempted to minimize and clarify the terms used to describe the hip community. I have adhered to a strict historical definition of a “hippie” as a person who adopted the principles, philosophies, and values of the Sixties era counterculture. By the late 1960s many people across the nation had adopted the outward symbols of the hippie lifestyle (“love” beads, flamboyant clothing, and smoking marijuana) but rejected or ignored its deeper beliefs in utopianism and other forms of alternative culture. As a result, many people could be hip but not be hippies. I adhere to this distinction throughout this study. I do employ the terms “longhairs” and “freaks” to mean general membership in the hip community, a usage hips at the time recognized. I do avoid using the term “head” as a general hip descriptor since it had specific connections to the drug culture, which not all hips participated in. The terms “New Leftist” and “politico” are employed as synonyms and are used when a distinction is required between political and cultural activists. Finally, I use the term “street people” to define a specific subgroup within the hip community composed of runaways, drug users and sellers, and transient hippies.

I employ the term “Strip” in a manner more in line with a present understanding of the term than a historically accurate one. At the time, the Strip did not define the hip district as a whole but a section of Peachtree Street between 8th Street and 15th Street. Indeed, some at the time used an even more restrictive definition, identifying the Strip as

the one block area between 10th and 11th Streets. The neighborhood that many hip community members lived in went by several names, including Tight Squeeze, the 10th Street Business District, the 14th Street Area, and the “Hippie District,” to list the most prominent. I have decided to avoid using these terms because they generally fail to relate closely enough to the community at the center of this study. Instead, I have employed the term “Strip” to describe the neighborhood because the term has come to represent the hip community’s presence in Midtown during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

When people discussed the Strip from the mid-1970s onward, they did not mean to discuss just a section of Peachtree Street or the businesses there that catered to hips. When people asked the question “what happened to the Strip?,” they more accurately meant to ask “what happened to the hip community that occupied that part of Atlanta?” To put it another way, “Where did all the hippies go?” and “What happened to the Strip?” exist as interchangeable queries in Atlanta. The Strip Project best represents this linguistic usage today. A website that explores Atlanta’s entire hip experience in the 1960s from the Catacombs night club to the *Great Speckled Bird* and Piedmont Park it employs the term “Strip” as the chosen descriptor of the hip community’s existence in that part of Atlanta. As a result, I describe life *in* the Strip, not *on* it, and call hips living in the neighborhood “Strip residents” to separate them from straights in the area, which I refer to as “Midtown residents.”

This dissertation progresses thematically in order to reveal most clearly the formation and complexity of Atlanta’s hip community, although events within each chapter are explored chronologically. I have organized the chapters in three sections

around what I have termed “meeting places.” Chapters Two and Three discuss the role of college campuses in the hip community. At Emory University, an activist contingent emerged initially through the work of radicalized grad students, young faculty members, and a few undergraduates who had been involved in the civil rights movement and antiwar activity. The connections these activists made with others in the city and region turned Emory into a key gathering spot for organizational meetings and a training ground for hip community leaders. But, as Emory’s best and most dedicated organizers left the school to work for other causes, it became difficult to create a sustained, effective or radical student movement of any notable size. Emory’s conservative middle-class student body also played a contributing role. Indeed, the most noteworthy demonstration at Emory during the 1960s emerged from the school’s small population of politically active conservatives. As a result, the Vietnam War served as the only issue that New Left activists could rally students around in large numbers and only in response to specific events after most of the nation had turned against the war in 1968. Following a major demonstration to protest the Kent State killings in 1970, activism at Emory largely dissipated as the Vietnam War appeared to be coming to an end.

In comparison, Georgia State University proved far more politically active during the era. Its urban campus and non-traditional, primarily working- and lower-middle class student body should have prevented a noteworthy student movement from developing at the commuter school. Instead, one developed that proved more radical, diverse and long-lasting than at any other school in the city. Opposition to the Vietnam War served as a starting point but by the first years of the 1970s the school possessed

Marxist students attempting to build a worker-student alliance, feminists fighting for abortion rights, and a gay liberation movement.

The next two chapters explore the hip community's two most important ideological meeting places. Chapter Three examines the city's antiwar movement. Opposition to the war in Atlanta first emerged from members of prominent civil rights groups headquartered in Atlanta (SNCC and the SCLC) and from the city's small collection of pacifist organizations. In its first years, a bi-racial city-wide movement grew by avoiding ideological battles and focusing on organizational techniques and strategies that worked best in the local environment. As a result, the antiwar movement included every part of the hip community as well as the city's collection of older, liberal activists. This coalition fractured by the end of the decade as the rise of Black Power drove away young African Americans and the slavish adherence to several variations of Marxist doctrine created significant rifts between white radicals while driving away both older white and black liberals. By the war's end in 1973, a small group of young white radicals were all that remained.

Chapter Five discusses the *Great Speckled Bird*, Atlanta's long-running underground newspaper. Born from small antiwar newsletters first published at Emory, the *Bird* would become one of the nation's most significant alternative publications. Staffed initially by older, highly educated and committed political activists, the paper played a crucial role in creating a community out of several disparate groups of cultural and political radicals. The paper also helped and protected the hip community by providing a source of income for street people, organizing funds to bail people out of jail and mounting campaigns to reign in repression and harassment committed against the hip

community by law enforcement agencies and other city officials. But, the staff's intense commitment to political activism also created trouble for the paper. *Birdpeople* often felt alienated from hippies and other street people who either ignored the paper's political content or openly confronted the editors for attempting to politicize hip culture. Political disagreements among the staff almost ended the paper's run in 1972 but it managed to survive and as the hip community it helped birth faded, it refocused its efforts on addressing city-wide, foreign policy and labor-based issues.

The last three chapters discuss the physical meeting places in the city that the hip community claimed at its own. Chapter Six discusses the rise of the Strip, a section of Midtown Atlanta which became the epicenter of the hip community. Centered around a roughly six block section of Peachtree Street, Atlanta's famed main thoroughfare, it had developed a reputation by the mid-1960s as the South's "Greenwich Village" because of its small bohemian population, most of whom had some connection to the nearby arts college and museum. By 1966, a few dozen hippies took up residence in several of the district's numerous inexpensive boarding houses but spent a good deal of each day on the street. A few coffeehouses and clubs began serving this population, which expanded as like-minded people around the city now knew how to easily find the hip community. City officials also became aware of the growing hip community and made efforts at eradicating it by jailing its most prominent member and shutting down its most well-known nightclub. These efforts failed to check the growth of the Strip and as more people arrived and more businesses opened to serve hips, the city embarked on a pattern of harassment aimed at making life for hips as difficult as possible. Lacking any real political power, hip residents had few resources to turn to in confronting this repression.

The Strip's existence seemed imperiled by the fall of 1969 as hips and police openly clashing in the streets of Midtown.

Piedmont Park serves as the topic for Chapter Seven. Located several blocks east of the Strip, the park became the playground for the hip community. Parties and rock concerts took place on a regular basis starting in 1968. Piedmont Park also provided a space for political rallies and meetings, an important function for a community that lacked open access to large indoor venues. By the summer of 1969, rock concerts featuring a rotating bill of local artists and the soon-to-become-famous Allman Brothers occurred almost every Sunday, attracting large crowds from around the city. The worsening relationship between the hip community and police in the Strip spilled over into the park, leading to a riot in October 1969. The event only strengthened the hip community's belief that the park belonged to them and needed defending. The city, however, contested this claim and in 1971 revealed plans to revitalize the park. As part of the process, law enforcement officials increased their efforts at clearing the park of hip community members. This proved difficult since harassment had driven the hip community off the Strip and into the park, deepening the commitment to resistance. The community also now contained a growing number of homeless and drug-addicted street people who took up permanent residence in the park's wooded areas and began selling and taking drugs in the open. The hip community fought attempts by police during the summer of 1971 to remove them from the park, resulting in violence and gunplay in which several hip community members and one policeman were injured. Several new ordinances passed by the city's parks department provided the police with new weapons

to use against the hip community and by the following spring the Piedmont Park had been retaken by straight Atlanta.

The final chapter returns to the Strip. By the beginning of 1970 hip community leaders had come together to form the Midtown Alliance and create the Midtown Community Center to serve the needs of the Strip's growing population of street people. Several straight agencies aided these efforts by hips to take care of their own by providing funds and helping bridge the gap between the straight and hip communities. The election of a new mayor who seemed willing to work with hips created the belief that the Strip would become a legitimate alternative neighborhood within the wider cityscape. These hopes soon came crashing down as hard drugs, vulnerable young runaways, professional drug sellers and motorcycle gangs moved into the Strip. New agencies attempted to address these problems but the neighborhood began to destabilize as drug addiction and violence led many older hips to leave the neighborhood. As these events unfolded in the spring of 1970, rumors circulated that thousands of hip people from around the nation planned to relocate to Atlanta that summer. The hip community tried to help city officials prepare for this mass in-migration but these efforts failed when the mayor took a hard line by increasing the number of police in the Strip, signing a new loitering ordinance, and spreading the word that the city was closed to outside hips. Although the hordes never arrived, local hips suffered heightened levels of harassment from the police. Cops and hips engaged in an escalating series of street battles, culminating in a four hour long riot that raged through the Strip that October. The violence drove more of the older hips out of the district and what remained of the

community on the Strip relocated to Piedmont Park. By the summer of 1971, the Strip had ceased to serve the people.

A final note on sources. My research uncovered a wealth of primary source material regarding the history of Atlanta's hip community. As a result, and to my disappointment, I have relied on oral history sources to a lesser degree than I had originally planned. I enjoyed immensely speaking to several key members of the hip community and listening to interviews collected by other scholars, but the wealth of documentary sources meant I needed to rely on oral evidence to fill in specific gaps in the written record or provide unique personal perspectives regarding major events. This in no way should diminish the important role these people played in helping me think differently and more deeply about the fascinating story of Atlanta's hip community. I hope this study accurately reflects their experience.

CHAPTER 2
PROTESTS IN THE SUBURBS: THE STUDENT MOVEMENT AT EMORY
UNIVERSITY

There's something happenin' here, what it is ain't exactly clear.

["For What It's Worth,"](#) Buffalo Springfield

In 1970, Judson Ward, Vice President and Dean of Faculties at Emory University, completed a survey sent to the nation's colleges and universities regarding campus political activity. His answers became part of "The Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest." Created by Richard Nixon in the wake of massive protests on campuses following the killing of four students at Kent State University in May, the commission hoped to ascertain how the nation's students had come to embrace radicalism and violence. Since 1967, student protestors at schools on the nation's coasts and upper Mid-West had taken over buildings, battled with police and even engaged in arson to demonstrate their anger over issues such as racism and the Vietnam War. By the start of the 1970s, many students in more remote and conservative parts of the country had also embraced these same tactics.

In comparison, events at Emory during this period of the nation's most turbulent decade seemed fairly tame in comparison. In fact, Emory students during the decade gained national attention not for sit-ins, violence or antiwar activism, but for organizing a rally in 1966 that supported the Vietnam War. In his answers to the questionnaire, Ward

cited several factors that contributed to this relative peace at Emory. He stated that the small student body allowed for open communication between students and the administration. In addition, he cited the “liberality of faculty and administration,” which often resulted in an acceptance of the changes requested by student radicals. Finally, Ward noted that a climate of cooperation existed on campus because the “regional orientation” of the student body. Composed overwhelmingly of Southerners, the students proved “courteous” and displayed “respect for authority.”¹ Ward’s assessment proved accurate in several respects. By 1970, through the leadership of president Sanford Atwood, Emory had recruited a faculty and administration, many from outside the South, who proved sympathetic to the issues supported by student demonstrators. While the school did attract liberal and, in some cases, radical graduate students from outside the region, the overwhelming majority of the undergraduate student body came from the Deep South and supported the region’s conservative approach to politics and culture. As a result, many historians have assumed little of note occurred at this quiet school located in the Atlanta suburbs.

A closer examination of Emory during the 1960s, however, reveals a more complex picture of campus politics. While activists never converted large numbers of students into committed radicals, they did create a student movement that lasted from the mid-1960s until 1970. Unlike students on other campuses that created numerous New Left organizations which students could officially join, activism on Emory’s campuses centered on a loosely organized group of radicals that focused most of their attention on the Vietnam War. More importantly, when key student leaders emerged they often

¹ Judson C. Ward, “Political Activities and Campus Disorders,” Judson C. Ward Office Files, Box 10, University Archives, Manuscript and Rare Book Library, Emory University, Atlanta, GA, hereafter cited as MARBL.

quickly transferred their attention and efforts to the larger and more radical hip community organizations headquartered in the city. Indeed, these groups, which often lamented the lack of a larger student movement on Emory's campus, acted as a primary reason for this problem. As a result, the school's New Leftists failed to become an important part of the crisis over race that erupted on campus in 1969 or create vital organizations that took up the increasingly diverse set of issues embraced by activists during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Consequently, the student movement at Emory dwindled quickly following the crisis of the invasion of Cambodia and the killings at Kent State in May 1970. The story of Emory in the 1960s reveals a movement held back both by its own decisions and its proximity to activist groups in Atlanta that held out the promise of stronger commitment and more radical action.

Historical Background

Nestled on six hundred acres in the upscale Atlanta neighborhood of Druid Hills, Emory University began humbly as a small college in nearby Oxford, GA in 1836. Affiliated with the Methodist church from its founding, it was named for Bishop John Emory, a church leader killed in a carriage accident in 1835. The school remained small and struggled through most of the late 1800s.² A controversy within the Methodist Church, however, forever altered the course of the school's history. In 1914, the General Conference of the Methodist Church severed its ties with Vanderbilt University over issues of governance. Vanderbilt had until that point provided training for Methodist ministers. Church leaders developed a plan to create two new theological training centers

² Thomas H. English, *Emory University, 1915-1965: A Semicentennial History* (Atlanta, Emory University, 1966), 3.

(preferably as part of larger universities), one on either side of the Mississippi River. Southern Methodist University in Dallas, TX, quickly assumed responsibility for theological training west of the river, leaving only the site in the eastern United States to be picked.³

To civic leaders in Atlanta, a new university fit perfectly within plans for the city. During the first few decades of the twentieth century Atlanta underwent a period of substantial economic growth. Looking to develop the city into a regional business center, prominent boosters enthusiastically adopted the "Atlanta Spirit," the belief that what was good for business was good for Atlanta. The establishment of a new university would help make the city more attractive to businesses from outside the region. In July, 1914, the city's Chamber of Commerce attempted to influence the church's decision by pledging \$500,000 cash, land for a campus, and temporary classroom, dormitory and office space so the school could relocate easily and rapidly from Oxford. To sweeten the deal Asa Candler, founder of the Coca Cola Company, wrote a letter offering his support for the new school and included a personal check for one million dollars. Such a generous sum may not have been necessary to sway the board's decision since Candler sent the letter to Bishop W.A. Candler, his brother and chairman of the commission tasked with deciding where the new school would be located. The commission quickly chose to accept the funds and founded the new university in Atlanta, which initially included the School of Theology and Emory College as its "academic department." The school's campus would be located in Druid Hills, a suburb developed by Asa Candler and located six miles northeast of downtown Atlanta.⁴ Emory's religious roots would impact

³ Ibid, 10-12.

⁴ Ibid, 12-14

the development of the campus New Left at Emory in the 1960s, although for most of its existence it possessed a conservative student body drawn from the state's middle class. The school grew steadily during the twentieth century. The civil rights movement largely bypassed Emory, which desegregated quietly in 1963. By the mid-1960s, however, the development of white student movements in the South and the escalation of the war in Vietnam persuaded progressive-minded students to act.

The Vietnam War Comes to Campus

During the first half of the 1960s, Emory's almost exclusively white undergraduate population of roughly 5,700 remained largely untouched by the civil rights movement despite being located in one of its most important cities. Instead, it would be the Vietnam War that sparked the growth of student political activity at Emory. On October 29, 1965, Emory hosted its first "teach-in" on the Vietnam War. Teach-ins had emerged the previous spring as a means of heightening awareness about the nation's growing commitment to the Vietnam War, which President Lyndon Johnson had escalated in March by sending in the first American ground combat troops. Teach-ins consisted of information sessions about Vietnam and debates about U.S. policy between pro- and anti-Vietnam War advocates. Following the first teach-in at the University of Michigan in March, "teach-ins spread like wildfire across America's campuses."⁵

By fall 1965 a group calling itself the Committee for Conversation had organized a teach-in at Emory. Chaired by Jody Palmour, an undergraduate from Gainesville, GA, the small group "sought to bring together engaging minds to help the student body and faculty see the possibilities for the University's relevance to the fundamental problems of

⁵ Tom Wells, *The War Within: America's Battle over Vietnam* (New York: Henry Holt, 1994), 24.

existence."⁶ According to Palmour, the event began after religion professor Thomas Altizer called him and several other students into his office. Altizer had attended the first teach-in at Michigan. He gave the students materials from that event and told them they should organize something similar at Emory.⁷ While the event, entitled "Conversation: Vietnam" had been organized as a teach-in, Palmour and his committee decided to avoid labeling it as such, opting instead to utilize the phrase "conversation" to describe it. The group's use of the term "sprang from the Student Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), "which had created a "Dialogue [sp] program that promoted inter-cultural group conversations."⁸ It also demonstrated how antiwar activists had to adapt seemingly radical tactics to the more conservative South. By changing the name of the event it allowed organizers to maintain the substance of the antiwar mission while avoiding unnecessary confrontation. While not the all-night affair held at the University of Michigan or the marathon discussion students at UC-Berkeley organized, the Emory "Conversation" proved a rousing success. Over 1,200 people attended the event, which brought significant members of the antiwar movement and political left to campus, including former head of the U.S. Socialist Party Norman Thomas and peace activist Staughton Lynd.⁹

The Emory teach-in also strengthened the connection between the school and the Southern Student Organizing Committee (SSOC). Founded in 1964, SSOC operated as a civil rights organization for progressive white Southerners and had close ties with both the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and Students for a Democratic

⁶ Jody Palmour, "Conversation: Vietnam," *New South Student* II no. 6 (November 1965), 4.

⁷ Jody Palmour, interviewed by Gregg Michel, 2 April 1995, in possession of author.

⁸ Jody Palmour, "Conversation: Vietnam," 4.

⁹ *Ibid.*

Society (SDS). Gene Guerrero, an Emory undergrad and civil rights activist, served as the group's first chairman.¹⁰ Palmour recalls that Guerrero invited people from SSOC's main office in Nashville to the event. "Several carloads" of people caravanned down from Tennessee, including Sue Thrasher, SSOC's executive secretary. The success of Conversation: Vietnam had an important impact on both Palmour and Emory. Soon after the event, Palmour dropped out of school after being offered a job working for SSOC.¹¹ The event also encouraged conservative students at Emory to organize a response called "Affirmation: Vietnam."

Affirmation: Vietnam grew out of events at Emory but also a concern that national media coverage of the antiwar movement misled many Americans into thinking that most college students opposed the war. Remar "Bubba" Sutton and Don Brunson developed the idea of petition drive which would culminate with a large rally composed of war supporters. Conceived in late November 1965, Sutton, Brunson and several other like-minded students quickly developed a written plan and began soliciting sponsors for the event by early December.

In its "Proposal for Action," which the organization mailed to prominent Georgian civic leaders, businessmen and politicians, the group explained why it felt the need for a public event in support of the nation's commitment to South Vietnam. Foreshadowing the intense divisions and conflict the war would generate among Americans by the late 1960s, the document made clear that the motivation behind the event lay in reminding Americans and those watching around the globe that the majority of nation's population remained steadfastly patriotic and supportive of the fight against global communism. The

¹⁰ For more on the history of SSOC see Gregg Michel, *Struggle for a Better South: The Southern Student Organizing Committee, 1964-1969* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004).

¹¹ Jody Palmour interview, 2 April 1995.

proposal also focused on winning the hearts and minds at home. Concerned that "the nations of the world, friend and foe alike, must surely wonder at the conviction and strength of those who consider the American involvement an undeniable and irrevocable commitment," after seeing so many antiwar protests in the U.S., Affirmation: Vietnam organizers argued that "the public consensus . . . must not be obscured by the behavior of a small segment of our population."¹²

The organization went quickly to work. Sutton flew to Washington D.C. to begin gathering support from prominent political and military figures, even going so far to force an expedited decision from the Internal Revenue Service regarding the group's tax-exempt status. Back in Georgia, Brunson and several other recruits reached out to college and high school students in an effort to create a state-wide student-run organization. This network helped with each of the event's three parts. A speaker's bureau consisting of college students would be made available to civic groups to explain the nation's role in Vietnam. A state-wide petition drive aimed to show that a clear majority of Georgians supported the nation's commitment to South Vietnam. The culmination of these efforts, however, would be a rally held on February 12, 1966, in Atlanta Stadium, newly constructed and waiting to host the inaugural season of the recently transplanted Milwaukee Braves.

From its inception the campaign received significant support. In the three months it took to organize the rally and conduct the petition drive, Affirmation: Vietnam received over \$60,000 in donations from individuals and businesses. Almost all of Atlanta's banks contributed \$1,000 each, as did Delta Airlines and the Georgia Power Company.

¹² "Affirmation Vietnam: A Proposal for Action," Maston O'Neal Papers, Series III, Box 26, Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Studies, University of Georgia, Athens, GA.(hereafter known as the O'Neal Papers)

Several companies, including Lockheed-Martin, donated the use of executive aircraft to transport student organizers and keynote speakers around the country.¹³ Sponsors for the event included prominent local and state politicians, including Atlanta Mayor Ivan Allen, U.S. Representative Howard “Bo” Calloway, arch-segregationist Roy Harris, Senators Herman Talmadge and Richard Russell, and former governor Ernest Vandiver. Many of these supporters sent glowing letters of support to the organizers, many echoing the sentiments of Russell that the group’s efforts would “hearten our own servicemen and will cause the Communist enemy to realize the hopelessness of his effort.”¹⁴ On campus, the group occupied almost two dozen rooms in Wesley Hall, provided free of charge by the university.

From December 1965 until the rally the following February, Affirmation: Vietnam volunteers worked tirelessly to gather signatures and plan the rally. The Student Steering Committee consisted of leaders from local colleges, including student body presidents from the University of Georgia, Georgia State College, the Georgia Institute of Technology, Agnes Scott College, and Spelman College. In addition, volunteers around the state busied themselves collecting signatures. The petition asked respondents to check “yes” or “no” to the following statement: “We as Americans and Georgians affirm and endorse our country’s commitment in Vietnam.” From the beginning Sutton and the others aimed to clarify the petition’s message. Organizer Tom King did not “want people to think we’re advocating war. What we’re advocating is the United States’ commitment

¹³ Gene Roberts, “10,000 Rally in Atlanta Rain to back Vietnam Policy; National Drive Slated,” *New York Times*, February 13, 1966, 2; Roy Simmons to Maston O’Neal, February 10, 1966, Series III, Box 26, O’Neal Papers.

¹⁴ Richard B. Russell to Remar Sutton, December 7, 1965, Series III, Box 26, O’Neal Papers

in Viet Nam. Our faith is in what our country must do.” Despite this muddled explanation, the petition gained tens of thousands of signatures.

Sutton, a twenty-four year old senior at Emory and the son of a Marietta, Ga., building contractor, acted as the driving force behind convincing major politicians and celebrities to speak at the rally. Beginning in early December he made several trips around the country to recruit participants. He flew to New York to bring retired Army General and Georgia native Lucius Clay on to the speaker’s platform. During a trip to Los Angeles he convinced comedian Bob Hope to appear in a local television special about the rally that aired several days before the event. Sutton made a special trip to recruit singer Anita Bryant, boarding a plane for an unannounced visit to her Miami home after she initially refused a spot on the program. His effort paid off, and he received word on his way back to Atlanta that she had agreed to appear.¹⁵ Sutton also secured the commitment of Secretary of State Dean Rusk, another Georgia native, to appear as the keynote speaker. Given the petition’s success and widespread support from business leaders, politicians and entertainers, the event’s organizers predicted that fifty thousand people would attend the rally.

On February 12 inclement weather helped keep attendance down but did not dampen the enthusiasm of those who came to support the nation’s role in Vietnam. People began arriving at the stadium by 11 a.m., two hours before the event’s official start time. A steady rain fell through most of the morning and turned into a downpour by the time the entertainment portion of the program began. The audience, estimated at ten thousand to fifteen thousand, listened to patriotic songs from local college bands and glee clubs. Anita Bryant provided her rendition of the “Battle Hymn of the Republic.” Army

¹⁵ “Singer Talked Into Attending Rally on War,” *Atlanta Journal*, February 6, 1966, 16.

Special Forces Sgt. Barry Sadler sang his hit song “Ballad of the Green Berets,” which he had debuted on the *Ed Sullivan Show* two weeks earlier and reached Number #1 on the *Billboard* singles chart by the first week of March. The crowd’s enthusiasm was on full display as participants wore patriotic-themed clothing and waved thousands of American flags. The rally represented a high point of support in the early days of the war before the body counts and protests reported on the daily news divided the nation. As one local reporter noted, “They [the crowd] cheered anybody who did anything. It was a flag-waving, hand-clapping group with plenty of lung power.”¹⁶

A slate of speakers followed the entertainers and made repeated pronouncements in favor of the nation’s Vietnam policy. Several students, including Remar Sutton and UGA student body president George Darden, addressed the rally. Prominent politicians followed, including governor Carl Sanders, and senators Herman Talmadge and Richard Russell. The event culminated with the presentation of the petition by organizer Tom King to South Vietnam’s representative to the United Nations, Nguyen Duy Lien. Containing more than 250,000 signatures the document showed that over 96% of Georgians polled supported the nation’s policy regarding Vietnam. The rally ended with a speech by Rusk, who reinforced the Johnson administration’s official, if inaccurate, justification for involvement in Vietnam. “Let us be very clear and very simple about Vietnam,” Rusk stated, “we are faced with . . . an attempt by North Viet Nam to take over South Viet Nam by force.”¹⁷

¹⁶ John Askins, “15,000 Wet Georgians Affirm Viet Nam Policy,” Robert Coram, “Deluge Fails to Dampen Rally Spirits,” *Atlanta Journal*, February 13, 1966, 1, 18, 22; Roberts, “10,000 Rally,” 2; Al Kuettner, “Peace Promised Hanoi Anytime Reds Want It,” *Washington Post*, February 13, 1966, A1.

¹⁷ Askins, “15,000 Wet Georgians,” 18; “Affirmation: Vietnam,” *The Emory Magazine*, 42 no. 2 (March 1966), 13.

Atlantans who opposed this justification for war staged a small but noticeable protest outside Atlanta Stadium during the rally. Approximately two dozen protestors, both white and African American, belonging to the Atlanta Committee to End the War in Vietnam marched while carrying signs proclaiming “Affirm Peace Not War,” and “All Men are Cremated Equal.” Founded the previous October, the organization had already conducted several demonstrations and spoken to various civic groups by the time of Affirmation: Vietnam. During the demonstration a scuffle occurred when William Kontoes, a middle-aged Atlantan, got out of his car and tried to pry a picket sign away from a female demonstrator while shouting that the protesters were a “bunch of dirty, Communist cowards.” The police quickly removed Kontoes and the demonstration proceeded without further incident. While small, this demonstration, along with the Committee to End the War in Vietnam, provided a foundation for the larger and more vocal antiwar movement that developed in Atlanta by the end of the 1960s.¹⁸

Affirmation: Vietnam proved a success for its organizers, despite the small turnout. The rally received coverage in the national media, including the *New York Times* and *Time* magazine. In February 1967, several organizers travelled to Pennsylvania to receive the George Washington Award from the Freedoms Foundation of Valley Forge in recognition for their “outstanding expression of patriotism and the American way of life.” In other ways, however, the project failed to live up to expectations. In addition to the sparsely attended rally, promises by the organizers to create future projects under the “Affirmation” banner were never fulfilled. Also, despite collecting \$70,000 in donations “Affirmation: Vietnam” ended in debt. In September 1966, the university agreed to pay

¹⁸ Nelson Blackstock, et al, Committee to End the Vietnam War Fundraising Letter, February 5, 1966, Box 26, Richard L. Stevens Papers, MARBL; Paul Hemphill, “Picket Patrol,” *Atlanta Journal*, February 14, 1966, 2.

off the almost \$4,000 the organizers still owed. Finally, the event failed to generate on Emory's campus a sustained voice of support for the Vietnam War. Within a year those opposing the war would emerge as the dominant political voice on campus.¹⁹

Finding a Voice

The election of Lester Maddox as Georgia's seventy-fifth governor helped launch Emory's student movement. A staunch segregationist, Maddox rose to national prominence in 1964 when a picture of him wielding an ax handle against African American protestors outside his segregated restaurant, The Pickrick, appeared in newspapers across the country. A year later Maddox closed the Pickrick instead of desegregating it. He used his popularity as a voice of protest against civil rights to launch his political career. In 1966, Maddox won a surprising victory in the Democratic primary by riding a wave of backlash in Georgia against the 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Voting Rights Act. In the general election, he actually lost the popular vote to Howard "Bo" Callaway, the first legitimate Republican challenger to the governorship since Reconstruction. Callaway had not won a majority of the votes, however, throwing the election into the Democrat-controlled state legislature, which gave the election to Maddox.

Concern among Georgians that Maddox would return the state to a policy of massive resistance against civil rights legislation led to renewed activism and the formation of the Atlanta-at-Large chapter of the Southern Student Organizing Committee

¹⁹ John Askins, "Further Affirmation Work Pledged by Emory Students," *Atlanta Journal*, February 14, 1966, 14; Jeff Maddox, "Dean Zellner Reveals Facts about 'Affirmation: Vietnam,'" *Emory Wheel*, September 6, 1966, 1; Jack Boozer, Jr., "University Action Rejects Freedom," *Emory Wheel*, March 2, 1967, 5.

(SSOC).²⁰ Founded in 1964, SSOC initially helped activists organize local civil rights campaigns across the South but in 1966 began forming its own chapters in cities and on college campuses. The creation of a city-wide chapter in Atlanta revealed the lack of strong individual campus movements but the close relationship activist students had developed across campus boundaries. The Atlanta-at-Large Chapter consisted of students and faculty from Emory University, Georgia State College, Agnes Scott College and Atlanta University. This organization also demonstrated the diverse origins of activists in Atlanta during the 1960s. Georgia State helped educate the city's lower middle class and working class, while Emory and Agnes Scott traditionally served the region's wealthier students. Atlanta University was part of the Atlanta University Center, the city's collection of historically black colleges and universities.²¹

The SSOC activists leaped into action in the first few months of 1967. On January 10, they held a protest outside the state capitol during Maddox's inauguration. Approximately fifty students marched several blocks before taking up a position within view of the podium. Several carried signs proclaiming "More Money for Education," and "Segregation is Sin," while six students carried a coffin with the phrase "Here lie Justice, Wisdom and Moderation" written on its side.²² The group also became involved in several issues regarding university reform. It staged a "study-in" inside the state legislature in February as the body hotly debating education funding. At the beginning of

²⁰ Southerners adopted a policy of massive resistance following the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*. Supporters of the policy attempted to block any form of desegregation. Massive resistance efforts faded after President Eisenhower used military troops to enforce the desegregation of Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1957. For more on massive resistance see Numan V. Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance: Race and Politics in the South During the 1950s* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969); Jeff Roche, *Restructured Resistance: The Sibley Commission and the Politics of Desegregation in Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998).

²¹ Larry Weisblatt, "Atlanta SSOC Tries to Focus All Varieties of Discontent into Action," *Emory Wheel*, May 11, 1967, 3.

²² Richard Werthheim, "Students Carry South's Coffin," *Emory Wheel*, January 19, 1967, 1

spring quarter it organized a workshop on university reform attended by students from throughout the region and featured an appearance by Steve Weisman, one of the leaders of the Berkeley Free Speech Movement.²³

While lacking an independent campus movement Emory and its student activists nonetheless served as a driving force behind the local SSOC chapter and the city's developing hip community. Several factors contributed to this situation. First, Emory possessed a strong connection to SSOC through Guerrero and Palmour. Second, the focus on graduate studies at Emory meant that the school attracted progressive students, many from outside the region, who were prone towards activism. Graduate student Tom Coffin would play a crucial role in building the campus's antiwar movement later in the year. Finally, a strong relationship with the Methodist Church that included providing professional religious training at the Candler School of Theology ensured that civil rights and peace issues would remain a topic of discussion on campus throughout the Sixties. Thomas Altizer, the instigator of *Conversation: Vietnam*, participated in numerous antiwar activities before leaving the university in 1968.

Indeed, antiwar activities became the focus of campus demonstrations starting in the spring of 1967. As part of the lead up to the national Spring Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam, Atlanta SSOC organized a teach-in April 11. Seventy five people attended from colleges around the city and heard speeches from Emory and Atlanta University Center faculty members. That weekend, SSOC and the Atlanta Committee to

²³ Larry Weisblatt, "SSOC Protests Budget Cut in Education, Sets 'Study-In'," February 9, 1967, 1; Weisblatt, "Atlanta SSOC Tries," 3. The national student movement began in part at Berkeley during the Free Speech Movement in 1964. Protests erupted following a decision by administrators to deny students the right to raise money for civil rights groups. The movement included several veterans of Freedom Summer, a civil rights campaign held in Mississippi during the summer of 1964, including Mario Savio. See Robert Cohen and Reginald E. Zelnik, eds., *The Free Speech Movement: Reflections on Berkeley in the 1960s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); W.J. Rorabaugh, *Berkeley at War in the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 8-47.

End the War in Viet Nam chartered a bus to take students to the Spring Mobilization March in New York City. Twelve Emory students, including Atlanta SSOC Steering Committee Chairman Bob Sprinkle, participated in the nation's largest antiwar demonstration up to that point, as 300,000 protesters descended on the plaza in front of the United Nations.²⁴

By the fall 1967 semester a loose confederation of radicals attempted to capitalize on the previous spring's success and develop a stronger campus antiwar movement. Led by graduate students and liberal faculty members, the activists undertook several measures to turn Emory students against the war. Tom Coffin, along with his wife Stephanie, had recently arrived in Atlanta from Seattle, where they had been active in the antiwar movement. Soon after arriving, Coffin began self-publishing the *Emory Herald Tribune*, an anti-war newspaper. Employing the same irreverent tone he would later use while writing for Atlanta's underground newspaper the *Great Speckled Bird*, Coffin proclaimed in the first issue of his two-page mimeographed handout that "in this my newspaper I can curse or swear or bellyache all I want to." Explaining his position on Vietnam and his editorial policy, he stated that, "I feel no obligation to defend our friendly demagogues, foreign or domestic. Nor must I as a 'responsible critic' try to rationalize either our presence in Vietnam or our barbarous actions against the Vietnamese people. I do however, provide a viable alternative: Get Out Now. . . ."²⁵

Beginning in October, activists held weekly vigils in front of Cox Hall. Atlanta SSOC leader Palmour stated that no one group sponsored the vigils, which were attended by

²⁴ Larry Weisblatt, "SSOC's Teach-In Urges End to Viet War, Draft System," *Emory Wheel*, April 20, 1967, 2; Larry Weisblatt, "Demonstrators Call for Vietnam Peace," *Emory Wheel*, April 27, 1967, 3; Tom Wells, *The War Within*, 133.

²⁵ Tom Coffin, *Emory Herald Tribune* I no. 1 (undated), 1.

what he labeled “a very diverse group with a real difference of political perspective.”

Although not directly associated with SSOC, the vigils continued the connection between Emory activists and those in city’s hip community. According to Palmour, the vigils attempted to gain support on campus for the Atlanta Workshop in Nonviolence (AWIN), a peace organization with offices in the city’s countercultural enclave that existed along a stretch of Peachtree Street between 10th and 14th Streets.²⁶ Organizers also hoped the vigils would encourage people to attend a large demonstration against the Vietnam War scheduled to take place in Washington D.C. on October 21.

The organizers of the vigils also coordinated the “St. Pepper’s Peace Parade and Carnival” on October 11, which attempted to raise awareness about the issues of the day. The Peace Parade demonstrated the growing interconnectedness between the counterculture and political activism. During the middle years of the 1960s, a growing movement of people looking to create a utopian alternative to American culture had emerged on the nation’s coasts, particularly in New York City’s Greenwich Village and the Haight-Asbury neighborhood in San Francisco. By 1967, countercultural districts had developed in other American cities, including Atlanta, but these districts had not come to the attention of most Americans. In January of that year countercultural adherents, popularly referred to as “hippies,” organized a “Human Be-In,” at San Francisco’s Golden Gate Park. The event received significant national press coverage and brought knowledge of the counterculture into the nation’s suburbs and high schools. Thousands of aspiring hippies and young people looking to escape their lives at home

²⁶ Paul Sunderman, “Campus Group Plans Regular Friday Afternoon Peace Vigil,” *Emory Wheel*, October 12, 1967, 1.

descended on the Haight that summer. The explosion of interest in the San Francisco counterculture became known as the “Summer of Love.”²⁷

Up to this point, political activists and hippies did not share common ground. Political activists had little interest in the counterculture prior to the Summer of Love while hippies openly rejected politics. Activists aimed to change and improve the nation’s political and social system while hippies hoped to create an entirely new culture that replaced war and capitalism with peace, love and freedom. By 1967, however, elements of the counterculture had become popular among a growing number of political activists while the escalating war in Vietnam led many hippies into antiwar activities. The lines between the two movements blurred as hippies protested in the streets and members of the New Left consumed psychedelic drugs, listened to rock and roll music and grew their hair long.

Emory’s festival reflected the coming together of these two movements. The event borrowed its name from the Beatles’ album *St. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band*, which had been released in June 1967. Considered the greatest album of all time by many rock critics and music historians, it soared to the top of the music charts and became the soundtrack for the Summer of Love. At Emory, organizers attempted to create a balance between the celebratory nature of the counterculture and the seriousness of New Left activism. In a flyer sent to the university’s faculty and staff, organizers

²⁷ For more on the history of the counterculture and its relationship with the New Left see Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle, eds, *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s and ’70s* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Mark Hamilton Lytle, *America’s Uncivil Wars: The Sixties Era from Elvis to the Fall of Richard Nixon* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 194-216; Doug Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 247-295.

stated that “gaiety will abound and politics will not be slighted.”²⁸ The event followed through on these intentions. Political activists, including Emory graduate student Steve Abbott and Tom Houck of the Atlanta Alliance for Peace, spoke against the war as organizers handed out free balloons, flowers and “decal tattoos.” Speeches alternated with musical performances and a group calling itself the “Sgt. Pepper’s Marching Band” travelled around campus drumming up new attendees. Approximately three hundred students participated in the three-hour event.²⁹

While organizers had successfully maintained a festive tone, the seriousness of politics broke through the revelry when student Ned Williams announced that he had begun a fast to protest the nation’s policy in Vietnam. Shirtless and with a peace symbol painted on his chest, the African American freshman from Savannah addressed the crowd, stating that he did not know how the Vietnamese could “ever create a thriving country when we [the United States] are destroying their countryside.” Williams also expressed discontent over what he considered to be the apathy of Emory students to the plight of the Vietnamese. He ended his short speech by stating his concern over the pride the university took in the Affirmation: Vietnam rally. Williams then descended the podium and proceeded to the library, where he sat down underneath a display housing the Freedoms Foundation medal presented to the Affirmation: Vietnam organizers. He stayed until closing time, talking with students. The following day, Williams demonstrated in front of Cox Hall, proclaiming his intention to maintain his fast until October 20, when, along with other Emory activists, he would leave for the demonstration in Washington D.C. Williams continued to fast over the weekend, leading

²⁸ Memorandum from the Ad Hoc St. Pepper’s Committee to Emory faculty and administrators, October 5, 1967, *Emory Herald Tribune* Vertical File, MARBL.

²⁹ Richard Kilberg, “Sgt. Pepper’s Peace Parade Happens Here,” *Emory Wheel*, October 19, 1967, 1.

to detrimental physical effects. On Monday, October 16 he entered the Emory student infirmary for treatment, but recovered quickly. His fast did lead to one change at Emory. Library officials took down the display containing the Affirmation: Vietnam award.³⁰

The loose confederation of peace activists that pulled together the Sgt. Pepper's Peace Parade continued organizing events after returning from Washington D.C. Its most notable demonstration occurred when Dow Chemical appeared on campus in November 1967 to recruit students for employment. Anti-war activists across the country targeted Dow Chemical because it manufactured napalm, a chemically-treated gasoline placed in bombs by American military forces in Vietnam and used to defoliate the jungle, often causing the severe burning and death of Vietnamese civilians. A month earlier at the University of Wisconsin a peaceful sit-in against Dow turned into a riot when local police used tear gas to remove the demonstrators. Events did not take such a dramatic turn at Emory. Coffin attempted to drum up support for the demonstration through the *Emory Herald Tribune*. "DOW is Coming," he proclaimed, "Better things for better living. Saran Wrap. And introducing Napalm-B. Less mess, less bother. It sticks better. It burns deeper." Organized by Coffin and Abbott, the demonstration consisted of approximately twenty students picketing outside the building where Dow conducted interviews. The group passed out literature describing the effects of napalm on humans and circulated a petition demanding that the university refuse to allow the Central Intelligence Agency to conduct interviews on campus the following week.³¹

³⁰ "Savannah Freshmen Begins Peace Fast Following Wednesday Parade," *Emory Wheel*, October 19, 1967, 2; *Emory Herald Tribune*, I no. 1 (October 24, 1967), 1.

³¹ Richard Kilberg, "Students Picket Maker of Napalm as Placement Official Uses AMB," *Emory Wheel*, November 9, 1967, 1; *Emory Herald Tribune* I no.7 (November 3, 1967), 1.

Conservative students had been mostly quiet since the Affirmation: Vietnam rally but re-emerged in response to the growing anti-war presence on campus. Mike Harrington, a graduate student in the philosophy department, organized a counter-demonstration across the street from the Dow protest. Harrington represented the Emory Ad Hoc Committee for the Defense of the U.S. Commitment in Vietnam, a group he had formed two weeks earlier. According to member Chris Stubbs, over fifty students had joined the group, which had been inspired by the recent formation of the Citizens Committee for Peace with Freedom in Vietnam. On October 25, the *New York Times* published a statement by the Citizens Committee, proclaiming that it “strongly support[s] our commitment in Vietnam.” The group believed that it spoke for the “great ‘silent center,’” Americans who had “consistently opposed rewarding international aggressors from Adolph Hitler to Mao Tse-tung.” The growth of the anti-war movement required these Americans to be heard. A long and diverse list of prominent Americans had joined the committee and endorsed its statement, including former U.S. presidents Dwight D Eisenhower and Harry S Truman, African American novelist Ralph Ellison, labor union leader George Meany and, closer to home, Ralph McGill, editor and columnist of the *Atlanta Constitution*.³²

Based on the principles outlined in this statement, the Emory Ad Hoc Committee provided an opposing viewpoint to the campus anti-war movement. Stubbs promised that its group would be confrontational but non-violent. When “the pacifists stage demonstrations,” Stubbs stated, “we will be on hand to show that we are here.” In addition to staging a counter-demonstration during the Dow protest, Harrington

³² Jim Reynolds, “Ad Hoc Committee Gives Support to Vietnam War, *Emory Wheel*, November 16, 1967, 1.

participated in a discussion about the Vietnam War sponsored by the Graduate Student Council in December, along with Palmour and Jim Skillman, a Georgia State student and Vietnam veteran. The group did not appear to last beyond the fall semester, most likely given the change in American opinion following the Tet Offensive, launched in January by the National Liberation Front.³³ While a military failure, the offensive convinced many Americans, including the nation's most prominent and respected journalist, Walter Cronkite, that victory in Vietnam could no longer be achieved.

Despite the formation of the conservative pro-war group and the development of a campus anti-war movement, no official New Left groups had emerged at Emory, even as they sprung up on other campuses in Georgia. Students at Georgia State founded the Committee on Social Issues and a SDS chapter emerged at the University of Georgia. Emory activists avoided this tactic, instead choosing to organize around a single issue, the Vietnam War. The ability to tap into an existing group of political activists in Atlanta impacted the development of the campus's left in several ways. First, it slowed the creation of independent groups on campus and in some cases worked against school-centered activism. Emory students played important roles in founding the Atlanta-at-Large SSOC Chapter and also belonged to other local groups. Undergraduate Ruth Robinette, for example, became involved with the Atlanta Alliance for Peace. In some cases, activists dropped out of school to work full time for the movement. Tom Coffin left Emory in early 1968 to help found the *Great Speckled Bird*. Coffin's departure had a significant negative impact on the campus antiwar movement since he had acted as a major organizing force in his brief time at Emory.

³³ Simon Miller, "GSC Sponsors Vietnam Discussion," *Emory Wheel*, December 7, 1967, 2.

Second, it discouraged less radical students from exploring activism in the safer environment of a college campus. Making forays into activism in the South always proved dangerous but campuses often provided a relatively safe place to do so compared with the streets and parks of Atlanta where demonstrators were at the mercy of state and local police. The lack of New Left groups on campus removed access to a variety of issues and protest strategies in an environment that would have encouraged more cautious students to explore activism.

Third, it helped radicalize dedicated campus activists by providing a relatively safe space for the local hip community to meet and commune. Subjected to continual harassment by the police and city officials, Atlanta's activists used the campus as a buffer zone. In April 1968, for example, Emory students sponsored a one day "New Left Conference for Peace and Freedom," to help plan for the SSOC-sponsored anti-war demonstration, the "Southern Days of Secession," part of a national antiwar event. Students from local colleges and members of the city's New Left, such as SSOC, the Young Socialist Alliance, and AWIN, attended the event. Identifying themselves as radicals they discussed numerous issues including legal and military repression against white radicals and the black community. That evening, attendees debated possible responses to the crisis in the civil rights movement following the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. the previous week. One option presented involved organizing "black power teach-ins" with speakers discussing black power ideology in an attempt to help educate the "average white man."³⁴

³⁴ "Jody Palmour Leads New Left Conference in AFROTC Building," *Emory Wheel*, April 11, 1968, 2, 8; Howard Romaine, "Peace and Freedom Now!," *Great Speckled Bird* I no. 3 (April 12, 1968), 12; Program for Atlanta New Left Conference on Peace and Freedom, April 6, 1968, Box 9, Division of Student and

By the fall of 1968, however, the New Left broke from tradition and began organizing campus-based New Left groups strictly for Emory students. Activists embraced the increasingly radical style of New Left politics visible in other parts of the country while also aligning themselves with the growing Black Power movement. In early October a chapter of Students for a Democratic Society formed on campus. Organized primarily by undergraduates Jack White and Mark Guza, the Emory SDS chapter adopted an agenda that reflected the growing radicalization of the New Left, both locally and nationally. Guza noted that the students who belonged to the group “felt some of the spiritual and moral contradictions of the neo-capitalist system.” During its first two meetings members discussed the “inevitability of racism in a racist culture,” debated supporting a local boycott of table grapes, formed a guerilla theatre group, and planned a response to an upcoming recruiting visit to campus by the Central Intelligence Agency.³⁵

Later that month, approximately twenty members of the group organized a second protest of Dow Chemical, which had returned to campus for another recruiting visit. By the time of this demonstration, the New Left had become decidedly more confrontational and theatrical. Using the tactics of the recently formed guerilla theatre group, demonstrators wore white masks while a woman dressed as the Statue of Liberty ignited a brazier filled with baby dolls. The protestors then marched into Trimble Hall and took up position in the hallway outside the room where the Dow recruiter was conducting interviews. Protestors demanded to meet with him. The recruiter agreed in the hope that a brief discussion would allow for a quick return to the scheduled interviews. The

Academic Services, Student and Academic Services Records, Vice-President Office Files (Thomas L. Fernandez), MARBL.

³⁵ Jack White, “SDS Meets, Discusses Issues,” *Emory Wheel*, October 17, 1968, 10.

demonstrators, however, became agitated when they decided that the Dow Representative seemed less than fully committed to the debate.

At this point, Robert Bowen, Emory's Placement Director, stepped into the discussion. Emory SDS demanded from Bowen a statement about the university's policy regarding the presence on campus of such controversial companies like Dow. After a heated exchange with the students, Bowen contacted John Outler, the university's Personal Director, to help answer the students' questions. When this failed to satisfy the protestors, Dean Jerome Zellner arrived to help resolve the situation. Zellner and the protestors argued late into the afternoon as the students attempted to persuade him that the presence of Dow on campus implied that the university endorsed the company's contribution to the nation's war effort. Zellner disagreed. He then called vice president Orié Meyers, who engaged in further discussions with the protestors regarding the role of students in decision-making at the university. Emory SDS member Jack White noted that while Meyers recognized the growing "student power movement," he admitted that majority student opinion on certain issues would have no impact on university policy. The meeting failed to generate a successful conclusion and broke down around 6 P.M. with Zellner encouraging Emory SDS to organize a student referendum on the issue.³⁶

The confrontational nature of discussions between administrators and SDS members during the Dow demonstration revealed a new attitude of suspicion and concern by school leaders towards activists on campus. While Emory's SDS chapter had not engaged in violence in its brief history, the decision by campus activists to start a chapter of a national group that had become increasingly radical and confrontational generated

³⁶ Marsha Haines, "SDS Stages Protest Against Dow Chemical," *Emory Wheel*, November 7, 1968, 1, 2; Jack White, "Dow Burns Babies," *Great Speckled Bird* I no. 22 (November 11, 1968), 14.

concern among administrators. The SDS chapter at Columbia University in New York City launched a massive demonstration the previous May that shut down the school for weeks and ended in bloodshed when police forcibly removed students involved in a sit-in at Low Library. In August, the nation watched with shock and horror as America's youth battled with the police in Chicago during the Democratic National Convention. These events helped foster the belief that activists were capable of the most outrageous acts, even at educational outposts in the Deep South.

In the fall of 1968, administrators began keeping a watchful eye on the activist community. The university police department either attended SDS meetings or received information from students who had. In a memorandum to Outler in late October, Safety and Security Officer Alex Johnson noted that as part of its preparations for the upcoming demonstration against Dow, SDS members had approached student government representatives with questions about possible consequences if the company's representative was kidnapped. Johnson also noted that some SDS members had begun meeting in secret and planned to attend the upcoming National Warfare Council sponsored by the national SDS office.³⁷

Tensions between the administration and student activists continued to rise through the fall and into the spring of 1969. Much of the responsibility lay at the feet of students who had increased their level of radical behavior. On November 5, Emory SDS organized a demonstration against the nation's war policy as part of the Student Mobilization Committee's National Student Strike. Approximately 250 to 300 students attended the rally, which featured numerous anti-war speakers and folk musicians.

³⁷ Memorandum from Alex K. Johnson to John M. Outler, October 22, 1968, Box 8, Division of Student and Academic Services, Student and Academic Services Records, Vice-President Office Files (Thomas L. Fernandez), MARBL.

During the rally, Emory SDS leader Jack White announced he would break his promise to not use amplification (since classes were still in session) and turned on a public address system. This decision led to a disciplinary hearing for White a month later.³⁸ Security personnel continued to attend SDS meetings in the new year, taking pictures of attendees and turning over materials distributed at the gatherings to administrators.³⁹ In January, Lt. W.R. Daniel of the United States Marine Corps filed a report with the Dekalb County Police Department following an incident in which an unknown anti-war protestor damaged audio-visual equipment used in a recruiting display.⁴⁰ By the beginning of May, administrators had grown so concerned about potential disruptions and demonstrations that vice president Orié Meyers contacted Henry Bowden, chairman of the Board of Trustees and General Counsel of the University, for advice on legal options regarding how to prevent students from taking over campus buildings and laws under which students could be prosecuted if they did so.⁴¹ Bowden's advice proved useful when radical students launched a major protest against the university later that month.

Black Power Comes to Campus

The growing sense of distrust between student activists and administrators at Emory helped construct the framework in which the May 1969 Black Student Alliance demonstration took place. The involvement of African American students in the Emory student movement up to this point, however, had been minimal. Several factors may

³⁸ Tom Coffin, "Emory Waiting for Lefty," *Great Speckled Bird* I no. 22 (November 11, 1968), 3; Marsha Haines, "Conduct Committee Reviews S.D.S. Class Disruption," *Emory Wheel*, December 5, 1968, 1.

³⁹ Case Report, Emory University Safety and Security Office, March 9, 1969, Box 20, Thomas L. Fernandez Papers, MARBL.

⁴⁰ Field Case Report, Dekalb County Police, Box 8, Thomas L. Fernandez Papers, MARBL.

⁴¹ Letter from Henry L. Bowden to Orié Meyers, May 2, 1969, Box 20, Thomas L. Fernandez Papers, MARBL.

explain why this proved to be the case. First, in 1969 African American enrollment numbers remained low, even though the school had desegregated voluntarily in 1963. Second, the rise of Black Power starting in the mid-1960s created divisions between white and black activists as African Americans abandoned bi-racial cooperation for racially exclusive organizations like the Black Panther Party. Third, black activists at Emory, like their white counterparts, had a wide variety of off-campus organizations to become involved with if they wanted to become politically active. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee had headquarters in Atlanta. SNCC particularly had been an early advocate of black separatism and the Black Power rhetoric favored by members of the BSA.

Despite the organizational separation of black and white activists by 1969, growing opposition to the Vietnam War often brought them back together at both the national and local level. This proved particularly true in Atlanta. In April 1969, a coalition of thirty local groups came together for the Southwide Demonstration Against the Vietnam War and for Self Determination, an event with a ponderous title that nonetheless revealed the connection between the civil rights struggle and the antiwar movement at the grassroots level. Starting at Martin Luther King Jr.'s former church, the march ended downtown at Hurt Park, adjacent to Georgia State University. There the demonstrators listened to both black and white speakers, including Ralph Abernathy, head of the SCLC, noted white antiwar leader David Dellinger, and J.T. Bears, an African American student involved in recent Black Power demonstrations at Duke University.⁴² By the start of 1969 the Black Power movement had increased its presence in Atlanta and raised concern among university administrators. In January,

⁴² Bob Goodman, *Great Speckled Bird* II no. 5 (14 April 1969), 10-11.

Emory president Sanford Atwood received information from Hugh Gloster, president of Morehouse College, that a group of black revolutionaries from California, including members of the Black Panther Party, had failed in a planned take-over of the school.

At Emory, Black Power was represented by the formation of the more moderate Black Student Alliance (BSA) during the 1968-1969 academic year. By early March, members of the BSA confronted Atwood over the problem of racism on campus. This decision resulted in part from incidents between members of the BSA and white students. On March 10, several BSA leaders confronted a white student who they believed had defaced the dormitory room door of another BSA member, Willie Orr. Orr had posted a sign on his door that contained the famous phrase, “No Vietnamese ever called me a Nigger.” Someone had written on the sign in response, “With that attitude, you will always be a Nigger.”⁴³ On March 12, two days after the dormitory incident, BSA chairman Hank Ambrose sent a letter to Atwood which included a list of demands as well as a request for a meeting with the president. Among other things, the BSA wanted an increase in black student enrollment, a “Black House” where African American students could meet, and a Black Studies program. Atwood responded to the demands on March 25 after two weeks of consideration. He dismissed most of them, while conceding to the demand that black students be involved in the school’s recruitment efforts.⁴⁴

Despite this dismissal, Atwood would prove a fairly cooperative administrator during the several demonstrations that occurred on Emory’s campus during the Sixties.

⁴³ Memorandum from Alan D. Whitman to M.G. Lamison, Jr., March 10, 1969, Box 20, Office of the President, Sanford S. Atwood Office Files, MARBL.

⁴⁴ Letter from J. Henry Ambrose Jr., to Sanford Atwood, March 12, 1969; letter from Sanford Atwood to J. Henry Ambrose, March 25, 1969, Box 20, Office of the President, Sanford S. Atwood Office Files, MARBL.

A Wisconsin native who earned a PhD from the state university, Atwood had been serving as provost at Cornell University when chosen as Emory's new president in 1963. He arrived in Atlanta with plans to turn Emory into one of the nation's top-ranked research universities. Atwood spent the rest of the decade fund-raising, recruiting top faculty from around the country and improving the academic quality of the graduate and undergraduate student bodies. He also gained a reputation as a supporter of academic freedom following the "God is Dead" controversy. In 1966, religion professor Thomas Altizer, who had encouraged the creation of the first teach-in Emory in 1965, gained national attention as part of a group of religious thinkers that developed a radical theology which questioned the relationship between a modern world-view and belief in a spiritual deity. These theologians rose to national prominence after being featured in a *Time* magazine article. The question "Is God Dead?" appeared on the cover. The article created a wave of criticism and outrage, leading many to call for Altizer's firing. Atwood, however, defended the professor's right to express his views and refused to dismiss him. During the BSA crisis and the major demonstration over events at Kent State in 1970, the president encouraged students to express their opinions and worked with them to find solutions that would improve life on Emory's campus.⁴⁵

At the same time that the BSA formulated its demands, the new Emory SDS chapter debated its own list of issues. During a meeting on March 9, three days before the BSA sent its letter to Atwood, SDS members discussed a proposed manifesto containing a wide variety of issues. Unlike the more focused goal of improving race relations on campus embodied in the BSA demands, the SDS list revealed an

⁴⁵ Gary S. Hauk, *A Legacy of Heart and Mind: Emory Since 1836* (Atlanta: Bookhouse Group, 1999), 129-131, 137-140.

organization lacking an ideological center. The document attempted to address a disconnected laundry list of issues. Emory SDS began the document with a demand for the end of racist policies on campus but also wanted a referendum on R.O.T.C., the end of special parking facilities, an extension of library hours and the reorganization of the bookstore and dining hall into non-profit businesses.

The Emory SDS demands reveal a central problem many New Left groups across the South faced in the late 1960s. By organizing SDS chapters and other groups so late in the decade, southern campus activists often felt compelled to play “catch-up” by addressing all at once issues activists outside the region had dealt with for over half a decade, such as the abolition of *in loco parentis* rules, greater involvement of students in university decision-making, the role of the military and defense contractors on campus, the Vietnam War and the growing women’s movement. In addition, dedicated activists in the South attempted to balance radical issues with the more moderate issue of university reform (largely abandoned by campus groups outside the South by 1969) because it held out the continued possibility of attracting liberal-minded but cautious students who might otherwise reject an openly radical agenda.⁴⁶ Finally, southern New Leftists followed the lead of activists in other parts of the country to support Black Power movements. Nationally, white New Leftists, led by SDS, had developed by the late 1960s an increasingly radical Marxist ideology that tied together issues of race, class and imperialism. According to this ideology, it became the job of white revolutionaries to build a “fighting force’ that would support the struggles of African Americans and other

⁴⁶ Jeffrey A. Turner, *Sitting In and Speaking Out: Student Movements in the American South, 1960-1970*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 7.

racial and ethnic minorities.⁴⁷ The attempt by Emory SDS to address all of these issues at once hampered the group's ability to prioritize its goals and helps explain why SDS failed to emerge as a prominent radical voice on campus and played a minimal role in the events that occurred later in the spring.

The four-day crisis created by the BSA began on Sunday, May 25 when several dozen African American students marched into a worship service being held in Durham Chapel. As BSA members took up position in the aisles, others addressed the congregation from the pulpit, decrying Emory as a racist institution and accusing the school's white liberals of being the worst practitioners of this racism. Dr. Richard Devor, who had been leading the service when the students entered, did not interrupt or attempt to make the protestors leave. Following speeches by several demonstrators, the group left Durham Chapel and proceeded to the dining facility at Cox Hall, arriving around noon. Joined by several white students who belonged to Emory SDS, they impeded entry to the food lines, handed out leaflets and held signs containing slogans such as "Christian Racists Eat Here" and "Emory is a Motherfucker." Several administrators had arrived at the scene of the protest but did not attempt to end it themselves or bring in campus security to disperse the demonstrators. At 2:00 PM the students "marched out as a unit" mimicking the militaristic behavior of other Black Power groups, most notably the Black Panther Party.⁴⁸

⁴⁷Max Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals turn to Lenin, Mao and Che* (New York: Verso, 2002), 46-47, 65-69, 70-72

⁴⁸"A Summary of Events of May 25-28, 1969 On the Emory University Campus Concerning Student demonstrations and Subsequent Actions by University Faculty and Administration," Office of Planning and Development, June 6, 1969, Box 21, Office of the President, Sanford S. Atwood Office Files, MARBL.

The BSA continued its protest the next day. Members of the group and several white supporters participated in another picket line at Cox Hall during lunch hours. After leaving the dining hall the demonstrators proceeded to the Administration Building, where James Brown, a member of the BSA, addressed the group and its supporters. That afternoon, Atwood met with the faculty of Emory College. He informed them of the decision to issue a restraining order to prevent further demonstrations, creating concern among several faculty members. In a letter to Atwood, Dean of Students Jerome Zellner expressed strongly his belief that the procurement of the order “violate[ed] the rich tradition of healthy interaction” between students and faculty. Furthermore, he stated that if Atwood went ahead with his plan to serve the order to protesters as planned on May 27, it would “mark the end of reason and destroy a valuable dialogue which is now taking beginning to take place.”⁴⁹ The meeting ended after the faculty supported a proposal to hold a convocation to resolve the crisis.⁵⁰ At 11:00 PM that evening, BSA members presented their grievances to the campus community at a rally attended by approximately 1000 students. The BSA reviewed its demands as well as read aloud the correspondence between the group and president Atwood that occurred in March. Finally, it gave the administration a deadline of 10:00 AM on Wednesday, May 27 to respond to its demands.

Atwood, along with several administrators, the president of the Student Government Association and the BSA worked to resolve the crisis over the next two days. White campus radicals, however, had little role in resolving the situation. While

⁴⁹ Memorandum from Jerome Zellner to Sanford Atwood, May 27, 1969, Box 20, Office of the President, Sanford S. Atwood Office Files, MARBL.

⁵⁰ “A Summary of Events of May 25-28, 1969,” Box 21, Office of the President, Sanford S. Atwood Office Files, MARBL.

several members of Emory SDS had aided the BSA demonstrators at the Cox Hall picket lines, the organization did not participate in negotiations. At 3:30 PM on May 27, several officers from the Dekalb County Sheriff's office arrived on campus to issue restraining orders to the students named in a complaint filed by Atwood. Thirty-one students involved in the demonstrations over the previous two days had been notified regarding the order and all of them gathered in front of Cox Hall that afternoon. Surrounded by supporters and curious onlookers, the students, one by one, stepped up when their name was called and accepted the order. The crowd then quickly dispersed. Meetings occurred across campus the rest of the day and late into the night. Numerous student groups issued statements that provided varying degrees of support for the protestors. In another meeting, the Emory College faculty solidified plans for the following day's convocation as well as defeated a motion to censure Atwood for issuing the restraining order. Finally, in the early hours of May 28, Atwood signed two resolutions after a lengthy meeting with the SGA. In these, he promised to rescind the restraining order and to work towards the eradication of racism on campus.⁵¹

The campus-wide convocation began at 10:00 AM that morning in Glenn Memorial Auditorium. In front of a standing room-only crowd, numerous students and administrators addressed multiple issues created by the two days of protest. Members of the BSA read a new list of "requests" formulated the previous day. Charles Haynes, president of the SGA, read the two resolutions signed that morning. Finally, Atwood addressed the crowd. He voiced his support for the resolutions and promised to work with the faculty and administration to address the requests made by the BSA. This

⁵¹ Ibid.

meeting marked the end of the crisis.⁵² By the following fall several requests made by the BSA had been approved and implemented, including the creation of a “Black House” where African American students could gather, and the hiring of future City Council member Marvin Arrington as an advisor for black students.⁵³

Fighting the War at Home

By the fall of 1969 opposition to the Vietnam War returned as the driving force behind activism on campus following the dramatic events the previous spring. But, the desire to form a more radical movement signaled by the creation of an Emory SDS chapter faded during the 1969-1970 school year. Although violent clashes between students and law enforcement increased on campuses in other parts of the country, Emory’s New Left generally avoided direct confrontation and adopted a more moderate approach to activism. Even as hippies and police clashed in Piedmont Park and The Strip in Atlanta, Emory activists retreated from radicalism.

The National Moratorium scheduled for October 15 became the focus of antiwar activities at Emory during the fall term. The Moratorium promised a more moderate approach to antiwar activism. Conceived by two former supporters of Democratic presidential hopeful Eugene McCarthy, the Moratorium consisted of thousands of individual demonstrations around the nation. Worried that many Americans opposed the war but stayed away from the antiwar movement as it became increasingly radical and prone to violence, Moratorium organizers believed that locally planned events would allow people to express their feelings and concerns about the war in a manner that fit the

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Beth Dawkins Bassett, “Some of the Anguish: The Turbulent Sixties,” *Emory Magazine* 58 no. 5 (1982), 12.

political climate in their location. In many places, including Emory, this included speeches by antiwar activists and candlelight vigils to honor American servicemen killed in Vietnam.⁵⁴

The Emory Moratorium Committee (EMC), led by several undergraduates and seasoned campus activist Steve Abbott, began planning in late September. Approximately eighty-five students attended the first organizational meeting which resulted in the creation of four sub-committees. EMC Chairman Ben Crosby voiced concern over the lack of broader support among the student body, particularly from the fraternities and sororities. The organization did gain the backing of the politically moderate Student Government Association and its liberal president, Charles Haynes, a reflection of the growing unpopularity of the war among many Americans. The committee planned a series of events over four days. The protest would begin on Sunday, October 12 with a speech by Yale University chaplain and noted anti-war activist William Sloan Coffin. This would be followed over the next two days with lectures and discussions about the war led by several Emory faculty members. The multi-day protest would culminate with several events on National Moratorium Day that Wednesday.⁵⁵

On October 15, events at Emory centered around a lengthy rally on the Quadrangle. The Emory Marching Atrocity Band, a guerilla theatre group that had played at previous demonstrations, kicked things off with a musical piece. Several speakers then followed. SGA president Charles Haynes spoke first, followed by Dr. William Hamilton, a professor in the religion department, and then O.J. Coogler, a former

⁵⁴ Wells, *The War Within*, 328-331.

⁵⁵ "War Moratorium Committee Plans Protest in Mid-October," *Emory Wheel*, October 1, 1969, 1; "Legislature Supports Moratorium," *Emory Wheel*, October 7, 1969, 1.

member of the state assembly. The rally concluded with two African American speakers, James Gavin, former head of the school's BSA, and James Orange, a staff member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Continuing the heightened concern regarding African American issues that began with the BSA demonstration the previous spring, both Gavin and Orange discussed the impact of the war on black men. Gavin echoed national Black Power leaders when he connected the Vietnam War to the civil rights struggle at home. He argued that "we must say now that there must be no more Vietnams; just as there must be no more Birmingham and no more Selmas, there must be no more Vietnams!"⁵⁶

At nearby Cox Hall, campus protestors held another demonstration. The Emory Mobilization Committee (Emory Mobe), which had recently formed and was part of a city-wide Student Mobilization Committee (Atlanta Mobe), picketed outside the weekly meeting of the Board of Trustees.⁵⁷ Formed by several members of the Moratorium committee including, once again, Steve Abbott, the group carried signs while chanting, "support our boys in Vietnam and not those who send them there." Abbott argued that many members of the board profited from the war through their business activities and that this did not serve the best interests of the university. To rectify the situation, the Emory Mobe issued several demands. The committee demanded that the Board of Trustees support the upcoming November 14 Moratorium and the national demonstration in Washington, D.C. on November 15, and provide transportation for students wishing to

⁵⁶ Steve Kraskin, "War Moratorium Ends with Quad Peace Vigil," *Emory Wheel*, October 17, 1969, 8.

⁵⁷ The Moratorium Committee and the Student Mobilization Committee (Mobe) existed as two different organizations, although they did work together closely during the fall of 1969. The Moratorium Committee formed to organize the two National Moratorium Days in October and November 1969. The Mobe had formed following the 1967 Spring Mobilization against the Vietnam War and organized several major demonstrations during the late 1960s, including one just a few days after the November Moratorium. For more on the Mobe see Wells, *The War Within*.

attend. The group also called for the trustees to “eliminate all forms of complicity between the University and the Vietnam War, which includes ending ROTC. . . .”⁵⁸ This issue would become the center of anti-war activism on campus the following spring.

During the remainder of the fall term, the Emory Mobe developed a set of activities that reflected its role as the new dominant anti-war voice on campus. Despite a strong campaign the previous academic year, the Emory SDS chapter had ceased operations. This most likely resulted from the collapse of the national organization during the previous summer. SDS had become the largest student organization of the 1960s, with approximately 100,000 members. By the end of the decade, however, a struggle for control of the group had erupted between two factions, one calling itself the Revolutionary Youth Movement (RYM) and the other composed of members of the Progressive Labor Party. The two groups fought bitterly for control of SDS at its 1969 National Convention in Chicago. In the end, the RYM faction claimed victory but SDS as an organization had imploded.⁵⁹ SDS chapters continued to exist on campuses across the country, including at Emory, but the lack of connection to a larger organization left many members without focus or direction. By the fall of 1969, Emory SDS had been supplanted by the EMC and Mobe. Emory SDS seemed not to mind this change as it refocused its efforts into the RYM chapter that had organized in the city.

Through the fall and into the spring of 1970 the Emory Mobe worked towards achieving the goals laid out in the list of demands it issued during the October Moratorium. It helped the EMC organize a teach-in on November 14 and also called for a student strike in support of another Moratorium that month. The group also worked

⁵⁸ Gail Bronson, “Pickets Outside Cox Call Demonstrate for Peace,” *Emory Wheel*, October 17, 1969, 1

⁵⁹ For a brief but informed explanation of the collapse of SDS and its aftermath see Elbaum, *Revolution is in the Air*, 69-73.

with the Atlanta Mobe to recruit students for the national demonstration in Washington, D.C. In the end, between one hundred fifty and two hundred students made the trip to the nation's capitol. In January, the Emory Mobe launched a campaign against the on-campus recruitment of students by General Electric, which the group called the nation's "second largest war profiteer." In a letter to GE printed in the campus newspaper, the Emory Mobe advised the company to "delete Emory from your recruitment agenda." Failure to do so would result in "whatever action is necessary to support our stand against G.E.," although the group did not provide details on what those actions might include. The effort proved successful and for reasons not given, GE chose not to visit the Emory campus.⁶⁰ Finally, in March, the Emory Mobe participated in a demonstration organized by the Atlanta Mobe. During a visit by Spiro Agnew to Atlanta, approximately 500 to 1,000 activists protested outside the hotel where the vice president delivered a speech at a Republican Party fund-raising dinner.⁶¹

The Emory Mobe's most confrontational demonstration occurred in April when it decided to challenge the presence of ROTC on campus. The debate over the military program had begun a year earlier when the SGA and College Council passed a resolution urging the faculty to remove academic credit from the Aerospace Department, which housed the Air Force Reserve Officer's Training Corps. In May 1969 the faculty Committee for Academic Policy and Standards (CAPS) recommended that the faculty deny academic credit to the ROTC program. However, two CAPS members put forward a substitute proposal that called for the program to retain its current status. The college faculty approved this proposal and CAPS let the issue lay dormant for the next year.

⁶⁰ "EMC Challenges Recruiters to War Debate," *Emory Wheel*, January 30, 1970, 1, 3; "YSA, EMC Differ Ideologically: Broad Socialism vs. Anti-war," *Emory Wheel*, February 10, 1970, 3.

⁶¹ Steve Schaffer, "Agnew's Presence Stirs Protest by Atlanta SMC," *Emory Wheel*, February 24, 1970, 1.

In the spring quarter, however, several anti-war activists pushed the issue forward. Three members of the Emory MOBE enrolled in Aerospace 103. Two of the students, Bill Patterson and Kitty Sloan, had signed the MOBE letter sent to General Electric in January. On April 12, Patterson and Sloan, along with the third student, Fred Palmer, sent a letter to Dr. Albert Stone, the CAPS chairman. In this letter, the students discussed several incidents in which their instructor, Lt. Col. Robert Black, treated them differently from other class members. According to the three students, Black refused to issue the students uniforms, banned Palmer from required laboratory sessions, and requested that Patterson transfer out of the course. Failing to receive a response from Stone, the students decided to act.

Over the course of a week in mid-April the three students along with supporters disrupted ROTC classes and re-ignited the debate among the faculty. On April 13, thirty-four students entered Aerospace 103 and took seats. When Col. Black entered the classroom, the demonstrators attempted to engage him in a discussion about the role of ROTC on campus. Black refused to discuss the issue but when pressed by the students he conceded that a meeting at some future time and place might be appropriate. He then asked the protesters to leave the classroom. Refusing to do so until Black agreed to a specific time and place to meet, the instructor dismissed the class and left the room.⁶²

The protestors called an emergency meeting the next day when it appeared that disciplinary action will be taken against the students who disrupted Col. Black's class. Over one hundred students attended and, in a sign of solidarity with the original thirty-four students, decided that another, larger group of students would enter the ROTC class on Thursday, April 16. Over the next two days various attempts at both heightening and

⁶² Gail Bronson, "Students Question ROTC Future," *Emory Wheel*, April 17, 1970, 1.

resolving the crisis occurred. SGA president Charles Haynes, although sympathetic to the demonstrators, worked on getting the CAPS to revisit the ROTC issue. Meanwhile, the antiwar community attempted to drum up support for the Thursday protest.

At 1:45 PM on April 16, demonstrators, students and faculty members met outside the targeted ROTC classroom. Following brief attempts by Haynes and history professor George Cuttino to dissuade the protestors from their proposed action, ninety-seven students entered the classroom. This action possessed an air of theatricality to it. The speeches were read as a formality and the instructor dismissed the class within minutes of its start. A more lively discussion took place across the hall as Dr. Stone chaired a meeting of the CAPS regarding the ROTC issue. Faculty members and students opposed to ROTC made up the majority of attendees, although several supporters of the program made their voices heard. Following statements by numerous audience members, the CAPS promised to reintroduce a measure calling for the denial of academic credit to ROTC at its next regularly scheduled meeting. Before the ROTC issue could be resolved, however, the escalation of the Vietnam War and the killing of four college students in Ohio sparked a week long series of demonstrations that rocked the Emory campus.⁶³

On May 1, President Richard Nixon announced that U.S. military forces had invaded Cambodia. Vietnam's neighbor to the west, Cambodia's dense jungle had been used by National Liberation Front forces (the "Vietcong") as a safe haven from American forces and a staging area for attacks into the Vietnamese countryside. U.S. leaders had believed for years that a major military headquarters existed just inside the Cambodian border. In attempt to locate and destroy this facility (which did not actually exist), Nixon

⁶³ Ibid.

authorized an invasion by U.S. Army and South Vietnamese forces. The invasion came as a surprise to many Americans. Troop numbers had steadily declined since Nixon had taken office in 1969 as the South Vietnamese army assumed greater responsibility for fighting the war.

The president's announcement, which the American people interpreted as an escalation of the conflict, touched off widespread demonstrations, particularly on the nation's college campuses. Events turned tragic on Monday, May 4. During a demonstration at Kent State University in Ohio, National Guardsmen fired into a crowd of students, killing four of them. The killings at Kent State led to a new wave of protests on thousands of campuses. At Emory, the ROTC debate over the past several weeks had heightened awareness about the Vietnam War and helped ensure that students made their voices heard following the Kent State deaths. In addition, Emory's antiwar supporters used the Kent State demonstrations to push the ROTC debate towards a quick resolution.

On May 1 a small crowd gathered on the Quad for a demonstration against the invasion of Cambodia but, as at many other campuses, it would be the Kent State killings that led to a mass mobilization of students. News of the killings reached Emory's campus the night of May 4. In an interesting coincidence, folk singer and pacifist Pete Seeger performed on campus that evening. Following the concert, antiwar activists held a meeting and decided to support the student strike called for by the National Student Association (NSA). They also quickly put together a rally to take place on the Quad the following day.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ "Emory's Not-So-Silent-Spring," *Emory Magazine* 46 no. 3 (1970), 6; "Emory Meets NSA Strike Call," *Emory Wheel*, May 5, 1970, 1.

The killings raised the concern of both faculty and students, and many of them made their way to the Quad on May 5 to participate in a number of activities. Although planned quickly and lacking a settled agenda, the grief and outrage felt by attendees extended the rally throughout the day. Beginning at 7:30 AM, demonstrators met at the campus gates and the entrances of classroom buildings to spread the word about the student strike and the rally on the Quad. A progression of speakers addressed the crowd throughout the morning. Around noon, approximately three hundred demonstrators began a march around the Quad. When it approached the administration building, in what appeared to be a spontaneous decision, about half the marchers entered. They trooped up the stairs to the fourth floor, hoping to meet with Atwood. While attempting to locate the president, the demonstrators took up positions in the hallways of the building. When it became clear that the president would not meet with them, the protestors left the building and returned to the rally. What some reports termed an “occupation” lasted less than ten minutes.⁶⁵

As the students continued gathering on the Quad, a scheduled faculty meeting took up the ROTC issue. In the first of two required votes, the Emory College faculty chose to remove the AFROTC program from the college “as soon as legally possible.” Recent events clearly impacted the discussion. In arguing for the removal of ROTC, Dr. Robert Fenton noted that the military engaged in “indiscriminate killing.” Outside, the day’s events concluded around 6:00 PM following a final slate of speakers. First, Dean Stephens announced the faculty ROTC vote. Then, College Council president Gary Hodges read the text of a telegram Atwood had sent to Nixon earlier that afternoon. In

⁶⁵ “Emory’s Not-So-Silent-Spring,” 8; “Emory Meets NSA Strike Call,” 1; “More to Go,” *Great Speckled Bird*, III no. 19 (May 11, 1970), 4

the brief message, he asked the president to “consider the prompt withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Vietnam and Cambodia.” Finally, Atwood himself addressed the crowd. Reading from a prepared speech he cautiously encouraged participation in the student strike and suggested that a petition signed by the entire student body be sent to Nixon and the state’s congressional delegation.⁶⁶

Several hundred students continued to participate in the strike over the next two days. Most activities centered on the Quad. On May 7, however, the strikers left campus and conducted a march through nearby Emory Village. Students also left campus to participate in city-wide antiwar activities that culminated in a march by over three thousand protestors to the Georgia Capitol Building on Saturday. During the week of demonstrations, the administration resisted calls from protestors to close the school. This changed following the decision by the Boards of Regents for the University System of Georgia authorizing a two-day closure. On Thursday night, Emory’s administrators agreed to close the undergraduate college and the Graduate School for one day, although other parts of the university remained open. According to Atwood, the decision reflected concern that if Emory remained the only university open in Georgia that day, it would “almost certainly attract, with disturbing results, groups of non-Emory students to the campus.” By closing the schools most closely connected to the university’s anti-war movement, the president believed that a strong chance existed to “[protect] the safety and welfare of our campus.”⁶⁷ Atwood’s fears proved unfounded as the largest but most peaceful demonstration of the week occurred on Friday. That morning, over seven

⁶⁶ “Emory’s Not-So-Silent-Spring,” 8; “Emory Meets NSA Strike Call,” 1; “More to Go,” 4; Letter from Sanford Atwood to Emory Alumni, Parents and Friends, June 1970, Box 3, Office of the President, Sanford S. Atwood Files, MARBL.

⁶⁷ Letter from Sanford Atwood to Emory Alumni, Parents and Friends, MARBL.

hundred students attended a memorial service conducted by the United Campus Ministry. During a march around the Quad following the service “the only noise was the sound of shuffling feet.”⁶⁸

During the next week, activists focused on the ROTC debate and issues that arose out of the Kent State demonstrations. On Monday, May 11 the College Council, an organization of students within the undergraduate college, approved a resolution asking the faculty to allow students working in the peace movement to take incompletes in spring quarter classes. On Tuesday during its regular meeting, the faculty tabled this resolution and delayed the second ROTC vote until a campus-wide referendum could be conducted. The decision upset deeply the campus’s anti-war contingent. On Wednesday night, approximately three hundred frustrated students gathered on the Quad to discuss a response. The initial plan proposed an occupation of the administration building. While this garnered some support from students, including Emory Mobe leader Bill Patterson, Gary Hodges proposed instead a march to Lullwater House, Atwood’s home. Hodges argued that while he wanted to occupy the administration building the threat of legal action by the administration would damage the chances of achieving the goal of removing ROTC from campus. Persuaded by this logic, students marched across campus to meet with Atwood.⁶⁹

At Lullwater House, the students encountered several administration members and campus police. The president, after meeting privately with Hodges, emerged to address the students. Atwood commented on a list of demands crafted by the students that included the acceptance of the College Council plan by the faculty, amnesty for students

⁶⁸ “Emory’s Not-So-Silent Spring,” 9.

⁶⁹ “Students Demand Action from Atwood at Lullwater,” *Emory Wheel*, May 15, 1970, 1.

who had participated in the April ROTC sit-ins, and the immediate removal of ROTC from campus. Atwood told the students that he would uphold any disciplinary actions against the students who had disrupted classes and that the ROTC and College Council resolutions were “properly in the hands of the College faculty.” Despite this unsatisfactory response, the demonstration ended peacefully following Atwood’s comments.⁷⁰

This march proved to be the last public demonstration of the month but not the end of the ROTC debate. On May 22, the SGA conducted a referendum regarding ROTC. The results of the referendum never became public since the Constitutional Council of the SGA, which oversaw elections, ruled the referendum invalid due to violations of the Election Code. The faculty, however, pressed ahead with the issue and on May 25 voted to end granting credit for ROTC by a vote of 104 to 71.⁷¹ ROTC would remain on campus for the next several years, despite declining enrollment numbers. In 1974, Emory finally removed ROTC completely.

Into a New Decade

The events of April and May 1970 marked the effective end of the student movement at Emory University. This seems unsurprising given that the Vietnam War acted as the primary motivation for much of the activism on campus during the late 1960s. As U.S. military personnel returned home and the troop numbers in Vietnam dwindled, the antiwar movement, both at Emory and around the nation, diminished. In October, the Emory Mobilization Committee co-sponsored with the Atlanta Mobe a

⁷⁰ “Students Demand Action for Atwood at Lullwater House,” 1, 2; Sanford Atwood to Emory Alumni, Parents and Friends, MARBL.

⁷¹ “Faculty Ends Credit for ROTC,” *Emory Wheel*, May 26, 1970, 1.

regional anti-war conference at the school to help plan activities for a national demonstration slated for Halloween. While activists considered the conference a success and a good start to the new decade's anti-war efforts, the demonstrations proved disheartening. At Emory, few people attended discussions about the war and a rally held on October 30 drew only one hundred students. The march through Atlanta the next day contained only a few hundred demonstrators. The weak turnout seemed to signal the end of a strong antiwar presence on campus and the Emory Mobe disbanded later that fall. Over the next several years, new anti-war groups formed but either quickly disbanded or did little beyond hold meetings.⁷²

The end of the campus antiwar movement meant the end of activism at Emory. Recent research on the Sixties has shown how activism on college campuses remained lively and a vital part of student politics well into the 1970s, largely through the formation of groups that addressed issues such as feminism, gay liberation, socialism and veteran's issues. At the University of Georgia and Georgia State University, for example, antiwar activism continued largely through the efforts of veterans who formed chapters of Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW). These schools also possessed active feminist and gay liberation groups. Student activist at Emory, however, failed to make the transition into these new forms of activism. A women's liberation movement had emerged on campus by 1969 but it remained small and did little beyond hold meetings and discussion groups. The activists themselves noted the difficulty of getting female students interested in feminist issues since the university generally treated women fairly and the privileged upbringing of many students precluded a sense of oppression. Emory

⁷² "Mass Marches Favored," *Emory Wheel*, October 6, 1970, 2; "Sparse Antiwar Participation Attributed to Election Year," *Emory Wheel*, November 3, 1970, 2; John Rogers, "Anti-war group Meets," *Emory Wheel*, January 26, 1971, 3.

also attracted few of Georgia's returning veterans. Even with the G.I. Bill, they found it difficult to pay the tuition at a private college and instead opted for less expensive public schools. In addition, Atlanta's hip community continued to draw away potential campus activists. The presence of a growing gay and lesbian community and radical political groups diminished the need for campus groups, a problem Emory's New Left had experienced through its existence. The only organization with roots in the Left that lasted in the 1970s was a Free University but even this endeavor struggled continually and lost any political meaning by the middle of the decade. When the Emory Free University opened it offered classes in Socialist Thought, Current Economic Issues and Women in American History. Three years later it provided instruction in Belly Dancing and Bridge.

In May 1972 a reporter for the *Emory Wheel* assessed the state of campus activism. She offered definitive if unhappy news for the proponents of the New Left. "Activism at Emory," she declared, "lies snoring in a corner." In the two years since the explosion of demonstrations following the Kent State killings, campus radicalism had disappeared. Numerous reasons exist for this result but they all pointed to the same conclusion. According to the reporter, "Emory is a peculiar place."⁷³ The history of the New Left at Emory clarifies and supports this conclusion. The failures and successes of Emory activists resulted from the specific environment in which they operated. The resistance from administrators displayed at other schools around the nation failed to develop at Emory, often frustrating activists and removing a key cause for the development of a large student movement. Led by a president that encouraged political engagement, the administration usually avoided taking any action against students that

⁷³ Barbara Brown, "A Look At Emory," *Emory Wheel*, May 3, 1972, 8.

could provoke violence or intransigence. During the Black Student Union and Kent State demonstrations, school officials provided wide latitude to activists and ultimately worked with them to resolve conflicts.

The proximity of an active hip community in nearby Atlanta also tapped into the well of potential movement leaders and recruits. While the local and regional New Left used Emory as a safe meeting place, it often drew away student radicals to work in larger and more engaged groups. Throughout the late 1960s, campus activists who began at Emory left the campus to join the local anti-war movement, helped fight for civil rights, or work for the *Great Speckled Bird*. As a result, the complex activist community that developed at other schools failed to materialize at Emory. Finally, the inability of the campus New Left to engage in issues beyond Vietnam War linked the course of campus activism to the course of the conflict.

But, this should not diminish the success activists achieved. It proved to be a long journey from Affirmation: Vietnam to the Kent State demonstrations. In just over four years, a committed group of activists, focused intently on working against American policy in Vietnam, helped build a movement on campus that fully engaged in the regional and national anti-war campaign. Across town, however, another and decidedly different campus would develop the complex student movement that Emory lacked.

CHAPTER 3

“THERE’S NO REASON TO BELIEVE BERKELEY IS AN ISOLATED INCIDENT”:

THE STUDENT MOVEMENT AT GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY

*“Father, father, everybody thinks we’re wrong,
But who are they to judge us
Simply because our hair is too long
You know we’ve got to find a way
To bring some understanding here today.”*

“[What’s Going On](#),” Marvin Gaye

While only six miles separated Georgia State College from Emory University, the differences between them occupied a far larger distance at the dawn of the 1960s.¹ Since its founding in the early years of the twentieth century, Georgia State struggled to maintain its existence, let alone develop into a quality school. By the early part of the decade a failed campaign to uphold segregation almost destroyed the institution but the growing demand for higher education from the city’s working and lower middle-class population dramatically increased the school’s student body and widened its academic offerings. By the end of the decade Georgia State’s future had been secured. It achieved university status in 1969 and underwent a period of sustained growth. Part of its transformation into a legitimate university included the development of a student movement on campus. By the late 1960s a diverse group of progressive students had created a small but deeply committed activist community. While opposition to the

¹ Georgia State achieved university status and a name change during the time frame covered by this chapter. In order to remain as factually accurate as possible, the name Georgia State College will be used when referring to events at the school until the name change occurred in 1969. After that point, the school will be referred to by its current name, Georgia State University.

Vietnam War fueled much of this activism, as it did at Emory, Georgia State groups committed themselves to a wider set of issues and created a more diverse, longer-lasting and radical movement than existed at the neighboring school. The New Left's development at Georgia State reinforces the conclusions of historians which confirm that student activism did not only attract upper middle class whites who attended elite universities but spoke to the concerns of the nation's working class youth.

Georgia State and the Origins of Campus Activism

What would eventually become Georgia State University began as the Georgia Institute of Technology's Evening School of Commerce in 1913. Initially located in "dank quarters" near Georgia Tech the school moved several times over the next few years as enrollment increased and by the 1920s and 1930s local businesses had come to depend on the school as a reliable source for qualified employees.² During the Depression of the 1930s, economic realities forced state leaders to rethink their support of public higher education. As a result, legislators in 1931 created the University System of Georgia. In 1933, the System's Board of Regents made the Evening School independent of Georgia Tech and renamed it the University System of Georgia Evening School.³

In 1947, the Board of Regents decided to turn the school into a branch campus of the University of Georgia. This decision resulted from a recognition that the school's facilities and faculty were incapable of dealing independently with the large increase in

² Thomas Dyer, *The University of Georgia: A Bicentennial History, 1785-1985* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1985), 290

³ Merl Reed, "The Struggle for State-Supported Higher Education in a Southern Regional Center: Atlanta and the 'Mother Institution,' 1944-1955," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* Vol. 80 (Fall 1996): 564-565. For more on the history of Georgia State University see Merl E. Reed, *Educating the Urban New South: Atlanta and the Rise of Georgia State University, 1913-1969* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009); Bertram Holland Flanders, *A New Frontier in Education: The Story of the Atlanta Division University of Georgia* (Atlanta: Corner Gilmer and Courtland, 1955).

enrollment resulting from the end of World War II and the passage of the G.I. Bill. Renamed yet again, this time as the Atlanta Division of the University of Georgia, the school's supporters hoped the relationship with UGA would lead to accreditation.⁴

The relationship between UGA administrators in Athens and those at its Atlanta campus proved contentious. UGA maintained control of the Atlanta Division's budget and "vital areas of faculty, curriculum and programs." In Atlanta, school administrators complained that they had little control over faculty appointments and that too many courses were being taught by part-time faculty. Even full-time faculty members had little say over the development of academic programs. Also, Atlanta Division administrators expressed concern over the fact that UGA forced a "'padded' and unrealistic catalog" on them while rejecting many proposed new courses that would meet the specific needs of students at the Atlanta campus. Overall, Atlanta Division officials favored separation from UGA, arguing that it would "better serve the rapidly expanding urban constituency." The Board of Regents disagreed despite support for the plan by Atlanta business leaders and the school's provisional membership in the state's accreditation agency beginning in 1952.⁵ Finally, in 1955, Harmon Caldwell, chancellor of the University System, announced his support for separation and in July of that year the Board of Regents approved the creation of a separate school, naming it the Georgia State College of Business Administration. In 1961, after the school's mission evolved and grew beyond the initial curriculum, the Regents again changed the school's name, shortening it to Georgia State College.⁶

⁴ Dyer, *The University of Georgia*, 291.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 292.

⁶ Reed, "The Struggle for State-Supported Higher Education in a Southern Regional Center," 572, 577, 575, 589, 593.

Georgia State, in seeking to fulfill its new mission as an independent four year college while still catering to its traditional student body, operated both night and day divisions. Hoping that a college degree would improve their employment prospects, many of the school's attendees were older than regular undergrads at other schools and attended part-time or at night while working during the day. These facts reflected changes in higher education across the country. The post-WWII years witnessed the growth of a new component in American higher education—the urban university. Urban (or metropolitan) universities and colleges were established in cities across the country and aimed to serve the needs of a changing student body. Urban colleges and universities catered not only to traditional college students who were in the 18-21 age bracket and attended school full-time, but also provided flexible schedules and new course offerings that met the needs of older, non-traditional students, such as those who split their time between school and a job or family, or professionals who took classes in order to advance their careers. Urban universities also adopted open admission policies and tuition rates that, for the first time, allowed the financially and educationally disadvantaged, often residents of a city's poorer districts, to attend college. Given its history and the changes to its mission during the 1950s and 1960s, Georgia State stood as a prime example of the new urban college.⁷

Independence, however, did not lead to stability. George Sparks, a Georgia Tech professor who had become the Evening School Director in 1928 and Georgia State's president in 1955, faced mandatory retirement in 1957. The search for a new president

⁷ For more on the history and mission of urban universities see Arnold B. Grobman, *Urban State Universities: An Unfinished National Agenda* (New York: Praeger, 1988); and Daniel M. Johnson and David A. Bell, eds., *Metropolitan Universities: An Emerging Model in American Higher Education* (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 1995).

proved a difficult one. While the faculty wanted the ideal candidate to possess a doctorate degree and have administrative experience, the only applicant who fit this criteria, Tulane President Rufus Harris, refused the position when offered to him. In explaining his decision, he stated that the Board of Regents had expressed little concern for Georgia State. According to Harris, they “had no real heart for the place.”⁸ This lack of concern became obvious over the next decade as Georgia State administrators engaged in a constant struggle to pry much-needed funds from the hands of the board.

In the end, the Board of Regents selected thirty-seven year-old Noah Langdale, Jr. as the school’s new president. He met few of the faculty requirements. He had earned a law degree and M.B.A. from Harvard but at the time of his appointment operated a private law practice and served as an assistant professor of social science at Valdosta State College. Caldwell explained that the racial situation in Georgia led to Langdale’s appointment. Following the Supreme Court’s 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision declaring segregated public education unconstitutional, southern states passed a series of laws to resist integrating schools. In Georgia, the legislature approved several measures to impede integration, including one that stripped funding from any public school which admitted African Americans.⁹ By the late 1950s civil rights activists in Atlanta began challenging these measures. In 1956, six African Americans applied to Georgia State but through a week-long series of machinations, including the last minute cancellation of a course, Sparks succeeded in keeping the school all-white.¹⁰ The university system’s chancellor stated it would be unfair to bring an outside candidate into this situation,

⁸ Reed, *Educating the Urban New South*, 196.

⁹ Robert A. Pratt, *We Shall Not Be Moved: The Desegregation of the University of Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2002), 40-42.

¹⁰ Reed, *Educating the New Urban South*, 200-201.

arguing that the school could close down at any time since it certainly faced more challenges from the local black community. It seems more likely, however, that Langdale, who came from a politically connected family, had been selected to insure that Georgia State remained open and segregated.¹¹

The new president's actions over the next several years reinforce this conclusion, as he consistently favored policies that damaged Georgia State but successfully excluded African Americans. He did not contest the state legislature's implementation of an age-limit for application, although it dramatically reduced Georgia State's student body, which consisted in large part of adults. In addition, Langdale helped craft an admissions policy designed to keep African Americans out of the entire university system. This new policy created admission procedures based on "character, personality, and moral-worth analyses of each matriculant," mandatory personal interviews, more stringent academic requirements and an emphasis on "psychological testing" that could be used to disqualify any applicant who cleared all the other admissions hurdles. While every school in the university system fell under these new guidelines, they were applied unevenly. Georgia State followed the policy strictly, going to great extremes in screening its applicants. As a result, the school's enrollment dropped 25% from 1958 to 1960, far exceeding the losses at Georgia Tech, Atlanta's other all-white public college. In 1961, the state's policy of massive resistance ended when legislators refused to close UGA after a federal judge ordered the school to admit two black students. Other colleges began admitting African Americans soon after this event, but not Georgia State. Langdale refused to allow the admission of any black applicants for over eighteen months, waiting until the segregation

¹¹ Ibid., 197.

laws were officially repealed by the legislature. In 1962, Georgia State admitted social studies teacher Annette Lucille Hall as the school's first African-American student. The struggle to keep Georgia State all-white had severely damaged the school. By early 1962 it had lost 58% of its student body.¹² This reduction made it even more difficult for administrators trying to convince the Board of Regents that the school desperately needed funds for faculty development and construction projects. Although in dire shape, Georgia State would soon enter a period of dramatic growth.

Despite having desegregated, Georgia State remained overwhelmingly white and politically conservative. By the early 1960s, however, a small number of progressive students formed a SDS chapter. The national SDS organization had its roots as the student component of the League for Industrial Democracy (LID), a “decrepit social-democratic holdover from another age.”¹³ Responding to the “new restlessness” emerging on college campuses at the start of the decade, the few hundred members of SLID (Student League for Industrial Democracy) voted in 1960 to change the group's name to Students for a Democratic Society. SDS truly came into its own two years later when the group issued the “Port Huron Statement,” a document that called for Americans to engage in “participatory democracy” and which marked the birth of the New Left.

By November 1963, SDS was a small organization operating out of a cramped New York City office. It focused most of its energies on the Northeast, building upon the fledgling peace movement that had emerged in the region during the 1950s, particularly at the numerous elite colleges in the Boston area.¹⁴ It seems somewhat remarkable, then, that in November 1962, SDS National Secretary Jim Monsonis received a phone call

¹² *Ibid.*, 206-213.

¹³ Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS* (New York: Random House, 1973), 16.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 83.

from “a couple of students at Georgia State College who wanted to form an SDS chapter.” Monsonis met with the Georgia State students over the Thanksgiving holiday weekend and reported back to the national SDS office that the group would form a “Liberal Club” dedicated to “the raising of controversial issues, to exploring new concepts of higher education, and to work for a responsible young liberalism in a changing south.” Monsonis also felt that, although the Georgia State students were conservative by SDS standards, they would be a good group and deserved all the help the national SDS office could provide since, “the 20-odd members are really isolated.”¹⁵

This assessment does not seem all that surprising coming from an activist based in New York City and belonging to an organization that drew its initial support from white pacifist groups frequently located on elite northeastern university campuses. While it is true that SDS at this time had few members or chapters, and that most of these were very far away from Atlanta, it is also true that Georgia State SDS members had a strong local activist community it could turn to for support. Looking at the fledging Georgia State SDS chapter from a regional perspective, it becomes clear that the activists were hardly isolated. In fact, they resided in one of the most politically active cities in the nation, home to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.

By January 1963, the Georgia State students had rejected the concept of forming a Liberal Club and submitted a constitution for a Georgia State chapter of Students for a Democratic Society to the Dean of Students. The constitution’s preamble stated that the Georgia State SDS sought to “create a sustained community of educational and political

¹⁵ Jim Monsonis to Vera Rony, November 28, 1962, *Students for Democratic Society Papers, 1958-1970* (Glen Rock, N.J.: Microfilm Corporation of America, 1977), Series 2A, No. 18.

concern,” and that it felt the need to put forth “a radical, democratic program counterpoised to authoritarian movements of both Communism and the domestic right.” Twelve students endorsed the document.¹⁶

To be considered an official organization at Georgia State, all student groups had to receive initial approval from the Dean of Students and final approval from the General Council, a body made up of other Georgia State students. Unfamiliar with SDS, Dean of Students Kenneth England contacted the group’s national office, requesting information on the organization. England heard back from Assistant National Secretary Don McKelvey, who agreed to send materials but felt that England’s interest in the group wasn’t “friendly.”¹⁷ On February 7, England sent letters out to the local group’s two leaders, Dayton Pruitt and Danny Smith, notifying them that he approved of the formation of a Georgia State SDS chapter but only on the condition that it “is to remain local and have no national affiliation whatsoever until it proves itself of help and benefit to the College.”¹⁸ Clearly, the material England received from the national SDS office raised some concerns. Pruitt related these to the national office, stating that England had warned them that “Jimmy Hoffa and Communists will not be allowed to speak . . . and that . . . if we picketed the school *in our underwear* he would take appropriate actions against our club—he was serious, too.”¹⁹

¹⁶ Georgia State College Students for a Democratic Society Constitution, Box 48, Dean of Students Office Records 1930-1970, University Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA (hereafter cited as Georgia State University Archives).

¹⁷ Kenneth England to National SDS, January 29, 1963, Box 48,, Dean of Students Office Records 1930-1970, Georgia State University Archives; Don McKelvey to Kenneth England, February 6, 1963, Box 48, Dean of Students Office Records 1930-1970, Georgia State University Archives.

¹⁸ Kenneth England to Dayton Pruitt, February 7, 1963, Box 48, Dean of Students Office Records 1930-1970, Georgia State University Archives.

¹⁹ Sale, *SDS*, 80.

Georgia State SDS wasted little time getting started and on February 19 sponsored a speech by national SDS member Jack Minnis, who also headed the Southern Regional Council's Voter Education Project. But, this seems to be the last official event sponsored by SDS at Georgia State, an unusual turn of events given the growing number of progressive students and activists present in Atlanta in the early 1960s. The SNCC office employed several well-known activists, including Casey Hayden, who began working in Atlanta during the spring of 1963. Hayden had impeccable New Left credentials. She helped draft the Port Huron Statement and her husband, Tom Hayden, was the current president of national SDS. Two other women deeply involved in the Civil Rights movement and the New Left, Constance Curry and Joan Browning, also lived in Atlanta at this time. It seems almost certain that Pruitt and the Georgia State SDS members would have met with and received encouragement from these women, particularly given that Browning attended Georgia State, had close connections with the Atlanta SNCC office, and had signed the constitution for the Georgia State SDS chapter.²⁰

It remains unclear, then, why the Georgia State SDS failed to gain momentum, but several possibilities seem likely. First, a national student movement that the group could turn to for encouragement and support had not yet developed. It would only be in the wake of the 1964 Berkeley Free Speech Movement that white student activists would begin to build a national student movement. In addition, although national SDS had a keen interest in organizing progressive Southern students, Georgia State SDS members may also have believed they had little in common with the rest of the organization.²¹

²⁰ For more on Hayden, Curry and Browning, see Constance Curry et al., *Deep in Our Hearts: Nine White Women in the Freedom Movement* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000).

²¹ Gregg Michel, *Struggle for a Better South: The Southern Student Organizing Committee, 1964-1969* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 51.

Prior to 1965, national SDS focused most of its efforts on university reform and organizing poor whites in the ghettos of Northern cities, issues that had little relevance to students at a non-residential southern college. Finally, the Civil Rights movement and organizations like SNCC possibly drew away those who would have been interested in SDS. This certainly proved true for Browning, who spent most of the 1960s working with Atlanta-based anti-racist groups.²²

All of these possible reasons lead to the question of why the Georgia State activists would have turned to SDS in the first place. Given the largely antagonistic and confrontational relationship between many African-Americans and white Southerners during the 1960s, it may be that activists at Georgia State considered it safer to organize on campus a chapter of a predominantly white group. As Gregg Michel points out, campaigning against long-standing racial and social norms could be particularly costly for southern activists, who could and often did lose friends, encountered condemnation and rejection from their families, and faced expulsion from school.²³ Georgia State activists may have wished to avoid the problems they would have faced if they crossed racial boundaries and affiliated openly and closely with the civil rights movement. Whatever the reason, the quick demise of the Georgia State SDS chapter meant that it would be several years before another New Left group appeared on campus.

²² Curry, *Deep in Our Hearts*, 79.

²³ Michel, *Struggle for a Better South*, 3.

Building a Movement and Making Connections

By 1967, the political turmoil and rapid cultural change which had engulfed the rest of the nation had made its way to Georgia State. In January, student Thomas Hathcock submitted to England the constitution for a new student organization, the Committee on Social Issues (COSI). The group's nearly four dozen charter members and seventeen faculty supporters, including several from the Atlanta Committee to End the War in Vietnam, envisioned COSI as a forum in which multiple viewpoints could be expressed and discussed. Although an independent and wholly local organization, the preamble to its constitution echoed the sentiments of SDS's Port Huron Statement, stating that the ultimate goal was to discuss ideas that would help build "a democratic society predicated on peace and racial equality; a society in which every individual is guaranteed physical well-being and the opportunity to develop to the fullest extent of his ability."²⁴ A great deal had changed on American college campuses since 1963. The Civil Rights movement, the Berkeley Free Speech Movement and the escalation of the Vietnam War starting in 1965 had the combined effect of politicizing college students in numbers never seen before and forcing them to ask questions about American society and the role of the university in their lives. The Civil Rights movement had an even stronger effect on Southern progressive white students, leading many to "raise questions about the roles they should play on their campuses and in their communities,"²⁵

During the mid-1960s, though, the question at Georgia State centered not on what to do about the student movement, but why it did not exist at the school. Student Bobby

²⁴ Committee on Social Issues Constitution, Box 21, Dean of Students Office Records 1930-1970, Georgia State University Archives.

²⁵ Jeffrey A. Turner, "From the Sit-Ins to Vietnam: The Evolution of Student Activism on Southern College Campuses, 1960-1970," *History of Higher Education Annual* 21 (2001): 104.

Nesbitt believed that the lack of activism could be attributed to the “maturity” of Georgia State’s students and the fact that many of them had to balance school with jobs and families.²⁶ Graduate student Michael Hosford, who had attended college in the Northeast, felt that the lack of dormitories was to blame, since “dormitory life . . . provides . . . a very fertile atmosphere for bull sessions which often lead to the birth of student movements.”²⁷ Another student, Mason McAllister, believed the lack of student activism could be attributed to regional differences. “Southerners,” McAllister stated, “are taught from earliest childhood to respect authority and older persons.” The Civil Rights movement may also have led Southern white students to develop “a distaste for demonstrations.” But, McAllister warned, “whatever the cause of the hesitancy to protest and defy authority, there is developing in the South the potential for more and larger demonstrations by students, especially as the discontent with the war in Vietnam spreads.”²⁸

COSI’s initial activities did indeed focus on the Vietnam War. President Lyndon Johnson’s decision to escalate the war raised student political awareness and led to an increase in antiwar activism around the country, including in the South. From its founding, the group sponsored talks about Vietnam by well-known and out-spoken members of the nation’s Left, while also participating in national anti-war demonstrations. Its first lecture featured Charles Bolduc, national committee member of the Young Socialist Alliance and founding member of the Minneapolis Committee to End the War in Vietnam. The anti-war-themed speech drew a boisterous crowd, as numerous conservative students and pro-war advocates heckled Bolduc throughout his presentation.

²⁶ Bobby Nesbitt, “State Students Too Busy to Riot,” *Signal*, September 30, 1965, 2

²⁷ Michael Hosford, letter to the editor, *Signal*, October 7, 1965.

²⁸ Mason McAllister, *Signal*, April 27, 1967, 2

In a letter to the student newspaper *The Signal*, COSI member Dusty DeStephano stated angrily that, “I have always known that numerous immature people attended Georgia State but until recently I never realized the extent of this immaturity . . . the whole atmosphere was more appropriate to a zoo than to a center of intelligent inquiry and discussion.”²⁹ Undeterred, COSI continued to host lectures through the spring and summer of 1967.

COSI members also traveled to New York City for the April 15 Spring Mobilization against the Vietnam War, an event that drew 300,000 marchers and became the largest anti-war demonstration in U.S. history up to that point.³⁰ COSI’s participation in the rally revealed several important facts about the school’s student movement. It showed that Georgia State New Leftists wished to actively engage with a national student movement that could provide encouragement and support. In addition, it demonstrated the interaction between activists at Georgia State and Atlanta’s hip community. The trip to New York had been arranged by the Atlanta Committee to End the War in Vietnam, a local organization run mostly by non-student activists. The trip brought together students from predominantly white colleges, such as Georgia State, Emory and Georgia Tech, with African-American students from some of Atlanta’s historically black colleges, such as Morehouse and Spelman. The interaction across race and campus boundaries would help create an active and long-lasting antiwar movement in Atlanta and provide Georgia State students with an activist community in which it could participate beyond the boundaries of campus.

²⁹ Dusty DeStephano, letter to the editor, *Signal*, March 30, 1967.

³⁰ Tom Wells, *The War Within: America’s Battle Over Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 133

Georgia State administrators, while certainly not supportive of COSI, did not seem overly concerned that the group would disrupt normal campus life. While they kept a close watch on whom the organization brought to campus, administrators maintained a conflict-free relationship with the group. Throughout 1967 and 1968, England continued to invite COSI members to his office to “take coffee” with well-known liberal politicians who visited the school.³¹ The fact that Georgia State contained few spaces for mass demonstrations and that students went home at the end of each day allowed administrators to believe that the conflicts occurring at colleges around the nation would not plague Georgia State.

Still, in their unpublished annual reports to Georgia State President Noah Langdale, administrators routinely felt the need to downplay the role of COSI on campus, making assurances that the group represented a very small portion of the student body. In his report summarizing the 1966-1967 academic year, England noted that “there has been very little interest among the vast majority of students in following the lead of those minority groups which deviate from the wholesome within and outside the college.”³² His 1967-1968 report reiterated this position, noting that “the vast majority of students maturely seek their educational objectives and have not been sympathetic to groups which they regard as extreme.” Dean of Women Nell Trotter, in her report for the same year stated that, although the academic year had been referred to as a “year of protest”

³¹ Kenneth England to COSI, 27 September 1968, Box 48, Dean of Students Office Records 1930-1970, Georgia State University Archives.

³² Dean of Students Annual Report 1966-1967, Box 15, Dean of Students Office Records 1930-1970, Georgia State University Archives.

around the nation, “the student revolt . . . has not taken place at Georgia State College. May it not.”³³

These assurances spoke to Langdale’s deep distrust of the New Left and his serious concerns regarding the potential for violent demonstrations. Following a trip to Columbia University and NYU in the summer of 1968, he “seemingly became obsessed with student demonstrations.” He communicated with college presidents around the nation about the issue, spent “a good deal of time ascertaining his legal options” if demonstrations did occur and, at one point, considered setting up a “secure room” in the basement of Sparks Hall, stocked with food and supplies.³⁴ Fortunately, Langdale did not have a great deal of direct contact with student activists.

While political activism captured the attention of relatively few students, other changes in the student body reflected the nation’s expanding youth culture. Most notably, a countercultural element emerged on campus starting in the 1966-1967 academic year. Trotter made note of the relaxed clothing styles of countercultural adherents. “We have seen a trend,” she states, “to unkempt, untidy appearance on the part of a few, who maintain a right for their personal appearance.”³⁵ Numerous Georgia State students had become involved in the Atlanta hip community and the close relationship between the school and the Strip in nearby Midtown generated interest on campus regarding the philosophy and outwards symbols of the counterculture.³⁶ Several

³³ Dean of Students Annual Report 1966-1967, Box 15, Dean of Students Office Records 1930-1970, Georgia State University Archives.

³⁴ Reed, *Educating the Urban New South*, 235.

³⁵ Dean of Women’s Annual Report 1967, Box 15, Dean of Students Office Records 1930-1970, Georgia State University Archives.

³⁶ “The Hippies,” *Signal*, July 13, 1967, 5.

articles in the *Signal* reported on rock music, drug use, particularly marijuana and Lysergic Acid Diethylamide (LSD), “hippie” clothing styles, and local night clubs.³⁷

On November 9, 1967, a group of hippies visited the college to participate in a “dialogue” with students about the countercultural lifestyle and philosophy. The visit came in the wake of a raid on one of the Strip’s most popular venues, the Catacombs coffeehouse, during which police arrested a Georgia State student.³⁸ The group of hippies that came to campus included David Braden, operator of the Catacombs and known as “Mother David” to local hippies, and Bruce Donnelly, a young Methodist minister who ran a church-sponsored coffee house, The Twelfth Gate. The group took questions for several hours from the two hundred students present. The local hippies explained that they had joined the counterculture because of an opposition to America’s “materialistic, selfish, immoral society,” and favored expressions of individual freedom and love for one another.”³⁹

During the 1967-1968 academic year COSI moved beyond simply organizing lectures and launched several campaigns that would have important consequences for Georgia State and its students by the end of the spring quarter. Members of the group continued to participate in national and local anti-war demonstrations. COSI leader Rick Brown attended the October 21, 1967 protest at the Pentagon (at which infamous sixties activist Abbie Hoffman promised, but failed, to levitate the building) and the group co-sponsored, along with a half dozen other Atlanta

³⁷ Steve Inscoc, “Records,” *Signal*, November 10, 1966, 2; “The Hippies,” 5-6; Ann Page, “Hippie Hangout is Atlanta Scene,” *Signal*, November 30, 1967, 3; Tom Watson, “At the Twelfth Gate: An Interview with Bruce Donnelly,” *Signal*, January 25, 1968, 6-7; David Govus, “People are Going to ‘Pot,’” *Signal*, June 20, 1968, 8.

³⁸ Orville Gaines, “Hippie Hangout Raided Here After Agents Buy Marijuana,” *Atlanta Journal*, November 3, 1967, 1, 4.

³⁹ “Hippies Discuss Idealism, Love, War, Pot at State,” *Signal*, November 16, 1967, 1.

anti-war organizations, a demonstration at the Atlanta military induction center on December 4, part of national anti-war protest campaign called for that week.⁴⁰

Outside of anti-war activities, most of the issues the new activist-oriented COSI fought for centered on university reform, a major agenda item for SDS, the Southern Student Organizing Committee (SSOC), and other local college-based New Left groups. That fall, the group circulated a petition against any *in loco parentis* rules still adhered to by the college. The petition failed to gain much support, due to the fact that Georgia State administrators, in charge of a non-residential college, found few opportunities to stand in as a parent for students, many of whom went home to their actual parents at the end of classes each day or were parents themselves.

COSI did manage to find an issue that combined its concerns about the war and the university's control over student lives when it started a campaign during the fall of 1967 to end compulsory ROTC. Reserve Officer Training Corps had been compulsory for decades at many institutions but as schools around the nation began abolishing the practice in the mid-1960s many colleges in the South, a region with a strong tradition of honor and military service, held fast to the practice of compulsory ROTC.⁴¹ At Georgia State, male freshmen had to enroll in a six quarter program of military instruction and drill that provided no credits towards a degree.

Unlike its other university reform campaigns, COSI's push to end compulsory ROTC found a great deal of support among Georgia State students. After several weeks

⁴⁰ Ronnie Schunck, "Student Activist Portrait," *Signal*, October 31, 1968, 10; Wells, *The War Within*, 195-203; Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam, 1987), 233-234.

⁴¹ Terry Anderson, *The Movement and The Sixties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 160. For discussions of southern notions of honor, manhood, and military service and how they relate to Vietnam see Owen W. Gilman, *Vietnam and the Southern Imagination* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1992); and James R. Wilson, *Landing Zones: Southern Veterans Remember Vietnam* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990).

of handing out leaflets that urged students to “Support Freedom of Choice,” COSI had managed by February to gather nine hundred signatures on its petition to end the program.⁴² The campaign gained further momentum when George Kunkle, a philosophy professor and one of COSI’s initial supporters, began circulating a petition among the faculty calling for voluntary ROTC, eventually getting seventy-five signatures by the end of April.⁴³

During the spring, the Student Government Association held a series of hearings on the issue and found that a majority of students favored ending compulsory ROTC. On April 26, 1968, the college faculty discussed the issue and sent it to the Standards Committee for further study. After its own set of hearings, the Standards Committee recommended making ROTC voluntary and, at the next general faculty meeting on May 20, those present voted 4 to 1 in favor of abolishing mandatory ROTC. Although the final decision rested with the faculty, Kunkle gave primary credit for the change to COSI, who got “the question to the decision stage.”⁴⁴

By the fall of 1968, COSI further expanded its anti-war campaigns and, more importantly, sought affiliation with the national SDS organization.⁴⁵ The decision signaled an important change within COSI. At its founding eighteen months earlier, the group saw itself as an independent organization that aimed to facilitate dialogue between competing viewpoints. Now, it wished to directly associate itself with a group that, by 1968, espoused radical political philosophies and engaged in direct and sometimes

⁴² Committee on Social Issues leaflet, undated, Box 48, Dean of Students Office Records 1930-1970, Georgia State University Archives

⁴³ “End Compulsory ROTC Says Faculty-led Petition,” *Signal*, April 18, 1968, 1; Patrick J. Tracy, “Free Discussion of ROTC,” *Signal*, May 2, 1968; “Mandatory ROTC Ended,” *Signal*, June 20, 1968, 10.

⁴⁴ George O. Kunkle, letter to the editor, *Signal*, May 20, 1968; Jim Skillman, “End Forced ROTC,” *Great Speckled Bird* I no. 7 (June 7, 1968), 3.

⁴⁵ “COSI Against Viet War, Seeks Union with SDS,” *Signal*, August 18, 1968, 14.

violent confrontations with the authorities. The University of Georgia SDS chapter in nearby Athens had organized a three-day occupation of a campus building in April and, although that demonstration remained peaceful, the SDS sit-in at Columbia University in New York during May ended in bloodshed, as did demonstrations at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago during August. By announcing its desire to affiliate with SDS, COSI sent the message that it now supported radical political action.

COSI also began throwing its support behind campaigns aimed at organizing the working class, a move that reflected a growing belief within the national New Left that real change in America would only come about through a worker-student alliance. One of the fundamental differences between the Old Left and the New Left rested in the New Left's initial belief that social change would occur by organizing the youth of America, namely high school and college students. This approach rejected the philosophy of the Old Left, which saw American society divided along class lines and considered social change possible only through the success of an organized and activist working class movement. By the last years of the 1960s, though, many New Leftists considered a merger of these two philosophies as the option most likely to successfully change America, and called for students and blue-collar workers to join forces in their drive for social justice. Southern activists were particularly drawn to this philosophy. Since the early 1960s, many progressive Southern students considered an alliance with poor whites a necessary step in achieving civil rights for African-Americans.⁴⁶ During the summer of 1968 COSI participated in a demonstration supporting a wildcat strike launched by workers at the Levi-Strauss factory in Blue Ridge, GA. In October, COSI member David

⁴⁶ For discussions of the growing belief in a student-worker alliance within the New Left see Sale, *SDS*, 484-486; and Michel, *Struggle for a Better South*, 160-166.

Govus co-chaired a committee made up of students and faculty from Georgia State and Emory that planned to help employees at both colleges organize a union.⁴⁷ COSI members also participated in the Grape Boycott, a nationwide campaign to support the efforts of Hispanic labor leader Cesar Chavez to gain recognition of a migrant farm workers union in California.⁴⁸

By the start of 1969, COSI formalized its affiliation with SDS by changing its name to the Georgia State SDS chapter (GSU SDS).⁴⁹ The decision, according to GSU SDS spokesman Rick Brown, meant “to demonstrate support for the national student movement and show a solid coalition here at State. As SDS, we have a national reputation but can maintain our local autonomy.”⁵⁰ The organization spent most of the spring focused on university-related issues. In February the group called for the creation of a committee to study the constitutions of the Student Government Association, the General Council and the College itself.⁵¹ Beginning in April, SDS circulated a petition demanding the repeal of a tuition increase just passed by the University System Board of Regents. GSU SDS framed the debate as not simply an issue of concern for students but one that had wider class and racial implications. The group stated that, “the fact is that the increase will injure those not in school far more than those in school, since it will exclude

⁴⁷ Demonstration flyer, Box 48, Dean of Students Office Records 1930-1970, Georgia State University Archives; Gene Guerrero, Jr., “Universities’ Poor,” *Great Speckled Bird* I no. 18 (October 14, 1968), 3.

⁴⁸ Gene Guerrero, “Grape Boycott Hits Atlanta,” *Great Speckled Bird* I no. 20 (October 28, 1968), 3. For more on Chavez and the Grape Boycott see Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties*, 300-310

⁴⁹ Kenneth England to Richard Brown, January 17, 1969, Box 48, Dean of Students Office Records 1930-1970, Georgia State University Archives.

⁵⁰ “SDS Purposes Outlined,” *Signal*, February 27, 1969, 9.

⁵¹ Richard Brown, “General Council Riots pt. 2,” *Altus*, February 5, 1969, 1-2, *Students for Democratic Society Papers, 1958-1970*, Series 3, No. 28; “SGA Considers SDS Proposals,” *Signal*, February 27, 1969, 1.

from school the poorer working people – especially blacks. The move is thus one of *de facto* [sic] racism.” By June the group had collected one thousand signatures.⁵²

By the start of the fall quarter, however, GSU SDS had become inactive. The sudden demise of the group can most likely be attributed to the split within national SDS that occurred during the summer of 1969, which also had a negative impact on the Emory SDS chapter. The seemingly endless war in Vietnam and the ineffectiveness of peaceful protest in stopping it created factions within SDS, each with its own plan for affecting real social change and each jockeying for power within the organization. In June 1969, at its National Convention in Chicago, SDS imploded as two competing factions fought for the loyalties of SDS members. By the end of the summer, SDS ceased to exist as an effective group in the national New Left. At Georgia State, SDS would disappear, but only for a time.

Students at Georgia State began looking for other New Left groups to fill the void left by the disappearance of SDS. This search occurred not only at Georgia State but across the country as activists searched for a new center around which to rally. The answer came with the creation of a new national anti-war organization. Two young liberals, Sam Brown and David Hawk, developed a new concept for demonstrations that would invigorate the New Left and the anti-war movement. Instead of organizing mass demonstrations in a few big cities, Brown and Hawk proposed that protests should occur in cities all over the nation on the same day, led by a loosely organized national committee. Their new organization, the Vietnam Moratorium Committee (VMC), set October 15, 1969 as the first Vietnam Moratorium Day. The event proved a huge

⁵² “Stop the Increase!” *Altus*, May 3, 1969, 1, Box 1, Dean Women Records, Georgia State University Archives; “1,000 Sign Petition Against Tuition Hike,” *Signal*, June 26, 1969, 2.

success, as “millions of Americans in thousands of cities, towns and villages across the nation,” called for an end to the war in Vietnam.⁵³

The student movement at Georgia State threw its support behind the new anti-war campaign in September when more than forty students attended the organizational meeting of the Georgia State University Student Mobilization Committee (GSU SMC).⁵⁴ The group immediately went to work making plans for local events to correspond with the October 15 nationwide Moratorium. Georgia State student Ginny Osteen, head of the GSU SMC, stated that the group’s aim for the moratorium was to provide “an educational view of the Vietnam War with reasons for getting out and demand to bring the troops home.”⁵⁵

On October 15, the GSU SMC staged a rally that featured numerous speakers, including Linda Jenness of the Socialist Workers Party and Morehouse College’s Student Body President Carthur Drake. Two documentary films about Vietnam followed the speakers. Overall, GS-SMC members considered the event a success. Student Pete Turnbull helped run the days’ events and stated that, “the meeting went well. There were no hassles, hecklers, no anything, really. It was a whole lot better than we expected. We had about 800 to 1,000 [attend], I’d say.” Later that evening, Georgia State’s Moratorium participants joined with demonstrators from the civil rights and hip communities in a candlelight light sponsored by the Southern Christian Leadership

⁵³ Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up?: American Protest Against the War in Vietnam 1963-1975* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 255, 269; Melvin Small, *Antiwarriors: The Vietnam War and the Battle for America’s Hearts and Minds* (Wilmington, DE: SR Books, 2002), 106-107.

⁵⁴ “Student Mobilizers Plan Fall Anti-War Activities,” *Signal*, September 25, 1969, 6.

⁵⁵ “Vietnam Moratorium Day Gains National Response,” *Signal*, October 16, 1969, 2.

Conference that proceeded from West Hunter Street Baptist Church to Atlanta City Hall.⁵⁶

The overwhelming success of the October Moratorium led the VMC to call for another event on November 13-14. The Atlanta Mobilization Committee, the GSU SMC, and anti-war groups from other local colleges participated in several events over the two-day Moratorium, including a city-wide Moratorium rally at the state capitol on November 13 and demonstrations on individual campuses around Atlanta on November 14. Later that day, several busloads of demonstrators left Atlanta for Washington to participate in a national demonstration slated for November 15.⁵⁷

The success of the fall demonstrations energized the national anti-war movement. At Georgia State, the GSU SMC capitalized on the resurgence of anti-war sentiment and spent the first several months of 1970 holding rallies and participating in demonstrations. In February, GSU SMC members traveled to the National SMC Conference in Cleveland. Ginny Osteen stated that GSU SMC planned to spend 1970 educating students about Vietnam by sponsoring more films and lectures about the war. Osteen also said the group was organizing a group for veterans who oppose the war.⁵⁸ Veteran enrollment at Georgia State had increased since the 1965-1966 academic year, when no veterans attended Georgia State. By 1968-1969 over sixteen hundred veterans attended Georgia State and this number increased over the next several years.⁵⁹ Nationally, a growing number of Vietnam veterans began opposing the war and formed groups such as Vietnam

⁵⁶ Georgia State Student Mobilization Committee flyer for the October 15 rally, Box 30, Dean of Women Records, Georgia State University Archives; "Vietnam Moratorium Day," *Signal*, October 16, 1969, 1

⁵⁷ Georgia State Student Mobilization Committee flyer for the November 13-14 Moratorium, Box 30, Dean of Women Records, Georgia State University Archives.

⁵⁸ Veteran's Caucus-SMC, letter to the editor, *Signal*, January 29, 1970.

⁵⁹ David Smith, Jr., "Georgia State University: A Historical and Institutional Mission Perspective, 1913-2002," (PhD dissertation, Georgia State University, 2005), 132-133.

Veterans Against the War (VVAW). At the start of 1970, VVAW was still a small organization without any chapters in the South but by the spring of that year the GSU SMC contained a Veteran's Caucus to meet the needs of anti-war veterans enrolled at Georgia State. Several members of the Veteran's Caucus would become leaders of the GS-SMC in the 1970s, including Frank Grinnon and Phil Lambert, who had been an Air Force war correspondent stationed in Saigon.⁶⁰ Activists at Georgia State seemed ready to move boldly into the new decade.

Kent State and Rise of Personal Politics

The GS-SMC participated in several rallies organized by the city's hip community in February and April 1970, including an anti-war demonstration organized outside Vice-President Spiro Agnew's hotel when he visited Atlanta on February 21. All other activities were dropped, though, after President Richard Nixon announced on April 30 that U.S. troops had invaded Cambodia and National Guardsmen killed four students during a protest against the invasion at Kent State University in Ohio four days later. As protests occurred in campuses around the city, four hundred GSU students held a rally in Hurt Park on May 6. Faculty members, students, and Vietnam veterans spoke against the invasion, the killings, and the war in general. After the rally, about fifty students marched through several Georgia State buildings shouting anti-war slogans and "Kent State, Kent State!" A large and, at times, violent demonstration at UGA the same day convinced the Board of Regents to shut down all twenty-six schools in the University System for two days. Anti-war advocates at Georgia State used the break from classes to organize another rally on May 8. While a smaller rally than the one on May 6 (only 125

⁶⁰ Veteran's Caucus-SMC, letter to the editor, *Signal*, January 29, 1970.

students participated) the event highlighted how the New Left at Georgia State had blossomed since COSI's founding more than two years earlier. In addition to the GS-SMC, speakers included representatives from such New Left student groups as the Young Socialist Alliance, the Society for Environmental Quality, and the Women's Liberation movement.⁶¹

The national New Left had undergone several important changes between 1968 and 1970. The increasingly radical and violent nature of some New Left groups, on display during the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago and the Weathermen's "Days of Rage" demonstration in 1969, alienated many left-leaning Americans. In addition, the collapse of national SDS in 1969 and Nixon's reduction in troop numbers in Vietnam contributed to the erosion of a unified New Left organized around ending the war and the student movement. These changes, however, did not mean that the New Left had disappeared. Instead, it shifted its focus. By 1970, the New Left had become a broad-based social movement that focused on achieving rights for all traditionally oppressed groups in American society, as well as taking steps to improve the environment. At Georgia State, new student organizations addressed all these issues. Some of the most active were those that comprised the Georgia State women's movement during the first few years of the 1970s.

Women's Liberation emerged as a national issue after the 1968 Miss America contest in Atlantic City, N.J., where female demonstrators crowned a sheep Miss America and set up a "freedom trashcan" into which they tossed items that symbolized their oppression, such as bras, girdles and fake eyelashes. It took a while, though, for the

⁶¹ "Students at Rallies Here Differ on War Opinions," "Students Mass Twice Against Escalated War," *Signal*, May 14, 1960, 1.

movement to make its way into the more socially conservative South. But, by 1970 women's liberation groups had been formed in Atlanta and on college campuses across the state. Speaking at Georgia State in February 1970, local socialist politician Linda Jenness predicted that the women's movement was going to "involve hundreds of women and . . . its going to mushroom this year."⁶² That same month veteran activist Ginny Osteen, member of the newly formed Georgia State Women's Liberation group (GSWL), stated that she and other members of her group "saw our struggle for liberation as a very serious matter," since they had to contend daily with "the reactionary, male supremacist attitudes that run rampant in this society."⁶³ Between 1970 and 1973, women's liberation groups planned activities at Georgia State that echoed events at the national level. The rhetoric of local women's liberation advocates often mimicked that of radical feminists in other parts of the country, who called for the end of a male-dominated society and the ability for women to have complete control over their bodies and their lives. Sam Boykin, a GSWL member, believed it necessary for women to meet together so they could "raise their conscience" about womanhood and to discuss the ways in which they were oppressed by the male-dominated society.⁶⁴

Women's liberation activists at Georgia State focused on two main issues during the early 1970s. First, they formed a campus chapter of the Georgia Women's Abortion Coalition (GWAC). The GSU GWAC organized in early 1972 and by the autumn became engaged in a campaign to get laws banning abortion repealed in Georgia. They planned

⁶² Beryl Diamond, "Linda Jenness Promotes Women's Liberation Drive," *Signal*, February 5, 1970, 2.

⁶³ Ginny Osteen, letter to the editor, *Signal*, February 19, 1970.

⁶⁴ "GSU Women's Lib Plans Open House," *Signal*, March 4, 1971, 11. Radical feminism constituted a distinct and important branch of the early women's liberation movement. Often members of other New Left groups, radical feminists rejected the limited and moderate goals of group like the National Organization of Women, in favor of what they considered needed fundamental changes in gender identities and relationships between the sexes. For more on radical feminism see Alice Echols, *Daring to be Bad: Radical Feminism in America 1967-1975* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).

to send members to Washington D.C. in October for a demonstration on the day that the Supreme Court was to hear arguments in *Roe vs. Wade*. Also in October, the GSU GWAC set up a table outside Kell Hall on campus to conduct a poll regarding how many female students at Georgia State had undergone an illegal abortion procedure. The event led to a verbal clash between GSU GWAC and the Georgia Right to Life Committee, who also had an information table set up.⁶⁵

Women's liberation advocates at Georgia State also worked hard on the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment. A remnant from the first wave of feminism during the early twentieth century, the ERA had been introduced into, and failed to pass, every Congress since 1923. But, in 1970, the U.S. House of Representatives approved the measure with a large margin and the Senate followed two years later. The Georgia legislature slated discussion of the amendment for January 1973 and in preparation female students at Georgia State formed G.S.U. Women for the E.R.A., which coordinated its activities with Georgians for the Equal Rights Amendment.

At the same time that Georgia State women organized to fight for their rights, gays and lesbians on campus formed their own group. During fall 1971 several Georgia State students who belonged to the Atlanta Gay Liberation Front formed a campus group, Georgia State Gay Liberation (GSGL), and sought recognition from school leaders as an official student organization. While New Left groups at Georgia State traditionally experienced little or no trouble receiving recognition as a student organization, the GSGL encountered delays in the processing of their application and, over six months after

⁶⁵ "Women Rally Against Laws on Abortion," *Signal*, May 4, 1972, 3; Raleigh Pitts, "Abortion Coalition, Life Committee Clash in Kell Hall," October 10, 1972, 1.

submission, had it turned down.⁶⁶ The delay resulted from a discussion among administrators regarding the most appropriate way to deny the application. At first, like their counterparts at UGA who were also trying to curtail the activities of a gay liberation group on campus, they turned to the state's sodomy laws.⁶⁷ An internally circulated memo from December 1971 stated that "sanction of the gay education organization would present insurmountable problems in the face of Georgia's criminal law . . . obviously activities of the organization could easily constitute felonies. Arguably, mere sanction of the organization could possibly constitute a felony." But, further research revealed that this argument faced possible defeat in court. The California Supreme Court had found in *Associated Students of Sacramento State College v. Butz* (1971) that denying a group access to campus facilities based on what it might do violated constitutional guarantees of free speech.

Instead, Georgia State administrators denied the group recognition based on a university policy which stated that sex education could only be taught in official classes. GSGL consisted of three committees, one of which, the education committee, disseminated information about gay and lesbian lifestyles on campus. Administrators interpreted this activity as "sex education" and used it as the basis for denying the GSGL application. An administrative memo stated that while "the University is well aware that the Constitution exists on campus . . . we deem it important to note that the university has and will give official or semi-official recognition to no campus organization

⁶⁶ "Gay Students Meet for Recognition," *Signal*, April 20, 1972, 5; Debie Denmark, "Gay Lib Not Recognized But Holds 'Pride Week'," *Signal*, July 13, 1972, 3.

⁶⁷ Christopher A. Huff, "Radicals Between the Hedges: New Left Activism at the University of Georgia, 1963-1975," (MA Thesis, University of Georgia, 2005), 124-133.

contemplating as a significant activity dissemination of sex education information.”⁶⁸

While members of GSGL threatened to fight this decision, in court if necessary, it eventually chose not to do so.

While new groups clashed with the administration at Georgia State, an old one reemerged. GSU SDS, which had become inactive after the collapse of national SDS during the summer of 1969, reorganized on campus during the fall of 1970. In September, the group battled with Sigma Nu, a Georgia State social fraternity, after GSU SDS members tore down a sign that Sigma Nu had posted on campus. The activists claimed that the poster was racist since it depicted in a negative way an African-American campus parking lot attendant.⁶⁹ GSU SDS also organized a “SDS South-east Conference” for October 9-11 on campus. The event attracted activists from colleges and universities across the Southeast, but organizers ran into trouble when the administration realized that the rooms reserved by GSU SDS were meant for a regional conference and not just a meeting of the campus SDS chapter. In response to the Sigma Nu incident and the SDS conference, Dean of Students Kenneth England sent a letter to GSU SDS president Debbie Russell informing her that “you ought not take down or deface signs that appear at the University,” that she needed to be “careful” when making facility reservations, and that, as president of SDS, she was “principally responsible for the full implications of the presidency for the official actions of the group.”⁷⁰

Russell paid little attention to England’s warning and in December launched a campaign against the B&D Cafeteria, the student dining facility on campus. On

⁶⁸ Untitled and anonymous internal memorandum, December 30, 1971, Box 2, Dean of Men Records, 1969-1976, Georgia State University Archives.

⁶⁹ Johannes Causey, “Fraternity, SDS Clash Over Rush Sign,” *Signal*, October 1, 1970, 11.

⁷⁰ Kenneth England to Deborah O. Russell, October 12, 1970, Box 1, Dean of Men Records, 1969-1976, Georgia State University Archives.

numerous occasions between December 1971 and March 1972 Russell and up to fifteen other GSU SDS members occupied the cafeteria aisles during lunchtime and, using a bullhorn, spoke about how cafeteria workers were underpaid and mistreated by the cafeteria's owner, Emory Brooks. After the first demonstration Dean of Men William Singleton recommended to England that Russell be suspended from the University for her disruptive behavior and refusal to comply with his demand to cease using a bullhorn, but no action was taken and GSU SDS continued demonstrations in the cafeteria.⁷¹

Despite these activities, GSU SDS never regained the momentum it had prior to 1969. By 1971 the Georgia State New Left had moved on to new issues and few campus activists seemed concerned with building the worker-student alliance that GSU SDS advocated. Those that did already belonged to one of the campus groups associated with the Socialist Workers Party. The lack of a national organization also hurt local organizations. SDS chapters reformed on numerous college campuses across the nation and few met with any significant success.

The end of the Vietnam War in January 1973 hit the New Left hard. Activist groups, regardless of their individual agendas, all opposed the war and came together for anti-war demonstrations, creating a common bond between them. The end of the conflict caused many groups either to disband or focus solely on their own issues. In some cases, the end of the war marked the end of student movements on campuses around the country. This proved to be the case at Georgia State. By Spring 1973, any sort of cohesive movement had ceased to exist. The GSU SMC simply disbanded and the few remaining New Left groups, such as ones belonging to the women's movement, turned

⁷¹ William Singleton to Kenneth England, December 7, 1970, Box 1, Dean of Men Records, 1969-1976, Georgia State University Archives.

their gaze away from campus and sought closer alliances with like-minded groups in Atlanta. Over the next several years a few attempts would be made to organize new organizations on campus, most notably the short-lived Georgia State American Indian Movement Solidarity Committee in April 1973 and the failed attempt to organize students to help Cesar Chavez's United Farm Workers in January 1974.⁷² But, these groups did little to distract from the fact that the New Left had ceased to be a presence on the Georgia State campus after January 1973.

The development at Georgia State of a diverse activist community that existed well into the 1970s reinforces arguments made by historians that the New Left proved attractive across regional and class boundaries. By the second half of the 1960s the Vietnam War and expanding student movement politicized students in all parts of the nation and at schools with working class and lower middle class backgrounds. The ability of a small group of activists to create a movement at a commuter campus like Georgia State, which held day and night classes, lacked dormitories, and possessed a fairly conservative student body where many members held jobs and were parents, attests to the widespread dissatisfaction with the status quo. Atlanta's hip community also contributed to the success of the student movement at Georgia State. Throughout its existence political activists at GSU drew upon the resources of a local network of radicals and organizations to bolster its fight against the Vietnam War and create a stronger student movement. In fact, several key groups, such as COSI and GSGL, were founded by members of similar city-wide organizations. While campus activists have been the

⁷² Lynn White, "American Indians Seek GSU Help," *Signal*, May 3, 1973, 12; Lynn White, "Bus Accident Causes Chavez Cancellation," January 24, 1974, 2.

focus of many New Left studies, in Atlanta the local community of political and countercultural activists, far more than student radicals, helped turn Atlanta into the center of Sixties-era politics and culture of the entire Southeast. As on campuses, the Vietnam War would be the issue that drew them to the city.

CHAPTER 4

“EVERYBODY IS HERE BUT THE MASSES”: THE ATLANTA ANTIWAR MOVEMENT

“War! What is it good for? Absolutely nothing.”

“[War](#),” Edwin Starr

During the first years of the Vietnam conflict pacifists, white liberals, civil rights workers and students developed a small but engaged antiwar movement in Atlanta. Reaching across numerous boundaries these activists worked hard to build antiwar sentiment in one of the most conservative and militarily-oriented regions in the nation. While a sense of cooperation borrowed from the civil rights movement guided the first years of antiwar activism, young white radicals had taken over the movement by the late 1960s and isolated the hip community’s activists from the city’s less extreme detractors of the Vietnam War. By the time the conflict finally ended, few within the hip community remained committed to fighting against the conflict, due in large part to bitter quarreling over ideological dogma that mattered only to them.

Despite its complex history, historians of the Sixties have paid scant attention to Atlanta’s antiwar movement. The first scholarly works on the movement during the Vietnam era generally overlooked the South but even scholars who have since recognized the development of southern movements against the war focus almost exclusively on the connection between antiwar and civil rights activism.¹ A close examination of antiwar activism in Atlanta, however, reveals a

¹ Despite its centrality to the Sixties era, few works look at the antiwar movement from a national perspective. The best include Charles DeBenedetti and Charles Chatfield, *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the*

movement influenced by a far broader set of ideas and groups than formerly believed. While civil rights organizations certainly played an important role, religious pacifists, liberals, and anti-nuclear activists made key contributions to the development of the local movement during the first years of the war. These groups attempted to increase the chances of success by forming numerous coalitions and alliances with long term goals and wide support from the local Left. These coalitions expanded and achieved notable successes as the hip community grew during the later years of the 1960s. By 1970, however, Atlanta's antiwar movement grew increasingly marginalized and ineffective as political radicals came to dominate local groups. By the last years of the war the broad-based coalitions that had played an important role in developing a vibrant local movement gave way to a series of ad hoc alliances hampered by factional infighting over tactics and ideology.

Pacifism, Civil Rights and Vietnam

Atlanta's small, progressive-minded and religious-oriented pacifist community laid the groundwork for the antiwar movement that developed during the mid-1960s. These early activists first came together after World War II and survived the rabid anti-communism of the McCarthy Era to become the voice of nuclear disarmament and pacifism during the late 1950s and early 1960s. In 1943, a small group of Quakers began meeting at the Central YMCA on

Vietnam Era (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990); Melvin Small, *Antiwarriors: The Vietnam War and the Battle for America's Hearts and Minds* (Lanham, MD: SR Books, 2002); Tom Wells, *The War Within: America's Battle Over Vietnam* (New York: Henry Holt, 1994); and Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up?: American Protest Against the War in Vietnam 1963-1975* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984). These works pay little or no attention to southern antiwar movements. Works about the Sixties which include major discussions of the antiwar movement but overlook the South include Terry H. Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties: Protest in America from Greensboro to Wounded Knee* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); and Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam, 1987). The best recent books that discuss the southern antiwar movement but focus exclusively on its civil rights origins are Gregg L. Michel, *Struggle for a Better South: The Southern Student Organizing Committee, 1964-1969* (New York: Palgrave MacMillian, 2004); and Jeffrey Turner, *Sitting In and Speaking Out: Student Movements in the American South 1960-1970* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010).

Luckie St. in downtown Atlanta but would move repeatedly before finding a permanent home in 1959. In 1957, a group of middle-aged women associated with local colleges re-launched a chapter of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), which had existed in Atlanta prior to the repression of progressive politics that acted as the hallmark of the McCarthy Era.² During the early 1960s, members of WILPF, along with several Quakers and activists from local civil rights groups and area colleges, organized the Greater Atlanta Peace Fellowship. The group focused its attention on demonstrations against nuclear testing and the Kennedy administration's Cuban policy. The GAPF held two days of demonstrations during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, encountering counter-protests organized by conservative Georgia State students and members of the National States Rights Party, a white supremacist political organization.³ These groups remained small and had little impact on opinions in Atlanta regarding nuclear disarmament and anticommunism but, along with several civil rights organizations, helped build the local antiwar movement starting in 1965.

During the early 1960s most Americans could not locate Vietnam on a map, let alone understand the intense conflicts that had consumed the Southeast Asian country since the end of World War II. This changed in August 1964 with the Gulf of Tonkin incident and the decision in March 1965 by President Lyndon Johnson to deploy the first ground combat troops to Vietnam. Protests against the war began almost immediately. That same month, opponents of the war at the University of Michigan organized the nation's first "teach-in" and in April Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) held a protest against the war in Washington, D.C.

² The Quakers and WILPF belonged to a larger collection of radical pacifist groups that developed in America during the twentieth century. Marian Mollin provides a nice overview of this movement in her book *Radical Pacifism in Modern America: Egalitarianism and Protest* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press: 2006); Another useful reference is Lawrence Wittner, *Rebels Against War: The American Peace Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984).

³ Jim Gehres, "The Movement in One City," *WIN Magazine* 5 no. 11 (June 1, 1969), 9-10.

Expecting no more than few thousand demonstrators, over 25,000 people attended the rally. The large turnout surprised the event's organizers and revealed a greater concern regarding the nation's war policy than many observers at the time thought existed.

In August, attendees at an antiwar conference in the nation's capitol formed the National Coordinating Committee to End the War in Vietnam (NCCEWVN or NCC) to help create a national peace movement.⁴ In Atlanta, antiwar activists began their campaign against the war on the city's most liberal college campus. On October 29, several students organized the South's first teach-in at Emory University, drawing over one thousand people from around the region (see chapter two). By November, local Quakers and civil rights workers had formed two new organizations, the Atlanta Committee to End the War in Vietnam (ACEWVN) and the Southern Coordinating Committee to End the War in Vietnam (SCCEWVN or SCC). Based in Atlanta, these two groups often worked together at the local level despite possessing different goals and political orientations.

Modeled on the NCC and various civil rights groups, the SCC hoped to act as a regional organization that aided local peace groups in developing antiwar activities. The organization had strong connections to the local civil rights movement. Harry Boyte and James Lawson, key members of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and SNCC leader John Lewis, attended the founding meeting during the first weekend in November, along with over one hundred representatives from organizations and colleges across the Southeast. During the proceedings, attendees paid tribute to Norman Morrison, a Quaker who had committed suicide by self-immolation on November 2 as a protest against the war. The group noted that Morrison

⁴ Tom Wells, *The War Within: America's Battle Over Vietnam* (New York: Henry Holt, 1994), 23-27, 51-52.

had been “a personal friend of many of the participants.”⁵ Attendees also voted Dwain Wilder as the group’s executive secretary. An undergraduate student at Yale, Wilder had come south earlier that year to join the civil rights movement after seeing marchers attacked by police on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama. A conversation with Boyte soon after arriving in Selma led to a job with the SCLC. Following fieldwork in Miami, he returned to Atlanta and, to his surprise, was nominated by Boyte as the new group’s coordinator. According to Wilder, Boyte considered SCLC leadership of the new group part of an ongoing effort to convince Martin Luther King, Jr. that he needed to publicly oppose the war. King, as head of the SCLC, had been reluctant to speak out against the war, not wishing to jeopardize white liberal support for the civil rights movement or turn publicly against Johnson after he helped get the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 through Congress.⁶ Others within the organization, however, saw the nation’s Vietnam policy and civil rights struggle as intricately intertwined and believed King needed to openly denounce the war. King, however, remained reluctant and it would be another year and a half before he finally proclaimed his opposition to the conflict. Regardless of King’s position, Wilder and the group’s members worked hard to generate antiwar sentiment in the region.

The SCC developed an ambitious plan to generate opposition to the war among southerners. Understanding the group as “a . . . unique . . . coalition of civil rights and student organizations with pacifist groups,” Wilder argued that its members possessed “technical and logistic talent, and an intimate knowledge of local and national government attitudes towards minority groups and the exploitative domestic policies at various levels of government

⁵ Southern Coordinating Committee to End the War in Viet Nam Formed, *America in Protest: Records of Anti-Vietnam War Organizations, Part 2: National Coordinating Committee to End the War in Vietnam, 1964-1967* (Woodbridge, CT: Primary Source Media, 2008), Roll 10, #119. Hereafter referred to as *America in Protest, Part 2*.

⁶ Interview with Dwain Wilder, October 21, 2011.

administration.” He hoped the SCC could tap into this knowledge and experience to sway southerners through workshops and a speaker’s bureau. In addition, the SCC would hold demonstrations, including a Southern Day of Protest. Working with peace groups in almost a dozen cities, the SCC planned a coordinated protest of the nation’s Vietnam policy on February 12, 1966, Abraham Lincoln’s birthday.⁷

In Atlanta, the ACEWVN attempted to work with the SCC in organizing against the war but conflict between the groups developed quickly. The ACEWVN had also formed in November through the efforts of several SNCC workers and Miriam Wasserman, a professor at the Atlanta University Center. According to member Jim Gehres, the Atlanta group focused more on demonstrations than education but several factors dampened the potential effectiveness of the group. It did not have a regular meeting space or its own mimeograph machine, which made printing flyers to advertise events difficult. A chronic lack of money prevented members from disobeying local police since the funds did not exist to wage court battles if members were arrested. In addition, tension developed between the ACEWVN and the SCC. Ideological issues were partly to blame. The SCC attracted Marxists and Socialists due to its affiliation with the NCC, which had close connections to the nation’s Communist Party. The ACEWVN was more ideologically moderate, stressing cooperation across traditional political boundaries while also remaining wary of radicals. The two groups had difficulty in communicating. In November, the groups planned two different demonstrations when vice president Hubert Humphrey visited Atlanta. When Humphrey returned to the city several months later the ACEWVN organized another protest while the SCC, instead of cooperating with the Atlanta committee, held a mock counter-demonstration across the street. Carrying signs with slogans such as “Kill a Kommie for Khrist,” “Bomb Greenwich Village,” and “Gas a Gook for God,” the counter-demonstrators

⁷ Agenda for Steering Committee Meeting, *America in Protest, Part 2*, Reel 10, #119.

hoped to attract people who supported the war and then draw them into conversations about the conflict. The SCC offered no help to the Atlanta Committee demonstrators across the street and had not given them notice of its plans.⁸

The early antiwar movement in Atlanta grew more complex with the creation of Atlantans for Peace in early 1966. In 1963, Pope John XXIII issued *Pacem In Terris*, a papal encyclical addressed to both Catholics and non-Catholics in response to growing Cold War tensions. Two years later, local non-denominational conferences began meeting around the nation to discuss the document. In Atlanta, John Yungblut of Quaker House brought together local peace organizations and religious leaders for the Atlanta Peace Convocation in December 1965. Atlantans for Peace emerged from this meeting. Led by local activist Nan Pendergrast, the group possessed a much less radical membership than the SCC or the ACEWVN. Composed of older liberals, the group hoped to create “responsible dissent in the South” to the war. This strategy proved successful and the group claimed several hundred members by 1967.⁹ The growing collection of civil rights workers, pacifists, white liberals and young radicals created the potential for a broad-based, effective antiwar movement in the city. But as these various groups began working together in the first months of 1966, tensions within civil rights circles diminished the potential of the nascent movement.

On January 6, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) issued a statement announcing its opposition to the Vietnam War. At the end of 1965, SNCC had yet to break with President Johnson over the war which, according to Clayborne Carson, became “a source of embarrassment for a few staff members” who felt they had to disassociate themselves

⁸ “Kill a Kommie for Khrist,” *SCC Newsletter* I no. 4 (May 14, 1966), 6-7; Gehres, “The Movement in One City,” 10-11; Dwain Wilder interview, October 21, 2011.

⁹ Janet Boyte Ferguson and Janet Adams Rinard, *As Way Opened: A History of Atlanta Friends Meeting 1943-1997* (Atlanta: Atlanta Friends Meeting, 1999), 70.

from the organization if they wanted to speak out against the war.¹⁰ The murder of Sammy Younge finally led the organization to announce its opposition. Younge, a navy veteran and SNCC activist, was murdered while attempting to use a “whites only” bathroom at a gas station in Tuskegee, Alabama on January 3. In its statement issued three days later, the organization directly connected the struggle of black Americans with that of the Vietnamese, stating that “the murder of Sammy Younge . . . is no different than the murder of peasants in Vietnam. In each case, the United States bears a great part of the responsibility for these deaths.” The statement “unleashed a flood of criticism and left the organization more isolated than ever from . . . the mainstream of the civil rights movement,” including the SCLC.¹¹

These two groups soon put aside their differences when a crisis arose over the seating of Julian Bond in the Georgia Legislature. Bond, an organizer of the Atlanta sit-ins during 1960 and a founding member of SNCC, had won election as one of the first eight African Americans to serve in the state legislature since Reconstruction. Several days before being sworn into office, however, Bond told a reporter that he supported SNCC’s antiwar statement and expressed sympathy for draft resisters, creating a wave of criticism from local and regional white leaders and politicians. At the statehouse on January 10 he was asked to step aside as the other new members took the oath of office. This decision led to a year-long crisis which ended with Bond finally taking his seat in the legislature after having to win a second election and see his case go all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The refusal to seat Bond galvanized the local civil rights and antiwar movements. Martin Luther King, Jr. threw his full support behind the young politician. In a letter to the NCC, ACEWVN member Janet Paschall noted that “the Julian Bond case is the biggest thing in

¹⁰ Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 187

¹¹ *Ibid*, 186.

Atlanta right now.” She apologized for not being able to offer the national organization more support since the “Atlanta Committee will be quite busy for awhile.”¹² Several days later the group issued a statement regarding the war and the Bond crisis which, like SNCC’s, made an intimate connection between the nation’s war policy and the freedom struggle. While condemning the legislature, the committee argued that “it is not those few men who have created the conditions that make their foolish act possible. It is the war itself which is beginning to flush away reason with a river of false patriotism.” They also did not believe it was “an accident that the antiwar movement and civil rights movement are running a parallel and often merging course.”¹³ While the Bond crisis brought together the peace and freedom movements, it ultimately furthered the growing problems between SNCC and the SCLC. On January 14, the groups co-sponsored a march to the Georgia state capitol. As the demonstrators paraded around the building, several SNCC members turned suddenly and charged at police officers guarding the building, hoping to gain access. The “brief but violent melee” between the marchers and police left several people on both sides injured. The violent end to the march also crushed the tenuous alliance between SNCC and the SCLC. An SCLC spokesman stated that the violence “disturbed” King and that SNCC’s actions had “hurt the civil rights cause and hardened the opposition to seating Bond.”¹⁴

While the march exacerbated differences between local civil rights groups, black activists continued to work with white radicals in the growing antiwar movement in the early months of 1966. “Affirmation: Vietnam” (see chapter two), a petition drive and rally meant to demonstrate Georgia’s overwhelming support for the nation’s Vietnam policy, hoped to attract fifty thousand people to the newly constructed Atlanta Stadium on February 12. The organizers had pulled

¹² Janet Paschall to NCC, undated, *America in Protest, Part 2*, Reel 10, #119

¹³ Atlanta Committee to End the War in Vietnam, January 18, 1966, Box 26, Richard L. Stevens Papers, MARBL.

¹⁴ Bill Shipp, “Troopers Repel Pickets Trying to Rush Capitol,” *Atlanta Constitution*, January 15, 1966, 1.

together a full slate of entertainers and speakers, including Secretary of State Dean Rusk, a Georgia native and one of the chief architects of the administration's war policy. In response, both the ACEWVN and the SCC had been attempting to drum up support for a protest outside the rally. In a letter to its friends, the Atlanta Steering Committee (part of the ACEWVN) asked for financial support and for participation in the Feb. 12 protest. "We feel it is most important," the committee stated, "that there are still Georgians who oppose U.S. policy in Southeast Asia."¹⁵ On February 10, members of the Atlanta Steering Committee helped organize a "Speakout" about the Vietnam War at the Atlanta University Center. Over two sessions that ran from 1:00 PM to 10:30 PM, a variety of speakers presented positions both for and against the war, including Howard Zinn, David McReynolds of the War Resister's League and Tom Huston, president of Young Americans for Freedom, a conservative student organization.¹⁶ On February 12, the antiwar demonstrators gathered for a rally at the capitol at 11 A.M. and then marched to nearby Atlanta Stadium. The protest outside the stadium encountered little difficulty with the Affirmation: Vietnam attendees. Seventy five protestors participated, including a contingent from the AUC, making it three times larger than any demonstration in Atlanta to that point.¹⁷

The city's antiwar movement continued to grow and develop during the rest of 1966. In May, the ACEWVN, Atlantans for Peace, the SCC and Quaker House came together to found the Atlanta Peace Center, the city's first antiwar coalition. Jim Gehres, a native of Ohio who moved to Atlanta in 1964 to attend graduate school at Emory, acted as the center's first coordinator. Gehres and other activists spent the summer planning a demonstration for Hiroshima Day on August 6, a yearly event sponsored by pacifist and religious groups that had

¹⁵ Atlanta Committee to End the War in Vietnam Letter, February 5, 1966, Box 26, Richard L. Stevens Papers, MARBL.

¹⁶ Committee for an AU Center Speakout on Vietnam, March 20, 1966, Box 26, Richard L. Stevens Papers, MARBL.

¹⁷ Gehres, "The Movement in One City," 11.

begun in Japan in the first years after World War II. In addition to remembering the victims of the Hiroshima bombing the event would serve as a protest against the Vietnam War. The demonstration consisted of a march from the Old Post Office Building (headquarters for the local Selective Service office) through downtown and ended with a rally at Ebenezer Baptist Church. Once there, several speakers addressed issues of peace and war, including Reverend Martin Luther King Sr. and Sanford Gottlieb of the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy. Over one hundred people participated in the event.¹⁸

In addition to the formation of the Peace Center, new activist groups on local college campuses increased the movement's ranks. During the fall several members of the ACEWVN who attended Georgia State College formed the Committee on Social Issues (COSI). Less radical than other local groups, COSI focused on educating the conservative student body through lectures, discussions and selling literature about the war. Following the election of segregationist Lester Maddox as Governor in November, student activists from several local colleges founded an Atlanta-at-Large chapter of the Southern Student Organizing Committee, a civil rights group composed mostly of white progressive southerners that would embrace numerous New Left causes over the next several years, including antiwar activism. These campus groups along with the local pacifist and civil rights organizations oversaw the expansion of antiwar activism in the city during the next two years.

By the summer of 1966, however, SNCC's growing acceptance of Black power ideology led the group to distance itself from the local antiwar coalition. Over the previous two years black nationalism had captured the imaginations of numerous SNCC members. Rejecting the bi-racial cooperation of King's SCLC and other moderate civil rights groups, black power

¹⁸Gehres, "The Movement in One City," 11; Paul Hemphill, "The Pacifist," *Atlanta Journal*, July 28, 1966, 2; "Bomb Day Protest Here Attracts 30," *Atlanta Journal*, August 7, 1966, 22.

demanded that African Americans meet their own needs and not look to the white establishment for aid. Not everyone in SNCC had embraced the full implications of black power by 1966, particularly the concept of racial separatism. That March, however, members of SNCC's Atlanta Project offered a position paper at a monthly staff meeting which called for the ejection of whites from the organization. SNCC leadership rejected this call for racial separatism initially but by the end of the year, under the guidance of Stokely Carmichael, the group would expel its few dozen remaining white members.

The radicalism of the Atlanta SNCC workers explains why they failed to include local white antiwar activists in a major demonstration at the city's main military induction center that summer. On the morning of August 16, eleven male SNCC members gathered at the induction center on Ponce de Leon Avenue to protest the "racist illegal war in Vietnam."¹⁹ Carrying signs with sayings such as "The Vietcong never called me 'nigger'" and "Who is the enemy?", they marched outside the center as army personnel tossed lit cigarettes onto them from the second floor window. The protest ended peacefully but a larger group returned each of the next three days. On August 17, SNCC demonstrators occupied the lobby of the induction center after military members tossed an unidentified liquid onto the protestors outside the front door. The SNCC members had to be forcibly removed from the building. On August 18, twelve SNCC members were arrested after a scuffle with the police. Throughout the several days of demonstrations SNCC did not request that any of the other groups in the local antiwar movement support its demonstration. It seems likely that few groups would have answered the request if it

¹⁹ African Americans had a particularly strong reason to protest at military induction centers. Blacks were more likely to be drafted, serve in frontline combat units and die in combat than white soldiers during the Vietnam War. See Christian G. Appy, *Working-Class War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 18-22. Part of the responsibility for this lay with the racial imbalance on the nation's draft boards. In 1966, blacks made up 13.4 percent of draft calls but only 1.3% of draft boards. No African Americans served on draft boards in the Deep South. See James E. Westheider, *The African American Experience in Vietnam: Brothers in Arms* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 26-29.

had been made. Following the protest no other groups came out publicly in favor of the SNCC demonstration. ACEWVN member Jim Gehres later noted with regret that, “we did nothing to support SNCC after the fact.” This most likely resulted from the state of the antiwar movement at the time. Radical action had not yet been embraced by the movement at any level; it still favored peaceful rallies, marches, and educational sessions. It would not be until October 1967, over a year after the SNCC protest, that the movement openly confronted law enforcement and military personnel in the streets of Atlanta.²⁰

Outside the South, the national antiwar campaign moved forward strongly in the first few months of 1967. Efforts at building a large, broad-based movement succeeded with the nation’s largest demonstration to date on April 15. In New York City, approximately four hundred thousand protestors participated in the Spring Mobilization Against the War. Setting out from Central Park, where several dozen men burned their draft cards, Martin Luther King, Jr., Harry Belafonte and Dr. Benjamin Spock led a massive group to the U.N. Plaza, where numerous speakers, including Stokely Carmichael, railed against the nation’s war policy. King’s participation in the march, combined with his first public pronouncement against the war during a speech at Riverside Church in New York City eleven days earlier, “marked the first significant attempt at coalition between the peace and freedom movements” nationally in almost two years.²¹ In Atlanta, the movement of SCLC firmly and openly into the antiwar camp meant a significantly larger role for the organization in local anti-Vietnam activism.

Beyond the inclusion of the SCLC, the local movement grew in other ways during 1967. In March, Henry and Sue Bass arrived in town to found the Atlanta Workshop in Nonviolence

²⁰ “Atlanta’s Black Paper,” August 25, 1966, *America in Protest, Part 2*, Reel 10, #119; Gehres, “The Movement in One City,” 11.

²¹ Simon Hall, *Peace and Freedom: The Civil Rights and the Antiwar Movements in the 1960s* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 106.

(AWIN). Henry Bass, born in Kentucky, attended Williams College for his undergraduate degree and was in the final stages of completing a doctoral degree at Harvard when he and his wife moved back South. The couple had been active in the New York Workshop in Nonviolence and discussions in that group about how to create a national antiwar movement encouraged them to move to Georgia. Arriving with a letter of introduction from noted activist A.J. Muste, the Besses met with Andrew Young of the SCLC about the best way to start organizing in Atlanta.²² While AWIN aimed to teach about nonviolence generally, its main efforts focused on issues related to the Vietnam War. The Besses wanted to “bring to Atlanta a greatly escalated and considerably more direct-action oriented peace movement.” Towards this end, the group began holding weekly vigils at Five Points in downtown and met with as many local groups as possible to promote antiwar sentiment. Within a month of its founding AWIN had organized a protest against vice president Hubert Humphrey when he visited town in April. Primarily an AWIN event, members from a wide variety of organizations participated, including the ACEWVN, SSOC, Atlantans for Peace, and students from Georgia State and Morehouse College.²³

The spirit of cooperation between the civil rights and antiwar movements grew with the creation of the Atlanta Alliance for Peace in May, reflecting the widening spectrum of political and organizing philosophies within the local movement. SNCC, AWIN, ACEWVN and SSOC represented the increasingly more radical wing of the local movement at the group’s first meeting while members from moderate organizations such as SCLC, Atlantans for Peace, the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and WILPF also attended. Discussions at the first meeting focused on several key issues. Most participants emphasized the need to create a strong

²² Henry Bass, interviewed by author, January 8, 2012.

²³ *AWIN Newsletter* I no. 1 (April 12, 1967); 1, 5, *Records of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, 1954-1970* (Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America, 1995), Part IV, Reel 25, Box 175. Hereafter referred to as *SCLC Records*.

alliance between local organizations as crucial to building an effective movement. Henry Bass proposed that the alliance embrace more radical direct action since it had proven successful and that people seemed ready for it. Differences and lack of communication between groups had created problems in the past so Miriam Wasserman suggested the creation of a steering committee that contained a member from every group involved. She, along with several others, emphasized the importance of focusing the alliance's efforts on creating an organization that responded to local antiwar needs and conditions rather than one that simply adopted the concerns and goals of national organizations. This point seemed particularly important given that the first major campaign undertaken would be organizing local events during Vietnam Summer.²⁴

Gar Alperovitz, a Harvard Research fellow and former congressional aide, had developed the idea of Vietnam Summer out of suspicions that far more people opposed the Vietnam War than attended marches and demonstrations. Alperovitz believed a national canvassing campaign conducted by local antiwar groups would create connections between average Americans with concerns about the war. In addition, he hoped that the summer program would lead to new groups springing up. Martin Luther King, Jr., Dr. Benjamin Spock and Robert Scheer unveiled Vietnam Summer at a "packed press conference" less than two weeks after the Spring Mobilization.²⁵ In Atlanta, groups involved in the project developed events that reflected their expertise, political orientation and available resources. For example, Atlantans for Peace sponsored a speech by famed pacifist and former Congresswoman Jeannette Rankin in May, who had retired to her home outside Athens, GA. In July, religious groups within the Alliance, including the AFSC, Quaker House, and Clergy and Laity Concerned About Vietnam

²⁴ Minutes of May 9, 1967 Meeting of Atlanta Organizations Involved in Anti-Vietnam Activities and Interested in a City Wide Coalition, *SCLC Records*, Part IV, Reel 25, Box 175; "Antiwar Group Here Discusses Solid Front," *Atlanta Journal*, May 10, 1967, 76.

²⁵ Wells, *The War Within*, 138.

(CALCAV), sponsored a program at Emory University that featured well known opponents of the Vietnam War from the nation's religious community, including William Sloan Coffin and Father Phillip Berrigan.²⁶

Ben Clarke of the SCLC undertook the creation of the "Peace Education Project." Clarke hoped to tap into the discontent toward the war felt by young men in the Atlanta's poor black neighborhoods. In his proposal to the Vietnam Summer headquarters in Boston, Clarke emphasized that these neighborhoods already contained activists involved in voting-related activities. He believed that his people could "be educated to discuss peace and to solicit people either by action, words or deeds." Clarke also proposed the creation of a Social Action Committee as well as bringing Black church and business leaders into the campaign.²⁷ In anticipation of the project's approval (and funding), Clarke had assembled a staff. In June, however, he received word that the national office had rejected his proposal, which seemed odd given its connection to King, one of Vietnam Summer's main spokesmen. Clarke contacted Andrew Young at the SCLC about this rejection and larger concerns he had regarding the relationship between Vietnam Summer and the black community. Clarke noted that out of ten proposals submitted from black communities around the nation only two had been approved, one led by SNCC and another organized by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) in East St. Louis. Clarke stated he had "mixed emotions" about Vietnam Summer given this "obvious organizational discrimination."²⁸ It seems possible that Clarke had a legitimate complaint. By 1967, both CORE and SNCC had embraced Black Power, a movement that proved increasingly

²⁶ Letter from Atlantans for Peace to Clergy and Laity of Atlanta's Religious Community, undated, *SCLC Records* Part IV, Reel 25, Box 175.

²⁷ Benjamin Clarke, "Peace Education Project: A Program for Atlanta's Black Community," *SCLC Records* Part IV, Reel 25, Box 175.

²⁸ Administrative Memorandum to Rev. Andrew Young from Ben Clarke, June 26, 1967, *SCLC Records* Part IV, Reel 25, Box 175.

more attractive to radical white activists than King's SCLC. By 1969 many in the New Left would blindly support black nationalists as the vanguard in a coming revolution but even at this time it seems likely that the leaders of Vietnam Summer would favor SNCC and CORE over Clarke's SCLC-based project.

Despite this rejection, Vietnam Summer in Atlanta culminated with the largest antiwar demonstration to date in commemoration of Hiroshima Day on August 6. While organizers of the previous year's march had managed to turn out one hundred people, the recent movement of King into the antiwar camp meant his influence and the SCLC's organizing resources would contribute to a much larger event. Planning the event proved to be a true group effort as every part of the expanding movement became involved. Recalling the event several years later, antiwar activist and *Great Speckled Bird* founder Tom Coffin recalled that a wide variety of church groups, new campus organizations from the city's predominantly white and historically black colleges, and civil rights groups worked together in planning the march.²⁹ Organizers hoped for a massive turnout. Charles Webster, a coordinator for the march, noted that "the most pessimistic planners in the alliance say we should be content with several hundred marchers, others, including me, are hoping and planning to work toward getting several thousand." In permit applications for the use of Piedmont Park and Grant Park, Webster repeatedly listed the upper limit of participants at two thousand.³⁰

Planning efforts far exceeded those from previous marches as organizers worked to attract demonstrators from around the Southeast. Daily news releases, thousands of leaflets, radio spots and stories in organizational newsletters advertised the demonstration. SNCC made a special effort to generate support in Atlanta's African American neighborhoods. One flyer the

²⁹ Tom Coffin, "Few Remember the Day," *Great Speckled Bird* III no. 33 (August 17, 1970), 2.

³⁰ Harry G. Willson to SCLC Administrative Committee, July 17, 1967, *SCLC Records* Part IV, Reel 25, Box 175; Jack Delius to Harry G. Willson, July 18, 1967, *SCLC Records* Part IV, Reel 25, Box 175.

group circulated asked “Peace? End the War? What’s that got to do with me, brother? A lot. It’s why you don’t have what you want.” It went on to discuss how money slated for poverty programs had been diverted to fund the war in Vietnam. The influence of the SCLC and SNCC in planning the event revealed itself in the list of speakers. Prominent African American activists dominated the list, including Ralph Abernathy and James Bevel from the SCLC, H. Rap Brown from SNCC and comedian Dick Gregory, an outspoken supporter of civil rights and antiwar causes.³¹

Even with the spirit of cooperation that permeated the planning of the Hiroshima Day march, a dispute did emerge over the use of Grant Park, leading SNCC to withdraw its support for the event. The schedule for events on Aug 6 began with demonstrators assembling at Piedmont Park at 1:30 PM. They would then march south through downtown Atlanta and end at Grant Park for a rally. It appears that the plan had been approved by the city since advertisements and flyers published this route. In the final weeks before the march, however, the city hesitated in allowing the use of Grant Park. In a letter to organizer Harry Willson, Jack Delius, General Manager of Parks and Recreation for the city, stated that the pavilion in the park (the chosen site for the speaker’s platform) had been reserved for a family reunion. He further noted that “Sundays are very crowded [at the park] and every available parking stall is taken.” He suggested the march end in a parking lot next to city hall.³² Coffin suggested that racial issues, not crowd size, led to the city’s decision. The park was a traditional gathering spot for the local Ku Klux Klan and the city would not issue a permit since it would be difficult for police to protect the marchers. Coffin went on state that march organizers and city leaders reached a

³¹ Atlanta Alliance for Peace News Release, July 15, 1967; Harry G. Willson to SCLC Administrative Committee, July 17, 1967; Draft Hiroshima Day Flyer, undated; Hiroshima Day Leaflet, undated; *SCLC Records* Part IV, Reel 25, Box 175.

³² Jack Delius to Harry Willson, July 18, 1967, *SCLC Records* Part IV, Reel 25, Box 175.

compromise through the efforts of a lady who was “prominent in the liberal wing of Atlanta Society.” The rally would now be held in Hurt Park near the Georgia State campus and, in exchange, the *Atlanta Constitution* would provide space on its front page for coverage of the event. The compromise angered the militant SNCC members involved in the alliance, who had pushed instead for a potential confrontation with conservative whites at Grant Park. In the end, all parties agreed to the deal except SNCC, which withdrew its support from the march.³³

Despite this conflict, the demonstration proved successful. Five hundred people marched out of Piedmont Park and down Juniper Street, far fewer than the two thousand Willson expected but still a much larger crowd than had attended any previous antiwar protest in Atlanta. The march reflected the ever-growing complexity of the city’s activist community. Representatives from the city’s pacifist and civil rights groups participated, of course, but new faces also made their way into the crowd. “Bearded hippies” from the city’s budding countercultural enclave in Midtown marched as did a small contingent from the local Veterans for Peace chapter, a national anti-Vietnam group composed mostly of older World War II and Korean War veterans. The march did encounter some heckling from bystanders and as the demonstrators proceeded through downtown a group of approximately 75 pro-war counter-demonstrators attached themselves to the rear of the group. The two factions began shouting pro- and anti-war slogans at each other once the demonstration reached Hurt Park, but the police prevented the confrontation from turning violent.³⁴ The Hiroshima Day march proved the highpoint of cooperation within the local antiwar movement. Over the next several years it would become increasingly younger, whiter and more politically radical, leading to an exodus of middle class liberals and impeding bi-racial cooperation against the war.

³³ Coffin, “Few Remember the Day,” 2.

³⁴ John York, “Hecklers Taunt Peace March,” *Atlanta Journal*, August 7, 1967, A2; “500 Hold Rally in Atlanta,” *New York Times*, August 7, 1967, 15.

Keeping the Fight Going

By fall 1967 the national antiwar movement began fracturing. The sense of unity created during the Spring Mobilization in New York gave way to increasingly intense disagreements between the liberal and radical wings of the movement. Concerned that actions up to that point had no impact on changing the course of the war, some members argued for the use of more confrontational tactics. Peaceful protest had clearly been ineffective in stopping the conflict's escalation so perhaps, they argued, the time had come for direct actions such as civil disobedience, open resistance to the law and, for a small group on the fringe of the movement, rebellion or revolution. The explosion of racial violence in urban areas that summer, particularly in Detroit and Newark, fueled a sense of "despair and cynicism" among many activists, encouraging the shift towards more radical thinking. In August, the National Mobilization Committee declared that the October march in Washington, D.C. would "obstruct the war machine" and proclaimed common cause between the movement and black America.³⁵

Across the country draft resistance had emerged as a key means of fighting the war more directly. Started on college campuses the previous winter, the resistance movement spread during the spring with the formation of city-wide based groups such as the Chicago Area Draft Resistance. By the summer a Draft Resistance Clearinghouse had been founded in Madison, Wisconsin. Resistance had grown out of arguments that individuals had an obligation to fight the government's execution of an illegal and immoral war. Draft resistance efforts tapped into the already existing network of pacifist and radical religious organizations that advocated for conscientious objection to all wars. These groups, composed largely of older antiwar liberals, came to disagree with the increasingly revolutionary rhetoric and confrontational tactics of the antiwar movement but continued to provide information, counseling and assistance to young

³⁵ DeBenedetti and Chatfield, *An American Ordeal*, 187.

men looking to become conscientious objectors, refuse military induction or evade the draft by leaving the United States.³⁶ That autumn, draft resistance groups embraced collective action through participation in a national draft card turn-in day on October 16. In California, an attempt to shut down the local army induction center turned violent, leading to a battle between police and protestors that ranged over twenty blocks in downtown Oakland.³⁷

The Oakland confrontation fueled the “spirit of disobedience” that drove the planning for the March on the Pentagon later that month. The melding of the counterculture and New Left helped create a carnival-like atmosphere to the event as famed radical Abbie Hoffman promised to levitate the Pentagon. The rhetoric of violence emanating from a younger, more politically radical element led several groups, including SANE and WILPF, to withhold support for the march while “antiwar military veterans and religious leaders hotly reminded leftist militants that the Mobilization was a coalition formed to help end the war in Vietnam, not to begin revolution in America.” The fragile coalition between radicals and moderates in the movement broke down during the march. Following a rally at the Lincoln Memorial attended by 100,000 people, approximately half that number crossed the Arlington Memorial Bridge heading for the Pentagon. Suddenly, a small group of radicals split away from the group, broke down barricades and attempted to enter the building before being beaten back. Thousands remained outside the Pentagon overnight, suffering repeated beatings by troops. Most left the following day and the “siege” ended anticlimactically with the arrest of a few hundred stragglers on the evening of October 22.³⁸

In Atlanta, many local activists embraced draft resistance and the general turn towards direct confrontation utilized in Oakland and at the Pentagon. In April 1967, 75 students at

³⁶ Ibid, 183-185.

³⁷ Ibid, 196

³⁸ Wells, *The War Within*, 195-197, 201-202.

Morehouse College formed a conscientious objector's union and planned to apply for CO status with their local draft boards. The group's faculty advisor expressed surprise at the students' actions, noting that most of the men had "no background in political action or social protest."³⁹ Draft resistance among white activists also began in earnest that summer. Tom Houck of the SCLC and Jim Gehres coordinated an anti-draft program for the Fellowship of Reconciliation from June to September, while AWIN expanded its counseling efforts.⁴⁰ Echoing the sentiments of antiwar activists in other parts of the nation, Bass stated that "it is increasingly evident that marches alone do not stop wars. At some point we have to move beyond marches to more direct forms of confrontation with the war machine." Towards this end he proclaimed that AWIN would refocus its efforts in two directions. First, it would attempt to create opposition to the war through grassroots organizing and by making connections to people at the local level. As Bass asserted, "it is our neighbors who must be convinced, our sons and Georgians who must refuse to fight."⁴¹ The group also planned to increase its participation in civil disobedience.

The national draft-card turn-in day on October 16 provided the perfect opportunity for AWIN to put its new plan into action. That morning, several dozen demonstrators took up positions outside of Atlanta's Selective Service headquarters on Peachtree Street. At one point, seven members left the picket line and sat down in front of the office door, blocking entry. After refusing police orders to move, the group, which included Jim Gehres and both Besses, were arrested. Soon after the arrests two demonstrators entered the building to turn in their draft cards. Jody Palmour and Jim Everett, both members of the Atlanta SSOC chapter, proceeded upstairs to the draft board office, followed by reporters, police and several curious office

³⁹ Phil Gailey, "The Draft and You—th," *Atlanta Journal*, July 9, 1967, A12.

⁴⁰ Gehres, "The Movement in One City," 12

⁴¹ Henry Bass, "A Program for Peacemongers," *AWIN Newsletter* I no. 5 (September/October 1967), Box 2, Richard L. Stevens Papers, MARBL.

employees. Palmour and Everett addressed the press after leaving the office and the demonstrators disbanded. Over the next several months, other members of the local antiwar movement also turned in their draft cards. In December, local peace groups organized a demonstration in support of Gene Guerrero. A former Emory student and SSOC's first national secretary, Guerrero refused military induction after being refused CO status by the Georgia draft board.

In addition to draft resistance, hundreds of southern men underwent draft counseling. Both AWIN and Quaker House provided help for those hoping to apply for C.O. status, find non-combat related jobs in the military, or discover ways of leaving the country to avoid serving in the military. AWIN threw itself wholeheartedly into draft counseling and while it enjoyed a positive relationship with Quaker House in regards to helping young men understand their options, some Quakers had problems supporting this program in the early years of the war. Several in the Atlanta Meeting chafed as being identified, through antiwar activities, with "hippies and flower children." By 1969, however, the Atlanta Meeting solidified its stance against the war when it offered sanctuary to Russell Malone, a G.I. who had gone A.W.O.L. and wanted help applying for C.O. status. Quaker House and AWIN would continue draft counseling through the remaining years of the war.⁴²

During 1968, the American antiwar movement found itself at the mercy of national and international events. On January 30, National Liberation Front troops (NLF or "Viet Cong") launched attacks on provincial capitals and major urban areas throughout South Vietnam. In Saigon, NLF fighters blasted their way into the American Embassy compound. Americans turned on the evening news to see dead Marines on the grounds of the nation's symbol of power in Vietnam. While ultimately a military failure for the NLF, which lost almost all the ground it

⁴² Henry Bass, interviewed by author, January 8, 2012; Ferguson and Rinard, *As Way Opened*, 91-93.

had gained and so many troops it never regained its effectiveness as a fighting force, the Tet Offensive convinced many Americans that victory in Vietnam could not be achieved. In a national poll taken in February a plurality of those questioned agreed that the troop commitment to Vietnam had been a mistake.⁴³ The Tet Offensive led to major changes in the nation's Vietnam policy. Johnson's advisors convinced him that the Pentagon had no strategy for winning the war and that Americans would strongly oppose an increase in troop numbers. In response, the president refused all but a few of the new troops requested by the Pentagon, reassigned General William Westmoreland (the military's top man in Vietnam) and re-launched negotiations with North Vietnam. In a televised address to the nation at the end of the March, Johnson reviewed these changes and finished with the explosive news that he would not run for reelection. The nation had little time to assess this announcement. On April 4, an assassin's bullet struck down Martin Luther King Jr. in Memphis, leading to riots in hundreds of cities across the nation (although not in Atlanta, King's hometown). Two months later, Robert Kennedy suffered the same fate after a campaign speech in Los Angeles.

This rapid series of events forced the antiwar movement to rethink its goals. The changes announced by Johnson left many Americans with the impression that the war was now heading toward a conclusion. Antiwar advocates tried to convince the nation that the conflict was far from over but the message failed to hit home.⁴⁴ The assassinations of King and Bobby Kennedy pushed many in the New Left closer to radicalism and violence. The movement also lost potential supporters to the presidential campaign of Democrat Eugene McCarthy, who ran as the candidate for peace in Vietnam. Finally, King's assassination led many white activists to reconsider the New Left's role within the freedom struggle.

⁴³ DeBenedetti and Chatfield, *An American Ordeal*, 211.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 215.

These concerns, among others, dominated a meeting attended by mostly radical members of the Atlanta Alliance for Peace on April 6. Organized initially to plan local actions during the International Days of Protest from April 20-30, King's assassination and the national crisis that followed exacerbated strategic and ideological divisions growing within the local New Left. Debate focused initially on the mistrust of liberals who defected to the McCarthy and Kennedy campaigns. The discussion soon shifted to what the New Left needed to do following King's assassination. Tom Gardner of SSOC argued that an effort had to be made at organizing poor and working class white communities, generating support for black rebellions, and educating white Americans about the relationship between racism and imperialism. Gardner's radical position reflected the growing belief within some elements of the New Left that fundamental changes needed to be made in American society. Moving away from critiques of liberalism and ending the war in Vietnam, a growing number of New Leftists adopted the ideology that the Vietnam War existed as part of a larger policy of U.S. imperialism which could only be destroyed through a Marxist revolution likely led by black militants.⁴⁵

Attendance at antiwar rallies across the nation during the Days of Protest, while not miniscule, was noticeably smaller than in 1967. In Atlanta, several hundred people participated in a march from the Federal Building at 8th and Peachtree St. to Piedmont Park for a rally featuring Carl Oglesby, former president of SDS. While less well attended than its most recent predecessors, this march should be considered a success given the other events that pulled attention away from antiwar activism, and the fact that the Atlanta Alliance for Peace had to overcome intense differences between moderate and radical antiwar activists in planning the event.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Howard Romaine, "Peace and Freedom Now!," *Great Speckled Bird* I no. 3 (April 12, 1968), 12.

⁴⁶ *AWINews* I no. 10 (May 1968), Box 2, Richard L. Stevens Papers, MARBL.

Along with an increase in political radicalism in the movement, GIs began entering the antiwar ranks by 1968. Former enlisted men and officers who had served in the two world wars and Korea had formed the first military-based antiwar group, Veterans for Peace, in 1967. After making contact with Vets for Peace and noticing that the group did not contain veterans from the current conflict, Vietnam vet Jan Berry helped form Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW).⁴⁷ In addition to these two organizations, active duty members of the military had been working against the war by refusing to ship out to Vietnam or train servicemen heading for Vietnam as well as founding antiwar GI newspapers. GI and civilian antiwar activists founded coffeehouses near military bases where servicemen could relax away from base. The South's strong martial tradition and conservatism meant many Georgians served in Vietnam and by 1967, thousands of these southern veterans had returned home. Many used the GI Bill to enroll at colleges in the Atlanta area or had moved into the Strip. These veterans would become a mainstay in the local antiwar movement for the rest of the conflict. Jim Skillman, for example, served in an artillery company near the Cambodian border before arriving in Atlanta and enrolling at Georgia State in 1967. He quickly began speaking out against the war, addressing Atlantans for Peace during a September meeting. He would remain deeply involved in the movement over the next few years. In the spring of 1968, Denis Adelsberger took over as coordinator of AWIN following the resignation of Henry and Sue Bass. The army had discharged Adelsberger after he refused to wear his uniform while stationed at Fort Gordon, GA.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Richard R. Moser, *The New Winter Soldiers: GI and Veteran Dissent During the Vietnam Era* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 104.

⁴⁸ Paul Hemphill, "The Vietnam War Leaves a Different Scar," *Atlanta Journal*, September 15, 1967, A2; *AWINews* I no. 10 (May 1968), Box 2, Richard L. Stevens Papers, MARBL.

Antiwar veterans and GIs proved a welcome addition to the movement and became the focus of several marches and demonstrations. In October, the Atlanta Alliance for Peace sponsored a GI Day March inspired by demonstrations held a few weeks earlier in numerous cities around the nation that prominently featured active-duty servicemen and antiwar veterans.⁴⁹ On the morning of the 26th, several hundred people gathered at the Selective Service Office before marching up West Peachtree and Peachtree Streets, heading for a rally at Piedmont Park. Few active duty GIs attended the rally but several speakers at the park read telegrams from soldiers stationed at military bases in the region. A speech by Gen. Hugh Hester, a veteran of both world wars, Korea, and a founder of Veterans for Peace, served as the rally's main feature.⁵⁰ This march reflected the state of the local antiwar movement by late 1968. Most noticeably, it had clearly failed to grow in size since the success of the Hiroshima Day demonstration fourteen months earlier. The dramatic events of the first half of the year certainly played a role, as did the growing animosity of the American public towards the New Left. The violence at an SDS-led takeover of Columbia University in May and the street battles between demonstrators and Chicago police during the Democratic National Convention in August upset many Americans who might have otherwise been sympathetic to the goals of the antiwar movement.

In Atlanta, the increasingly radical positions adopted by some members of the antiwar movement had alienated older liberals and activists in moderate civil rights groups, such as the SCLC and Atlantans for Peace. While these activists remained opposed to the war they, and the groups they belonged to, played a smaller and smaller role within the movement over the next several years as it grew increasingly younger and whiter. Other groups emerged to take the place

⁴⁹ DeBenedetti and Chatfield, *An American Ordeal*, 233; Steve Wise, "GI March," *Great Speckled Bird* I no. 20 (October 28, 1968), 2.

⁵⁰ Steve Wise, "GI's March for Peace," *Great Speckled Bird* I no. 21 (November 4, 1968), 1, 3, 14; Hugh Nations, "Retired General Urges End to Vietnam War and Draft," *Atlanta Journal*, October 28, 1968, A15.

of Atlantans for Peace and the SCLC, notably the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and Young Socialist Alliance (YSA), which had played a key role in organizing the GI Day March. An increasing number of hippies from the city's countercultural district also helped swell the antiwar ranks. The choice of Piedmont Park as the venue for the GI Day rally (and a march the previous April) reinforced these changes. Earlier demonstrations had taken place in Hurt Park or Grant Park, locations situated solidly in between the African American neighborhoods of South Atlanta and the white neighborhoods north of downtown. Relocating the endpoint to Piedmont Park, only a few blocks from the city's hip district, clearly indicated the end of attempts to maintain a sustained alliance between black and white activist groups and emphasized the growing domination of young white political and cultural radicals within the movement. Over the next year, disagreements between these radicals increasingly hampered the movement's effectiveness.

The problems facing the Atlanta movement mirrored those at the national level. Numerous issues plagued antiwar groups, from bitter factional fights over ideology, an increased attraction to violent action and a good deal of paranoia and mistrust created through government infiltration and harassment. Charles Chatfield argues correctly that "the motivating rationale of the early New Left had been the dream of fusing individual alienation and collective disaffection into a political force" but "this hope had been seriously compromised in 1968 by cultural rebellion and militancy on the radical fringe and it largely dissolved during 1969-70." In more succinct terms, by the start of 1969, "the antiwar movement was mired in a slump."⁵¹

That spring, activists from across the south descended on Atlanta to begin organizing an Easter weekend march which they hoped would rejuvenate the movement. The Atlanta demonstration would be one of several slated for cities around the country. These events had been proposed during the GI-Civilian Antiwar Action Conference in Chicago the previous

⁵¹ DeBenedetti and Chatfield, *An American Ordeal*, 243; Wells, *The War Within*, 292.

December and aimed to build on the growing opposition against the war among military personnel. In Atlanta, antiwar activists agreed to combine their efforts with those of the SCLC, which was planning a series of events to commemorate the one-year anniversary of MLK's assassination.⁵² The Southern Mobilization Committee, a new group led by Tom Houck and Denis Adelsberger, attempted to recruit organizers from around the region in the hopes that they would "shape a movement around the evils of war, racism and poverty" and "build the broadest coalition of forces . . . to assure that the South will continue Dr. King's tireless work for economic and political equality."⁵³

Attendees at a February planning meeting led by the Atlanta Alliance for Peace displayed little of King's vision of understanding and cooperation as ideological differences hampered attempts to create a consensus among activists. A struggle over leadership emerged as soon as the meeting got underway. A coalition of groups that included the SCLC, AWIN and CALCAV challenged the leaders of the Alliance, the umbrella organization that oversaw plans for the April march. Houck and Henry Bass led the charge against the organization's officers and steering committee, many of whom belonged to the YSA. By 1969, many antiwar activists around the country had become deeply antagonistic to the YSA because of the group's aggressive attempts to dominate the national movement's political message.⁵⁴ CALCAV member Charles Webster complained that the Alliance had been "coopted by Trots" (short for Trotskyites, a popular slang term that referred to members of various Socialist parties), whose "politics are out to lunch." He hoped that the group would "remove the parasitic influence of YSA." YSA member Nelson Blackstock called Webster's remarks "the crassest kind of redbaiting" and argued that the lack of

⁵² DeBenedetti and Chatfield, *An American Ordeal*, 245.

⁵³ Southwide Mobilization Committee Letter, February 11, 1969, *SCLC Records* Part IV, Reel 25, Box 175.

⁵⁴ Wells, *The War Within*, 275-76.

participation by other groups had contributed to the placement of YSA members in Alliance leadership positions, not a nefarious socialist plot.⁵⁵

The focus of the march also fueled factional fighting. The SCLC and AWIN camp objected to the emphasis placed on GI participation, which YSA had stressed since the December meeting. Denis Adelsberger complained that “thousands of GIs may come to Atlanta and march, but the next day they’re back in uniform as part of the war machine. I don’t think they should be leading the march.” Instead, he argued, a greater focus should be on King and his legacy. Houck also hoped to lead the committee in this direction by proposing that African Americans should be placed on the steering committee and serve as officers. This suggestion failed, the YSA-dominated leadership remained, and participants agreed to reconvene in several weeks.⁵⁶

By the time of the next meeting problems between the YSA and other groups had been settled. Members of the SCLC, YSA and AWIN agreed on a proposed slate of events for what had become known as the “Southwide Mobilization Against the War in Vietnam and for Self Determination.” Various groups would hold separate events on April 4 and 5, with the entire coalition coming together on April 6 for a march through Atlanta, ending with a rally at Hurt Park. SSOC representatives, however, raised objections. By 1969, the group had become deeply radicalized and several key members embraced a form of communist ideology that emphasized the creation of a white student-worker alliance as the best means for social and political change. In addition, it had developed the theory of “southern distinctiveness.” Supporters of this notion saw the region and its problems as quite different from those in other parts of the country.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Bob Goodman, “March Forward 1969,” *Great Speckled Bird* I no. 34 (February 17, 1969), 2, 15.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ For a discussion of Southern distinctiveness and the internal debate over communist factionalism in SSOC see Michel, *Struggle for a Better South*, 190-214.

These problems, therefore, required southern solutions. These two issues formed the focus on SSOC's criticism of the April march. Group members argued that the march should be subordinated to the larger issue of building a radical movement in the south and that its focus did not represent the interests of its student-worker constituency. SSOC proposed a more "Southern-flavored" march for Saturday, April 5 that would pass by a statue of New South booster Henry Grady and end with a rally at the statue of radical southern Populist Tom Watson on the grounds of the state capitol. The proposal garnered vicious opposition. One participant called SSOC "Klan racists." After several hours of debate attendees rejected the SSOC march and reached agreement on the initial joint proposal offered at the beginning of the meeting.⁵⁸

Despite these factional struggles, the Southwide Mobilization became the city's largest antiwar demonstration to date. Approximately three thousand marchers, about one quarter of them African American, snaked their way through downtown Atlanta. The pleasant weather certainly increased participation. Upon arriving at Hurt Park, demonstrators listened to speakers that represented the broad coalition of groups involved in the march, including pacifists Jeannette Rankin and Dave Dellinger, J.T. Bears (a member of Clemson University's Black Power student group), and civil rights leaders Andrew Young and Dr. Ralph Abernathy of the SCLC.

The success of the April protests reinvigorated the antiwar movement. Nationally, two new groups emerged to capitalize on the success. The New Mobilization Committee (New Mobe) replaced the original organization, which had fallen apart due to factional in-fighting the previous year, and the Vietnam Moratorium Committee (VMC), formed by two liberals who had participated in Vietnam Summer, worked for Eugene McCarthy's campaign in 1968, and hoped to create an entirely new type of protest. Both groups began making plans for massive antiwar demonstrations in the fall. In Atlanta, a new city-wide Student Mobilization Committee formed

⁵⁸ Bob Goodman, "We Gather Together to Gather Our Plans," *Great Speckled Bird* I no. 35 (February 24, 1969), 3.

with a focus on organizing local high school and college students against the war. The Atlanta Mobilization Committee, which had coalesced to help organize the Southwide Mobilization, maintained its existence and, along with a newly formed local VMC chapter, planned local events for November.

Changes within the broader New Left had an important impact on the local antiwar movement through the spring and into the summer. In June, SDS destroyed itself as a national organization. Ideological divisions had created bitter in-fighting over the previous year, culminating in attempts by the Maoist Progressive Labor Party to take over leadership of the organization at the national convention in Chicago. The meeting devolved into chaos as various factions made competing claims on the mantle of leadership. In the end, SDS ceased to exist as a unified organization. Before destroying itself, though, SDS members helped pull apart SSOC which, wracked by internal disagreements, voted itself out of existence on June 8. Remnants of SSOC and SDS coalesced into the Revolutionary Youth Movement II (RYM II) during the summer of 1969. Far smaller and not nearly as media-worthy as the Weatherman, the other major faction that emerged out of the implosion of SDS, RYM II nonetheless “took seriously the notion of immersing itself in the working class” and pushed the antiwar movement to more fully embrace an anti-imperialist ideology.⁵⁹ Several key SDS and SSOC people emerged as RYM II leaders, including former SDS National Secretary Mike Klonsky, and SSOC members Lyn Wells and David Simpson. In addition, Atlanta served as the organization’s headquarters, although it seemed this meant little beyond setting up a post office box.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Max Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals Turn to Lenin, Mao and Che* (New York: Verso, 2002), 72.

⁶⁰ Airtel from Director, FBI to SAC Atlanta, January 14, 1970, *FBI File on Students for a Democratic Society and the Weatherman Underground Organization* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1991), Roll 6, 0690-0776. Hereafter referred to as *FBI File on SDS/WUO*.

The increased presence of committed communist revolutionaries in the local antiwar movement exacerbated existing ideological differences. Planning sessions for a Nagasaki Day demonstration in August witnessed intense debate over the protest's message. AWIN argued for a limited message based on the immorality of nuclear warfare while YSA members wanted a more direct political statement about the Vietnam War that could attract a broad spectrum of demonstrators. The Atlanta Revolutionary Youth Movement (ARYM), however, lobbied for an anti-imperialist message and objected to a reading of the Georgia war dead during the event, since it favored American casualties but ignored the Vietnamese. The coalition managed to overcome these disagreements and settled on a march to be held on August 9 while individual groups planned their own actions for other days that week.⁶¹

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) contributed to the divisions within the local antiwar movement. Since the 1950s the bureau had operated a counterintelligence program against political radicals. The program, commonly known as COINTELPRO, targeted some right-wing extremist groups, such as the Ku Klux Klan, but focused most of its efforts in the 1960s on civil rights and New Left groups. In addition to collecting information through informants in the movement or the placement of undercover agents in leftist organizations, the COINTELPRO also employed various strategies to exploit divisions and create discord and disruption within these groups. Even though its existence remained hidden from the public until the 1970s, COINTELPRO had little success in crippling the New Left (the purpose of the program), largely because movement members became adept at identifying informers, instigators, and undercover agents. However, COINTELPRO contributed to the repression New

⁶¹ Jeff Berchenko, "Hiroshima Nagasaki," *The Great Speckled Bird* II no. 19 (July 21, 1969), 3.

Leftists faced in the 1960s and “fostered a paranoia that something *organized* was behind the scenes, pulling strings and always watching.”⁶²

The FBI’s Atlanta office had been watching the hip community in Atlanta since at least 1968. That year a contact informed the Special Agent in Charge (SAC) of the local office about the “increased Trotskyite influence in the local peace movement” and that the Atlanta Alliance for Peace “is increasingly coming under the influence of the YSA.”⁶³ In response to concerns over YSA and other New Left activity in Georgia, the Atlanta office began developing “a highly placed individual in the New Left as a security informant.” In early 1969, the FBI received information from several informants that YSA members had been using duplication equipment at their place of employment to print off organizational materials. The Atlanta office received permission from bureau headquarters to send an anonymous letter to the employer about this activity. The Atlanta office later reported that the letter had resulted in a review of the two employee’s records and might have led to their dismissal if both had not resigned prior to being fired.⁶⁴

Two demonstrations held that August revealed the growing attraction of direct confrontational tactics to members in the local movement. The Nagasaki Day march failed to generate significant interest among antiwar supporters. No more than a few hundred people participated or sat through its diverse slate of speakers. Pacifist Charles Webster called for “brotherhood, humanity, peace, soul power and nonviolence,” while Bill Ayers, a member of the

⁶² David Cunningham, *There’s Something Happening Here: The New Left, the Klan, and FBI Counterintelligence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 180.

⁶³ Airtel from SAC Atlanta to Director, FBI, October 14, 1968, Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts, Subject: (COINTELPRO) New Left, Atlanta Division, 100-449698-2, available online at: <http://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro/new-left/cointel-pro-new-left-atlanta-part-01-of-01/view>

⁶⁴ Airtel from SAC Atlanta to Director, FBI, October 9, 1968, Airtel from SAC Atlanta to Director, FBI, 22 January 1969; Airtel from SAC Atlanta to Director, FBI, May 22, 1969, Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts, Subject: (COINTELPRO) New Left, Atlanta Division, 100-449698-2: available online at: <http://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro/new-left/cointel-pro-new-left-atlanta-part-01-of-01/view>

Weathermen, attempted to spread the group's anti-imperialist message and drum up support for its plans to "Bring the War Home" during the Days of Rage protest in Chicago that October.⁶⁵ For many within the movement the days of non-confrontation and peaceful marches focused solely on ending the Vietnam War seemed over by the summer of 1969. In its place local activists substituted direct action against the American imperialist "war machine," an alignment of political, educational and business interests that benefitted from the exploitation of third world populations. Three days before the Nagasaki Day march, AYRM sponsored a demonstration outside a meeting of Standard Oil's regional directors. Chanting "Power to the People!" and "Smash Standard Oil," approximately fifty protestors rallied outside the building while about a dozen spoke with police and Standard Oil employees in the lobby, who blocked access to the meeting on the eighteenth floor. Eventually, two activists sneaked up the stairwell and managed to meet with company executives for fifteen minutes before being escorted out of the building by security officers. While certainly smaller than other demonstrations, it represented the new turn towards an anti-imperialist message and increasingly confrontational tactics.⁶⁶

The local FBI office took a great interest in the activities of RYM II and ARYM. Informants at the group's first national conference, held in Atlanta during November 1969, filed numerous reports on the proceedings. That winter, in a message to numerous local FBI offices, director J. Edgar Hoover stressed that "concentrated efforts must be made by Atlanta to place informants on a national level in RYM" since the city served as the group's headquarters. The message revealed Hoover's frustration over a lack of information regarding the organization.

⁶⁵ Bob Goodman, "Nagasaki Day," *Great Speckled Bird* II no. 23 (August 18, 1969), 6.

⁶⁶ Tom Coffin, "Smash Standard Oil!" *Great Speckled Bird* II no. 23 (August 18, 1969), 2, 3.

“The field cannot sit back and let this organization develop without penetrating its inner core,” Hoover urged.⁶⁷

Disagreements regarding which of the large national demonstrations to support that fall consumed meetings of the antiwar coalition during September. Four major actions had been planned. The Vietnam Moratorium Committee had scheduled a nation-wide demonstration for October 15. The Weatherman and RYM II planned various events in Chicago on October 8-10. In Washington D.C. that November, Quaker groups organized a “March Against Death” on the 14th and the New Mobilization Committee planned a large demonstration on the 15th. In Atlanta, the antiwar coalition struggled to reach agreement on which events to support. Ideological factionalism drove the debate. AYRM opposed the Moratorium since liberals who believed in “anticommunism” supported the event. According to Lyn Wells, “those who do not struggle for self-determination act in the interest of the ruling class.” She went on to argue that “the united front coalition must uphold the right of all people . . . to organize themselves into disciplined Marxist-Leninist collectives.” ARYM could also not support the March Against Death because of its favoring of American over Vietnamese dead. Linda Jenness of the SWP countered these arguments, noting that anticommunist liberals had always been part of leftist coalitions and had played an important part in the antiwar movement. The debate continued during the next meeting of the coalition when Jenness took issue with SDS’s Chicago demonstrations. She argued that while the group advertised the event as peaceful, it actually wanted a direct and

⁶⁷ Memorandum from C.D. Brennan to W.C. Sullivan, December 16, 1969, *FBI File on SDS/WUO*, Roll 6, 0623-0689; Airtel from Director, FBI to SAC Atlanta, January 14, 1970, *FBI File on SDS/WUO*, Roll 6, 0690-0776.

violent confrontation with the police.⁶⁸ In the end, the coalition agreed to support only one event, the November 15 march sponsored by the New Mobe.⁶⁹

The growing factional divisions played themselves out in the streets of Atlanta during October and November. The Moratorium proved a monumental success as people in towns and cities around the country came out to show support for those who had died in Vietnam. Colleges around Atlanta held a variety of events. Spelman College closed for the day, eight hundred students at all-female Agnes Scott College attended a morning symposium on the war and four hundred students at Georgia Tech attended a rally with speakers and a rock band. That evening the largest antiwar demonstration of the era occurred when 4,500 to 5,000 demonstrators participated in a candlelight march from West Hunter Street Baptist Church to City Hall. The city-wide march had been organized only a week earlier, after the national VMC requested something happen in Atlanta besides campus events. The slate of speakers reflected the recent addition of the rally. It featured no prominent national names or celebrities except several well known local activists, such as the SCLC's Hosea Williams, and a few campus leaders. The success of the Moratorium led the VMC to call for a second demonstration on November 13 that would coincide with the other protests taking place that month. Locally, it provided a needed boost to activists, particularly those aligned with the liberal part of the movement, who began quickly making plans for local events in November as well as organizing transportation to Washington D.C. for the march on the 15th.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Jenness's assessment proved quite accurate. Demonstrators in Chicago rampaged through the streets smashing car windshields with a variety of weapons and fought with local police. See Gitlin, *The Sixties*, 393-394.

⁶⁹ Steve Wise, "Atlanta's Own Antiwar Coalition," *Great Speckled Bird* II no. 25 (September 1, 1969), 15; "This Article is Biased," *Great Speckled Bird* II no. 28 (September 22, 1969), 18-19.

⁷⁰ Larry Woods, "Peace Power Paraded Here," *Atlanta Journal*, October 16, 1969, A1, A6; Steve Wise, "One Week Late," *Great Speckled Bird* II no. 34 (November 3, 1969), 6.

AYRM held a demonstration a few weeks before the Moratorium based on its own anti-imperialist agenda. On October 3, approximately two dozen members of the group protested outside the Marriott Motor Inn during a dinner honoring David Rockefeller, chairman of Chase Manhattan Bank. For an hour and half protestors picketed on the sidewalk and shouted slogans such as “Soooooeee! Rockefeller! Off the Pig!” The marchers then took up positions by the front doors of the building and continued to chant “Pig! Pig! Pig!” as Atlanta Mayor Ivan Allen arrived. At the request of the police the protestors returned to the sidewalk. Soon after, the protestors made a second move towards the building. This time they encountered police with drawn weapons, who handcuffed fourteen demonstrators. Following the arrests *Great Speckled Bird* reporter Jim Gwin explained the group’s actions, noting that members of the Rockefeller family participated in shaping Vietnam policy during the Kennedy Administration and was deeply involved in the Middle East. Gwin called for the entire antiwar movement regardless of political belief to support those arrested, arguing that “it is the time to organize to meet political repression head on and to build an anti-imperialist movement.”⁷¹

The November events proved less successful on the local level but national demonstrations lifted the spirits of antiwar supporters. Inclement weather largely hampered Moratorium and Mobilization events in Atlanta and attendance at symposiums and lectures on the city’s campuses did not match those from the October Moratorium. In addition, several busloads of demonstrators left Atlanta for Washington D.C. to attend the New Mobe demonstration scheduled for the 15th, dividing the efforts and attention of activists. In the nation’s capitol Americans revealed their surging desire to see the war end. The Quaker-sponsored March Against Death brought a good deal of solemnity to the weekend, as thousands

⁷¹ Tom Coffin, “Theatre at the Marriott,” Jim Gwin, “Why,” *Great Speckled Bird* II no. 31 (October 13, 1969), 2, 3, 19.

of people, each carrying a candle and a placard with the name of a dead GI, walked from Arlington National Cemetery to the White House. They then blew out the candle and placed the placards in coffins. The procession lasted for thirty-six hours. On Saturday, approximately half a million people gathered on the Mall by the Washington Monument. Following speeches by Coretta Scott King and Senator Eugene McCarthy the mass of people sang a ten minute version of John Lennon's "Give Peace a Chance."⁷²

Reporting for the *Great Speckled Bird*, Steve Wise seemed impressed and slightly overcome by the size of the demonstration and the positive energy on display. After witnessing several months of sectarian squabbling in local antiwar circles, Wise noted that the event succeeded due to the efforts of antiwar liberals from the VMC and New Mobe, who assumed leadership of the antiwar movement following the collapse of SDS. Wise also identified several key changes in antiwar organizations. While a majority of Americans now supported an end to the war, they had also grown frustrated with the movement itself. What began as a multi-generational movement that possessed a strong bi-racial component had become dominated by white youths by 1969. The violence and radicalism of the previous eighteen months had taken its toll as average Americans looked with distaste on a movement that fought street battles with the police, openly called for revolution and fervently supported the North Vietnamese government. In Washington, Wise noted that the large crowd contained proportionally few adults. The inclusion of the counterculture in the antiwar movement also grabbed his attention. Recalling how political activists just a few years earlier theorized that hippies might be "a CIA plot to divert the attention of young people from social problems," he pointed out their growing numbers at the march and in the movement.⁷³ In Atlanta, the antiwar movement would address

⁷² DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal*, 261-263.

⁷³ Steve Wise, "The Big Ooze," *Great Speckled Bird* II no. 37 (November 24, 1969), 2-3.

all these issues. Over the next several years, local activists witnessed a melding of politics and culture and worked to tamp down ideological differences, while also encouraging new people to help fight against a seemingly endless war.

Coming Together, Moving Apart, Wrapping it Up and Marching On

The Atlanta antiwar movement spent the first months of 1970 assessing the present and contemplating the future. While the success of the New Mobe march the previous November held out hope that a large and unified antiwar coalition could still exist, it appeared clear just a few months later that the moment for such an event had quickly passed. Antiwar liberals began abandoning the movement, looking towards the Democratic Party and Congress for a resolution to the war. Hopes for the movement rested with the radical Left but the splintering of SDS and the dogmatic factions it created would hamper the ability to create a unified front against the war. From 1970 to 1973 a series of groups attempted to grab and hold on to the reins of national leadership but largely failed to bring the various elements in the New Left together. By the early 1970s the expansion of the New Left only made this process more difficult. In the immediate aftermath of the SDS collapse the role of imperialism became only one of several major points of contention among activists. Countless discussions within antiwar groups now focused on how to address issues race, gender and sexuality identity. Events in Atlanta would mirror those at the national level as local activists attempted new ways of building consensus only to see political factionalism dominate the movement by the war's end.

Two factions with competing agendas dominated the Atlanta antiwar community during the early 1970s. The Trotskyites (the SMC, YSA, and SWP) made up the first group. It favored a single issue message—end the war now—and large scale demonstrations coordinated closely

with national organizations. AWIN aligned itself with this faction during planning meetings of the Atlanta Mobe, the only remaining city-wide coalition of antiwar groups (the Atlanta Alliance for Peace had been subsumed by the Atlanta Mobe and officially ceased to exist by the start of 1970). ARYM and other radicals, many of them former SSOC and SDS members, comprised the second faction. Drawing on the success of the civil rights movement before 1965, which several of these radicals had participated in, this faction increasingly stressed the importance of community organizing to building a strong local movement. In addition, this group favored a broader message based on anti-imperialism and tying together the war, feminism and Black Power.

The FBI COINTELPRO attempted to exploit these ideological disagreements. In February 1970, the Atlanta office sent a letter to a local RYM leader. Signed “A Friend,” it hoped to exacerbate any bad feelings in the local antiwar coalition. “How can you RYM people be so naïve and gullible as to continue to let the Trots run the whole show,” the letter began. Playing to the recipient’s sense of importance, ‘A Friend’ went on to claim that the socialists worked diligently to ensure their viewpoints dominated local antiwar conferences while “being gracious enough to throw you a few scraps to keep you happy.” In April, the Atlanta office reported that the letter had not produced the desired effect and the two factions had overcome their differences.⁷⁴

This assessment proved accurate and during the spring of 1970 activists put disagreements aside as events encouraged working across ideological, strategic and racial boundaries. In February, over 1,000 demonstrators gathered on the sidewalks outside the

⁷⁴ Memorandum from SAC Atlanta to Director, FBI, January 21, 1970; Memorandum from SAC Atlanta to Director, FBI, April 23, 1970, Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts, Subject: (COINTELPRO) New Left, Atlanta Division, 100-449698-2: available online at: <http://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro/new-left/cointel-pro-new-left-atlanta-part-01-of-01/view>

Marriott Motor Hotel during a visit by Vice-president Spiro Agnew. In addition to local and college-based groups, representatives from the High School Mobe picketed, as did the feminist movement. In addition, the event's planners organized transportation to bring in hips from the Strip to swell the ranks. Placards displayed slogans such as "Drop Acid, Not Bombs" and "Pig Agnew—Enemy of the People."⁷⁵

In April, news that Nixon had authorized a bombing campaign against Laos triggered protests around the nation as it appeared to many people that the president planned to escalate the war. The Atlanta Mobe hoped to hold a march on the 18th but it touched off an intense debate among local activists. Radicals at the planning sessions attempted to make anti-imperialism the focus of the demonstration but were outvoted by the coalition of socialist groups which argued that "the best way to build a movement against the escalation of American counterinsurgency in Southeast Asia . . . was to continue to build a broad movement against imperialism's most blatant example of counterinsurgency: the war against the Vietnamese people." The suppression of anti-imperialist sentiment led to a bitter public debate between the local movement's two factions in the pages of the *Great Speckled Bird* but did not derail the march, which proved to be one of the most storied in the movement's history.⁷⁶

During the early afternoon of April 18, approximately four hundred demonstrators marched out of Piedmont Park and proceeded south on Peachtree Street, headed towards downtown. The decision to use Peachtree violated the permit approved by the city, which wanted the march to go down Juniper St., a few blocks to the east. Officials hoped to avoid

⁷⁵ David Massey, "Protest of War Greets Agnew Here," *Atlanta Journal*, February 22, 1970, A3; Barbara Joye, "Fuck You, Agnew," *Great Speckled Bird* III no. 9 (March 2, 1970), 2-3.

⁷⁶ Jim Gwin, "End the Racist War in Vietnam," *Great Speckled Bird* III no. 10 (March 9, 1970), 6; Barbara Joye, "One Way Street," *Great Speckled Bird* III no. 11 (March 16, 1970), 5; "The Antiwar Movement: Beyond Bodycount," *Great Speckled Bird* III no. 13 (March 30, 1970), 8, 22-23; Ginny Osteen, "No Resurrection," *Great Speckled Bird* III no. 14 (April 2, 1970), 16-17; Ed Clark, "SDS Responds to YSA& SMC," *Great Speckled Bird* III no. 16 (April 20, 1970), 18-19. In interviews with the author Atlanta antiwar activists repeatedly mentioned the April 1970 march as a highlight of the local movement.

having the antiwar demonstration run into another protest taking place downtown at the same time. Leaders of a lengthy and bitter strike by workers in the predominantly black sanitation department had organized a protest that morning. Seeing an opportunity to support the working class and black communities, antiwar leaders negotiated with the organizers of the strike to have the two events meet in downtown. Hearing the news that the antiwar march was on its way, many of the sanitation workers sat down in the middle of Peachtree Street to wait. When the antiwar demonstrators arrived the two groups fused and proceeded to move around downtown for several hours, shouting slogans such as “Rich Man’s War, Poor Man’s Fight.” *Bird* writer and activist Barbara Joye recalled that people on both sides were nervous about what might happen by bringing these two groups together but when they finally met “people practically flew into each other’s arms.”⁷⁷ At the time she expressed her hope that this march had “strengthened the city workers and laid the groundwork for future coalitions and new strategies for the Left in Atlanta.”⁷⁸ This proved not to be the case. The strike eventually failed, the antiwar movement did not expand because of this unique event, and a new bi-racial alliance did not develop. But, these issues fell to the wayside as Atlanta activists soon had to create a response to some of the most tragic events of the era.

On April 30, President Nixon went on television to announce that U.S. ground troops had invaded Cambodia, Vietnam’s neighbor to the west, in hopes of finding and destroying a major enemy military facility. The announcement sparked hundreds of protests, mostly on college campuses. On May 4 at Kent State University in Ohio, events turned deadly when National Guard troops sent to break up a demonstration fired at the students, killing four of them. The nation erupted. Millions of students went on strike, eventually leading several colleges to cancel

⁷⁷Barbara Joye, interviewed by author, October 2, 2008.

⁷⁸Barbara Joye, “Rich Man’s War, Poor Man’s Fight,” *Great Speckled Bird* III no. 17 (April 27, 1970), 2-3.

classes for the rest of the semester. Widespread protests occurred on campuses across Georgia, leading to the closure of the entire University System for two days. In Atlanta, in addition to numerous campus protests, 5,000 demonstrators marched to the capitol on May 9.⁷⁹

Later that month, the antiwar community participated in the March Against Repression. Responding to the violence of recent weeks, which included the Kent State deaths and the murders of two black students at Jackson State University in Mississippi and six African Americans in Augusta, GA by police, the SCLC organized a five day procession of a few hundred people from Perry, GA to Atlanta. On May 23, a massive march attended by 10,000 people absorbed the procession arriving from Perry. The event ended with a mass meeting at Morehouse College, where participants listened to speeches by Coretta Scott King, Ralph Abernathy and George McGovern.⁸⁰

These successful and well-attended events proved to be the last sustained period of success for the local antiwar movement. In August, fewer than two hundred people participated in the yearly Hiroshima Day march and between two and three hundred appeared in a local march on October 31 as part of a national antiwar demonstration. Marches around the nation that Halloween witnessed noticeably smaller crowds than had taken to the streets after Kent State. By the start of 1971 the national antiwar movement entered its final phase as old groups died and new ones took their place. With a few exceptions, the movement failed to keep the nation's attention on the war as Nixon continued to bring troops home and the conflict slowly dragged on to its conclusion.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Bill Montgomery and Lorraine M. Bennett, "5,000 March Here in Protest for Peace," *Atlanta Journal*, May 10, 1970, A1.

⁸⁰ Thomas A. Johnson, "5-Day March in Georgia Ends with Massive Rally," *New York Times*, May 24, 1970, 1.

⁸¹ Coffin, "Few Remember the Day," 2-3; Richard B. Matthews, "200 March Here in Protest of War," *Atlanta Journal*, November 1, 1970, A1; Jack White, "Mobe March," *Great Speckled Bird* III no. 45 (November 9, 1970), 9-18.

Local activists frustrated with an endless series of traditional marches that drew fewer and fewer people tried a new approach in the first months of 1971. The Atlanta Mobilization, reflecting the rise and fall of national antiwar organizations, changed its name to the Atlanta Political Action Committee (APAC) signaling its affiliation with the National Political Action Committee (NPAC), which had grown out of the collapse of the New Mobe. Socialists still dominated NPAC and APAC, which created tension at the first meeting of local groups to plan events for a spring action. APAC immediately called for a march and rally focused on the single issue of immediate U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam. The proposal met with opposition from a variety of other groups who expressed frustration at another attempt at the same old thing. No agreement could be reached but over the next several meetings a plan emerged that focused on a two day festival as the center of the spring action.

Known as the “People’s Fair,” it reflected the frustration of local activists with tired strategies but also revealed fundamental changes within the New Left and the interconnectedness of the local hip community. By 1970 the political and cultural Left had effectively merged. While the counterculture had abandoned its early utopianism and recognized the need for political activism, a more important change resided in how the political Left came to view the role of culture in their efforts at altering American life. Moving beyond political forms, the New Left saw politics in every aspect of life by the end of the 1960s. This belief manifested itself in the well-known phrase “the personal is political,” which identity politics movements such as gay liberation and radical feminism embraced. But, it also meant that the New Left saw the political potential in art, theatre, music and literature. Denis Adelsberger, a key organizer of the People’s Fair, explored these ideas in his explanation of what the event aimed to accomplish. “The People’s Fair is an attempt to show what the radical/freak/antiwar movement is about,” he stated,

“we express ourselves in the form of theater, protest, art, education, lifestyle . . . we look for a lifestyle to express our ideals and goals instead of relying on slogans and symbols, and why a revolution is lived, not just fought for or preached.”⁸²

Atlanta’s hip community embraced the event and made it a huge success. Numerous organizations in the Strip set up information booths, local coops provided food, various theatre groups put on performances, and discussion groups dealt with such diverse topics as yoga, gay liberation, high school organizing and ecology. Fair organizers did not forget the war. A rally on Saturday afternoon lasted for several hours and featured well-known speakers, including Andrew Young and national antiwar activist Rennie Davis. The weather proved pleasant on both days, drawing in thousands to Piedmont Park.⁸³

The success of the event led to People’s Fair II in August. While a march to commemorate Hiroshima Day played a part in the three day event, the second fair focused more on cultural elements within the hip community; craft booths and activities dominated the weekend’s activities.⁸⁴ While the People’s Fairs proved a successful combination of politics and culture, the idea came too late to serve a purpose beyond 1971. The hip community, especially the Strip, had entered into its decline. As hips spread throughout the city it would become more difficult to easily attract them to events in Midtown. As a result the brief but intentional marriage of cultural and political activism ended soon after People’s Fair II.

The antiwar movement itself became largely dormant during the fall of 1971 and early months of 1972, moving into action only after Nixon announced the mining of Haiphong Harbor in May. The bi-racial coalition of liberals, pacifists and radicals that had built the local

⁸² Denis Adelsberger, “People’s Fair,” *Great Speckled Bird* IV no. 11 (March 15, 1971), 5.

⁸³ “Come to the Fair!,” *Great Speckled Bird* IV no. 14 (April 5, 1971), 12-13; Tom Coffin, “Peoples Fair—In Retrospect,” *Great Speckled Bird* IV no. 15 (April 12, 1971), 13.

⁸⁴ “People’s Fair II,” *Great Speckled Bird* IV no. 33 (August 15, 1971), 7.

movement had long passed from the scene. Instead, a small contingent of young white radicals attempted to rebuild some semblance of a united front against the war through the creation of a new antiwar coalition. The groups present at the organization's first meeting reflected how far the movement had travelled in seven years. Various socialist groups sent representatives under the APAC banner, while unaffiliated radicals and members of several communist groups such as the Georgia Communist League (Marxist-Leninist) and SDS/Progressive Labor coalesced into a second faction. Neither the Quakers nor the SCLC participated. APAC dominated this meeting as well as a gathering of the new coalition's steering committee the next evening. Tensions between the two camps ran high although the more organized APAC contingent, having already made plans for a demonstration on May 13, clearly had the advantage over the loosely connected radical faction. As a result, the demonstration proceeded smoothly and successfully. Despite a steady rainfall, between three and four hundred marchers moved down Peachtree Street to a rally in Plaza Park. One observer noted the presence of people who had not attended an antiwar event in several years.⁸⁵ Within a few weeks, however, the coalition would fall apart as partisan political fighting moved to the forefront.

By the end of May the radical faction had formally organized itself into a new group, the Atlanta Coordinating Committee (ACC). As before, disagreements centered on the refusal of APAC to embrace a strategy built around anti-imperialism. To the anti-imperialists in the ACC, APAC and other socialist groups failed to understand the nature of international politics. By attempting to create a broad front around the single issue of ending the Vietnam War, socialists not only failed to consider the conflict as part of a larger problem but aligned themselves with liberals, who encouraged the nation's imperialist agenda. By 1972 the growing sentiment against the war had worked its way into the halls of Congress, leading to support among some

⁸⁵ Anne Jenkins, "New Coalition," *The Great Speckled Bird* V no. 20 (May 22, 1972), 2-3.

antiwar groups for candidates that worked towards ending the conflict. Radicals saw this as dancing with the devil. Liberals within the system, even if they opposed Vietnam, supported a capitalistic system which would create new conflicts in other parts of the globe. Ending this process required radicals to educate Americans and spread the message of anti-imperialism. In Atlanta, supporters of anti-imperialism had always been a minority within anti-war coalitions, forcing them to bend to the will of the more specifically antiwar majority. By 1972, however, enough of the latter had left the movement that radicals became an equal voice within the new coalition. But, rather than confront APAC, these radicals simply went their own way, splintering an already diminished movement.

The existence of two separate antiwar organizations failed to generate new support for the local movement but did make antiwar activity a more pleasant experience. Freed from the bitter debates over ideology that had dominated coalition meetings since 1969, the two groups largely agreed to disagree on politics while managing to co-sponsor several events between May and the end of the war in January 1973. In June, the two groups developed several events in anticipation of a visit to Atlanta by Nixon. On Sunday June 18, the ACC held an antiwar picnic while APAC pulled together a march and rally outside the Civic Center the following day. Nixon failed to attend, sending Spiro Agnew in his place, but did make an appearance in Atlanta in October, leading to another demonstration by the two groups.⁸⁶

Dividing the movement did negatively impact any potential success it might have had during the last months of the war. Following his re-election in November, Nixon attempted to force concessions out of North Vietnam at the negotiating table by launching a massive bombing campaign that culminated with the “Christmas Bombings” in December, “the most concentrated

⁸⁶ Anne Jenkins, “U.S. Out of Vietnam,” Tom Coffin, “Nixon Out of Atlanta,” *Great Speckled Bird* V no. 25 (June 26, 1972), 2-3; Teddi Lane, “Anti War,” *Great Speckled Bird* V no. 42 (October 23, 1972), 2.

aerial bombardment of the war.”⁸⁷ In response, APAC and the ACC co-sponsored an antiwar march and rally in downtown Atlanta on November 18. While several hundred people attended, it lacked the energy and focus to previous events. This may have simply been due to the fact that the war was very close to a resolution, but one participant placed the blame on APAC. Anne Jenkins, a radical supporter of the ACC, argued that the “most glaring deficiency of this demonstration was its base in the past and its inability to broaden into new issues.” For Jenkins, “our reasons for still being in the streets should be to protest the racist and imperialist policies which led to aggression in places like Vietnam.”⁸⁸

Finally, in January, the groups planned separate events during Nixon’s inauguration. Holding firm to its belief in mass action, APAC organized several busloads of protestors for a trip to Washington as part of a large national demonstration. In Atlanta, the ACC, which had recently changed its name to the Atlanta Anti-Imperialist Committee (AAIC), organized an event based firmly around anti-imperialism and support for radical black and working class groups. Seven days later, direct U.S. military involvement in the war ended with the signing of the Paris Peace Accords.

While the war and activism against it would not stop until the fall of Saigon in April 1975, the peace settlement signaled the end of direct American involvement and, with it, the Atlanta antiwar movement. What had begun modestly in the fall of 1965 had become an important component in the city’s hip community by the end of the decade. The transition of the civil rights movement out of the South after 1965 played a key role in refocusing the attention of southern progressives on Vietnam but the possibility of a strong, sustained alliance between

⁸⁷ DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal*, 343.

⁸⁸ Antioch Annie, “APAC-ACC Rally,” *Great Speckled Bird* V no. 47 (January 31, 1972), 5.

white and black activists, which seemed possible well into the middle of 1967, collapsed with the rise of Black Power and the increasingly more radical positions adopted by the white New Left. By the last years of the war a diminished movement of activists clashing over competing leftist ideologies and tactics doomed any chances of keeping large numbers of people interested in fighting against the conflict. In Atlanta, though, the antiwar movement was not the only organization that drew a diverse set of people together. Starting in 1968 and continuing into the middle of the 1970s, the underground newspaper the *Great Speckled Bird* served as the center of Atlanta's hip community.

CHAPTER 5

“BITCH AND BADGER, CARP AND CRY”: THE *GREAT SPECKLED BIRD* AND ATLANTA’S HIP COMMUNITY

*“Your newspapers, they just put you on
They never tell you the whole story
They just put your young ideas down”*

[“What About Me,”](#) Quicksilver Messenger Service

By 1969 people had grown accustomed to the confrontational content of the *Great Speckled Bird*, Atlanta’s underground newspaper. Founded the previous year *The Bird*, as it was more commonly known, attracted both fervent defenders and rabid detractors through its commitment to radical left-wing politics, strong anti-racist positions and frequent challenges to social norms through the use of profanity, nude photography and references to illegal drug use. But, its May 26 issue generated a fresh wave of outrage by pushing the boundaries of acceptable journalism further than it ever had before. On the cover, “Trashman,” a creation of underground “comix” artist Spain Rodriguez, stood in front of a Coca Cola sign, holding a machine gun. Addressing an unknown assailant, Trashman brashly stated “C’mon and Get it Mother Fucker.” The use of profanity on the cover and the attack on an Atlanta business icon generated numerous problems for the newspaper, including the arrest of several staff members and *Bird* street sellers. By the spring of 1969, however, this had become routine. Local officials had been harassing the staff and sellers of the *Bird* almost since its first issue. One more arrest or lawsuit did little to deter people who had been fighting for civil rights and against the Vietnam War for years in one of the nation’s most conservative regions.

By the time the “Trashman” cover appeared, the *Great Speckled Bird* had come to serve an indispensable role in the hip community, ensuring that the paper survived any crisis. Founded by veterans of the civil rights and antiwar movements and staffed by political and cultural radicals, the paper had become the voice of the local New Left and counterculture. During its eight year existence, the *Bird* helped organize protests, provided income for penniless hips, confronted the city’s political and business leadership, and defended a community under constant assault by local politicians and law enforcement. While Atlanta’s antiwar movement had brought together black and white, radical and liberal, and young and old in shared opposition to the nation’s Vietnam policy, the *Bird* helped further develop the city’s hip community by providing a forum for its most committed members while also publishing serious investigative reporting that continuously criticized local leaders. For several years during the height of the hip community, almost nothing happened that the *Bird* did not organize, publicize, or analyze. But even as it worked hard to sustain and protect this community, the political radicalism of its staff proved its eventual undoing. By the mid-1970s the *Bird* staff remained committed socialists. Following the demise of the Strip a few years earlier, the paper spent the rest of its existence engaged in a constant struggle to acquire revenue and retain a readership that had largely abandoned political activism. By the middle of the decade, the *Bird* lost this struggle and fell to earth.

Underground Newspapers and the Founding of the *Great Speckled Bird*

Underground newspapers emerged in the mid-1960s as a forum for radical politics and the counterculture, issues that daily newspapers and news magazines either ignored, down-

played or heavily criticized.¹ Not surprisingly, the earliest underground papers developed in urban centers that possessed hip districts full of political radicals and artists that existed on the fringes of American society. In 1964, Art Kunkin founded the *Los Angeles Free Press*, considered the first Sixties era underground newspaper.² The following year, the *Berkeley Barb* and New York's *East Village Other (EVO)* began publication. Mid-size cities that hosted large state universities also possessed underground newspapers, such as *The Rag* in Austin and Michigan State University's *The Paper*. As the New Left and counterculture grew over the next several years, underground newspapers proliferated. By the early 1970s, hundreds of papers were being published across the nation.

The rapid spread of the underground press led to a wide variety in the quality of content and presentation. Many existed as little more than mimeographed pages handed out for free or sold for a few cents on college campuses and street corners in areas populated by hippies. Staffed with activists who had little or no journalistic and publishing experience, most underground papers had short life spans. While this lack of experience negatively impacted many publications, it also encouraged staffs to experiment with graphics, layout and content. Visually stunning, the best underground papers became works of art as well as an informational source about events not covered in daily papers. However, the stories printed in underground newspapers often proved far from reliable. Underground journalists made no pretense towards objectivity. To them the quest for fair and balanced reporting had led the mainstream media into

¹ The terms “underground press” and “underground newspaper” have always caused problems for both former writers and analysts of the medium. The newspapers of the sixties did not operate underground in any real sense of the word. Terms such as “alternative press” or “opposition press” better described them. According to Robert Glessing, the term “underground” came from “the rush of anti-establishment newspapers in the early 1960s when most underground papers reflected the American drug culture. Since drugs were . . . illegal, the name ‘underground press’ caught on and held.” See Robert J. Glessing, *The Underground Press in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970); 3.

² John McMillian, *Smoking Typewriters: The Sixties Underground Press and the Rise of Alternative Media in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); 39.

helping maintain the status quo in the nation's political and cultural life while crushing opposition or the possibility of real social change. Underground papers criticized major publications such as the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and the *Atlanta Constitution* for supporting a liberal, capitalistic agenda which advocated for change but did little to attack the underlying racial and economic problems facing the nation.³

By the late 1960s, the large number of underground newspapers often led to many publications shaping their content to meet the needs of specific readerships. Some, like *The Oracle* in San Francisco, focused on the concerns of the counterculture. Others, such as New York's *The Rat*, founded by former SDS leader Jeff Shero, discussed radical politics. The underground press supported the rise of personal politics in the late 1960s and early 1970s by creating numerous papers that dealt primarily with feminism, gay liberation or the concerns of ethnic and racial minority groups. The best underground newspapers, however, spoke to all of these issues. While the largest papers had subscribers across the nation, like all underground papers they existed primarily to provide a local readership with coverage not found in the other daily and weekly newspapers. This resulted in broad coverage of both political and cultural issues. In this type of underground newspaper, readers could find information on the latest organizational meeting for an antiwar march, reviews of art-house movies and rock concerts, in-depth analysis of local city council meetings, and lengthy critiques of the history of American imperialism.⁴ Quality writing became a staple of the best papers. While even the most successful underground papers relied heavily on volunteers, they also kept several paid reporters and editors on staff. Surprisingly, the *Bird* possessed all the qualities found in the more well-known and successful underground newspapers of the era but has routinely been left out of

³ John McMillian, *Smoking Typewriters*, 7-8.

⁴ Laurence Leamer, *The Paper Revolutionaries: The Rise of the Underground Press*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972); 13-14; John McMillian, *Smoking Typewriters*, 7.

discussions of the era's alternative press. Nonetheless, the *Great Speckled Bird* proved incredibly successful by providing quality coverage of the New Left and counterculture while also addressing local and regional concerns, in the process becoming the voice for Atlanta's hip community.

The roots of the *Bird* can be found in Atlanta's antiwar movement. Tom Coffin, a graduate student at Emory University, and his wife Stephanie began publishing a campus antiwar newspaper during the fall of 1967 (see chapter two). Consisting of a single sheet of legal-size mimeographed paper, the *Emory Herald Tribune* provided detailed and critical analysis of the nation's Vietnam policy with occasional coverage of campus political events. But, the need for a newspaper that addressed city-wide issues became clear quickly to Coffin and other activists. By January, Coffin shelved the *Emory Herald-Tribune* and began publishing the *Big American Review* as a way of getting like-minded people involved in the movement, particularly students at local schools the Coffins had met.⁵ While still mimeographed, the *Big American Review* provided far more coverage than the *Emory Herald Tribune*. Expanded to half a dozen pages, the paper featured stories on the local antiwar movement, advertised cultural events, and printed articles from contributors at other local schools.⁶ Clearly, Coffin's vision had grown during his first few months as an underground publisher and as he made connections within the local activist community, this vision gave birth to the *Bird*.

In the first months of 1968, a group of nineteen activists and budding journalists sent out a letter to raise funds for the formation of a "free press" in Atlanta. The problems facing the nation and the perceived weakness of the established media drove the project. "The press in

⁵ Tom Coffin, interviewed by the Strip Project, available online at: http://www.thestripproject.com/interview%20site/Oral_History_of_The_Strip/The_Coffins.html

⁶ Patrick K. Frye, "The Great Speckled Bird: An Investigation of the Birth, Life, and Death of an Underground Newspaper," MA Thesis, University of Georgia, 1981, 34.

America has lost its independence,” they exclaimed, “It is no longer a responsible press. It can no longer be trusted.” The proposed alternative would address “the extreme crises” that the nation faced for which “a free press is vital.” This group of activists made no attempt to hide its politics. They declared that “many of us feel that radical change both in attitude and action in America is required if we—or the world—are to survive this Nuclear and Revolutionary Age.”⁷

Any recipient of this fundraising letter with knowledge of southern radical politics during the 1960s would recognize the people involved in the project. The few treatments of the *Bird* by scholars have noted the political background of the paper’s founders but have generally downplayed the extent of their importance within Southern activist circles.⁸ The importance of Emory University as a breeding ground for local and regional leaders can be seen in the involvement of several current and former students, including the Coffins, and faculty member Ted Brodek. In addition, the list contained Gene Guerrero, Jim Gwin and Howard Romaine, three prominent members of the Southern Student Organizing Committee who had long been involved in civil rights activism, including being part of the small group of southern whites involved in 1964’s Freedom Summer. Harlon and Barbara Joye were also included. Harlon Joye had originally come south for academic research but soon became an integral part of the Atlanta hip community, eventually founding WRFG (Radio Free Georgia), an Atlanta-based

⁷ “Announcing the Formation of a Free Press in Atlanta, Georgia,” undated, Eliza K. Paschall Papers, Box 19, Emory MARBL.

⁸ Despite the importance of the *Bird* to the Atlanta activist community and its location in the pantheon of the American underground press, very little study of the paper has occurred. See Patrick K. Frye, “The Great Speckled Bird;” William G. Fudge, Jr., “A Descriptive Readership Study of the Atlanta Underground Newspaper: The Great Speckled Bird,” PhD Diss, Florida State University, 1975; Douglas E. Gordon, “*The Great Speckled Bird*: Harassment of an Underground Newspaper,” *Journalism Quarterly*, 56 (Summer 1979); 289-295; and Laurence Leamer, *The Paper Revolutionaries*, 92-104. For a *Bird* writer’s perspective on the newspaper and its history see Sally Gabb, “A Fowl in the Vortices of Consciousness: The Birth of the *Great Speckled Bird*,” in Ken Wachsberger, ed., *Voices From the Underground:--Volume 1, Insider Histories of the Vietnam Era Underground Press* (Tempe, AZ: Mica Press, 1993); 41-50. With the exception of Gabb’s memoir, all the other sources rely on Leamer’s description of the paper’s founders written in 1972. At a time when the southern New Left was largely marginalized, it is not surprising that the activist history of the *Bird*’s founders was not fully understood or recognized.

radio station dedicated to local artists and political programming which is still in operation. University of Georgia student David Simpson also appeared as a founder. Simpson, a Georgia native and navy veteran, had created the UGA SDS chapter. In May 1968 he went to work for SSOC full-time after being expelled for his activism. He would play a key role in the demise of that organization, help found RYM II, and remain active in communist groups into the 1970s. The list not only revealed the serious intentions of the newspaper's founders but also their desire to focus primarily on political issues, particularly the Vietnam War and racism.

In its fund-raising letter, the *Bird's* founders requested two thousand dollars to publish the first three issues, a relatively small but realistic sum made possible by recent changes in publishing technology. The invention of photo-offset printing had created the ability by the mid-1960s for anyone with "a few hundred dollars and a political or personal cause" to publish a newspaper.⁹ Prior to the creation of photo-offset printing, prospective publishers had no option but to use a Linotype machine. Use of this machine required extensive training and purchasing one proved beyond the means of most start-up operations. Photo-offset printing did away with this substantial cost and training. Now, according to John McMillian, "all one needed was a competent typist, a pair of scissors, and a jar of rubber cement with which to paste copy on to a backing sheet, which was then photographed and reproduced exactly as it was set. For just a couple hundred dollars, one could print several thousand copies of an eight- or sixteen-page tabloid."¹⁰

In possession of these basic skills and some start-up funds, *The Great Speckled Bird* first appeared on the streets of Atlanta on March 15, 1968. The inaugural issue contained most of the elements that would lead to the *Bird's* success as a strong voice of opposition in Atlanta and the

⁹Robert J. Glessing, *The Underground Press in America*, 41.

¹⁰ John McMillian, *Smoking Typewriters*, 6-7.

Deep South. Reflecting the activist background of much of the staff, the majority of articles laid out over its eight pages dealt with political issues, specifically the Vietnam War and racism. Coverage remained focused on local and regional topics, such as a seminar of the Vietnam conflict sponsored by local peace groups and a story about three Atlanta activists who had turned in their draft cards. In addition, *Bird* writers reported on civil rights protests in Social Circle, GA and Birmingham, AL, as well as the arrest of antiwar GIs at Fort Jackson in South Carolina. In two articles introducing the paper and explaining its existence, Tom Coffin and Don Speicher criticized strongly the mainstream press, reserving their harshest words for Ralph McGill, editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*. A well-respected public figure and liberal who supported the civil rights movement, he earned the ire of the radical *Bird* staff for his support of the Vietnam War and criticism of the New Left and counterculture.¹¹ From the beginning the paper put its radicalism proudly on display.

In addition to political coverage the *Bird* discussed cultural topics but in a way that did not fully reflect the tastes of the growing number of hippies in Atlanta. The staff did proclaim its connection to the drug culture of the period. The first issue contained a comic strip by local artist Ron Ausburn entitled “Poem for Merry Jane” that openly advocated the use of marijuana. One frame said simply “Smoke Dope.” In addition, one of only four advertisements informed readers of the wide variety of drug paraphernalia available at Middle Earth, the city’s first “head shop.” Its arts coverage, however, implied a closer connection to the Beats of the 1950s than the hippies of the 1960s. An interview with jazz musician Charles Lloyd covered a page and a half. Several poems appeared throughout the issue and short articles discussed an African American theatre festival and a performance of *Lysistrata*. The issue contained no reviews of rock ‘n’ roll

¹¹ *Great Speckled Bird*, I, no. 1 (March 15, 1968).

concerts or albums. This would soon change as the paper's content adjusted to the tastes of its readership.

Decisions regarding content reflected the politics of the era. The *Bird* staff organized itself as a cooperative, mirroring other underground newspapers around the nation that embraced the politics of the New Left, particularly the idea of participatory democracy. Developed by SDS in its founding document the *Port Huron Statement*, the principle of participatory democracy called for people to become actively involved in the decisions that affected their lives. Tom Hayden, the primary composer of the document, did not intend for the term to mean that "some form of consensus would replace voting, hierarchy, and the traditional machinery of representative institutions."¹² But, by the late 1960s as the New Left became increasingly radical and embraced socialistic ideals, this is exactly what it came to mean. National organizations such as SDS provided few directives for local chapters, which often operated without elected positions or permanent leaders. The need to make even the most basic decisions led to meetings that turned into verbal marathons.

The *Bird* staff, familiar with the participatory democracy concept and composed of seasoned veterans of the civil rights movement and New Left, applied this philosophy to the newspaper. Coffin would later claim that he and the *Bird* staff had created "participatory journalism," and that founding the *Bird* had been an overtly political act.¹³ Each contributor to the *Bird* became a member of the Atlanta Cooperative News Project, the paper's official publisher, and gained the right to participate fully in discussions and vote on content during the weekly editorial meetings. This led to lengthy and often boisterous gatherings. According to *Bird* writer Sally Gabb, "collective meetings were theatre. An ad hoc chair kept the dialogue

¹² James Miller, *Democracy is in the Streets: From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987); 142.

¹³ Tom Coffin, "Tell the Truth, Do You Really Miss the Bird?" *Great Speckled Bird*, IX no. 9 (October 1976); 14.

moving; each speaker called on the next. Criticism was the demand of the hour, as cutting and harsh as could be evoked.” Guerrero noted that “it would take four or five hours at the minimum to argue through, and try to achieve some sort of loose consensus about what ought to be in the paper.”¹⁴ In addition, all management and editorial positions would be occupied on a rotating basis. A paid staff person would hold a position for at least three months but in some cases more depending on when the cooperative decided to rotate the staff. The *Bird*’s staff organization and editorial structure evolved over the paper’s lifespan but always remained committed to the cooperative model.¹⁵

The *Bird*, Hips, and Harassment

The *Bird* worked out of an old, ramshackle house at 187 14th Street on the northern edge of the Strip. During its existence the *Bird* would gain a sizable regional readership through subscriptions but a large part of its success (and meager profits) came from over the counter sales in Strip establishments and sales from street vendors to Strip residents.¹⁶ Underground newspapers across the country often relied on street vendors who would purchase bundles directly from the paper’s office at a discount rate and sell issues to pedestrians, shoppers and motorists at the cover price. This method worked well in urban areas with densely populated hippie districts that also attracted weekend visitors and tourists, such as Haight-Asbury in San

¹⁴ Sally Gabb, “A Fowl in the Vortices of Consciousness,” 42; Patrick K. Frye, “The Great Speckled Bird,” 67.

¹⁵ William G. Fudge, “A Descriptive Readership Study,” 30-32.

¹⁶ Most records for the *Great Speckled Bird* were destroyed when the newspaper was firebombed in 1972, so it is impossible to get precise sales numbers over its entire existence. However, William Fudge’s study does provide a breakdown of sales for the February 28, 1972 issue. The *Bird* was in decline by this date, printing 10,000 copies of the issue, half of what had been printed at the paper’s height of popularity in the summer of 1970. Fudge records that 9,329 copies were distributed and that 6,539 of those were sold by “dealers, street vendors, counter sales.” These numbers come after the hippie district along Peachtree had ceased to effectively exist, suggesting that a higher percentage of papers were sold on the streets and stores during the paper’s first years than the 70% Fudge recorded in 1972. P. 78.

Francisco, Telegraph Ave. in Berkeley and the Strip in Atlanta.¹⁷ In Atlanta, street sellers also did well at suburban shopping centers. *Bird* staffer Steve Wise recalls that on weekends he could sell almost two hundred and fifty copies in just a few hours at Lenox Square Mall, located several miles north of the Strip in Buckhead.¹⁸ The *Bird* provided a variety of discounts based on the number of issues purchased but its sales policy always catered to the needs of a community with limited financial resources. Selling the *Bird* often provided the first source of income for newly-arrived residents to the Strip and sometimes became a regular job for the more ambitious vendors. New sellers could purchase copies on credit and with collateral. The *Bird* also had a policy of buying back unsold copies in some cases. Eager and successful street vendors could make over fifty dollars a week, more than the paid staff earned, but selling the *Bird* on the streets often proved a dangerous way of making money. Vendors encountered harassment regularly from law enforcement and, in some cases, found themselves in jail for violating local loitering ordinances. The *Bird* did not abandon these freelance employees. The staff promised sellers that if they received a ticket or landed in jail the *Bird* would pay the fine, provide a lawyer and take care of bail.¹⁹ Its location and reliance on street sellers, as well as its protection of them, turned the *Great Speckled Bird* into more than simply a source of New Left and countercultural information; it became a critical resource that the expanding hip community turned to for money, help and guidance. It was, in the words of one scholar, “the sounding board for the social and political discontent of this community.”²⁰

¹⁷ Robert J. Glessing, *The Underground Press in America*, 86-91. The distribution percentages mentioned in the previous footnote follow closely those of other underground papers Glessing tracked in his study. However, while he mentions that most papers have a subscription rate of 10-15%, the numbers in Fudge’s study show that approximately a quarter of *Bird* issues were distributed through paid subscriptions. It is difficult to draw a definitive conclusion based on one issue and the fact that Fudge does not say where paid subscribers lived, but it does suggest that the *Bird* had a stronger regional readership than underground papers in other cities.

¹⁸ Steve Wise, interviewed by author, 21 October 2008.

¹⁹ “Selling the Bird,” undated, Great Speckled Bird papers, Box 3, Emory MARBL.

²⁰ Douglas E. Gordon, “The Great Speckled Bird,” 290.

As it developed a leadership role in the hip community, the *Bird* attempted to create a sense of unity and develop a shared ideology between political radicals and hippies, a task burdened by a rocky past between the New Left and the counterculture. During the early years of the 1960s, radicals and countercultural adherents shared little common ground. Hippies had little use for political activism. Ken Kesey, author and leader of the nation's most well-known hippie group, The Merry Pranksters, gathered attention to himself in 1965 when he rejected "protest politics" at an antiwar event in San Francisco, claiming "that's what they do," meaning un-hip politics.²¹ In turn, New Leftists, attempting to reinvigorate liberalism, saw little of political value in music, art and the consumption of mind-altering drugs like marijuana and LSD. Wishing to influence and not alienate mainstream America, political activists rejected much of the counterculture, especially its most visible elements, including colorful, gender neutral clothing styles and long hair for men. Instead, political activists encouraged the wearing of conservative clothing, such as jackets and ties for men and dresses for women, during protests.

By 1968, however, both movements had drifted towards common ground. The escalation of the Vietnam War and the rapid growth of antiwar sentiment led many hippies to embrace political protesting. For their part, New Leftists began to consider the importance of culture in its drive towards a new America. At the most basic level, political radicals began taking drugs, listening to rock music and growing their hair long. But, the New Left remained skeptical of other ideas connected to the hippie lifestyle. Doug Rossinow argues that although the New Left added a cultural component to its larger critique of American society, it never totally embraced the full hippie experience. While part of a shared youth movement, the New Left's version of

²¹ Doug Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); 248.

the counterculture existed separately from the hippie one or as the “left wing of a larger white counterculture.” Either way, New Left cultural activities “carried a sharper political edge.”²²

Underground newspapers often became the meeting place in which the counterculture and New Left debated ideas about cultural radicalism and built a tenuous alliance. In Austin the experience of the *Rag*, the South’s first underground newspaper, foreshadowed some what would happen at the *Bird*. While the *Rag* staff “expressed loyalty to a synthetic vision of a single youth movement” and “was quite aware that a display of interest in the counterculture might entice readers who otherwise would not be exposed to left-wing discussion of political matters, in the end [the paper] provided more of an appeal for unity among distinct constituencies than a real synthesis.”²³ Unlike in Texas, the Atlanta New Left and the counterculture come together into a single community but the same tension existed between hippies and political radicals in Georgia as did in Austin.

In the summer of 1969, several “thoroughly incensed hippies” complained to the *Bird* staff about an article that claimed a series of free Sunday rock concerts in Piedmont Park were “the beginnings of a revolutionary movement” and not simply about “peace, love and dope.” “They simply had no use for such militancy,” according to Laurence Leamer.²⁴ The *Bird* recognized this tension at the time, noting that the relationship between the paper and the community was “strange and complex.” The staff fully credited the Strip for the paper’s success but argued its residents and the *Bird* often had separate goals. It saw the gap between the hippies on the Strip and the *Bird* staff. “We’re older, we’re into politics, or music, or art,” they claimed, and noted that few of them participated in the “street scene.” Staffers did, however, recognize

²² Doug Rossinow, “The Revolution is About Our Lives’: The New Left’s Counterculture,” in Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle, eds., *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s & 1970s* (New York: Routledge, 2002); 100.

²³ Doug Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity*, 261.

²⁴ Laurence Leamer, *The Paper Revolutionaries*, 103.

the resentment that many hippies had toward the paper, due mainly to its “call for militant struggle, or other organizing rhetoric.”²⁵ By the early 1970s the New Left and counterculture in Atlanta had resolved these conflicts, as shown by the People’s Fairs held in 1971 but this occurred more as the result of a common history of official harassment than a shared system of core beliefs.

Atlanta’s hip community had endured harassment from local law enforcement since it began coalescing in the Midtown area during 1966. From its beginning, the Strip became a favored destination for hippies, social outcasts, and teenage runaways from across the South. Usually lacking money, jobs or a steady place to live, these young people spent a great deal of time on Peachtree Street, making them an easy target for police wishing to cleanse the city of the new youthful menace. Older members of the community often provided places for teens to sleep, making them targets for visits by law enforcement looking for runaways. In addition, the few night clubs that catered to hips also endured consistent harassment from police, who raided bars under the pretense of looking for runaways or evidence of illegal drug use but who seemed more intent on simply making life difficult for patrons.²⁶ The local media duly reported on the development of the Strip and the activities of local police but did not offer any criticism of the growing pattern of harassment faced by the hip community in Atlanta.

The *Bird* filled this void while also becoming a target of harassment itself. From its beginning until the Strip devolved in the early 1970s, the *Bird* countered official harassment in several ways. First, it reported what happened to hips in the neighborhood. The fourth issue of

²⁵ Maude, “14th St.,” *Great Speckled Bird* II, no. 36 (November 17, 1969); 2. Maude is most likely not the real name of this column’s author. Many underground journalists used pseudonyms, either as a sign of irreverence for mainstream journalistic standards or to hide their identity. In addition to harassment from the FBI and other law enforcement agencies, underground writers, particularly in the South with its recent past of violence against progressives, always had to deal with the possibility of physical attacks against them.

²⁶ Please see the next chapter for a more in-depth discussion of the Strip and police harassment.

the *Bird* offered extensive coverage on the arrest of David Braden, the owner of a local art gallery and coffeehouse, and an important figurehead in the early development of the Strip.²⁷ Other major clashes with the police such as the 1969 riot in Piedmont Park and several street battles between hips and the police during 1970 also received extensive coverage. These larger stories shared column space with short articles about the small, daily struggles Strip residents faced. *Bird* writers dutifully reported police raids on hip residences, the refusal of police officers to arrest people who verbally or physically assaulted hips, the numerous drug-related trials of Strip residents, and attempts by hips to make “straight” businesses in the neighborhood treat them fairly.²⁸

The *Great Speckled Bird* staff also utilized its activist past in attempts to ease the growing tensions between local officials and Strip residents. Within a few months of beginning publication, the *Bird* printed advice on what to do if stopped by police or arrested on the Strip. The column listed the rights individuals possessed and exactly what police had the legal right to do. But, above all, the *Bird* noted, “you **must not** resist arrest even if you are innocent.” The article recommended clipping out the column and carrying it at all times.²⁹ This advice harkened back to the early years of the 1960s and the passive nonviolence of the civil rights movement that had become mostly antiquated by 1968. The Black Power movement had been supporting the use of violence as a means of self-defense for several years and white radicals would begin battling with police several months later at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. The unwillingness of the Atlanta police department to work cooperatively with local

²⁷ Jim Gwin, “Busted,” *Great Speckled Bird*, I no. 4 (April 26, 1968); 1, 10.

²⁸ Tom Coffin and Gene Guerrero, “Howard & Wood: V Squad Vices,” *Great Speckled Bird* I no. 11 (August 2, 1968); 2, 13; Joe Nickell, “Justice for Nipples & Hippers,” *Great Speckled Bird* I no. 9 (July 3, 1968); 2; Tom Coffin, “15th Street Bust,” *Great Speckled Bird* I, no. 5 (May 10, 1968); 5; Rex T. Barnes, “Eat in,” *Great Speckled Bird* I no. 18 (October 14, 1968); 5.

²⁹ “Busted or What to do When the Cops Come,” *Great Speckled Bird* I, no. 4 (April 26, 1968); 11.

hips during the entire existence of the Strip led many to ignore or abandon this type of passive response. Still, attempts needed to be made at working with local officials to avoid violence. In August, Gene Guerrero and Jim Gwin of the *Bird*, along with several other members of the hip community, met with Atlanta Chief of Police Herbert Jenkins to discuss community relations, but found little room for agreement.³⁰

Over the next year the Strip residents endured consistent harassment by police, leading the *Bird* to file a lawsuit against city officials in September 1969. In its complaint, the *Bird* stated it filed the suit on behalf of people associated with the newspaper as well as “persons of unconventional appearance, mode of behavior, and political and social opinion,” in a word, hips. The *Bird* considered the case part of an organized effort to counter the harassment Strip residents had endured for several years. Noting the futility of waging a legal battle on a “piecemeal basis” by fighting each arrest individually, the *Bird* saw this suit as a “legal offensive which forces the city of Atlanta to explain its policy of harassment.”³¹ The newspaper took up the case due in part to its role in the community. *Bird* staffers stated in their complaint that many people in Atlanta (by which it meant those who were not members of the hip community) saw the paper as “the ‘official’ publication and most visible manifestation of the presence of this unconventional community in the City of Atlanta.”³² The staff then used the paper to build its case, asking any longhairs and other members of the community who had been hassled by police to contact the *Bird*.³³

³⁰ Gene Guerrero, “Longhairs Meet with the Fuzz,” *Great Speckled Bird* I, no. 12 (August 16, 1968); 5. For more on this meeting see the next chapter.

³¹ Bob Malone, “Bird Files Suit Against City,” *Great Speckled Bird* II, no. 28 (September 22, 1968); 3.

³² *Rebecca Hamilton et al v. Ivan Allen, et al*, U.S. District Court, Northern District of Georgia, Atlanta Division, Great Speckled Bird Papers, Box 4, Emory MARBL.

³³ “Hassled by Police?” *Great Speckled Bird* II, no. 28 (September 22, 1968); 5.

The *Bird* often chose to fight harassment in the courts. The paper usually won their cases because of its access to quality legal aid. According to *Bird* staffer Berl Boykin, local left-leaning lawyers helped often with cases regarding street sellers. The paper also had a close relationship with the National Lawyers Guild, a left-wing legal association that protected the civil liberties of numerous individuals and groups in the antiwar and civil rights movements during the 1960s.³⁴ Lawsuits taken up by the *Bird* and its legal team centered on harassment by state and local officials that aimed to either shut the paper down or restrict its ability to reach the reading public. The paper's opponents attempted several legal strategies. Within weeks of its first issue, state and local officials visited the *Bird* to inspect its business paperwork, hoping to find a violation that would lead to the paper shuttering its doors. This tactic failed. Officials and local critics then began taking issue with the paper's content. In the fall of 1968, the *Bird* filed a complaint in federal court regarding numerous obscenity charges brought against it. The problem originated in neighboring Dekalb County, just a few miles away from Atlanta. In an attempt to discredit Clark Harrison, a candidate for chairman of the county commission in an upcoming local election, opponents distributed a "smear sheet" that linked Harrison to the *Great Speckled Bird*. The handout noted that Harrison had the support of the Dekalb New Era newspaper, which published the *Bird*. Through the highly selective use of quotes and images from the underground paper, the handout's anonymous writers attempted to show that the "hippie smut sheet" proved dangerous to the local community.

The revelation of the paper's "obscene" content led to a crackdown in Dekalb County. Sheriff Lamar Martin declared that the *Bird* could not be sold in the county and arrested several street vendors that November. Local schools also attempted to rid their hallways of the paper and punished those found with copies. One student received a three week suspension for selling

³⁴ Patrick K. Frye, "The Great Speckled Bird," 85.

the paper at school. The crackdown had the desired effect. The Dekalb New Era informed the *Bird* staff it could not longer publish the paper due to intense political pressure. According to *Bird* circulation manager James Sundberg, the paper lost all of its distributors in Dekalb County, often after visits from local police, and several in Fulton County. Afraid of being arrested, about half of the paper's street sellers ceased operating and the number of issues sold dropped from eight thousand to five thousand. Fulton County officials soon announced it would file obscenity charges against the paper.³⁵ The *Bird*'s future looked bleak but soon turned around. After calls to numerous printers, one in Montgomery, AL, finally agreed to publish the paper. In addition, it defeated the charges of obscenity in court. In April 1969 a three-judge federal panel found "after a through examination of all published issues of the *Bird* [the court] is unable to find any single article or issue that would fall within the United States Supreme Court's determination of obscenity." As a result of this decision, numerous street sellers contacted the office to acquire copies of the latest issue. By the end of April the *Bird* had recovered from this lengthy legal assault and enjoyed sales of over thirteen thousand copies per issue.³⁶ Unable to shut down the paper, local officials attempted to make selling the paper difficult.

Street sellers remained at the center of harassment against the *Bird*, although the strategy waxed and waned depending on the state of affairs between the newspaper and the city's power elite. While street sellers endured harassment by the police regularly between 1968 and 1972, the election of Sam Massell as mayor in 1969 led to a temporary improvement in the situation. Massell, unlike his predecessor Ivan Allen, proved at first willing to work with hip community leaders. But, this relationship soured over the next several years as the paper increased its

³⁵ Douglas E. Gordon, "The Great Speckled Bird," 291; *Great Speckled Bird et al v. Leroy Stynchcombe, et al*, U.S. District Court, Northern District of Georgia, Atlanta Division, Case 12231, Great Speckled Bird Papers, Box 4, Emory MARBL.

³⁶ Tom Coffin, "Obscene? No.," *Great Speckled Bird* II, no. 7 (April 28, 1969); 2.

attacks against local politicians and government agencies. By the beginning of 1972, the *Bird* had begun in-depth explorations of city development issues, including articles that examined Massell's connection to several local real estate companies. In January, the *Bird* accused the mayor of launching a campaign against the Strip that included a new wave a street seller arrests in an attempt to force hips out of the area. Several more *Bird* articles about street seller harassment appeared over the next months and on April 17 police began arresting *Bird* vendors using an obscure law that required "peddlers" to have a license from the city. Nine people had been arrested by nightfall and no sellers were in operation by the end of what the paper called "The Day Mayor Massell Tried to Kill the *Bird*."³⁷ The paper quickly went to court and received a temporary restraining order to prevent further arrests. In its complaint, the paper claimed that the city selectively enforced the ordinances since police only arrested *Bird* sellers and not those for the daily newspapers. The case dragged on until November, when the city agreed to amend the law and pay the paper's court costs. This decision essentially ended the city's harassment of *Bird* sellers.³⁸ But, again, the *Bird* did not just wage these battles out of self-preservation. In article after article about its legal fight against the city it emphasized the importance of *Bird* selling to local hips.

Regular moves made it difficult for the *Bird* to maintain the connection to the Strip it wanted. Considered by some *Bird* people to be form of harassment, urban development projects twice forced a move. During the summer of 1969, an intense period in the Strip marked by confrontations between police and residents and a series of suspicious fires, the *Bird* lost its insurance and had to find new office space. The staff had two months to find quarters but faced

³⁷ Linda, "Why City is Hassling Bird Sellers," *Great Speckled Bird* V, no. 1 (January 10, 1972); 2; Roger, "Sell the Bird," *Great Speckled Bird* V, no. 17 (May 1, 1972); 24.

³⁸ *Atlanta Cooperative News Project v. E.F. McKillop et al*, U.S. District Court, Northern District of Georgia, Atlanta Division, Case 16495, Great Speckled Bird Papers, Box 4, Emory MARBL; Candy, "Bird in Court," *Great Speckled Bird* V, no. 45 (November 13, 1972); 12.

opposition at every turn. The insurance problem most likely covered up another goal of the building's owners—the desire to sell the property to developers. The *Birdhouse* on 14th Street occupied land that would become part of Colony Square, a complex containing two skyscrapers, a shopping mall, and residences. The development would eventually take up an entire block of Peachtree Street between 14th and 15th Streets. As the paper's staff began packing, construction crews demolished empty houses of both sides of the *Birdhouse*.³⁹

The task of finding new offices almost brought publication to a standstill. The staff spent weeks contacting every real estate agent who had properties for rent in a ten block area. Remaining in the immediate vicinity of the hip district proved paramount to the staff. The *Bird* existed as a central part of the neighborhood and the symbiotic relationship between the two underlay the paper's success. The search yielded nothing. Agents either refused to help or property owners turned them away when told who wanted to rent their building. Jack Hazan, a long time realtor in the neighborhood, suggested the *Bird* look into purchasing a building. This approach also failed, either because of requests for large down payments or resistance from owners to sell to the *Bird*. As the weeks fell away and eviction day grew closer, the staff turned to new ideas.⁴⁰

In September three staffers, Howard Romaine, Gene Guerrero and Sally Gabb, drew up incorporation papers for the Peachtree Tenth Development Corporation. This venture planned to raise money towards the purchase of new offices by issuing stock at one hundred dollars a share. The incorporation papers hinted at a larger goal beyond aiding the paper. The corporation aimed to get involved in the “owning, buying, selling, leasing, renting, and financing [of] real estate.” It also proposed to raise a maximum of one million dollars through stock sales, far more than

³⁹ Howard Romaine, “Once Upon a Time,” *Great Speckled Bird* II, no. 36 (November 17, 1969), 14-15.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

they needed to purchase office space.⁴¹ This suggests that the *Bird* planned to fight urban development in the Strip area. With substantial capital, the proposed corporation could purchase buildings and land that might otherwise be demolished or incorporated into projects like Colony Square. The corporation failed to materialize, however, when it became clear that it would be impossible to raise enough funds to accomplish the primary goal of buying a new *Birdhouse* in the few weeks remaining before the paper had to move. In the end, the *Bird* rented space in a warehouse at 253 North Avenue, a building initially rejected because of its location. Crews began demolishing the *Birdhouse* the day after the staff completed the move.⁴²

Located in Buttermilk Bottom, the new offices were a half dozen blocks away from the Strip's center on Peachtree Street and in a traditionally African American neighborhood slated for urban renewal. As Romaine noted at the time, the *Bird* found itself “on the black side of the Ponce de Leon Maginot line [Ponce de Leon Avenue has traditionally been considered the dividing line between black and white Atlanta], on the dark side of Atlanta's urban apartheid, just down from where all the hips and freaks and poor white folk live.” The *Bird* certainly did not ignore issues in black Atlanta. In fact, racial issues remained an important part of its coverage throughout the paper's existence. Black Atlanta, however, did not purchase the *Bird*, creating a sense of separation between the paper and the residents of its new neighborhood. Steve Wise noted that the paper regularly printed materials submitted by the local Black Panther Party but that no meaningful relationship existed between the two organizations.⁴³ As Gabb noted later, “the black community . . . never embraced the *Bird*—it was not theirs.” For two

⁴¹ Articles of Incorporation of “Peachtree Tenth Development Corporation,” Great Speckled Bird Papers, Box 4, Emory MARBL.

⁴² Howard Romaine, “Once Upon a Time,” *Great Speckled Bird* II, no. 36 (November 17, 1969); 14-15.

⁴³ Steve Wise, interviewed by author, 21 October 2008.

years, the paper operated out of the North Avenue location, distant from the hip district it helped develop and support.⁴⁴

In September 1971, urban development forced the *Bird* to move offices again; Buttermilk Bottom was located in the Bedford-Pine Urban Redevelopment Project. Begun in the mid-1960s with grant money from the Department of Housing and Urban Development and run by the Atlanta Housing Authority, the project had resulted in the purchase and razing of hundreds of residences but very little new construction by the end of the decade. By 1971, the building which housed the *Bird* offices had been slated for demolition. The staff secured a new building at 240 Westminster Drive, located on the northwestern edge of Piedmont Park. Although located closer to the Strip than it had been for two years, the proximity to its old neighborhood meant less now than it had when the paper was forced out in 1969.

By late 1971, the Strip, the *Bird* and Atlanta were undergoing periods of important transformation. By the autumn of that year the Strip had entered into a period of decline. The counterculture had effectively ended by the early 1970s, both locally and nationally. In Atlanta, the collection of hippies and radicals on the Strip had begun to spread out and blend into the wider city. Many businesses that catered to hips closed and the center of political activism moved several miles east to the Little Five Points neighborhood. The paper's content reflected the slow demise of the Strip. Its local coverage now focused more on city-wide issues as the *Bird* became an increasingly reliable source of information on local politics and topics related to urban development. This proved a rich vein to mine since the city underwent a period of intense change in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In addition to ongoing urban renewal projects, Atlanta had entered the first stages of building a light rail system, launched highway building and other

⁴⁴ Howard Romaine, "Once Upon a Time," *Great Speckled Bird* II, no. 36 (November 17, 1969); 27; Sally Gabb, "A Fowl in the Vortices of Consciousness," 45.

projects meant to expand the area's suburbs, and commissioned studies regarding future development to the downtown and "uptown" areas of the city. Civic leaders envisioned a city that bore little resemblance to what existed at the end of World War II. They hoped Atlanta could become a major urban area similar to those outside the South. Still staffed by political radicals, the *Bird* printed numerous articles that criticized these projects, stating they stood to benefit the city's wealthy elite but did little for the middle and working class, both white and black.

The *Bird* paid particularly close attention to the role of Mayor Sam Massell in these projects. Massell had served as vice mayor under Ivan Allen and won the 1969 mayoral election as an acceptable compromise between the city's white and black communities. By the late 1960s suburbanization and white flight had created a more balanced split in the city's population between white and black residents. Any white candidate wishing to become mayor needed bi-racial support and Massell proved acceptable on both sides of the color line (although far more blacks voted for him than whites). Younger and more liberal than his predecessor (as well as being Jewish), he promised to work closely with local black leaders. He also enjoyed a friendly relationship with the city's business elite through his family's real estate company. Early in his tenure, Massell attempted to create a dialogue with the hip community but this relationship soured as police harassment in the Strip continued during the mayor's first years in office. The intensity of the *Bird's* criticism towards Massell originated also in changing political beliefs among the paper's staff. During the early 1970s the paper jettisoned any remaining support for liberalism and more fully embraced a radical class-based analysis of American society. The staff increasingly saw themselves as the defender of the "people," not just the hip youth movement or blacks, and considered Massell another politician who had abandoned the average Atlanta resident in favor of the city's monied interests. In an article reviewing the city's future plans the

Bird pitted the white power elite, which it labeled “Massell & Co,” against non-affluent whites. “The Dream City will be inhabited by poor blacks and rich whites,” the paper argued, “middle and working class whites are being forced out of the central city by freeways and other improvements.”⁴⁵ The relationship between Massell and the *Bird* would grow worse when the paper began a campaign against local slumlords.

The problem began when *Bird* reporter and Georgia State student Mike Raffauf questioned Massell in November 1971 about a report that recommended changes in how the city enforced housing codes. Under the new system, owners of properties that did not meet code would have to correct all violations at once or pay a five hundred dollar fine for each property in violation of the law. Under the old policy, the city enforced housing violations on a block by block basis. The new policy would place a significant financial burden on “slumlords,”—companies or private individuals who owned large amounts of property in the city’s poor, mostly African American, neighborhoods. When asked by Raffauf why he had rejected the new plan, Massell answered that he had never seen the report. The next day, Raffauf spoke with three city officials familiar with the plan, including George Aldredge, Chief of the City of Atlanta Planning Department. All three confirmed that Massell had seen and rejected the report because it “would take up too much of his time to implement.” Late that afternoon, Raffauf met with Massell and presented the mayor with the evidence he had gathered. Hearing that city officials had contradicted his version of events, Massell called Raffauf a “goddamn liar” and physically ejected him from his office. In its coverage of the confrontation, the *Bird* speculated that the mayor rejected the plan because he owned slum housing or that he simply wished to protect friends who owned properties that violated housing codes.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Marcos, “Atlanta Planning: Power & the People,” *Great Speckled Bird* V, no. 6 (February 14, 1972); 10.

⁴⁶ Mike Raffauf, “Mayor Blows it Again,” *Great Speckled Bird* IV, no. 48 (November 29, 1971); 2.

The story caused a stir in local political circles and had long-term consequences for the *Bird*. Following its publication, local TV news stations contacted city officials to follow up on the paper's version of events. In early December two of the officials quoted in the piece, Aldredge and associate city attorney Ralph Witt, submitted memorandums to Massell detailing their involvement with the new proposal and contact with Raffauf. Both claimed that they had been misquoted and had not told the *Bird* that the mayor had seen and rejected the proposal. City Hall decided to stop sending press releases to the paper, citing several recent instances in which the *Bird* had misrepresented the mayor's actions. A member of the Massell's staff stated that the mayor felt "that the *Bird* has been unfair in its coverage of him and . . . doesn't see why he should 'help' the newspaper."⁴⁷ The *Bird* continued its criticism of Massell and the city's handling of urban development, with catastrophic results.

On the night of May 6, 1972, a fire destroyed the new *Bird*house on Westminster Drive. According to the *Bird*, a fire department official stated that the blaze had most likely been the result of arson, but an investigation yielded no evidence to support this conclusion. The paper lost over \$4,000 worth of publishing equipment and supplies along with four years worth of paperwork and back issues. While nobody claimed responsibility for the fire and the police made no arrests, the *Bird* placed the blame at the feet of Sam Massell. The relationship between the paper and the mayor had been deteriorating since the previous fall and Massell had been publicly speaking out against the *Bird* that spring, calling the paper a "hate sheet" that no longer deserved any rights.⁴⁸ While never directly stating that the mayor ordered the attack, the paper did accuse him of creating the "atmosphere conducive to this crime. . . it's very possible that

⁴⁷ Gene Guerrero, "& Cuts Off Bird," *Great Speckled Bird* IV, no. 48 (November 29, 1971); 2.

⁴⁸ Candy Hamilton, "Bird Firebombed," *Great Speckled Bird*, V, no. 19 (May 15, 1972); 2-3.

someone reading or hearing about the mayor's recent comments . . . figured they'd do the mayor a service by doing the dirty work."⁴⁹

The attack on the *Bird* certainly fit into a larger pattern of violence against southern progressives that had existed since the 1950s. Dedicated racists often used bombs and arson to kill and intimidate people during the civil rights era, most memorably in Birmingham, Alabama (nicknamed "Bombingham" for the number of attacks on civil rights leaders) when a bomb exploded at the 16th Street Baptist Church in 1963, killing four African American girls.

Terrorists also attacked the homes of key leaders. In 1956 during the Montgomery Bus Boycott racists bombed the home of Martin Luther King, Jr. In Atlanta the following year opponents of the civil rights movement bombed the city's oldest Jewish congregation. Arson proved the most popular strategy for opponents of the Strip. By the late 1960s numerous fires with suspicious origins had occurred in the neighborhood and in September 1969 two firebombs damaged hip businesses on Peachtree Street. Few attacks occurred in the early 1970s but by the middle of the decade the tactic would become popular again as a means of harassing and intimidating the emerging gay community in Midtown.

The city's hip community rallied around the *Bird*. Numerous organizations held benefits to raise money that helped purchase new equipment, supplies, and secured a new lease. The Laundromat, a crafts cooperative on Peachtree Street, held a rummage sale while the People's Place, a tavern located in Little Five Points, hosted a dinner for the paper. The Morningstar Inn, another restaurant that catered to the city's hips, donated one day's proceeds to the paper.⁵⁰ Several politicians and political groups also issued statements in support of the *Bird*. Julian Bond exclaimed "Fly on, Bird!" and categorized the attack as "part and parcel of a continuing

⁴⁹ Ibid, 3.

⁵⁰ "Groups Hold Benefits," *Great Speckled Bird* V no. 20 (May 22, 1972); 5.

process of extra-legal harassment begun with the sanction of the Atlanta's corporate ruling class." The Georgia Communist League (Marxist-Leninist) also considered the attack part of a class-based assault led by the city's elite. "The burning of the *Bird*," they stated, "is another recent incident of repression which [is] mounting against the people. But these attempts by the ruling class to crush opposition to its policies can only further expose their real nature and in the end will bring their downfall!"⁵¹

Despite the devastating nature of the fire, the *Bird* emerged strong and confident from the ashes. The financial support received through benefits and donations allowed the staff to avoid altering its publication schedule and the next issue hit the streets on time. The staff acquired temporary office space on 11th Street and secured a new *Birdhouse* on Juniper Street by the end of July, placing them closer to the old neighborhood than they had been in several years. In addition, harassment by city officials slackened in the years after 1972. The city's power elite underwent important changes in the 1970s, most notably with the election of Maynard Jackson as Atlanta's first African American mayor. The staff felt that Jackson tolerated the paper due to its coverage of black issues in Atlanta and the fact that he had helped incorporate the paper while working for legal aid at Emory University in 1968.⁵² Whatever the reason, the harassment that had been an important part of the paper's existence since its founding largely ceased. Street sellers operated without fear of arrest and the staff did not have to use the court system as protection against overzealous city leaders and police. As external troubles diminished, internal ones took their place. The sense of common purpose among the staff created by the firebombing masked divisions which had been growing for some time. Disagreements over politics would soon prove more threatening to the paper's existence than the firebombing.

⁵¹ "Rising With Support," *Great Speckled Bird* V, no. 19 (May 15, 1972); 3.

⁵² Patrick K. Frye, "The Great Speckled Bird," 93.

The *Bird* and Late-Sixties Era New Left Politics

The *Great Speckled Bird* prided itself on offering a diverse set of political viewpoints during its first years of existence. While certainly critical of liberalism and staffed with political radicals, the paper's submission policy allowed any left-leaning political opinion into the paper free of content editing as long as it won the support of the cooperative during the weekly staff meeting. The conservatism of the south encouraged the *Bird* to support any and all political movements on the Left, and, by 1968, the American Left encompassed a wide set of beliefs. The emergence of Black Power and the nascent feminist movement broadened the Left by making it embrace what would become known as personal politics—movements based on sexual, gender, racial and ethnic identity. The *Bird* supported all of these movements.

The rise of the new movements, along with the radicalization of the New Left and other national events over the past few years, led many Americans to grow increasingly critical of it by 1968. Most Americans still supported the basic premises of the liberal state but the urban riots that occurred after 1964 and the handling of the Vietnam War led many to grow wary of liberals and start questioning their policies by the late 1960s. In addition, the New Left had become increasingly more radical as many in the movement rejected electoral politics and capitalism, instead throwing their support behind socialism, anti-imperialism, and the need for some kind of revolution to affect real national change. Under assault from both within and outside its ranks, the nation's Left fractured by the beginning of the 1970s. Liberals, both old and young, remained committed to fulfilling the promise of Johnson's Great Society through participation in electoral politics. New Left radicals called for revolution, embraced violence, and argued over which form of Marxism best helped the working class and undermined global imperialism. Staffed over the years by liberals, revolutionaries, feminists and gay liberationists, the *Bird* acted

as a microcosm of the nation's Left as internal conflicts, ideological rigidity, and other disputes played a critical role in hampering its long term effectiveness as a voice for those it purported to help. As a result, the *Bird* became increasingly isolated politically and routinely suffered financial trouble during its last years of existence.

The advent of the feminist movement created the first internal problems at the *Bird*. Women had been an integral part of the paper's founding but few of them had come to the paper independently. As *Bird* writer Becky Hamilton noted, women arrived at the paper as part of a couple. In its early years the *Bird* was "the Coffins, the Guerreros, the Romaines, the Gwins." Few women staffers contributed content in the paper's early years, instead doing the "shit work" such as typing, managing circulation and keeping the books. As a result, *Bird* women had to compete for the few jobs available to them which often led to animosity and hurt feelings.⁵³ The situation at the paper mirrored the rest of the movement. Women played important roles within groups such as SNCC and SDS during the middle years of the Sixties but they rarely achieved leadership positions and continually fought to have their voice heard. In addition, many of the women who rose through the ranks of these groups did so through their sexual relationships. As the wife of the first president of SDS, Barbara Haber "had special status but not necessarily more credibility." Male members of the SDS inner circle did not see her "as a person in my own right" and any success she achieved would vanish if her husband lost his position or left the organization.⁵⁴ Several attempts had been made to address this problem in the movement, most notably when SNCC members Casey Hayden and Mary King issued "A Kind of Memo," a document that addressed the role of women in the organization. But, by 1968 little had changed

⁵³ Becky Hamilton, "Even a Woman Can Do It," *Great Speckled Bird* III, no. 41 (October 11, 1970); 3

⁵⁴ Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000); 117.

since New Left men largely failed to recognize the legitimacy of gender discrimination as a political issue.

Left with few options, New Left women found alternative ways of coming together. Women's Liberation groups began springing up in urban areas around the nation, such as Cell 16 in Boston and New York Radical Women (NYRW). Many of the women in these groups, and other burgeoning feminists across the country, attended the Jeannette Rankin Brigade protest in January 1968, an all female demonstration against the Vietnam War. The protest had mixed results. While it created new connections between feminists, it also highlighted divisions within the women's movement. Most notably, young radical feminists clashed with the more liberal members who, like Betty Freidan, author of *The Feminine Mystique*, subscribed to a moderate version of feminism represented by the National Organization of Women (NOW).⁵⁵ A firmly liberal organization, NOW had been formed in 1966 as a "feminist civil rights organization" that advocated for laws which promoted gender equality in the public sphere and workplace.⁵⁶ Raised in the politics of the New Left, however, many younger feminists rejected liberal feminism and embraced a radical version which sought to fundamentally change society. As Alice Echols explains, "whereas liberal feminism sought to include women in the mainstream, radical feminism embodied a rejection of the mainstream itself. And while liberal feminists defined the problem as women's exclusion from the public sphere, radical feminists focused on the sexual politics of personal life."⁵⁷ The radical wing of the women's movement emerged into the national spotlight with the 1968 Miss America demonstration in Atlantic City. Organized by NYRW, approximately one hundred women gathered on the boardwalk outside the pageant for a

⁵⁵ Alice Echols, *Daring to be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 56.

⁵⁶ Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open*, 75.

⁵⁷ Alice Echols, *Daring to be Bad*, 15.

day long series of protests against the pageant, which they argued exploited women.⁵⁸ The publicity the demonstration garnered fueled the formation of women's liberation groups around the country.

Southern activist women embraced feminism in late 1968 and early 1969. The SSOC organized a women-only conference that included seasoned southern activist Anne Braden. Women's liberation groups sprang up at colleges and universities across the region. In Atlanta, a group of women had begun meeting to debate feminist issues and co-sponsored the SSOC women's conference. Female *Bird* staff, many of whom belonged to the local liberation group, organized a women's caucus at the *Bird* in 1969. The caucus had an immediate impact and brought out the paper's first women's issue in February. Composed of articles written only by women, the issue offered a comprehensive overview of the state of feminism in the late 1960s. Stories discussed abortion, employment discrimination, women in sports and athletics, women in music, and numerous other issues.⁵⁹

The publication of the first women's issue so soon after the formation of the caucus did not mean that the male staff members had easily embraced feminism. In fact, women had to struggle with the paper's male staff for most of 1969 to achieve an acceptable level of equality. According to Stephanie Coffin, "there was a period of time after the struggle for women's liberation [began] that men were quite lost and on the defensive." For the first few months the paper debated content, particularly coverage of women's issues and the refusal to run advertisements that related to the exploitation of women. Discussions later turned to the roles women would take on the staff. During the paper's first year almost all of the writing had been done by men. Following the formation of the women's caucus the staff made efforts to include

⁵⁸ For more on the Miss America protest, see Alice Echols, *Daring to be Bad*, 92-101.

⁵⁹ *Great Speckled Bird* I, no. 36 (February 28, 1969).

more articles by women and encouraged female staff members who did not write to contribute material. According to Guerrero, it took the male staff awhile to understand their sexist behavior. They had accepted the belief common in the New Left that men had the right to lead movements while women played a subordinate role. “It was easy to fall into the pattern of hiring another guy . . . and leaving the women to either work straight jobs to support men they were living with who worked at the paper, or having them do volunteer work while the men received the paychecks at the *Bird*,” he stated.⁶⁰

Over time, the caucus achieved gains for female staff members. The amount of content written by women increased, they started serving in the top editorial positions as part of the cooperative’s rotation schedule, and the staff maintained a policy of not running articles, ads or graphics which women found offensive. In addition, the paper continued to put out an annual women’s issue for several years. At one point in early 1972 women filled the majority of paid positions. While the staff struggled with issues of feminism the paper’s street sellers largely ignored the changing attitudes towards women. Many female street vendors continued to dress provocatively, knowing it would increase their sales.⁶¹ Some male street sellers sold both the *Bird* and HIP, a cheaply produced local tabloid that combined sophomoric political commentary with sex ads and pornographic pictures of women.⁶²

The radical feminism of the women’s caucus also created conflict with moderate feminists, most notably *Bird* columnist Eliza Paschall. Paschall, born in 1917, had unimpeachable liberal credentials. A fervent supporter of civil rights and an active politician, she played important roles in numerous local organizations from the 1950s through the 1970s. In

⁶⁰ Patrick K. Frye, “The Great Speckled Bird,” 70-72.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 72-74

⁶² *HIP*, Alex Williams Collection, Athens, GA; Affidavit of Tom Millican, *Atlanta Cooperative News Project v. E.F. McKillop et al*, U.S. District Court, Northern District of Georgia, Atlanta Division, Case 16495, Great Speckled Bird Papers, Box 4, Emory MARBL

the late 1950s she belonged to HOPE (Help Our Public Education) but resigned when the group chose a cautious and slow path to school desegregation in Atlanta and “avoided questions of justice and morality.” In an *Atlantic Monthly* article explaining her decision, Paschall declared that “‘realistic’ liberals” of the “white south were in danger of losing their souls.”⁶³ She also served as the executive director of the Greater Atlanta Council on Human Relations for most of the 1960s. She resigned from the GACHR in 1967 to become the executive director of the new Atlanta Community Relations Commission, formed after a 1966 riot in the African American neighborhood of Summerhill. Less progressive members of the commission pushed her out of the position after one year, an event reported in the *Bird*’s first issue. Paschall also strongly supported women’s rights. In the 1970s she became involved with the Georgia Commission on the Status of Women, the International Women’s Year and served a term as NOW’s executive secretary.⁶⁴

Paschall had a regular column in the *Great Speckled Bird* from 1968 to 1970 entitled “Paschall On...” Over several years she wrote about the multitude of issues that engaged her time and attention, including school desegregation, local elections, the antiwar movement, and feminist issues. The last topic caused a conflict with the paper’s women’s caucus in the spring of 1970. The disagreement centered on a column Paschall had submitted on women’s communes. Not mincing words, she doubted that “an ‘all-female commune,’ or an all-female anything for that matter, would be new, revolutionary, or in and of itself ‘liberating for the females.’” This rejection of female communes struck at the heart of the difference between radical and liberal feminism. Many radical feminists argued that liberation could only be truly achieved through

⁶³ Matthew D. Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); 72, 74.

⁶⁴ An early supporter of the Equal Rights Amendment, Paschall would eventually come out against the ERA. During the 1980s she served in the Reagan administration as a liaison to the President’s Task Force on Legal Equality for Women.

organizations and in spaces devoid of men. Paschall disagreed. As she stated later in the article, “I do not share the fear expressed by some of my younger sisters that women can develop strength only away from men. My fight for liberation as a woman is to remove the restrictions which society has placed on me simply because I am female.”⁶⁵ Sally Gabb, a member of the *Bird’s* women’s caucus, contacted Paschall about the article and told her that the caucus considered it “derogatory” to women and that it would not be run.

Paschall fought back. In a letter to the entire *Bird* staff she accused the paper of violating its principles. Stating that she had always worked under the understanding that her columns would be edited for length and space but not “content or point of view,” Paschall found “any kind of ‘censorship’ on your part completely out of character” and concluded by reminding the staff it should “expect me to protest what I understand to be a violation of freedom of the press in THE BIRD as quickly as in other publications.” She also issued an ultimatum. She would submit no further columns until the one under discussion had been printed and would cease sending future articles if they also faced the possibility of a veto by the women’s caucus based on content.⁶⁶ The paper acquiesced to her demands and printed the column in the next issue along with a rebuttal by a female staff member.

The experience had an impact on Paschall and over the next several months she began inquiring about the paper’s management structure and the role of the women’s caucus. She clearly did not care for the cooperative model of participatory journalism the *Bird* had adopted, noting in several letters to the paper her frustration at not knowing who was in charge of what at any given time. In August she contacted the paper with a series of questions about who could participate in weekly coop meetings and the role of the women’s caucus in determining what the

⁶⁵ Eliza Paschall, “Womans Commune—Yes—or—No?,” *Great Speckled Bird* III, no. 17 (April 27, 1970); 16.

⁶⁶ Eliza Paschall to Bird Staff,” 23 April 1970, Eliza K. Paschall Papers, Box 19, Emory MARBL.

paper published about women's liberation. By this time she also believed she did not have the full support of the staff and asked if people at the paper wished her to continue submitting articles.

Her columns appeared sporadically over the next few months and by November she decided to end her relationship with the *Bird*. In her public resignation letter, which the *Bird* agreed to print, she placed most of the blame at the feet of the women's caucus and its radical feminist ideals. "I cannot accept," she stated, "that all women connected with the Bird are expected to participate in The Women's Caucus or that The Women's Caucus should have veto rights over anything appearing the paper relating to women's rights, sex discrimination, etc. . . I do not believe the best interests of women or men are served by segregation based on sex."⁶⁷ But, in a personal letter to Tom Coffin and Gene Guerrero, she listed more complex reasons for severing ties with the paper. In general, she felt the paper had diminished in quality. She lamented the lack of local news coverage (which the paper would increase over the next several years) and also a decrease in journalistic standards. Reporting had become highly subjective, the use of pseudonyms by reporters made it hard to understand whose viewpoint the reader received, and the overall tone of the paper had become "shrill."⁶⁸

These criticisms could have been leveled at the underground press as a whole. Most papers practiced a style of journalism similar to that used by the *Bird*. Paschall's criticism, however, hinted at a larger problem within the New Left. By the dawn of the 1970s the radicalization of the movement had led to ideological rigidity among its members. Many political activists now considered themselves revolutionary communists and the New Left splintered into several Marxist-based factions, each convinced they had the correct "ideological

⁶⁷ Eliza Paschall, Letter to the Editor, 14 November 1970, Eliza K. Paschall Papers, Box 19, Emory MARBL.

⁶⁸ Eliza Paschall to Gene Guerrero and Tom Coffin, 14 November 1970, Eliza K. Paschall Papers, Box 19, Emory MARBL.

line.” These issues worked their way into the underground press, including the *Bird*. As John McMillian notes, in their search for the “correct revolutionary formula, some underground journalists became increasingly enamored with Marxism-Leninism . . . and as a result began diluting the distinctive, regional flavor of their newspapers”⁶⁹ As shown in the previous chapter, the antiwar movement wasted a great deal of time arguing over the correct role of anti-imperialism as championed by RYM II. The fight against global imperialism and the communist organizations it inspired gained converts in Atlanta and on the *Bird* staff. In 1972, conflicts based on these issues almost killed the *Bird*.

By the fall of that year two factions had developed on the paper’s staff. Communists and those supportive of global revolutionary movements comprised one group. Some in this group belonged to the October League, launched by former members of RYM II. This organization and its supporters argued that the *Bird* needed to become a more communist-oriented paper. Broad coverage, particularly of cultural issues, should be reduced and replaced by content that supported Maoist doctrine. According to Max Elbaum, the New Left’s general stance against anti-imperialism had led some radicals to embrace Maoist thought which provided “the most elaborate framework available to early 1970s revolutionaries . . . and served as the new movement’s strongest single reference point.”⁷⁰ Gay liberationists, cultural radicals, feminists and socialists comprised the second faction.

These two groups battled with each other during weekly staff meetings during the last months of 1972. Coverage of women’s liberation and gay rights became two particularly controversial topics of debate. The New Communist Movement (of which the October League was a part) recognized gender inequality but by focusing solely on a class-based approach to the

⁶⁹ John McMillian, *Smoking Typewriters*, 174.

⁷⁰ Max Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals turn to Lenin, Mao and Che* (New York: Verso, 2002); 140.

issue it “glossed over the depth and complexity of sexism as a form of oppression in its own right.” New Communists dismissed gay liberation entirely, considering it “an issue for privileged whites at best and a backward distraction from the class struggle at worst, and the majority of early groups prohibited open gays and lesbians from being members.”⁷¹ Communists at the *Bird* won enough fights during editorial meetings to increase the amount of column space given to international politics and the global revolutionary struggle, but at a cost. The adoption of such a political hard-line alienated many of the paper’s readers. The *Bird*’s circulation began to drop as the paper isolated itself from its more politically moderate and culturally-oriented readers. As readership declined and internal tensions mounted, the staff questioned if the *Bird* had served its purpose and needed to cease publication.

The struggle between the two factions came to a resolution in January. In the second issue of the new year the staff announced that the next issue would be the last one. The decision rested on the fact that the “people presently on paid staff are leaving the paper, and no new staff members for the paper as it is have come forward.”⁷² The announcement pushed many in the community into action. At the next coop meeting sixty to seventy people showed up interested in working for the paper. A more moderate new staff was formed and had the *Bird*’s next issue on the stands at the end of the month. It included an analysis of recent problems and laid out the paper’s new agenda. In the past few years the staff had “become more afraid of people,” and “shut ourselves off from other people and the society around us.” This would not happen again. The new *Bird* promised a wider range of coverage while remaining the voice of the Left in Atlanta. “We are political people—socialists,” they explained, “but we believe that having a socialist politics isn’t just ‘heavy’ stuff. It is the way you live your life . . . the way you love,

⁷¹ Ibid, 137, 139.

⁷² Birdflock, “Important Notice to Our Readers,” *Great Speckled Bird* VI, no. 2 (January 15, 1973); 3.

cook, struggle and change.” The paper would aim for “a balance between things—news and analysis, ‘politics’ and culture, private and social, local and national.”⁷³

Losing a Community, Losing a Voice

The new *Bird's* launch came at a moment of transition, locally and nationally. Two days before its first issue went on sale, direct U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War ended with the signing of the Paris Peace Accords. More than any other political issue, opposition to the Vietnam War fueled the development of the New Left after 1965 and held it together, however tenuously, into the 1970s. The end of the war effectively killed what remained of a unified movement. From 1973 onward political, social and cultural radicals had a wide selection of issue to support (feminism, gay rights, environmentalism, consumer advocacy, to name just a few), but no longer one to unify them. The end of the war meant in a very real sense the end of the Sixties.

In Atlanta, the *Bird* staff and other New Leftists had to adapt to a changing activist landscape. The physical boundaries of the local community had changed and shifted. By the beginning of 1973, the Strip had long ceased to exist as the epicenter of hip culture and politics.⁷⁴ From the mid-1960s to the end of the decade it provided an oasis of free expression and free thinking in a desert of conservatism and conformity. The very behaviors that created the need for this oasis had gained wider acceptance within mainstream American society by the 1970s. As migration to the neighborhood slowed and then reversed itself, many hip businesses closed. While a few remnants of the countercultural heyday remained, the Strip would primarily serve the neighborhood's growing gay community before being bulldozed to make way for the

⁷³ The New Birdstaff, “Rejoice! The Bird Flies On,” *Great Speckled Bird* VI, no. 3 (January 29, 1973); 3.

⁷⁴ Please see chapter eight for an analysis of the Strip's demise.

skyscrapers which now define the area. The political Left had also abandoned the Strip for the nearby Little Five Points neighborhood. The *Bird* itself would move to the area in July 1975. This proved to be its last move and put it close to the headquarters of the Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance and WRFG, a listener-supported radio station which grew out of the local New Left and had close ties with the *Bird*.⁷⁵

Money issues and changing tastes finally killed the *Great Speckled Bird*. The paper had been many things to many people during its existence but it ultimately was a business which needed to generate revenue. Between 1973 and 1976, the *Bird* failed to hold on to the culturally and politically progressive readership that had sustained the paper from 1968 onward. By the summer of 1973 the paper began holding a series of benefit events (including a two night concert series that included Lynyrd Skynyrd), and regularly requested donations in its pages. Several factors led to the paper's lack of readership and revenue. First, the paper encountered competition from other weeklies. The *Atlanta Gazette*, founded by former *Bird* staffer Rick Brown, and *Creative Loafing*, provided some local news coverage but focused primarily on youth-oriented culture. The demise of political activism and the widespread dissemination of the counterculture into mainstream society put these new papers much more in touch with the tastes of the young, hip reading public. As a result, record companies began switching their advertisements from the *Bird* to these new weeklies, a major source of income which the *Bird* had a monopoly over for years.⁷⁶ The gay community also had its own paper, the *Atlanta Barb*, which began publication in 1974 and that drew away another important segment of the *Bird*'s readership.⁷⁷ Its circulation remained steady at ten to twelve thousand copies an issue through

⁷⁵ Patrick K. Frye, "The Great Speckled Bird," 92.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 99

⁷⁷ *Atlanta Barb*, I, no. 1, Atlanta Lesbian and Gay Thing Papers, Series I, subseries 19, Box 1, Kenan Research Center, Atlanta History Center, Atlanta, GA.

the beginning of 1975 but the staff anticipated a reduction in these numbers as advertising revenue dwindled.

The experience of the *Bird* mirrored that of the underground press as a whole. Some of the most successful underground papers had ceased operation by the beginning of 1973, including the *Rat* in New York, *Space City!* in Houston and the *Berkeley Tribe*. Most that remained encountered competition from “alternative weeklies” like *Creative Loafing*. Founded on a firmer financial footing than underground papers, these new publications were often free, focused on writing of the highest caliber and, while left-leaning, did not “see themselves as appendages to a social movement.”⁷⁸

The *Bird* still did and as money troubles mounted the staff debated how to run a successful, radical paper in a competitive market that had grown wearing of activism. In February 1975, staff member Doyle Neimann penned an insightful and well-crafted analysis of the *Bird*'s problems and possible paths forward. He argued that the paper, while still associated with the counterculture by many Atlantans, had ceased serving that community. “The trend for the past several years,” he stated, “has been away from the direction that the young, hip, white audience has been moving in. Their concerns, certainly to the extent that they center of consumption and escapism, have not been our concerns.” Neimann noted that *Creative Loafing* and the *Atlanta Gazette* did a better job of targeting that market, making any attempt by the *Bird* to court that audience futile. Instead, he argued the paper should adhere to its left-leaning roots and provide content that aided the global socialist struggle. As Neimann passionately stated, “We must look towards a left community more pervasive, more organized and more powerful that what now exists, a left community that could begin to compete for power with bourgeois forces who now wield it. We must believe that what we do with the *Bird* can make a difference

⁷⁸ John McMillian, *Smoking Typewriters*, 173

and can help to build that kind of movement.”⁷⁹ A less insightful but equally committed staffer hoped to inspire the cooperative by noting that “the Bird faces a difficult situation. As did Lenin, Mao, Castro, George Washington and other freedom fighters. The important thing is not to give up, or let classist, capitalist ideals be our goal, our standard of ‘success.’”⁸⁰

The *Bird* staff did not quit and the paper continued for another twenty months but only with great difficulty. Money woes plagued the publication. In June 1975 the *Bird* became a free paper (if acquired in the Atlanta area) in hopes of increasing circulation.⁸¹ This proved largely unsuccessful. In the last issue of volume eight the staff announced the *Bird* would cease being a weekly and instead come out once a month. Deeply in debt and composed of an all-volunteer staff by this point, the paper had made a final plea for financial help a few weeks earlier but raised only enough funds to pay less than half of its publishing bill. The cooperative considered moving to monthly status the only viable alternative to ending publication. Circulation would be limited to five thousand copies with most being sent to subscribers.⁸² This change also failed to solve the paper’s money problems and in October 1976, the *Great Speckled Bird* died.

In its final issue, the *Bird* published the thoughts of several founders and long-time staff members regarding the paper and its history. Those who had been there at the paper’s founding or who joined the cooperative in its first years understood the symbiotic relationship between the *Bird* and the hip community it served and sustained. Don Spiecher noted that “when the Bird began publishing, it arose from, served and unified the struggle of a growing, committed, but fatally narrow-based community in Atlanta. Inevitably the community faded and so must the

⁷⁹ Doyle Neimann, “Some Notes on the Political and Economic Crisis facing the Bird,” February 1975, Great Speckled Bird Papers, Box 5, Emory MARBL.

⁸⁰ Anonymous, “The Bird is a Socialist Paper,” Great Speckled Bird Papers, Box 5, Emory MARBL.

⁸¹ *Great Speckled Bird* VIII, no. 22 (May 29, 1975), 1.

⁸² “Coming Soon—A Monthly Bird,” *Great Speckled Bird* VIII, no. 51 (December 18, 1975); 2.

Bird.” Interviewed after the paper’s demise, Berl Boykin made a similar argument, claiming that “the Bird died because the counterculture died.”⁸³ These assessments, while largely correct from an economic viewpoint, tended to overlook the more complex relationship between the *Bird* and the city’s hip enclave in the Strip. From its beginnings the *Bird* strived to be, above all, a political paper. This contributed to a wary relationship with the counterculture. By the late 1960s the New Left came to appreciate the political aspects of cultural forms and the *Bird* duly reported on them as a service to its hippie readership, but the paper’s nourishment of the Strip grew from the desire to create a real alternative community with political power that could affect change, not simply a new bohemian grove.

The melding of politics and culture served the paper well during its height from 1968 to 1971 but as the counterculture waned, activism went out of style among the nation’s youth and the hip community began disappearing in the early Seventies, the paper reverted to its political roots with little regret. Unfortunately for the socialists and Marxist-Leninists who staffed the paper, no new community arose to embrace the publication. While the death of the counterculture played a part, the *Bird*’s ultimate demise came from the unwillingness of the staff to abandon its left-wing principles or correctly gauge the political climate of the 1970s. As radical politics fell out of fashion among the nation’s left in the 1970s, the *Bird* refused to accompany many of its former supporters and compatriots on the journey back towards liberalism and mainstream electoral politics. In the end, the revolution would have to wait and the *Bird* would not be part of it.

⁸³ “Mirroring and Defining the Struggles,” *Great Speckled Bird* IX, no. 9 (October, 1976); 15; Patrick K. Frye, “The Great Speckled Bird,” 98.

CHAPTER 6

MOVING INTO A TIGHT SQUEEZE: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRIP, 1966-

1969

*“Now, hey you, mister, can’t you read?
You’ve got to have a shirt and a tie to get a seat
You can’t even watch, no you can’t eat
You ain’t supposed to be here.”*

“[Signs](#),” Five Man Electrical Band

On January 31, 1962, The Uptown Association mailed its first planning study, *Uptown Ideas*, to local businessmen. The Uptown neighborhood had long existed as a residential and small business district several miles north of downtown Atlanta but big changes loomed over the horizon for Atlanta by the early 1960s and the business and property owners who operated in Uptown wanted to make sure they benefited. In a cover letter accompanying the thirty-three page booklet (densely packed with photographs and colored illustrations) the association’s executive director Richard W. Bivens stated with enthusiasm, “Big things are happening . . . many Uptowners are making dramatic improvements . . . others are making plans . . . Uptown is on the move—FORWARD.” To help encourage commercial development in the area, *Uptown Ideas* offered a vision of progress based on the expansion of surface roads and freeways, the building of a rapid transit system (a “MUST”), and thoughtful construction on its numerous vacant or underdeveloped lots.¹

¹ “Uptown Ideas,” Midtown Neighborhood Subject File, Kenan Research Center, Atlanta History Center, Atlanta, Ga.

While rapid transit, new highways and tall buildings represented the area's future, these things certainly did not reflect the reality of 1962 Uptown. Several months after *Uptown Ideas* found its way into the hands of business owners, a local newspaper described the same neighborhood as "'Atlanta's Own Greenwich Village.'" In the article, Bob Willimon explored the youthful arts community in the area, relating how a pedestrian strolling through the district could hear classical piano music emanating from Victorian-era mansions, take in a film at one of the South's oldest art cinemas, or enjoy an exotic gourmet meal, all in an area that retained its Southern charm. How could it not, when Margaret Mitchell wrote most of *Gone with the Wind* in an apartment building close to nearby Piedmont Park?²

Looking at the area today (renamed "Midtown" as the city's boundaries pushed northward in the 1960s and 1970s), with its collection of shimmering glass skyscrapers that house the local business elite on the top floors and upscale shops and restaurants at street level, it seems a foregone conclusion that the Uptown Association's vision for the district would have easily pushed aside the older neighborhood. But the victory of the business community came later than many of its members had hoped for in the heady days of the early 1960s and not without facing opposition from local residents, including the largest collection of hips in the Southeastern United States. From 1962 through the end of the decade, Atlanta's Greenwich Village not only survived but became a thriving urban countercultural center. But, this proved a daunting task. Facing constant harassment from city officials, police and conservative local citizens, residents in the Strip possessed a limited number of strategies to help them carve out a sustainable community during a period of rapid economic growth and social change in Atlanta. By

² Bob Willimon, "Atlanta's Own Greenwich Village," *Sunday Times Observer*, May 27, 1962, 10.

1969, it appeared that these efforts had failed as violence erupted in the Strip and its existence began to be questioned by both hips and straights.

The History of Midtown Atlanta and the Strip

Before it became the hip capital of the Southeastern United States, Midtown had served as a solidly middle class residential and shopping district. As the city expanded and changed, the boundaries of Midtown shifted, achieving their present locations by the early 1960s. The neighborhood consisted of three distinct but interrelated parts.

Piedmont Park comprised the northeastern section of the neighborhood. The second part lay west of the park, running north from 10th Street to 17th Street, and west from Piedmont Avenue to Spring Street. This part of Midtown has had several monikers during its history—the 10th Street Area, the 10th Street Business District, Tight Squeeze, The Strip—and all still were in use during the 1960s and early 1970s, depending on who was discussing the area. The third and largest section of Midtown lay south of the park. Consisting largely of single family homes and apartment buildings, it runs east from Spring Street to the Norfolk-Southern Railroad line. 10th Street runs along its northern border and Ponce de Leon Avenue exists as its southern border.

Midtown experienced its heyday between 1920 and 1950. In addition to the hundreds of single family homes, the area contained a thriving shopping district on Peachtree Street, running approximately from 8th Street north to 14th Street, which grew substantially during the late 1930s and 1940s. Several major banks and grocery stores opened branches in the area and at one point in the 1940s the Tenth Street Merchants

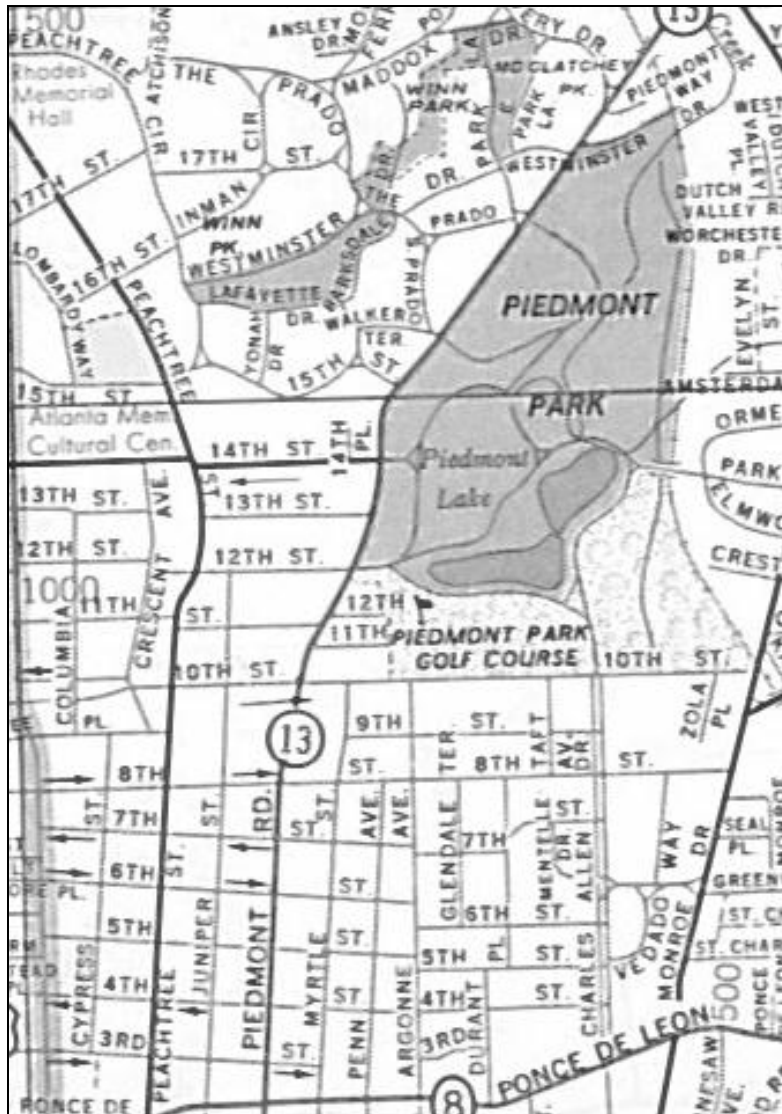


FIGURE 6-1 Midtown Atlanta in 1971

Association boasted over one hundred members.¹ An influx of people into the city during the war years, however, helped create a housing shortage. In response, the number of rental units in the neighborhood increased as new apartment buildings went up and owners converted single family dwellings into rooming houses. This trend continued

¹ Jack Hazan, "The Three Faces of Tenth Street," *Real Estate Atlanta*, February, 1974, 28; Charles Rutheiser, *Imagineering Atlanta: The Politics of Place in the City of Dreams* (New York: Verso, 1996), 184.

during the nation's economic boom in the 1950s. The neighborhood became a favored destination for young single people moving into the city, attracted by jobs and cheap rent. Midtown's bohemian reputation also grew during this period due to its numerous theatres, art galleries, and large number of students from the nearby Atlanta College of Art who lived in neighborhood. The opening of the Atlanta Memorial Arts Center in 1963 further strengthened the district's attractiveness to artists and bohemians.²

While Midtown's reputation as a cultural center grew during the early 1960s, it lost its appeal as a favorable neighborhood for the city's growing middle class. Young families, once the backbone of the neighborhood, moved further up Peachtree Street into Buckhead or to one of the new suburbs sprouting up in nearby Dekalb and Cobb counties. The physical appearance of the area declined as numerous landlords failed to sustain a high level of maintenance on their rental units. The business district also experienced a downward turn due to several factors, including the 1964 opening of the Ansley Mall shopping center just a few miles away, the decision to restrict on-street parking along Peachtree Street, and re-designating several avenues in the neighborhood from two-way to one-way.³ While the older residents and merchants who remained in Midtown would later blame the influx of hippies for the decline of area, the process of change had been underway for at least a decade by the time they began arriving in 1966.

² Rutheiser, *Imagineering Atlanta*, 185.

³ Jack Hazan, "The Three Faces of Tenth Street," 29-30

The Hip Community on Peachtree Street

The Catacombs and the Twelfth Gate, two coffeehouses which opened in 1967, played a pivotal role in the development of the Strip as a gathering spot for Atlanta's hip community. The presence of an existing population of artists, students, and young adults in Midtown make it difficult to determine with accuracy the exact date that 1960s-era hips arrived in the neighborhood since, far from moving into a cultural void, the arrival of a small but growing population of hippies signaled an internal shift in the area from the bohemianism of the 1950s and early 1960s to the counterculture that emerged by the mid-1960s.⁴ This shift also occurred in other cities as the Beats fell out of fashion and hippie districts emerged in the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood of San Francisco, along Telegraph Avenue in Berkeley, in New York City's West Village, and Yorkville Avenue in Toronto, to name just a few. Hippies arrived later in Atlanta than these other locations but, by 1966, a small group had made their presence known by taking up residence on the

⁴ Finding a term that describes collectively who lived in the Strip can be difficult. Studies conducted at the time failed to provide information about this population by breaking it down into subcategories or tracking accurately how it changed over time. In other words, all Strip residents were "hippies" throughout the period. Magazines and newspapers reinforced this usage by regularly referring to the Strip as "hippieland" or a "hippie colony." In its first few years this would be largely accurate as the majority of Strip residents adhered to hippie values. They advocated for peace and love, avoided political involvement, used drugs as a means of personal exploration and discovery (not just for recreational purposes), and rejected materialism and capitalism. Over time, however, this original group of hippies became an equal, than smaller, part of a growing population composed of runaways, political radicals, hip young professionals, rock musicians, hip entrepreneurs, and suburban "plastic" hippies who spent extended periods of time in the Strip but regularly returned to their parent's homes. While the physical appearance of these Strip residents led straight Atlantans to believe they were hippies since they had long hair and adopted hippie fashions, a dwindling number followed basic hippie values as the years passed although, overall, these people were still hip in a general sense by existing in opposition to straight society. This presents a dilemma to anyone studying the Strip. At what point did it stop being a haven for hippies and evolve into a more complex and general hip district? I argue that this transition started in 1968 and had been completed by early 1969. As this chapter will show, during that period the introduction of politics in the Strip through the founding of the *Great Speckled Bird* connected the district to the city's wider hip community. In addition, its growing regional reputation as a welcoming alternative community, the opening of hip businesses on Peachtree Street and the use of Piedmont Park as both a political meeting place and concert venue attracted a wide variety of new residents. As a result, I will use the term "hippie" to describe these residents through the end of 1968. From that point forward, the Strip existed as a "hip district" rather than a hippie one and the term "hippie" will be used in quotes or when discussing actual hippies.

sidewalks of Peachtree Street in Midtown. Although highly visible, this group of approximately 200 to 300 people, some not yet eighteen-years-old, lacked any cohesion or sense of community.⁵ This changed in early 1967 with the opening of the Catacombs and the emergence of David Braden as an early figurehead in the hippie community.

A native of Greenville, Alabama, Braden settled in Atlanta in 1962 after running out of money on his way to New York. He worked several jobs in the Midtown area, including a stint as a model at the Atlanta Art School.⁶ In 1966, Braden, along with business partner Kathryn Palmer, opened an art gallery, the Mandorla, which soon found a permanent home in a two story house on the corner of 14th and Peachtree Streets. The gallery operated on the first floor and in the basement Braden opened The Catacombs, a coffeehouse and music club that became a favorite gathering place for local hippies. Strip resident Rupert Fike remembered that Catacombs as a “mythical place.” “You would get in there and strobs would be flashing, acid rock [playing], people jumping up and down. You couldn’t believe you were still in Atlanta.”⁷ Older than many of the area’s first hippies (Braden was in his late twenties when he opened The Catacombs), he recognized that many of them had no place to live and began renting out beds on the second floor of the house to solve this problem. As a result, he acquired the nickname “Mother David,” a moniker that reflected his role as caretaker for the burgeoning hippie population but which also derived from his open homosexuality.⁸

⁵ Rick Briant Dandes, “Where Did All the Hippies Go?,” *Atlanta Weekly*, December 5, 1982, 17.

⁶ Bucky Weatherall, interviewed by the Strip Project, available online at: http://www.thestriproject.com/interview%20site/Oral_History_of_The_Strip/Bucky_W.html

⁷ Rupert Fike, interviewed by the Strip Project, available at http://www.thestriproject.com/interview%20site/Oral_History_of_The_Strip/Rupert.html

⁸ Dandes, “Where Did All the Hippies Go?,” 17; Paul Hemphill, “Hippies Here to Stay Despite Pressure, Leader Vows,” *Atlanta Journal*, November 17, 1967, A2; Jim Gwin, “Convicted,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, I no. 4 (May 9, 1968), 10. *Atlanta Journal* reporter Orville Gaines noted that when police arrived at the Catacombs in search of a man who had been reportedly shot and asked to speak with Braden, several

The Strip's population swelled during the summer of 1967 (a process that would occur each summer for the next several years), leading to an increase in police and media attention being focused on the district and, specifically, Braden. While Mother David's age and activities placed him in a position of some responsibility in the Strip, the local press and city leaders hyped this role and labeled him the "leader of the hippies," giving him far more authority, and the hippie population far more cohesion, than actually existed.⁹ A local reporter who spent five weeks "undercover" in the Strip credited Braden with *authorizing* the city's first "Be-In," an unlikely scenario among a population that questioned leaders and rejected rigid structures and hierarchies.¹⁰ Regardless of whom city officials considered its leader, Atlanta police had been continually attempted to control the hippies in Midtown and considered the Catacombs the center of countercultural activity. In addition to constant foot patrols of the section of Peachtree between 10th and 14th Streets, they entered the club on several occasions to collect teenagers who had been reported absent from school.¹¹

As the summer progressed, city officials embraced a more aggressive effort at eliminating the hippie population before it grew much larger. The national media attention given to the hippies in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury neighborhood likely influenced this change in policy. In January 1967, San Francisco's hippies held the first

hippies told the officers that "She's in bed," which would support the argument that Braden's nickname originated in part from his sexuality. See Orville Gaines, "Hippieland Combed for Man," *Atlanta Journal*, October 26, 1967, A4.

⁹ Michael A. Palmer, "Hippie Attends a Love-In, The Flower Children's Pet," *Atlanta Journal*, October 23, 1967, A1; Gaines, "Hippieland Combed for Man," *Atlanta Journal*, A4; Hemphill, "Hippies Here to Stay Despite Pressure, Leader Vows," A2.

¹⁰ Michael A. Palmer, "Hippie Attends a Love-In, The Flower Children's Pet," *Atlanta Journal*, October 23, 1967, A1. Reporter Michael Palmer wrote a two part series on Atlanta's hippies after claiming to have spent five weeks living among them. While parts of the article appear aimed at shocking readers, Palmer discussed several elements of the hippie community that would define it over the next several years, including widespread drug use, housing problems, and its relationship with local motorcycle gangs.

¹¹ Paul Hemphill, "9-Day Education for Korey Trips Up 'Mother David,'" *Atlanta Journal*, November 7, 1967, A2

“Human Be-in,” an event that gained widespread coverage. Many Americans became aware of hippies for the first time when, during the next several months, they turned on the evening news and saw barely clad women and men with long hair dancing freely to rock music, or opened up *Time* and *Life* magazines to read about the growing popularity of marijuana and LSD use. As summer approached, thousands of potential hippies, runaways, and college students hoping to become part of the “Summer of Love” descended upon the new epicenter of the nation’s counterculture. Far from finding peace and love, many of these recent transplants encountered a city unable to handle the numerous social problems caused by a large influx of young people. Housing shortages, disease, petty crime and an increase in professional drug dealers led to the “rapid destabilization and disintegration of the Haight-Ashbury community.”¹² That October, Haight-Ashbury residents organized a “Death of the Hippie” march in recognition of the rapid transformation the neighborhood had undergone.¹³

In Atlanta, police repeatedly targeted the Catacombs and local hippie “crashpads” (residences rented by one or a few people who then opened up the house to numerous hippies as a temporary place to stay or “crash”). In July 1967, the club temporarily closed on charges of fire and building hazards, but reopened by the end of the summer.¹⁴ In August, police arrested twenty-seven hippies at a house near Piedmont Park. Police charged the apartment’s official resident, Richard Kewet, with violating Georgia Code 20-11, “operating a dive,” a charge that would be used repeatedly in the campaign against

¹² Christopher Gair, *The American Counterculture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 133.

¹³ Barney Hoskyns, *Beneath the Diamond Sky: Haight-Ashbury, 1965-1970* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997), 163.

¹⁴ Ann Carter, “Hangout of Hippies Closed as Hazard,” *Atlanta Journal*, July 23, 1967, B18.

the Strip over the next several years.¹⁵ A broadly worded statute, it gave police wide latitude to charge the operator of any social function or business with a crime if officers observed any behavior they disliked. These charges would often get dismissed in court, but attaining a conviction and upholding the law proved secondary goals to local law enforcement. In other words, the charge of “occupying a dive,” along with several other equally broadly worded statutes, proved powerful weapons that local police and city officials used to disrupt, harass and intimidate hippies.

Local officials continued targeting Braden and the Catacombs through the autumn months. Local police, aided by two federal narcotics officers, raided the coffeehouse in the early hours of November 3, arresting thirteen people, including Mother David. The raid occurred after Anthony Korey, a rookie Atlanta policeman, spent nine days undercover as a hippie, purchasing a wide variety of illegal drugs and completing warrants on those who would be arrested. Interviewed by the local press about his experience, Korey claimed that “this movement is more disastrous to our country than Nazism was to Germany.”¹⁶ He went on to argue that hippies would “kill” to pass on their “philosophy of love,” citing as proof the fact that he had witnessed hippies with guns, knives, and other weapons. While clearly passionate in his distaste for hippies, Korey misunderstood who was considered one, stating that there were two kinds, the “sedate group” and the “violent or motorcycle group.”¹⁷ The former favored drugs while the latter brandished weapons. Hippies and motorcycle gangs both belonged to the wider hip community in Atlanta during the late 1960s but would never be considered interchangeable by those with proper knowledge of the counterculture. Korey’s

¹⁵ “Redcoats’ Raid Party, 27 Hippies Arrested,” *Atlanta Journal*, August 23, 1967, A2

¹⁶ Orville Gaines, “Child Could Buy Pot, ‘Hippie’ Officer Says,” *Atlanta Journal*, November 4, 1967, B7

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

confusion originated from the fact that both groups had taken up residence on the Strip and possessed a general sense of being outside the social and cultural mainstream. They did not, however, share similar philosophies about life.

The future of the hippie population became a point of debate following the raid. The arrest of Braden, along with almost thirty others, led the Atlanta police to consider the nascent movement dead. Informed that hippies had abandoned the Strip following the raid, Superintendent of Detectives Clinton Chafin stated proudly that, “it’s my opinion that this will finish them.”¹⁸ Braden, out of jail on bond by the middle of November, disagreed with Chafin’s assessment. Placing the hippies as the heirs of Hemingway and the Beats of the 1950s, Braden predicted the local movement would continue to grow but move off of Peachtree Street and east into the nearby Little Five Points neighborhood. Once there, the community would expand through the help of local churches, the opening of health clinics, and the launch of a hippie newspaper.¹⁹ Neither Chafin nor Braden got it completely correct. Chafin’s hopeful wish that the hippie movement had been eradicated in Atlanta proved quite wrong as it grew dramatically over the next few years. Braden came closer, correct in his assertion that the community would grow, but his prediction that it would quickly shift to another part of the city proved false.

Braden’s troubles continued into 1968. On January 30, the trial for his arrest in November resulted in a one-year suspended sentence. On March 12, however, a grand jury indicted Mother David for selling marijuana to a minor, nineteen-year-old Chip Burson. Many hippies and radicals, at the time and later, believed that Braden had been framed by law enforcement as part of the ongoing campaign against the Strip. After an

¹⁸ Hemphill, “9-Day Education for Korey Trips Up ‘Mother David,’” A2

¹⁹ Hemphill, “Hippies Here to Stay Despite Pressure, Leader Vows,” A2.

attempt by his lawyer to claim insanity failed, Braden pleaded guilty on April 25 and received a seven year sentence. All appeal attempts failed and Braden eventually ended up serving several years in prison.²⁰ The Catacombs did not last long following Braden's conviction. A local realty company bought the property in the summer of 1968 and invalidated the club's lease.²¹

While no real hippie leader existed in the Strip's first years, Braden helped foster a sense of shared identity through the creation of a space for hippies to gather and by offering free housing to some of the younger and more vulnerable. The relative ease with which city officials could remove Braden and the Catacombs revealed the hippie population's weaknesses and lack of power in several ways. First, Braden did not possess the financial resources to wage a prolonged legal battle against city officials. Second, the lack of a connection in 1967 between the local New Left and counterculture meant Braden could not draw upon the activist background of people who could have organized a campaign in his support or protested police harassment. Third, no direct lines of communication had been created between hippies and city officials, who considered them nothing more than an unwelcome and potentially dangerous presence. Over the next several years each of these issues would be addressed in the hip community but the most important would be the establishment of a working relationship with city officials. In most cases this would not be achieved directly but through the efforts of a third party or organization. The earliest and most successful case of this occurring can be seen in the creation of the Twelfth Gate coffeehouse. The Twelfth Gate, operated by the Reverend Bruce Donnelly, aimed to provide more than a social gathering spot. While

²⁰ Jim Gwin, "Convicted." *Great Speckled Bird*, I no. 4 (April 26, 1968), 1, 10; "Braden's Conviction Appealed," *Great Speckled Bird*, I, no. 5 (May 10, 1968), 3.

²¹ Tony Paris, "The Catacombs is Reborn," *Atlanta Gazette* V no. 11 (12 November 1978), 9.

Braden's attempts at helping the strip's hippies failed due to pressure from the police and a lack of resources, Donnelly's efforts at the Twelfth Gate created a bridge between the hippies and straight Atlantans, an effort that contributed to the growth of the hip community over the next two years.

While the Twelfth Gate opened its Strip location in the fall of 1967, the coffeehouse had already been operating for almost a year in the basement of Grace Methodist Church, located on Ponce de Leon in the southeast corner of Midtown. Catering to the neighborhood's large number of college students and young adults, it proved overwhelmingly successful. Diane Smith, an early patron of the Twelfth Gate, noted that on some nights almost three hundred people would show up, spilling out on to the church's lawn. Soon, however, Smith and other patrons "got the idea we were less than welcome" from some members of the church. After an attempt to integrate coffeehouse patrons more fully into the congregation failed and as complaints from residents who lived near the church grew, the idea arose to move the coffeehouse to the Strip in the hopes that "others could have a chance to find themselves—the way they had at the Grace coffeehouse." After gaining approval and funding from the Methodist North Georgia Conference, Donnelly left Grace Methodist and opened the Twelfth Gate as a separate ministry in a two story house at 36 10th Street, just off Peachtree Street.²²

The Twelfth Gate acted as a transitional establishment as the Strip shook off its reputation for 1950s-era bohemianism and became the center for the local 1960s counterculture. Street minister Harcourt "Harky" Klinefelter, a constant presence in the hip community during the late 1960s and early 1970s, credited the coffeehouse with

²² Ginger Hames, "Coffeehouses at Churches Gain Favor," *Atlanta Journal*, June 27, 1967, B5; Olive Ann Burns, "Coffeehouse Preach-In," *Atlanta Journal Constitution Magazine*, June 9, 1968, 30-31; Bruce Donnelly, interviewed by author, August 20, 2009.

being the first establishment in the Strip to contribute towards the building of an organized hip community while also being “the last of the Beatnik coffeehouses rather than the first hip coffeehouse.”²³ The services provided by the Twelfth Gate reflected both its connection to and distance from the hippie population. Operating as a Methodist ministry, it offered religious services on Sundays and maintained throughout the week a message of Christian love and brotherhood. The coffeehouse targeted young middle-class people by creating an avant-garde but safe environment and by barring the more radical, challenging and illegal elements of the counterculture that found a home at the Catacombs. The bands performed folk music instead of rock ‘n’ roll, patrons could purchase coffee and tea but no alcohol, and the smoke that filled the air came from tobacco not marijuana. A shop occupied the second floor and sold folk records and religious books but not water pipes or rolling papers. The Twelfth Gate attracted some “real” hippies but mostly large numbers of young people from the suburbs drawn to this diluted and tamed version of the counterculture.

In other ways, though, Donnelly and his staff catered to the more authentic rebelliousness and alienation present in 1960s youth culture. The Sunday church service often took place not at the coffeehouse but several blocks away in Piedmont Park. Attending the “Preach-in and Love Feast,” worshippers would hear Donnelly give sermons about how for centuries “turned-on types have experienced religious highs . . . without the use of mind-expanding drugs.” Open from 9 P.M. to midnight the rest of the week, the establishment offered other ways of experiencing the counterculture. Patrons

²³ Report on the 10th Street Area by Harcourt Klinefelter, Box 6, Community Council of the Atlanta Area Papers, MARBL, Atlanta, GA. Hereafter referred to as the CCAA Papers.

could enroll in a yoga class or purchase items with countercultural significance, such as candles, beads, incense and “psychedelic sunglasses.”²⁴

Donnelly fully understood that the Twelfth Gate attracted few real hippies off the Strip. Refuting accounts in local newspapers that the coffeehouse was a “hippie house,” Donnelly stated emphatically, “This is just not a hippie thing.” He noted that the young people who attended the coffeehouse “had too much sense to risk damage from LSD or a police record from marijuana.” Instead, his patrons were “bright, turned on to life, with a great depth and capacity for enjoyment.” They may have been hip but were certainly not hippies. Donnelly also noted the age distinction between people who came to the Twelfth Gate and hippies. His establishment served the local population of young single adults and college students between the ages of 18 and 26 while many hippies had yet to reach their eighteenth birthday. This also kept them away from the coffeehouse since, in his assessment, younger kids would rather dance to rock bands than listen to folk music and talk about weighty issues.²⁵

The public’s perception of the coffeehouse as a gathering spot for hippies, however, encouraged Donnelly to become familiar with members of the local hippie population. The growth of Atlanta’s hip community occurred largely after the Summer of Love, ensuring that it attracted both legitimate hippies and suburban teenagers seeking firsthand knowledge of what they had seen on television and in the press. Donnelly called these children “bubble-gum hippies” and “vacation hippies,” (also known as “plastic” hippies), noting that “they came from all over the South, but a lot of . . . runaways [were] from \$50,000 homes in the Atlanta suburbs.” As one of the few

²⁴ Burns, “Coffeehouse Preach-In,” 25-26.

²⁵ Burns, “Coffeehouse Preach-In,” 26, 28.

members of mainstream society familiar with the Strip, parents and the police contacted the minister to help them locate runaways. Donnelly quickly began receiving dozens of such requests each month. After the coffeehouse closed at midnight, the young minister visited the crash pads and apartments where hippies lived, looking for runaways.²⁶

Through his knowledge of the area, Donnelly understood that the hippie movement would not disappear and believed that city officials had adopted the wrong approach to dealing with it. Complaining that “the problems of runaways aren’t solved by police harassment,” and that the city possessed a social service infrastructure incapable of handling a “big migration of teenagers,” (not to mention older, legitimate hippies), he developed several programs to address the public health issues presented by a growing population of transient, unemployed young people. These programs helped hippies in a real way while also creating the first connections between Strip residents and rest of Atlanta, connections that would prove increasingly important as more people flocked to the area over the next two years. First, Donnelly attempted to help hippies avoid hunger by acting as a *de facto* booking agent for local organizations who wanted to gain a better understanding of the counterculture. Referring to himself jokingly as a “rent-a-hippie agency,” Donnelly fielded calls from religious youth groups, civic agencies and schools requesting folksingers or speakers. He would often send out people involved in the Twelfth Gate ministry but if these groups wanted “a real hippie,” Donnelly would visit crash-pads and apartments looking for a willing participant. He usually had little problem finding one since “hippies liked to talk about their thing. Besides, they’re usually hungry and churches have good suppers.”²⁷

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Burns, “Coffeehouse Preach-In,” 28, 29.

Countercultural lifestyles led to greater health problems than occasional hunger and Donnelly addressed this issue by sponsoring a health clinic starting in the fall of 1967. Dr. Joseph Hertell, a former national director of the American Red Cross and Sunday school teacher at Rock Springs Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, approached Donnelly about providing help in the area. He had recently visited the Strip, a trip prompted by the realization that many of his Sunday school students spent time at the coffeehouse. Donnelly informed Hertell that many young hippies needed health care. The doctor responded by running a free clinic out of Donnelly's office. The clinic proved an instant success and revealed the problems associated with living a countercultural lifestyle in an urban environment and the need for outside assistance in solving them. As Donnelly recalled, "We had a clinic . . . with just one doctor, man, and we couldn't take care of all the patients."²⁸

Several factors brought hippies to the clinic's door, which operated two nights a week. Poverty, poor housing conditions, sexual experimentation, drug use and the inexperience of teenagers and young adults in dealing with personal hygiene issues created a long and varied list of problems. Hertell encountered numerous cases of infectious hepatitis, hookworms, pinworms, and malnutrition. Many patients also came into the clinic suffering from venereal disease and drug-related problems. The clinic proved a safe haven for Atlanta's hippies who could not afford medical treatment or who hesitated going to nearby Grady Hospital, considering it a "place of last resort because of the [negative] attitudes of many people at Grady regarding hippies and the old fear of

²⁸ Burns, "Coffeehouse Preach-In," 29; Dandes, "Where Did All the Hippies Go?," 17.

being found out as drug users.”²⁹ The clinic also dealt with less critical health issues. In addition to the numerous hippie patients, Hertell saw a number of teenage clients from the city’s affluent suburbs looking for services or treatment that they could or would not get from their family physicians. This group of patients included many girls from North Atlanta wanting birth control. As a result, Hertell’s wife ended up doing triage at the clinic, separating the truly sick from those looking to hide their activities from their families.³⁰

The clinic ceased operation during the winter of 1968 due to legal difficulties with the city but planned to reopen in the spring. Hertell used this time to enlist the support needed to expand its staff and services. With Donnelly’s assistance, he approached the Fulton County Medical Society for help in operating the clinic. The society agreed and Dr. George Swerdloff, a retired dentist, organized the clinic’s expansion as a community project for the organization. The clinic moved out of the coffeehouse and set up its operations in the Boy Scout Hut located behind the First Presbyterian Church at 16th and Peachtree Streets. Supported by the medical society, it continued to operate two nights a week as it had the previous fall, but now offered a wider variety of services. Several medical doctors worked in rotation. In addition, a clinical psychologist donated his services and clients had access to a representative from Planned Parenthood and volunteer nurses from several of the city’s hospitals. In announcing the re-opening of the expanded clinic, Hertell and Donnelly stressed that it existed to serve Strip residents. The minister noted that the clinic offered a comprehensive set of services, not just help for

²⁹ Duane Beck, “Interim Report of the Fourteenth Street Area,” CCAA Papers, Box 1, MARBL, Atlanta, GA; Alex W. Williams, interviewed by author, July 27, 2009

³⁰ Dandes, “Where Did All the Hippies Go?”, 17, David Morrison, “10 Years Later . . . Or, Where Have All the Flower Children Gone,” *Atlanta Journal*, March 3, 1977, A8.

drug-related issues. “So many of these young people are confused and disillusioned with the movement,” Donnelly noted, “they don’t want to go home and lose face. These are the people we think we can help most.” To aid in making sure the clinic served the local community, a young woman from the Twelfth Gate staffed the front counter, screening out the “teenyboppers in sports cars” from the suburbs looking for birth control.³¹ The Twelfth Gate and the free clinic did more than provide needed social services. The efforts of Donnelly and Hertell lent credence to the notion that an actual community had emerged in the Strip, one that could, in a limited way, take care of its members. The coffeehouse and free clinic also created a bridge between prominent leaders in Atlanta and the hippie movement at a time when the only other contact it had with the city came in form of police harassment. The efforts of Donnelly and Hertell played key roles in the development of the city’s hip community.

Repression, Response, and Resistance

While hippies came to rely on the services provided by the Twelfth Gate and the free clinic, by the fall of 1967 they had made few efforts on their own to build and protect their presence in the area. This resulted in large part from a lack of organizing experience since few political activists had yet to move into the neighborhood. This changed in first months of 1968 as a growing number of radicals from local college campuses and the *Bird* offices began appearing in the Strip and encouraging it’s residents to organize.

Unfair treatment from local merchants became the first target of the newly politicized hippies. While the number of hip-owned stores in the Strip increased during

³¹ Philip Gailey, “Transient Hippie Clinic,” *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, June 2, 1968, A10.

1968, the bulk of merchants in the 8th to 14th Street section of Peachtree had been in operation long before hippies arrived in the area and were often ambivalent, quietly unwelcoming, or openly hostile to them. In November 1967, Miller Francis, who became a major arts columnist for the *Great Speckled Bird*, harshly criticized local hippies for tolerating such treatment and failing to organize effectively. In a column for the *AWIN Newsletter*, Miller noted that two Strip restaurants, Bradshaw's and The Pennant, had recently adopted policies denying service, "including use of a public telephone, to anyone with long hair or anyone whose dress includes an element which could be an excuse for a 'hippy' label." He categorized a recent demonstration at Bradshaw's a failure since protesting hippies had refused to develop a plan of effective action and instead let the event "degenerate into chants of 'Peace,' 'Freedom,' and 'Love.'" Francis furthered call out Atlanta's hippies for boycotting the previous summer's Hiroshima Day march. He placed the blame for this decision on David Braden. Miller stated Mother David opposed the march because it had been organized by communists and participating would "give the coffeehouse [the Catacombs] a bad name." He concluded by laying responsibility for change directly at the feet of hippies, who needed to fight "the 'second-class' citizenship currently forced upon them or the results would be nobody's fault but their own."³²

The police presented a far greater threat to hippies than local merchants. Disorganized and lacking any real power, hippies had few options in countering official repression. This began to change when the *Bird* started publication in March. Over the next several months the staff would draw on its activist past to help organize a response to this treatment. It also generated a groundswell of opposition to the police through the

³² Miller J. Francis, Jr., "Flower Power vs. Fascist Power," Atlanta Workshop in Nonviolence Newsletter, I, no. 6 (November/December 1967), 6-7, Box 2, Richard L. Stevens Papers, MARBL, Atlanta, GA.

publication of stories about the routine mistreatment of hippies by law enforcement officials. The *Bird*, echoing Miller's position from the previous fall, emphasized the importance of community development as a form of resistance. In April, *Bird* staff writer Don Speicher observed that "we have no community now. Our attempts to build one have been small and they have failed. It is essential that we work together—cooperatively. We must come together in celebration and in joy and work responsibly and with commitment at making our community work. We must understand that our attempts at self-realization and community are opposed at every turn by the forces of contemporary American society."³³

The opening of new businesses in the Strip that catered to the counterculture aided in community building efforts. These new shops, located in older homes and storefronts, acted as gathering spaces for Strip residents off the street, providing relief from police harassment. They also attracted curious shoppers from around the city. These businesses made it more difficult for the police to target hippies while also attracting new Strip residents, providing income for them, and increasing the district's allure as a local tourist destination. In an attempt to check these trends police began aggressively targeting countercultural businesses. The Morning Glory Seed, the Strip's first "head shop" (a store that sold psychedelic merchandise and drug paraphernalia) closed after police arrested two employees in March 1968. Another head shop, Middle Earth, opened in November 1967 and encountered constant harassment from local police, who routinely entered the premises without warning, bothered its customers and threatened to arrest its owner, Bo Lozoff, for selling "obscene" posters and other objectionable merchandise. The Middle Earth, however, managed to stay open and even

³³ Don Speicher, "Love vs. Hate, Atlanta, Georgia," *Great Speckled Bird* I no. 4 (26 April 1968), 9.

launched a branch store above the Catacombs. This venue did not last long and by the summer Lozoff closed the shop due to constant police harassment.³⁴ The Twelfth Gate attempted to use the same space as a place for hips to get off the street but that too closed by the end of the summer after police repeatedly entered the building to arrest teenage patrons for loitering.

As happened each summer, the number of people in the Strip swelled. This exacerbated tensions between hippies, local merchants and the police but also created a carnival-like atmosphere on Peachtree Street during long summer nights. Resident Toni Scifalo later recalled life in the Strip. While living on 15th Street she remembers that “we were out on [Peachtree] street all the time. And it would be so thick with people you couldn’t walk. You would get into a clump and just be moved along the sidewalk with the clump of people.”³⁵ In July, a “large delegation” of straight business owners attended the monthly meeting to the Aldermanic Police Committee in order to lodge complaints against the district’s growing hippie population. According to these merchants, the hippie presence had led to depreciation in property values, making it “unsafe for residents to walk down the street.” The minutes of the meeting did not make it clear who these two issues related to each other.³⁶ Gaston Nikta, who owned a beauty parlor at 14th and Peachtree Streets, stated that he had contacted Vice-mayor Sam Massell about the problem but that Massell claimed that Nitka was the source of any harassment

³⁴ Bo Lozoff symbolized the ease with which people moved between the counterculture and the New Left. A seasoned political activist who had worked with the Southern Labor Action Movement, Lozoff and his wife found themselves in San Francisco during the Summer of Love. Filled with countercultural ideals, they returned to Atlanta and opened Middle Earth. See The Strip Project, available online at <http://www.thestripproject.com/Welcome.html> and Michel, *Struggle for a Better South*, 162.

³⁵ Toni Shifalo, interviewed by the Strip Project, available at: http://www.thestripproject.com/interview%20site/Oral_History_of_The_Strip/Pig_Iron.html

³⁶ Police Committee Minutes, Regular Meeting, July 31, 1968, Box 63, Sam Massell Papers, Kenan Research Center, Atlanta, GA.

encountered from hips. As vice-mayor, Massell proved to be the only local politician who maintained a reasonable attitude towards the city's hip community. In a July 1968 meeting of the Community Relations Commission (CRC), he "voiced his concern that hippies are a small minority who are subject to persecution."³⁷ The members of the Police Committee, however, clearly saw the situation differently and ordered a crackdown on hippies on the Strip.

Police Chief Herbert Jenkins soon acted on the committee's orders and arrests in the Strip increased during the two weeks after the meeting. Complaints of harassment mounted in turn. In response, Jenkins scheduled a meeting in mid-August with Strip residents and several supporters. The group included two *Bird* staff members, Bruce Donnelly, two hippies, an ACLU lawyer, and George Blau from the Christian Council of Metro Atlanta. Jenkins told the group that he had attempted to be lenient with the hippie population in the Strip, stressing that it had both its good and bad members, and all involved in the area needed to weed out the negative elements. The Strip delegation largely rejected this assessment, stating that police routinely used obscure ordinances to regularly harass all members of the district, making no distinction between "good" and "bad" hippies. The group made numerous suggestions to improve relations between Strip residents and the police. Jenkins acted in part on one of them, that a regular crew of specially-trained officers be assigned to the Strip.³⁸ In response, he placed one officer, Detective Ray Pate of the Crime Prevention Bureau, on special assignment to the district. Pate would oversee and review all complaints and arrests made in the area. In August, Jenkins also instructed that any officer making an arrest in the "hippie colony" fill out a

³⁷ Raleigh Bryans, "Alderman Order Hippie Crackdown," *Atlanta Journal*, August 1, 1968, B4.

³⁸ Gene Guerrero, "Long Hairs Meet With Fuzz," *Great Speckled Bird* I no. 12 (16 August 1968), 5.

complete, written report in hopes of reducing the number of illegitimate arrests.³⁹ As a result, tensions between Strip residents, the police and straight residents in Midtown seemed to calm briefly, at least enough so that the CRC cancelled a scheduled meeting in Piedmont Park slated for mid-September to discuss life in the Strip. CRC program coordinator James Lindskoog credited Pate with the improved situation, stating that he treated hippies fairly while also helping them “reduce activities which had aroused their neighbors.”⁴⁰

Strip residents turned their attention again to local restaurants that discriminated against hippies now that relations with local police had temporarily improved. Protesting a fifty cent minimum which the Pennant applied only to hippies, approximately thirty five longhairs launched an “eat-in” at the restaurant from 2 AM to 9 AM on October 7. Arriving with fifty cents each, the protestors refused to leave until the manager, Gerald Baker, agreed to treat them fairly. Baker, following a lengthy discussion in which it became clear the problem was with one particular employee who worked the night shift, agreed with the group’s request for fair treatment and stated he would fire the “ill-tempered waitress.”⁴¹ In January, another group of about fifty longhair demonstrators launched an eat-in at the Waffle House over the issue of selectively enforced minimums. Although the manager, Bill Booker, initially called the police, he allowed law enforcement to leave when the demonstrators refused to follow orders to vacate the restaurant. Not wishing to cause a scene, he ordered the staff to serve the protestors and within a few hours the demonstration had ended. In a conciliatory gesture, Bob

³⁹ Atlanta Police Department Daily Bulletin #21-173, August 30, 1968, Box 63, Sam Massell Papers, Kenan Research Center, Atlanta, GA.

⁴⁰ “Hippie Airing Postponed by City Panel,” *Atlanta Journal*, September 16, 1968, A2.

⁴¹ David Nordan, “Hippies Score One; Manager Keeps Cool,” *Atlanta Journal*, October 7, 1968, B14; Rex T. Barnes, “Eat-In,” *Great Speckled Bird*, I no. 18 (14 October 1968), 5.

Goodman, covering the story for the *Bird*, returned to the Waffle House and spoke with Booker. He explained that he enforced a minimum purchase on hippies because, unlike straights who ate and left quickly, they tended to linger, sometimes for hours. According to Booker, hippies also tipped poorly, hurting the take home pay of waitresses.⁴² This general sense of cautious coexistence between the Strip residents and local merchants would soon end as violence erupted on Peachtree Street.

The “Face of Fear”

Winter on the Strip passed with few incidents. With the exception of the demonstration against the Waffle House, Strip residents did not encounter major troubles with straights or law enforcement. The one exception occurred at the end of January when the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI), with the assistance of federal narcotics agents, launched a raid in the area after an undercover GBI agent had spent several weeks posing as a hippie and gathering evidence. On the night of the 28th, agents served warrants at residences around the district, eventually arresting twenty people on drug-related charges or the favorite catch-all violation of occupying a dive.⁴³

The relationship between Strip residents and the police had yet to deteriorate since the changes made by Jenkins had been implemented the previous summer. Other events, though, created problems and ill feelings in the Strip. Starting in the summer of 1968, more than two dozen suspicious fires had occurred within a half mile radius of the intersection of 10th and Peachtree Streets. While the fire department confirmed many of these blazes were accidental in origin, quite a few remained unsolved and appeared to be

⁴² Bob Goodman, “Hippys Sit Down,” *Great Speckled Bird*, I no. 31 (30 January 1969), 5.

⁴³ “Drug Raids Jail 20 Hippies Here,” *Atlanta Journal*, January 29, 1969, A1.

arson. Tom Coffin of the *Bird* shared the theory that an arsonist or group of arsonists operated in the area but he could not offer a single, clear motive for the crimes. The fires could have been an attempt to drive out hippies through intimidation and fear. Other people offered the theory that the fires were attempts at insurance fraud by businessmen or landlords looking to leave the area without incurring a financial loss. Whatever the cause of the fires, the effect could not be missed. By the summer of 1969, “rubble-strewn vacant lots” had begun to dot the landscape, adding further blight to an older neighborhood already in decline.⁴⁴

The fires also worsened an existing housing problem. Many of the blazes occurred in apartment buildings that rented to hippies and other Strip residents. The removal of these units from the market not only left the growing Strip population with fewer spaces to occupy but encouraged other landlords to raise rents and neglect routine maintenance issues. In response, Mayor Ivan Allen paid his first visit to “hippieland” that April. He and Fulton County Commissioner Walter Mitchell arrived unannounced on a Friday afternoon to see if the housing situation warranted “attention by public agencies concerned with health and substandard housing.” The two officials spent several hours in the area, knocking on apartment doors to inspect conditions. They even visited the offices of the *Bird*. While finding conditions less than “ideal,” Allen did not consider them worthy of further attention by city officials.⁴⁵

Strip residents also endured a growing number of increasingly violent attacks. The relationship between hippies and Midtown residents had worsened over the past year

⁴⁴ Lee Simowitz, “Atlanta’s Hippie Area Plagued,” *Atlanta Journal*, July 27, 1969, E1; Maude, “Fire!” *Great Speckled Bird* II no. 18 (14 July 1969), 5.

⁴⁵ Raleigh Bryans, “Mayor Visits Hippieland, Finds Housing Far From Bad,” *Atlanta Journal*, April 16, 1969, A17.

but both sides managed to avoid open conflict by literally dividing Peachtree Street in half. Hippies congregated on the eastern side of the avenue between 10th and 14th Streets while straights and “rednecks” frequented the bars and businesses on the western side. According to Strip resident Peter Jenkins (known popularly as Bongo), an “unwritten law” existed that the two groups would not invade each other’s territory.⁴⁶ This rule did not apply to people who lived outside the neighborhood, though, and hippies increasingly became the target for beatings at the hands of “rednecks” who came to the Strip, often drunk, looking to start fights. By 1969, these attacks had increased in frequency as had as the number of sexual assaults committed against female hips. As summer approached, however, the attacks turned potentially deadly as gunfire erupted repeatedly in the Strip. On April 30, a verbal confrontation between hippies and what witnesses described a “rednecks” and “slick-backed hair types” in the Waffle House seemed to end without incident. But once out on the street, eight of the hippies suffered injuries from shotgun blasts that came from a nearby car. Taken to Grady hospital, they reported being ignored by the medical staff and eventually found themselves under arrest for “creating a turmoil.” In July, Ron Jarvis, owner of the Leather Aardvark, a head shop on Eight Street, engaged in a gun battle after he exchanged heated words with three men in a car who asked him where they could “procure women.” In this case police arrested both Jarvis and two of the men involved in the shooting.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Peter Jenkins, interviewed by the Strip Project, available online at:

http://www.thestriproject.com/interview%20site/Oral_History_of_The_Strip/Bongo.html

⁴⁷ Simowitz, “Atlanta Hippie Area Plagued,” E1; Bob Goodman, “Bad Vibes,” *Great Speckled Bird* II no. 9 (May 12, 1969), 3,17; Duane Beck, “Interim Report of the Fourteenth Street Area,” Box 1, CCAA Papers, MARBL, Atlanta, GA

That June as the Strip population started swelling, the relationship between the police and hip residents rapidly deteriorated.⁴⁸ A televised speech by the mayor precipitated this change. Describing hips as “misinformed pathetic kids,” Allen expressed exasperation with the fact that “we arrest them by the hundreds for the slightest infraction of the law” but to little effect. He seemed most upset that the Strip had turned into a tourist destination on weekends. On Friday and Saturday nights, thousands of plastic hippies crowded on to the sidewalks and cars full of families checking out the scene created endless traffic jams on Peachtree Street. Automobiles would be lined up from 14th Street down to the Fox Theatre, located on the 600 block of Peachtree. Hip residents often provided a far more antagonistic spectacle than these families had come to see. One hip recalled that he would walk out into the middle of the street and urinate on cars.⁴⁹ City officials had also increased their harassment of the local hip population in response to (unfounded) rumors that Chicago’s hippies, looking to escape repression, planned to migrate en masse to Atlanta.⁵⁰

Hip residents paid the price for the mayor’s growing concern as the police increased its presence in the Strip and arrested hips for almost any reason. The *Bird* attempted to aid Strip residents by printing the names and badge numbers of officers who had engaged in the worst cases of harassment. It also offered strategic advice for a newly formed hip “street patrol.” The paper advised that it stay focused on monitoring the

⁴⁸ As discussed in footnote 4, by this time hippies had become part of a broader hip population in the Strip, thus the switch here from discussing hippies to hips.

⁴⁹ Charlie Brown and Darryl Brooks, interviewed by the Strip Project, available online at : http://www.thestriproject.com/interview%20site/Oral_History_of_The_Strip/Charlie_Brown.html

⁵⁰ Rutheiser, *Imagineering Atlanta*, 59.

actions of the police rather than assisting them in apprehending outside agitators. The police, the *Bird* argued, posed the “greatest threat” to Strip residents.⁵¹

The escalating tensions between hips, the police, and violence-prone members of straight society culminated in a series of major confrontations during the late summer and early fall. On the night of August 4, police and Strip residents battled openly on Peachtree Street. The event, labeled a “near riot” by the city’s two leading daily newspapers and a “police riot” by the *Bird*, began when members of local law enforcement and GBI agents launched another drug raid in the Strip. Local and state agencies had become concerned about the growing availability of heroin and other hard drugs in the area. As police and GBI agents began arresting people and placing them in paddy wagons, a crowd gathered. The frustrations of the past few months found voice as a group of approximately two hundred Strip residents began yelling “Fuck the Pigs! Get the Fucking Pigs Off the Street!” A small group of radicals started a well-known Black Panther Party chant, “The revolution has come!/ OFF THE PIGS!/ Time to pick up the gun!/ OFF THE PIGS!” Others in the crowd taunted several African American police officers, asking them, “Hey Tom! How can you be black and be a pig?”⁵²

It remains unclear what happened next. The *Bird* reported that as paddy wagons pulled away a few policemen began randomly grabbing people on the sidewalk and shoving them to the ground. After somebody tossed a single small stone at a police car, more officers waded into the crowd, wrestling with protestors and spraying them in the

⁵¹ Pam Gwin, “The Mayor Speaks,” Bob Malone, “In the Streets,” *Great Speckled Bird* II no. 16 (June 30, 1969), 2.

⁵² Jack Nelson, “Hippie Community in Atlanta Angered By Police Tactics,” *Washington Post*, August 7, 1969, F3; Keeler McCartney, “Police Seize 75 Hippies in a Near Riot,” *Atlanta Constitution*, August 5, 1969, A1, 8; Orville Gaines, “Hippie Area Drug Raid Brings Arrest of 38,” *Atlanta Journal*, August 5, 1969, A1, 6; “No Pigs in Our Community,” *Great Speckled Bird* II no. 22 (August 11, 1969), 2-3.

face with a chemical agent. Both the *Atlanta Journal* and *Atlanta Constitution*, however, reported that police endured “a shower of bricks and bottles” from the crowd before they began making arrests. All sources agree that when the police took a break to regroup in the parking lot of a nearby supermarket, the crowd gathered outside the *Birdhouse* on 14th Street. Members of the Atlanta Revolutionary Youth Movement arrived and convinced the protestors to erect a barricade of furniture and boxes in the middle of Peachtree Street. For twenty minutes traffic came to a standstill before police cleared the debris and the crowd finally dispersed. Officials claimed they had confiscated a quantity of narcotics in the raid. They also arrested thirty-eight people on a range of charges, including narcotics possession, inciting a riot, and the use of obscene language.⁵³

The situation worsened. On September 11, a firebomb severely damaged part of Atlantis Rising. Opened just a few months earlier, Atlantis Rising operated as part cooperative business and part recreation center. Occupying a double storefront at 1017 Peachtree Street in the heart of the Strip, the business provided a means for hip community members to generate income and a safe space to relax off the street. Atlantis Rising came together through the efforts of two local residents, Danny Cochran and Chuck Monroe. Monroe approached Cochran about the idea of opening a new kind of store in the old business district. The two owners provided small start-up loans to merchants and artists, who would occupy a space in the store. In return, the merchants would give the owners 10% of their profits to repay these loans and as rent on their space. These small businesses occupied one half of Atlantis Rising. An informal community center occupied the other half, where hips could play arcade games, listen to music on a jukebox and congregate away from the street. A small stage had been erected in the

⁵³ Ibid.

parking lot behind the store, allowing local bands a place to play. Music drifted out on to Peachtree Street almost every night after Atlantis Rising opened in the middle of June.⁵⁴

The space became an instant success, although its role as a community center outweighed its business operations. Over the summer it became the “communication headquarters” for the hip community. A free medical clinic began operating there two nights a week and, according to one part time employee, it was “the first place runaways” went to since people there could “usually put them up or help them get settled.” It also became a meeting place for hips and a emerging group of leaders. Both inside the store and in the parking lot, Strip residents met to discuss the growing problems between themselves, the police, and the neighborhood’s straight residents.⁵⁵

The firebombing temporarily ended these activities. Witnesses to the attack stated that in the early hours of September 11 “three men in a dark-colored 1969 Mustang Mach I threw cans of gasoline with lighted wicks” through the front window on the community center side of the storefront before speeding away up Peachtree Street. Firefighters managed to contain the blaze in this section of the store but a good deal of supplies and merchandise was damaged or destroyed.⁵⁶ If the attack had been meant to intimidate hips, it failed. In fact, the vicious nature of the attack brought together both hip and straight residents in the area. Within a few hours, hips began the process of rebuilding Atlantis Rising. Straight merchants soon joined the effort, either by lending a hand in the reconstruction effort or by donating money and materials. The crew grew so large it

⁵⁴ Diane Thomas, “Fire Bombs Ruin Hippies’ Co-Op,” *Atlanta Journal*, September 12, 1969, A6; Maude, “Atlantis is Rising,” *Great Speckled Bird II* no. 17 (July 7, 1969), 3.

⁵⁵ Thomas, “Fire Bombs Ruin Hippies Co-Op,” A6.

⁵⁶ “Fire Bomb Suspected in Hippie Store Blaze,” *Atlanta Journal*, September 11, 1969, C4; Thomas, “Fire Bombs Ruin Hippies’ Co-Op,” A6; Tom Coffin, “Atlantis,” *Great Speckled Bird II* no. 28 (September 22, 1969), 2.

attracted numerous onlookers and it became difficult to get work done. The firebombing even generated some sympathy from the broader community. The mayor's office approved the use of Piedmont Park for a benefit concert. An op-ed in the *Atlanta Journal* labeled the attackers "cowards and nightriders" and encouraged the police and fire departments to "press their investigation in this case, even beyond their normal concern."⁵⁷

Support for Strip residents dwindled quickly, however. A second firebomb attack damaged the Stein Club later that month, a popular bar among hips. This attack generated little support from Atlanta residents, who had turned against the city's hip community following a riot in Piedmont Park on September 21. As will be discussed in the next chapter, a free rock concert in the park turned into a melee as several hundred attendees, most from the hip community, battled openly with police.

The escalation of violence and confrontation during the summer and early fall of 1969 turned the hip community generally and the Strip specifically into key issues during that year's mayoral election. The previous January Ivan Allen announced he would not seek a third term, opening the field up to several potential candidates. Atlanta had long been controlled by a business-oriented coalition composed of leaders from the black and white communities. Its grip on local affairs had been so strong for so long that one historian defined the situation as "regime politics."⁵⁸ As a result, the black community routinely supported white candidates for local offices who would, in turn, favor policies that often benefitted black neighborhoods and businesses. By 1969, however, the civil

⁵⁷ "Hippies' Atlantis Rising Again," *Atlanta Journal*, September 11, 1969, A16; Coffin, "Atlantis," 2; "Cowards By Night," *Atlanta Constitution*, September 13, 1969, A4.

⁵⁸ Larry Keating, *Atlanta: Race, Class, and Urban Expansion* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), 76.

rights movement had shattered this coalition, leading to the most hotly contested election in decades. That fall, four candidates battled to replace Allen. Rodney Cook, a local businessman and state representative, had the support of white civic leaders while Horace Tate, a local educator, became the first African American in the city's history to run for mayor. Few local black leaders supported Tate, believing he had no chance of winning, and instead went with the vice-mayor, Sam Massell. Jewish, "unabashedly liberal" and reform-minded, Massell acted as the perfect compromise candidate as the city transitioned into the modern period of black leadership that would begin with the election of its first African American mayor in 1973. Interestingly, Massell did not have the support of Allen, who claimed the young vice-mayor lacked experience. The two men had never been close and Allen instead supported Cook.⁵⁹ The last candidate, a conservative "law and order" city alderman named Everett Millican, lacked support from city elites, primarily based on his antagonistic positions on racial issues, and had little chance of winning the election.⁶⁰

City residents considered the growing Strip population a serious issue and each candidate addressed the problem in their own way. In a survey of 400 Atlantans commissioned by Cook, 24% considered hippies an "extremely important" issue. Not surprisingly, residents of the 5th Ward, home to the Strip, were the most concerned. Forty-six percent classified hippies as an extremely important issue.⁶¹ Millican took the hardest line, calling the Strip as a disgrace as far as "the hippies, homosexuals, sex

⁵⁹ Frederick Allen, *Atlanta Rising: The Invention of an International City 1946-1996* (Atlanta: Longstreet Press, 1996), 103-105.

⁶⁰ Ivan Allen, Jr. and Paul Hemphill, *Mayor: Notes on the Sixties* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971), 223-225.

⁶¹ August 20-27 Survey conducted by Civic Services, Inc., Box 4, Rodney M. Cook Papers, Richard B. Russell Library, Athens, GA.

deviates, and drug pushers” were concerned. Cook adopted a conciliatory message towards hips, addressing their concerns that city government had failed them. In a televised speech on October 19, he stated that in his administration young people “would have a feeling of participation in the affairs of a great city. They are trying to tell us that that is what they want and need. We certainly need them.”⁶² Massell, as vice mayor, had established a track record of sympathy and tacit support for the hip community, a position he did not disown during the campaign. In the end, Massell emerged victorious with 55% of the total vote, although he polled far better in the African American parts of the city. In the Strip, few seemed concerned with the election as the harassment, violence, and oppression of the past several years had finally led Strip residents to find its own solutions to the district’s growing problems.

The Strip had reached a turning point by November 1969. The hip population, composed of a few hundred hippies and two coffeehouses in 1966, had grown to several thousands residents, numerous hip-related businesses, and hosted a wide variety of groups existing on the fringes of American society, from teenage runaways to members of motorcycle gangs and revolutionaries. While it proved a haven for hip people from around the South, many city residents considered the Strip an eyesore and an embarrassment that needed removal. As a result, life in the Strip proved difficult for its hip residents as they faced discrimination from straight businesses, near constant harassment from law enforcement, and the very real threat of physical harm from conservative and violence-prone private citizens. By 1969 these tensions led to open

⁶² Alex Coffin, “Run Hippies Out: Millican,” *Atlanta Constitution*, September 22, 1969, B2; Speech by Rodney Cook made on WQXI-TV, October 19, 1969, Box 4, Rodney M. Cook Papers, Richard B. Russell Library, Athens, GA.

conflict as gun battles erupted on Peachtree Street and hips battled police. But, despite attempts by its more politically-oriented members, Strip residents had yet to develop a collective voice or create a sustained and organized response to harassment in the area beyond a few protests against local businesses. This would change as the 1960s turned into the 1970s. First, though, it proves necessary to examine another location in Atlanta that the hip community claimed as its own. At the same time that it had been developing a presence in the Strip, it also started claiming ownership of Piedmont Park. As a gathering place that hosted rock concerts and political rallies, Piedmont Park existed as a key part of the physical community that Atlanta's hips attempted to create during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

CHAPTER 7

FINDING COMMON GROUND: PIEDMONT PARK AND ATLANTA'S HIP COMMUNITY

*“Another day in the park, you’d think it was the Fourth of July,
People dancing, really smiling,
A man playing guitar, singing for us all,
Will you help him change the world?”*

“[Saturday in the Park](#),” Chicago

On September 8, 2007 the Allman Brothers made their triumphant return to Piedmont Park. During the group’s first years of playing together in the late 1960s, it held several concerts in the park, a 183 acre green space located several miles north of downtown Atlanta. Setting up inside or close by the park’s pavilion, the band hosted free shows for members of the city’s hip community. The 2007 concert, however, possessed little of the countercultural ethos of the sixties. Billed as a fundraising event to help pay for a 53 acre extension to the park, and featuring a headlining performance by the Dave Matthews Band, tickets for the event started at \$45, although a limited number of \$250 packages could be purchased that provided concertgoers with the “ultimate VIP experience,” including a private view of the concert, an open bar, and a catered buffet. Organizers did encourage concertgoers to “do their part for the environment” by leaving their cars at home and taking public transportation to the park.¹

¹ “Dave Matthews to Headline Benefit at Atlanta’s Piedmont Park on September 8th,” Piedmont Park Conservancy press release, May 30, 2007. Available at http://www.piedmontpark.org/conservancy/NR_dmb_benefit_07.pdf

Drawing connections between the present and the past, the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* interviewed several former members of Atlanta's hip community who attended those 1969 performances. These former hippies highlighted the sense of community and tolerance that the park facilitated in the 1960s. According to Patrick Edmondson, "White, black, young, and older [sic] all focused totally on the Allman's music." The role of Piedmont Park as a safe haven for hips was all the more important given its location within a region known for its intense political and social conservatism. The park proved to be one of the few places to "let your freak flag fly."²

These fond reminiscences of Piedmont Park revealed only one part of a much more complicated story about its role in Sixties-era Atlanta. Along with the Strip, the park played an important role in the development of Atlanta's hip community by providing a physical space in which a wide and sometimes disparate group of people could come together and find common ground through music and mayhem, picnics and politics. By 1969, Piedmont Park played a central role in attempts to grow and sustain a viable hip community as its members repeatedly claimed that the park belonged to the people meaning, of course, themselves. For several years the park served as a rallying point for demonstrations and a concert venue for local, regional and national rock bands. By the early 1970s, however, it also became a haven for runaways, drug addicts and ruthless hard-drug sellers.

The adoption of Piedmont Park by hippies, political radicals and drug addicts did not go unnoticed by local residents and politicians who repeatedly challenged the assertions of ownership over the park made by the hip community. While city officials had allowed one of Atlanta's largest parks to deteriorate during the early 1960s, urban

² Bo Emerson, "A Flashback to 1969," *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, September 8, 2007, A1

renewal in Midtown encouraged civic leaders to undertake a revitalization of Piedmont Park late in the decade, bringing a new focus on the space. Through the use of new city ordinances and a sustained campaign of police harassment, city officials quickly forced the hip community out of park, making it a place for all the people once again.

Piedmont Park's History and the Problem of Public Sex

Piedmont Park's geographical boundaries have changed little since the city of Atlanta purchased the property in 1904. Located approximately two miles north of downtown Atlanta, the park's southern boundary runs along Tenth Street from Argonne Avenue to the intersection of Tenth and Monroe Drive. From this point its eastern border

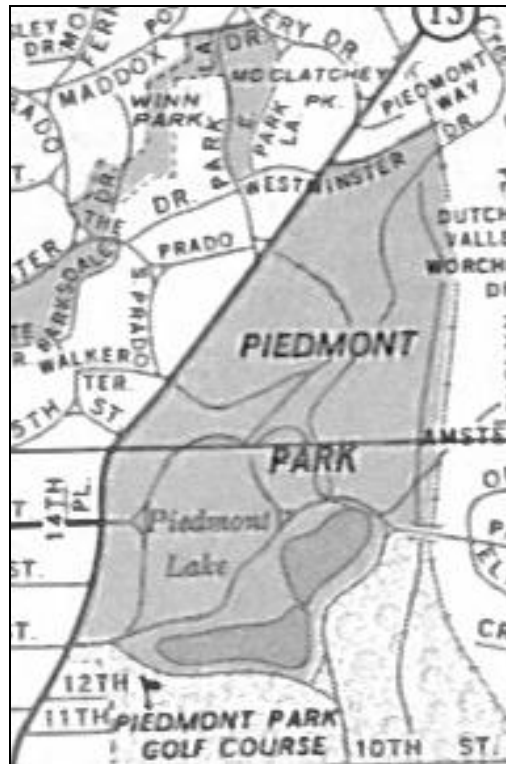


FIGURE 7-1 Piedmont Park in 1971

follows the Norfolk Southern railroad line northward until it terminates at the eastern end of Westminster Drive. The northern boundary follows Westminster to its intersection with Piedmont Avenue, where it moves southwestwardly, following Piedmont until it connects with Tenth. The park's shape resembles that of a roughly drawn right-isosceles triangle with a Piedmont Avenue acting as its hypotenuse.

What would become Atlanta's premier park originated with several decisions that reflected both the civic-mindedness and class-based concerns of its founders. Atlanta resident Benjamin F. Walker purchased 190 acres of farmland on July 1, 1887 on behalf of the Gentleman's Driving Club. A newly formed organization composed of men from the city's elite, the club (which is currently the highly exclusive and private Piedmont Driving Club), hoped to use the land to create a series of trails on which it could drive carriages and ride horses. Soon after, it allowed the newly formed Piedmont Exposition Company to develop the land as a fairground for the 1887 Piedmont Exposition. City leaders regarded this event as a success, due in part to a visit by president Grover Cleveland, and in February 1889, the Piedmont Exposition Company purchased the entire 190 acres from the Club and used the site over the next several years to hold state fairs. In one of its two 1892 games, the University of Georgia football team played Auburn University on the fairgrounds and defeated them 10-0.¹

Inspired by the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Atlanta's civic and business leaders envisioned a similar event in their city. The fair's promoters, hoping that the event would encourage trade between southern states and Southern American countries, settled on the factually correct if somewhat clunky moniker of The Cotton

¹ Mark L. Johnson, "An Invitation for Use: The Rehabilitation of Piedmont Park, Atlanta, Georgia, from Piedmont Avenue to the Heart of the Park" (MA thesis, University of Georgia, 1992), 23-24.

States and International Exposition. The decision to hire renowned landscape architect Frederick Law Olmstead to consult on the development of the grounds spoke to the size of the Exposition directors' vision and the importance they gave to the event. But, after an initial visit in March 1894, Olmstead decided to drop the project and, despite the high hopes of its planners, the exposition failed to generate a great deal of visitors. Over its one hundred day run, fewer than 800,000 people came through the gates. While far less famous than the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago, it did host African American leader Booker T. Washington, who delivered his most renowned speech, the "Atlanta Compromise," to a totally white audience on September 18.

In the decade after the exposition closed its gates, the land continued to be used for recreational purposes. A group of citizens formed the Exposition Park Company and in 1896 signed a five year lease on the property and provided free admission for Atlantans wishing to partake of its facilities. The city pushed the company to organize annual expositions, a move that "built up in the public mind the idea that the City was really the proprietor and owned and interest in the company." The Atlanta City Council had approved the purchase of the land before the 1895 Exposition but the deal had been struck down by Mayor John Goodwin. The sale finally went through almost a decade later in 1904.² After the purchase, Atlanta extended its boundaries to include the park, connecting it to the new residential developments rising up around the park's boundaries. Ansley Park, the first and most prestigious of these neighborhoods, had been designed to attract the wealthiest of Atlanta's white residents. The neighborhood encompassed 275 acres and had been designed "as a commodity to be sold to elites seeking status markers and a neighborhood aesthetic that exuded order, harmony and graceful living." Ansley

² Ibid, 24, 26.

Park not only meant to keep out the lower classes but also affluent African Americans when, in 1904, it required homeowners to sign restrictive deed covenants that forbade the sale of homes to blacks.³ The neighborhood shared the park's Piedmont Avenue boundary north of 15th Street. The proximity of such an exclusive neighborhood to a park meant for all Atlantans meant that its residents would be some of the first to question certain activities in Piedmont Park as it developed into one of the city's largest and most important public spaces.

Concern over the use of Piedmont Park occurred sporadically during the first two decades after the Second World War. These debates reveal the numerous ways in which the park existed as a space for various means of personal expression. The park contained several roads open for automobile traffic and at night they served as romantic gathering places for young couples. In 1953, Atlanta Police Chief Herbert Jenkins expressed concern at a city council meeting that this behavior might stray into the realm of public indecency and suggested imposing a curfew, effectively closing city parks from dusk to dawn. City council members took a benign view of this amorous behavior, however, and voted in favor of "parking" in the park.⁴

The vote did not lay the issue of sex in the park to rest. In October 1954, the Atlanta Association of Baptist Churches, concerned with nighttime activities in the park, approved a committee report expressing concern over the city's parking ordinance and promised to study the matter further. In the resulting document, the Baptists revealed to city residents that Piedmont Park, along with providing a space for heterosexual coupling,

³ LeeAnn Lands, *The Culture of Property: Race, Class, and Housing Landscapes in Atlanta, 1880-1950* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009), 52, 55.

⁴ John Howard, "The Library, the Park and the Pervert: Public Space and Homosexual Encounter in Post-World War II Atlanta," in John Howard, ed., *Carryin' on in the Lesbian and Gay South* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 114-115.

also acted as an important place for homosexuals to meet.⁵ As John Howard has pointed out, the concern over homosexuality in Piedmont Park was conflated with concerns over other types of sexual perversion, resulting in a portrait of all homosexual men in the park as potential child molesters, tricking sexually innocent and naïve adolescent boys into a life of immorality. Responding to an increased outcry from the public to address these concerns, the city installed \$30,000 worth of streetlights in the park, as well as promising to increase the number of foot patrols by police officers. In addition, the council later approved new fines for vandalism after amorous couples disabled several of the lights.⁶

In addition to being a gathering spot for both heterosexual and homosexual couples, by the late 1960s Piedmont Park had become an important public space for the city's growing hip community. The local antiwar movement often chose the park as a gathering point for marches into downtown or as a location for post-march rallies. On April 27, 1968, for example, a march organized by the Atlanta Alliance for Peace proceeded from the federal building at 8th & Peachtree up the city's main thoroughfare and, after turning right on to 14th Street, entered Piedmont Park for a rally that featured several plays by a local guerilla theatre group and a speech by former SDS president Carl Oglesby.⁷

Piedmont Park also hosted numerous countercultural events. In July 1968, approximately 800 people gathered around the park's pavilion for the city's first "Be-In," an event copied from the more famous San Francisco Human Be-In held the previous

⁵ The importance of public spaces to the development of urban gay communities has been well documented. For two particularly insightful studies of this issue see Anne Enke, *Finding the Movement: Sexuality, Contested Space, and Feminist Activism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007) and Marc Stein, *City of Sisterly and Brotherly Love: Lesbian and Gay Philadelphia, 1945-1972*.

⁶ Howard, "The Library, the Park and the Pervert," 115-118

⁷ Howard Romaine, "Atlanta on the March," *Great Speckled Bird* I no. 5 (May 10, 1968), 2, 15.

summer. Although this particular event was shut down by local police for violation of local city ordinances, Atlanta's hippies would continue to gather in the park on a regular basis. The crowds grew noticeably larger the next year during a series of free Sunday concerts.⁸

But, while the growing presence of both hippies and political radicals in Piedmont Park caused concern among several of the city's more conservative political leaders it had yet to generate a great deal of worry among local residents. Alderman Everett Millican, hoping to capitalize on concerns over the city's growing hip community during his 1969 mayoral campaign, proposed a curfew that would have effectively closed city parks from as early as 10 P.M. until dawn, arguing that it would help end the practice of "homosexuals, sex deviates and others using the park all hours of the night."⁹ Several Ansley Park residents attended the Aldermanic Parks Committee meeting which discussed the new measure. In sharing their opinions regarding Millican's idea, these residents expressed a far greater concern regarding the continued presence of homosexuals in the parks than hippies. Perry Abelman, who opposed the ordinance, lived adjacent to Piedmont Park and used it often for exercise. He told the committee about a recent visit to the park when a large number of hippies had been present and said he saw them doing "nothing wrong." Hip community member Linda Jenness accused Millican and Alderman Charlie Leftwich of creating a "hysterical atmosphere" against local hippies, but Leftwich stated quite plainly, "We don't have any real problem with the hippies." Ansley Park resident Linda DeMars also did not necessarily oppose the presence of hippies in the parks. In her opinion, "at least the hippies used the parks,"

⁸ Tom Coffin and Howard Romaine, "BE-IN: Hippies VS Cops," *Great Speckled Bird* I no. 10 (July 19, 1968), 9.

⁹ Howard Romaine, "The Parks Belong to the People," *Great Speckled Bird* II no. 11(May 26, 1969), 2, 15.

while many other city residents had stopped doing so. She proposed that more organized activities in the park might reduce the number of “undesirables,” whose presence she blamed on “integration and homosexuality.”¹⁰

While no other local residents included references to hippies in their comments, many felt that the presence of homosexual activity in Ansley Park’s small neighborhood parks (Yonah, Winn, and McClatchey) had reached a “critical stage” and that action was needed. Mrs. Marthame Sanders noted the homosexuals came in such numbers that they caused traffic jams and created so much noise late into the night that she had to “take a sleeping pill to escape it.” Robert Alston invited the aldermen to his home between 10:00 P.M. and 3:00 A.M. to witness for themselves what was going on. Arthur Montgomery stated that, while homosexuals had rights, they needed to respect the rights of others.¹¹

Regardless of the reason for their concern, hippies or homosexuals, many attendees at the June 10 meeting who demanded some kind of action opposed Millican’s curfew plan, for several reasons. For those who live around the parks, the need to curtail the illegal and illicit homosexual activity did not justify restricting their right to use the park whenever they wanted. An editorial writer for the *Atlanta Journal* agreed, stating that “closing the parks to all persons because of an objectionable few would hardly be fair. The law-abiding citizen—whether he be deacon, hippie, homosexual or alderman—should be allowed to use city parks in peace.”¹² Mrs. Jimmie Minis, head of the city’s summer poverty program, reported that a committee composed of members from several

¹⁰ Parks Committee Minutes, June 10, 1969, City of Atlanta Records, Atlanta City Council and Board of Alderman, 1848-1997, Kenan Research Center, Atlanta History Center, Atlanta, GA. Hereafter referred to as Atlanta Board of Alderman Records.

¹¹ Howard Romaine, “Parks Belong to Aldermen,” *Great Speckled Bird* II no. 14 (June 16, 1969), 7; Parks Committee minutes, June 10, 1969, Board of Alderman Records, Kenan Research Center, Atlanta, GA.; Raleigh Bryans, “Parks Curfew Bill Dies in Committee,” *Atlanta Journal*, June 11, 1969, A11.

¹² “Parks and the Law,” *Atlanta Journal*, June 11, 1969, A26.

city agencies also opposed the ordinance. While many of the plan's supporters came from the city's more affluent sections, the young people she worked with in the poorer parts of the city stayed in the small neighborhood parks late into the evenings to avoid the summer heat. Given the large number of people who did this, Mrs. Minis and members of her committee felt that enforcement of a curfew ordinance would be "difficult if not impossible," leading to their recommendation that the measure be rejected. Alderman Rodney Cook, aware of the possible racial conflicts that enforcement of a curfew ordinance would cause, stated that "talk about trouble, run those children out of the parks in those areas and we'll see real trouble." As a result of these concerns, the measure was defeated by a 3-1 vote, and the committee proposed instead an increase in park lighting, police patrols, and the possibility of banning parking on all streets in some parks.¹³

Music and Revolution in the Park

The hip community's use of Piedmont Park increased significantly during the first nine months of 1969. In March, the *Great Speckled Bird* celebrated its first anniversary with a party in the park. Hoping to avoid any unsettling encounters with local officials, *Bird* staff member Nan Guerrero appeared before the Aldermanic Parks Committee to receive permission for the use of live amplified music, which was given with some reluctance.¹⁴ The city's political activists also took time to enjoy the park's athletic facilities by forming a "Revolutionary Softball League." In a review of one game, the *Bird* noted that the Georgia State SDS chapter suffered a 15-11 loss to the newspaper's team despite demonstrating "Correct Revolutionary Tactics, Red Guard fervor, militant

¹³ Romaine, "Parks Belong to the Aldermen," 7; Bryans, "Park Curfew Bill Dies in Committee," A11.

¹⁴ Parks Committee Minutes, March 11, 1969, Board of Alderman Records, Kenan Research Center, Atlanta, GA.

Ho Ho Ho Chi Minh chants, and not a little Male Chauvinism.” Commenting on the upcoming game between the SDS chapters at Georgia State and Emory, the *Bird* noted that “Ho Ho Ho Chi Minh, THIS TIME SDS may even win!!!”¹⁵

Despite an increase in park use by the hip community and the sense of ownership it encouraged, the Park still needed to serve the wider community. While the hip community considered the park the only safe place to let their “freak flag” fly, they often did so only when scheduling allowed. Responding to public requests for more organized recreation, the City of Atlanta Parks and Recreation Department sponsored “Swingin’ Summer,” a series of outdoor dramatic productions and band concerts to be held in more than one hundred of the city’s parks, including performances by the Third Army band in Piedmont Park.¹⁶ City agencies and private business owners also planned a “Funday” at the park on August 29 to celebrate the end of the summer Youth Opportunity Program. Scheduled events included live bands, free swimming, art exhibits and games and prizes. Free transportation would bring in children of all ages from all parts of the city, which city officials estimated would result in approximately 10,000 children visiting the park that day.¹⁷

Working around these and other city-sponsored events, the hip community still managed to increase its presence in the park through a series of free concerts. Shows occurred occasionally during the spring and early summer but became a more regular occurrence following the 1969 Atlanta International Pop Festival. Held over the Fourth

¹⁵ “Sports Section,” *Great Speckled Bird* II no. 9 (May 12, 1969), 3. While not widely discussed in the New Left and counterculture historiography, historians of gender and sexuality have revealed the importance of recreational sports leagues to the development of personal identity, community development and the struggle over contested space. See Enke, *Finding the Movement*, 145-176 for an excellent discussion of the topic.

¹⁶ “Swinging Summer’ To Keep Parks Busy,” *Atlanta Journal*, July 1, 1969, A12.

¹⁷ “Free Frolic For Kids Planned for Piedmont,” *Atlanta Journal*, August 22, 1969, A2.

of July holiday weekend at an automobile racetrack in Hampton, GA, the two day bill included Janis Joplin, Joe Cocker, Creedence Clearwater Revival, Grand Funk Railroad and Led Zeppelin.¹⁸ The hip community received an added musical treat on Monday, July 7, when several national acts that had appeared at the festival played for free in Piedmont Park. Flyers had circulated over the weekend encouraging people to come to the park, but gave no information about what was to happen. Early Monday evening, following an afternoon rain shower, roadies unloaded equipment and set up for what became a long night of free music. Strip resident Rupert Fike later recalled that concert promoter Alex Cooley had decided to put on the event as a “thank you” for making the festival as success.¹⁹ Local favorites the Hampton Grease Band played first, followed by Delaney and Bonnie, Chicago Transit Authority, Spirit and the Allman Brothers. The Grateful Dead ended the concert, playing a long set that lasted into the early hours of Tuesday morning.²⁰

The success of this free concert came at a particularly tense time in the relationship between the hip community and local officials. In addition to a recent crackdown on homosexuals in nearby neighborhood parks, police had been increasing their harassment of hips on the Strip. Strip residents had recently begun talking about an organized response but had not yet decided on a plan of action.²¹ As the hip community began to consider itself under siege, it started to discuss the park and the cultural events which occurred there in political terms. Committed countercultural adherents and New

¹⁸ Jim Gwin, untitled, *Great Speckled Bird II* no. 18 (July 14, 1969), 2, 3.

¹⁹ Rupert Fike, interviewed by The Strip Project

²⁰ Gwin, untitled, 2,3; Patrick Edmondson, “A Bus Stops in Piedmont Park, July 7, 1969,” available at http://www.thestriproject.com/Hippies_Stories/Entries/2007/5/19_Dead_in_Piedmont_Park.html

²¹ Bob Malone, “Community Self Defense,” *Great Speckled Bird II* no. 17 (July 7, 1969), 9.

Left activists now saw the park as more than simply a gathering place; it had become an important battleground in their quest for meaningful social change.

This shared interest in the park between the counterculture and New Left was not unique to Atlanta. As Doug Rossinow has argued, by 1969 the New Left had expanded its philosophy. Seeking more than political change the New Left became an expansive social movement aimed at the creation of a new American culture. In other words, by the late 1960s, The New Left and counterculture had become intricately intertwined.²²

Public spaces played an important role in bringing politics and culture together. Parks particularly took on political meaning by the late 1960s. During the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, demonstrators and the police battled for control of Lincoln Park. In May 1969, violence erupted in Berkeley over an undeveloped piece of land owned by the University of California. Claiming the space as their own, over two hundred hippies, college student and community activists turned the former parking lot into a park, which they called “People’s Park.” On May 15, police cleared the park and encircled it with cyclone fencing. The hip community responded by rioting and the ensuing street battle ended that evening after twenty policeman had been injured and twenty protestors had been shot, one fatally.²³ Events at Piedmont Park a few months later would confirm that the willingness to defend contested space was not restricted to cities famous for their radical New Left communities.

²² Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity*, 247-248.

²³ For more on events in Chicago see Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York, Bantam, 1987), 326-331; Tom Hayden, *Reunion: A Memoir* (New York: Random House, 1988), 291-326; Mark Kurlansky, *1968: The Year That Rocked the World* (New York: Ballantine, 2004), 269-286. For more on People’s Park in Berkeley see W.R. Rorabaugh, *Berkeley at War: The 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 155-166.

The *Bird* repeatedly expounded on the park's new role and the melding of culture and politics that summer. In a piece entitled "Our Park," "Richard" explained the importance of music to the creation of a new society. "If we are a revolutionary culture than we must not return to the past like a heretic turning back to mother church, we must develop revolutionary art," Richard argued. This argument did not originate with Richard. Countercultural writers and thinkers around the nation had expounded repeatedly on the revolutionary potential of rock music. While some rock bands, such as Detroit's MC5, discussed politics openly in its lyrics, the music's larger revolutionary role "lay in the purported ability of rock to expose the sham of Western culture and to change the life orientation, political or otherwise, of its listeners," according to Timothy Miller. Or, as Richard simply stated, "our music radicalizes."²⁴

But the key lay not simply in the creation of revolutionary art itself but the context in which it was created. For Richard, truly radical music that helped revolutionize the people had to exist outside the confines of a "capitalist system" that weakened its power by turning it into a commodity. Miller notes that the economic element of rock music existed as an "uncomfortable underbelly" for its champions. Some hip commentators concluded that, because money fueled the music industry, rock was "inherently compromised and couldn't be counted on as a vehicle of the revolution."²⁵ Richard, however, offered an alternative proposition. He explained that countercultural radicals needed to turn away from "festivals and radio and recordings." Music would liberate people when it was provided free of charge and "there will be no one in between" the musician and the listener. For Richard, Piedmont Park provided the place for this

²⁴ Richard, "Ours-Atlanta," *The Great Speckled Bird* II no. 15 (June 23, 1969), 4; Timothy Miller, *The Hippies and American Values* (The University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 77.

²⁵ Miller, *The Hippies and American Values*, 78.

experience to occur. He criticized those who attended the Atlanta Pop Festival, where they would “smoke dope within the confines of walls established by exploitative systems.” The far better experience would be going down to Piedmont Park, where the hip community could “listen to music and know it is your music” and by doing so make the park “your park.”²⁶

A *Bird* review of both the festival and the free concert in the park on July 7 reinforced Richard’s argument. In alternating paragraphs that moved from the festival to the concert, Jim Gwin explored both the limits on freedom created by the festival and the unlimited freedom available in the park. For Gwin, the festival grounds provided a “4.5 mile ribbon of asphalt and steel fence, coca cola houses,” hundreds of empty beer cans, “half-eaten, fermenting” watermelon rinds littering the ground, and heat so oppressive many concertgoers became sick. In the end Gwin left the festival “disappointed that so many could meet for so little.” This account differed significantly from the free concert two days later. For Gwin, the Grateful Dead performance especially provided a free space in which people of all races and classes could exist outside of social constraints. He wrote of how he moved “through wholly different communities of people spawned by the electricity of the music . . . lying on the ground is an old black worker with his woman in his arms.” As the Grateful Dead played into the night, Gwin noticed that “v-signs are thrown high” and “a young black policeman [was] buoyed on the shoulders of an ecstatic procession.”²⁷

²⁶ Richard, “Ours-Atlanta,” 4.

²⁷ Gwin, untitled, 2, 3. Gwin’s description of police behavior seems unlikely. However, concert attendee Patrick Edmondson asserts that several policemen at the event ingested LSD and smoked marijuana. Edmondson, “A Bus Stops in Piedmont Park, July 7, 1969.”

Clearly, by the summer of 1969 Piedmont Park had assumed a political and cultural significance for the hip community that led many to consider the park, at least on certain days, their own. A series of suspicious fires that had plagued the Strip during the past year and the changes brought about by new construction projects such as Colony Square strengthened the belief by hip community members that the park needed to serve as a free space and refuge. Concerts which took place during July and August often combined music and politics, emphasizing the growing mood of cooperation between New Left and countercultural elements in the hip community. On August 24, the local Socialist Workers Party held a campaign rally in the park for its mayoral candidate, Linda Jenness. In addition to speeches, the rally included live music. A week later, The Hampton Grease Band headlined another free concert in the park, an event that the *Bird* considered a “medicine show,” a recuperative experience from the pressure officials were placing on the hip community, both locally and nationwide. The paper considered it “an afternoon of life, peace and consciousness, a still center in Piedmont while our brothers get castrated in Taos, heads beaten elsewhere. We needed it.”²⁸

Piedmont Park became a place of spiritual rejuvenation for the hip community following the firebombing of Atlantis Rising. On the Sunday following the attack, Piedmont Park hosted a benefit concert for the store. Despite a rash of arsons in the Midtown area during the past several months and the ongoing harassment of Strip residents, the firebombing of Atlantis Rising existed as a particularly egregious act that drew attention and some sympathy from numerous local media outlets and city officials. The severity of the event helped generate an impressive lineup of bands on such a short notice. Labeled the “Atlanta Mini Pop Festival” by Miller Francis, the community’s

²⁸ Clifford Endres, “Hot Grease,” *Great Speckled Bird* II no. 26 (September 8, 1969), 14.

preeminent cultural chronicler, the concert contained sets by the Hampton Grease Band and two other local favorites, the Booger Band and Brickwall. The Allman Brothers headlined the bill and brought along another band from Macon, The Sweet Younguns. Francis considered the concert more than simply a musical event or rally for Atlantis Rising. For him, it served as a building block in the creation of a viable alternative community. Comparing it to other memorable Park concerts, such as the first time the Allman Brothers had played and the Grateful Dead show two months previous, Francis noted the intense sense of positive feelings that the crowd in “our park” generated. He also listed the wide array of the city’s population in attendance, including “straight, crewcut, turned-on, tribal, black, working class, mothers and children,” in addition to the large contingent from the hip community.

While this concert demonstrated the growing strength and unity of the hip community it also highlighted the need for it to find ways of surviving on its own, without the help on outside forces. Referencing the fact that the city often provided a mobile stage for park concerts, Miller argued that “*what we must be about is building a platform for our music that nobody can take down. A community built from the money and support of the power structure is a fragile one, a non-community.*” He went on to state that, “A . . . community that builds itself, with its own forms and solutions to its own problems, forms that are structured after its music and its tribal living patterns, will stand. The vibes in Piedmont Park on all the Saturdays and Sundays flow out of our fight to replace the power behind the firebomb . . . that gutted Atlantis Rising, and our attempt to design a politics to effect that replacement. What the youth community of Atlanta, and of America, does not reject is the will to struggle, to fight for their communities. What it

does reject is the old forms in which that struggle has been expressed.”²⁹ Francis expressed clearly the ways in which both culture and place had developed intensely political meanings for the hip community of Atlanta. The park was not simply a public recreational space, but a key focal point in the political struggle to build a true alternative community.

The Piedmont Park Riot

In September the hip community involved itself in a local debate over police brutality. That month, patrolman DeWitt Smith publicly accused several white officers of beating three black prisoners without provocation. Smith, an African American, repeated his accusations during a meeting on September 12 at the West Hunter Street Baptist Church. Standing at the altar, the policeman addressed the approximately three hundred people in attendance while the men who had been beaten stood at his side.³⁰ Smith’s allegations focused largely on the relationship between the police and the African American community but also noted the mistreatment local hips routinely endured. He stated that “if your hair is long and you’re wearing bell-bottoms you are in for it. Girls are jerked and pulled into line by their hair . . . and they [officers] seem to delight in grabbing a man by the seat of his pants and lifting him up until the pressure in his groin becomes unbearable.” Several local officials, including Aldermanic Police Committee member Jack Summers, denounced the accusations as politically motivated, stating they were timed to influence the upcoming mayoral election.³¹ Black community leaders,

²⁹ Miller Francis, Jr., “Our Park,” *Great Speckled Bird* II no. 28 (September 22, 1969) 12, 13.

³⁰ Bob Rohrer, “Board Hints at Brutality Investigation,” *Atlanta Constitution*, September 13, 1969, A5.

³¹ Larry Woods, “Brutality Report a Sizzler,” *Atlanta Constitution*, September 14, 1969, A18; Alex Coffin, “Police Brutality Cries Engage the Candidates,” *Atlanta Constitution*, September 17, 1969, A6.

however, maintained pressure on city officials regarding the issue. On September 19, a coalition of civil rights groups filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court that, among other demands, called for the removal of Police Chief Herbert Jenkins.³² Earlier the same week, lawyers representing the *Great Speckled Bird* also filed suit in federal court, launching a “broad-based attack on the harassment and intimidation that the city has leveled at the community in recent months.”³³ As the end of September approached, tensions mounted between a police force under attack in the press and the courts and the local activist communities. These tensions soon boiled over in Piedmont Park.

The park’s September 21 concert boasted an impressive lineup. While the Allman Brothers would not play that Sunday, the show presented some of the best local rock acts, including Radar, the Booger Band and headliners the Hampton Grease Band. This line-up, the success of a concert the previous Sunday, and a prominently-placed announcement in the *Great Speckled Bird* ensured a sizable attendance. Despite a chilly rain, by late afternoon between 1000 and 1500 people had arrived in the park. Several staff members from the *Great Speckled Bird* used the show as an opportunity to collect affidavits regarding police harassment which they planned to use as part of the paper’s recently-filed lawsuit.³⁴

Several undercover policemen had been circulating through the crowd and the attempt by one officer to arrest an audience member sparked a violent confrontation between concertgoers and the police. Just as Brickwall started its set, word began to circulate that undercover narcotics agents from the Atlanta police had entered the crowd looking to make arrests. A hip community member in the audience, George Nikas, began

³² Margaret Hurst, “Oust Jenkins, Suit Demands,” *Atlanta Constitution*, September 20, 1969, A1.

³³ Bob Malone, “Bird Files Suit Against City,” *Great Speckled Bird* II no. 28 (September 22, 1969), 2.

³⁴ Jim Gwin, “In OUR Park,” *Great Speckled Bird* II no. 29 (September 29, 1969), 3.

following Detective C. R. Price as he moved through the crowd conducting a “narcotics investigation.” When Price approached people in the crowd, Nikas would warn them that Price was a police officer. Price then attempted to arrest Nikas for interfering with a police officer. As he led the young man away, the crowd gathered around the two. It began chanting “show us your badge” and “let him go.” Nikas attempted to resist by wrapping his arms around a telephone pole but Price pried him away.³⁵ Suddenly, a person rushed forward and tried to pull Nikas away from the policeman. Price pulled his service weapon and brandished it at the crowd. While people distracted the officer, Nikas pulled away and disappeared into the audience. Price decided not to follow him and left.³⁶ Nikas recalled later that economics as well as politics motivated the crowd’s actions since he had “fronted,” or supplied, drugs to many of the people who confronted Officer Price.³⁷

The hips incorrectly assumed the confrontation had ended. As the music, which had stopped during the struggle, resumed, Price and several other policemen entered the park and quickly apprehended Nikas a second time. They also arrested Bill Fibben, a staff photographer for *The Bird*. Several hundred audience members immediately surrounded the cars containing Nikas and Fibben, shouting “This is our park!” and “get the pigs out of our park!” Atlanta police later stated that the crowd began rocking the car and letting the air out of its tires. Lieutenant H.V. Gunther called for reinforcements and tear gas canisters. The concert’s promoter, Steve Cole, attempted to persuade police to

³⁵ George Nikas, interviewed by The Strip Project, available online at

http://www.thestriproject.com/interview%20site/Oral_History_of_The_Strip/George_Nikas.html

³⁶ Frank Wells and Bob Hurt, “Piedmont Concert Erupts Into Disturbance, 20 Held, *Atlanta Constitution*, September 22, 1969, A1, 17; Hugh Nations and Harmon Perry, “Piedmont Park Melee ‘Looked Like WWII,’” *Atlanta Journal*, September 22, 1969, A1, A8; Gwin, “In OUR Park,” 3, 4.

³⁷ George Nikas, interviewed by the Strip Project.

let him calm down the crowd but before he could do so, a policeman lobbed a tear gas canister into the crowd.³⁸

What had been an angry confrontation between the police and the concertgoers now turned into a riot. As the crowd around the patrol car began to scatter, several paddy wagons and almost the entire evening watch of the Atlanta police force approached the park. While sixty officers waited in a bus nearby, forty patrolmen attempted to disperse the crowd. Police fired more tear gas canisters and the crowd responded by throwing some of them back, along with rocks, cans and glass bottles. At one point, George Nikas had to be removed from the patrol car he had been placed in when a tear gas canister rolled under the vehicle and began filling it with smoke.³⁹

For thirty minutes a running battle of sorts took place. The police, who had taken up a position not far from the park pavilion, continued to throw tear gas canisters into the crowd as several officers repeatedly charged into the group hoping to make arrests. The crowd would quickly disperse when this happened, only to retake its position after the clouds of tear gas dissipated. The confrontation ended when Al Horn, an ACLU lawyer who often represented members of the city's hip community, arrived at the park and talked with Police Superintendent Oscar Jordan. Following this conversation, the crowd calmed down and several police officers left the park. As attempts were being made to restart the music, Police Chief Herbert Jenkins and Mayor Ivan Allen arrived, too late to make any meaningful contribution although the mayor did spend some time listening to crowd before leaving after the concert resumed.⁴⁰

³⁸ *ibid.*

³⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

The riot resulted in injuries on both sides. Two police officers were treated and released for minor cuts and scratches at nearby Grady hospital. The only person in the crowd whose injuries required more intense treatment actually had no connection to the hip community. Estelle Johnston, the 41-year-old wife of a Georgia Tech philosophy professor, had gone to the concert to check on her two children. Arriving in the middle of the riot, she attempted to calm down police officer D.L. Dingee, who turned his nightstick on her, striking her on the head and tossing her into a nearby paddy wagon. During a press conference at *The Bird* office held the day after the riot, Johnston explained how she had been arrested. Denying she had assaulted Dingee before he hit her, as he contended, she did admit that she “hit him across the seat of the pants” with an umbrella after he struck her. After waiting for two hours in the paddy wagon, the police took her to Grady for treatment, where they handcuffed her to a wheelchair.⁴¹

In addition to Johnston, police charged eleven other people. Represented by Horn, their cases eventually came before municipal court Judge T.C. Little in November. George Nikas, whose arrest sparked the riot, pleaded guilty to interfering with a police officer and received a \$150 fine. The seven others also pleaded guilty on various charges ranging from profanity to inciting a riot, and received fines from \$27 to \$33.⁴² Charged with the more serious crime of assault and battery on a police officer, Johnston had her case held over to Superior Court.

The incident provoked a variety of responses from the hip community, local civil rights leaders, politicians and city officials. These statements revealed the complicated relationship both between these groups as well as divisions within the city’s hip

⁴¹ Sam Hopkins, “City to Probe Charges of Brutality in Piedmont Park,” *Atlanta Constitution*, September 23, 1969, A1, 8; “Professor’s Wife Held for Court,” *Atlanta Journal*, November 5, 1969, B11.

⁴² Bill Montgomery, “8 Get Fines Here in Melee at Park,” *Atlanta Journal*, November 19, 1969, A10.

community. With the mayoral election just weeks away, each of the candidates weighed in on the riot. Millican, who had earlier proposed a park curfew, favored drastic action. In a speech delivered at Atlanta's First Presbyterian Church, he promised that, if elected, he would "run the hippies out of town." Echoing his statements from the previous spring, he labeled the city's countercultural district "a disgrace," filled with "hippies, homosexual, sex deviates and drug pushers." Admitting that Piedmont Park had deteriorated before the hip community claimed it as its own, he still argued that "its gone down a lot more since."⁴³ In an appearance at the Dykes-Tuxedo Civic Club, alderman and mayoral candidate Rodney Cook took a less aggressive position, stating that law-abiding citizens should not fear being "hit over the head" by police but that those who broke the law should be punished to the fullest extent possible. Instead of running the hippies out of town, Cook believed that hiring more policemen, raising their salaries, providing them with better training and creating neighborhood patrols would solve the problem.⁴⁴

Great Speckled Bird reporter Greg Gregory analyzed the riot in political terms, arguing for the park's importance to the development of a new American society. After comparing the actions of George Nikas to those of Paul Revere, Gregory stated that "Sunday's resistance was not 'revolutionary antics,' the work of 'agitators.' Sunday was a defense of the kind of life we have chosen to live. This life includes music; it includes dope; but more significantly; and of revolutionary impact, is our self-perception as a *people* acting in unity." For Gregory, action created unity. "A park cannot be liberated by permit, cannot be 'free' just because freaks come together to dig some fine music," he

⁴³ Alex Coffin, "Run Hippies Out: Millican," *Atlanta Constitution*, September 22, 1969, B2.

⁴⁴ Alex Coffin, "Millican, Cook Talk on Brutality, Hippies," *Atlanta Constitution*, September 27, 1969, A1, A8.

argued, “Sunday was about what comes down when . . . we transgress the constricted lifestyle that is acceptable to and in this rotten society.” Gregory had harsh words for those in the hip community who criticized the people who had fought back. Arguing that this criticism attacked the very unity the riot had created, Gregory believed that “to fall back on a love-and-peace stance which quickly becomes a hate-the-bottle throwers posture is to fragment the solidarity that saw politicians and culture freaks standing side by side.” While praising the importance of gentleness to their cultural revolution, he argued that cruelty, not gentleness, needed to be the appropriate response when “tribal celebrations” came under attack. Solidarity required that musicians, “trippers,” and rock throwers stand together or the new culture they hoped to create would die.⁴⁵ Jim Gwin also expressed concern about the damage that could be done to the hip community if divisions emerged over how its members had acted during the riot. Noting that some argued for the preeminence of a vision of peace, love, community and family, while others would argue for struggle, Gwin asserted that “we must defend our vision as it emerges in concrete form. The communal/music experience in Piedmont Park is that vision.”⁴⁶

The politicians of the *Great Speckled Bird* responded quickly to the riot. As soon as the music resumed, staff members at the *Bird* office recorded the statements of approximately one hundred people present in the park during the confrontation. These statements would be added to the suit the *Bird* had filed recently in federal court.⁴⁷ During a press conference held at the newspaper’s office the day after riot, the hip community presented three demands: that all charges against those arrested on Sunday be

⁴⁵ Greg Gregory, “Sunday in the Park,” *Great Speckled Bird* II no. 29 (September 29, 1969), 2

⁴⁶ Gwin, “In OUR Park,” 4.

⁴⁷ Gwin, “In OUR Park,” 4; Wells and Hurt, “Piedmont Concert Erupts Into Disturbance, 20 Held,” A8.

dropped, that all plainclothesmen and other policemen be banned from the park and, finally, to “let us have our music.” A woman from a local SDS chapter proposed that all Atlanta policemen be prohibited from carrying firearms but Horn stated that he thought “that might be going a little too far.”⁴⁸

The riot also generated support from the city’s civil rights community. On Monday, the Atlanta Ad Hoc Committee on Law Enforcement and the Community presented four recommendations to Mayor Ivan Allen. The group, which had come together the previous April to look into police brutality issues, noted that the Atlanta police “showed the same brutal force as Chicago” in their efforts to disperse the park crowd, a reference to the previous year’s street riots during the Democratic National Convention. The committee called for an end to police brutality and harassment, suspensions of policemen accused of brutality, improvement in jail conditions, and the establishment of grievance procedures. While Allen declined to comment on these recommendations, he stated that the city would undertake a “full investigation of police brutality charges” stemming from the riot, and announced that the two officers noted most prominently for their actions in the park, C. R. Price and D.L. Dingee, had been transferred to duty in south Fulton County. Both the mayor and Jenkins stated this might help the situation since the problem had been caused by a small number of “bad apples” within the police force.⁴⁹

The Committee, which included members of the Urban League, the NAACP, and the Metropolitan Atlanta Summit Leadership Conference, saw common cause between the black and hip communities when it came to law enforcement issues. In its statement

⁴⁸ Wells and Hurt, “Piedmont Concert Erupts Into Disturbance, 20 Held,” A8.

⁴⁹ Hopkins, “City to Probe Charges of Brutality in Park,” A1, A8.

to Allen, it claimed that “the city has evaded responsibility and accountability for abuse of its citizens. Brutality occurs not only at the jail, it happens at the time of arrests . . . and we know that the police rioted in Piedmont Park yesterday.”⁵⁰ SCLC leader Hosea Williams also tried to make a connection between oppressed blacks and hip community members. Speaking to the Sunday crowd at Piedmont Park after the riot, he told them that “this is the same thing that has been happening to black people for a long time—and partly for the same reason: because they don’t want to conform to the ways of this sick, racist society. The reason they’re brutalizing you is simple: you want to live your own life, your own way.”⁵¹

The hip and civil rights communities strengthened their bonds by planning a march to police headquarters on Saturday, September 27. On Tuesday, representatives from all segments of the activist community met at the *Birdhouse* to plan the event and finalize its demands. In addition the *Bird* and the SCLC, close to one hundred people attended the meeting, including numerous hippies and street people, ministers from several local churches, local countercultural shopkeepers and political radicals. In addition to the three demands formulated immediately after the riot, the group agreed to publicly support the call from civil rights groups for the termination of Herbert Jenkins and the demand that black people control their own communities. The audience also agreed to demand the firing of seven police officers involved in the riot, including Price and Dingee, as well as eight other officers that the black community wanted dismissed.

The marchers left Piedmont Park at 2 P.M. and proceeded along Peachtree Street towards downtown. The procession consisted of approximately 600 people when it left

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

⁵¹ Gwin, “In OUR Park,” 4.

the park but grew to 1000 marchers as it moved down the city's main thoroughfare. Holding high banners with the phrases "Fire Jenkins" and "No Armed Police or Narks in Park," the group included several African American ministers and civil rights leaders, such as the Reverend Douglas Slappey of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and Hosea Williams. Having reached police headquarters the marchers handed over their demands to Superintendent Jordan. The crowd then listened to several speeches, including one from Williams and a member of the hip community named Sullivan. The demonstrators then turned around and headed back to the park.⁵²

The outward display of unity the march created masked internal debates between the political and cultural segments of the hip community. Greg Gregory, previously critical of those in the hip community who opposed fighting back against the police during the riot, now turned his scorn on the political elements who helped organize the march. He noted that, although the riot originated over the issue of drug use and a "nark," the community meeting rejected a "freedom of the head" demand. For Gregory, this compromised the unity the hip community had been striving to maintain. He expressed outrage that while the riot had been started as an attack on the community's "psychic territory," by the time of the march organizers "had sheepishly tabled our identification with dope . . . and pretended that dope was irrelevant." For the hip community to succeed and thrive, Gregory believed that "we must come on as who and what we are, not petulant children of the middle class, who have been 'brutalized' by the nasty po-lee-see-mens [sic], but as the Aquarians we are."⁵³

⁵² Greg Gregory, "Where Have All the Liberals Gone?," *Great Speckled Bird* II no. 30(October 6, 1969) 2, 3; Leonard Ray Teel, "Hippies' March Aims at 'Brutality'," *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, September 28, 1969, A2.

⁵³ Gregory, "Where Have All the Liberals Gone?," 3.

The hip community descended on the park the Sunday after the march and actions by city officials seemed to indicate that it had won some concessions, at least temporarily. The pavilion, which had been reserved for a family reunion, was surrendered to the hip community and approximately 500 people enjoyed seven hours of music. Parks Superintendent Jack Delius expressed dismay that the family decided to leave, stating that “the parks are for everybody.” Delius did, however, issue an immediate permit to the organizers of the event for the pavilion’s use. The Atlanta police also largely avoided the park. No uniformed officers appeared, although the eleven man park police force took up positions about one hundred yards from the pavilion, chatting with the crowd and directing traffic.

Events during the weeks after the riot and subsequent march highlighted how the park continued to serve all aspects of the local community while generating continued discussion over its use. Associated Press reporter Ray Bell, assigned to find out just what was happening in the park, noted how quiet it appeared on the day he visited. Bell failed to find any hippies as he circulated around the park, meeting instead maintenance workers, mothers taking their children to play, local teenagers, and an interracial league of softball teams. Mrs. Lorrie Hammonds, who visited the park with her infant son everyday, told Bell that the hippies she encountered had been nice to her. In fact, she expressed more concern about older men in the park making sexual advances towards her. Other residents, however, disagreed with this assessment of the local hippie population and described incidents of public sex, increasing crime rates and “the general nuisance created by the hippie community.”⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Ray Bell, “Piedmont Park: Puzzling, Placid,” *Atlanta Journal*, October 5, 1969, A7.

The last major countercultural park event of the year occurred over the weekend of October 15 through 17. For three days, the Piedmont Music Festival took over the park. Produced by Atlantis Rising and the Universal Life Church, the event featured some of the biggest local and regional musical acts, including Joe South, Boz Scaggs, Billy Joe Royal, The Hampton Grease Band and the increasingly popular Allman Brothers Band, whose first album would be released a few weeks later. The festival ended on Sunday with two couples being married on stage by a Universal Life Church minister.⁵⁵

Reclaiming Piedmont Park for “The People”

Life in Piedmont Park for the hip community remained peaceful through the following year. The only major conflict occurred over a proposed music festival that would honor those killed at Kent State and Jackson State universities.⁵⁶ This concert eventually gained approval from the city and as the weather turned pleasant the weekly series of Sunday concerts returned. Despite a growing concern among city officials about the possibility of a large migration of hips on to the Strip that summer, the situation in the park between law enforcement and the hip community remained free of conflict. By the summer of 1971, however, this changed and the park became the focus of open conflict between the city and the hip community.

Two issues led to the dissolution of the pleasant state of affairs in the park. First, city officials began focusing a great deal more attention on Piedmont Park. During the fall of 1970, plans regarding the refurbishment of Piedmont Park became public. The

⁵⁵ Charlie Cushing “Sunday,” *Great Speckled Bird* II no. 33 (October 27, 1969), 9

⁵⁶ Parks Committee Minutes, June 4, 1970, Board of Alderman Records, Kenan Research Center, Atlanta, GA.

Parks Committee had approved a long term plan for parks improvement in 1968 and the move towards new construction in Piedmont Park began in March 1971 with the allocation of almost \$500,000 for a new swimming pool, bathhouse and softball field complex. The improvements were long overdue. For most of the 1960s, the city of Atlanta had been largely ignoring its park system. As a result numerous parks, including Piedmont, had deteriorated through overuse. Voters in 1962 soundly rejected a bond issue that would have approved funds for improvements in Piedmont Park. More significantly, in almost every year during the decade almost 50% of the city's Parks Improvement Fund (about \$250,000 annually), had been diverted to help pay off bonds involved in the construction of Atlanta Stadium. The Parks Department allocated most of the remaining funds to park space in the growing suburbs. By the end of the decade, according to the plan drawn up by the parks department, Atlanta had less than 50% of the park space needed for a city of its size. Now, with the help of matching federal funds, the committee planned to refocus its attention on in-town park space, with Piedmont Park becoming the largest project.⁵⁷

In soon became clear that few people liked the proposed changes. During a four-and-a-half hour meeting held that May to discuss the new plan, Jack Delius and the rest of the parks committee endured a flood of complaints. While almost everyone supported the proposed ban on automobile traffic, few agreed with attempts to retool the park for structured recreational purposes. Working closely with Delius, landscape architect Reinald Dersch had developed a plan for the park that included the construction of a 50 meter swimming pool and a circular softball complex built around a two story concession

⁵⁷ Harry Murphy, "Face-Lift Due Soon For Piedmont Park," *Atlanta Journal*, March 4, 1970, A2; Gene Guerrero, "The Park," *Great Speckled Bird* III no. 47 (November 23, 1970), 12-13; Maurice Fliess, "Plans for a Tranquil Park Setting Off a Big Uproar," *Atlanta Journal*, May 25, 1971, A2.

“tower.” Fourteen tennis courts would be moved to accommodate a new recreation center. The plan further envisioned a sidewalk café and a performing arts stage in the middle of the lake. Road closures created the need for parking and several acres would be given over to new lots with spaces for hundreds of cars.⁵⁸ Members of both the straight and hip communities disliked most of these ideas, arguing instead that the park needed to retain as much green space as possible and remain dedicated to unstructured leisure pursuits. A small number of conservative citizens even feared that the plan would hand the park over to the hips. Before the meeting these opponents of the plan labeled Delius a “wide-eyed liberal, a Communist and a frequent visitor to Castro’s Cuba.” But, the hip community’s presence in the park did not seem to concern most people at the meeting. The *Bird* reported that, surprisingly, no “hippie-baiting” had occurred. One local resident, Mrs. Bill Mathis stated that “the hippies aren’t bothering us, but we’re scared to death of golf balls” (Piedmont Park contained a 9-hole golf course).⁵⁹ Some did support the new plan, including a few in the hip community. Steve Coles, the promoter behind many rock concerts in the park, argued that the park needed better management, which the plan provided. The Southern Bicycle League, composed mostly of hip community members, voiced their support for ending automobile use.⁶⁰ Most disliked the plan and this widespread opposition led to numerous revisions. In the end, the plan would be debated and altered for years before even one of its proposed additions, a swimming pool, began construction.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Alex Coffin, “Plans for Piedmont Park Stir Controversy,” *Atlanta Constitution*, May 21, 1971, A16; Maurice Fliess, “Plans for a Tranquil Park Setting Off a Big Uproar,” *Atlanta Journal*, May 25, 1971, A2.

⁵⁹ Fliess, “Plans for Tranquil Park Setting Off a Big Uproar,” A2; Alex Coffin, “City to Revise Piedmont Park Plan,” *Atlanta Constitution*, May 27, 1971, B14.

⁶⁰ Gene Guerrero, “Whoever Heard of a Park for Cars?,” *Great Speckled Bird* IV no. 23 (June 7, 1971), 3.

⁶¹ Johnson, “An Invitation for Use,” 36.

The general public's dislike for the original plan confounded Alderman D.L. "Buddy" Fowlkes, chairman of the parks committee. Despite the lack of opposition to the hip community's presence in the park during the May meeting, other city residents and civic leaders had grown increasingly concerned about it. The Strip had drawn most of the city leaders' attention over the past several years, but it took a good deal of effort to ignore the sizable presence of the hip community in Piedmont Park. Since the hip community had adopted the park as its own starting in 1969 many Atlantans have given up using the park, surrendering it to the hips. As the debate over the future of Piedmont Park intensified through the summer of 1970, Fowlkes revealed one of the plan's original goals. Far from handing the park over to longhairs, as some claimed, the plan had been designed to counter the takeover of the park by the hip community. According to Fowlkes, the redesign aimed "to bring some of the good folks back in the park . . . we were hoping to stabilize it so that it could be used by all segments of the community, not just one."⁶² By reorienting the park towards regular, structured use through athletic leagues and cultural events, Fowlkes and Delius aimed for a more subtle means of checking the hip community's claims over the park. This plan failed but not only because local citizens failed to understand its purpose. In addition, other city officials had been following a course of action that forced the hip community to increase its presence in the park, encouraging longhairs to defend more stridently its claims of ownership of the space and resist proposed changes.

Under the guidance of Mayor Massell and Chief of Police Jenkins, a concerted effort had been underway since the previous summer to check the expansion of the hip

⁶² Hugh Nations, "Piedmont: A Park . . . or a Crash Pad?," *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, August 8, 1971.

community into the Strip. Through increased police harassment and the passage of a new city ordinance, Strip residents endured constant pressure and began to consider its very existence threatened. As a result, large numbers of people who called the Strip home, including many street people without permanent residences, moved several blocks east to Piedmont Park. The *Bird* noticed the shift that August, reporting that “this summer the Strip is practically deserted and the park is being used more.” It also took umbrage with local reporters who held the hip community responsible for straight Atlantans abandoning the park. *Bird* columnist Mary claimed that “we’ve really gone out of our way in the past few years to make other people feel comfortable around us. We’ve given them flowers and free food and been more than willing to rap about what we’re doing around here. We’ve taken in the people that the Great Society shuns and wants nothing to do with and tried to help them get their shit together. If there’s anything we’re not, it’s being exclusive.”⁶³ Mary’s exasperation spoke to the growing estrangement between the hip community and straight Atlanta.

By the fall of 1971 conditions in Piedmont Park had worsened and, despite Mary’s claims of inclusiveness, park residents had begun adopting a siege mentality, particularly towards the police. Atlanta’s long summers and mild autumns led many homeless hips to take up permanent residence in the wooded areas of the park. The composition of the hip community had changed by the early 1970s. Few “real” hippies existed in the hip community anymore, replaced by young runaways, drug addicts, professional drug sellers from outside the community and other social castoffs. Pushed off the Strip, many of these people had little choice but to move into the park. Reports in local papers claimed that at least several hundred people now called Piedmont Park

⁶³ Mary, “Parkanoia,” *Great Speckled Bird* IV no. 33 (August 15, 1971), 21.

home.⁶⁴ The pavilion served as the epicenter of this population, which gathered there each night, many of them looking to purchase drugs and some brandishing weapons openly.

The *Bird*, ever the voice of hope and opposition, attempted to counter the increasingly negative reports about the park in the local media, stating that “most of the park is unchanged from last year or the year before.” Stressing the existence of a shared identity and common purpose that had become frayed around the edges, the paper claimed that “Piedmont Park is a community. It is a city within a city, and a life-style within a life-style. We are convinced that there can be an end to police hassles, bad dope and rip-offs, in order for us to survive, and we must be the ones to end it—not the Atlanta power structure.”⁶⁵ These pleas feel largely on deaf ears and violence erupted repeatedly in the park that fall.

A shooting in July acted as an omen of events to come. The *Bird* attempted to figure out what exactly happened but received so many conflicting versions of the confrontation that, in true underground journalistic fashion, it printed all of them.⁶⁶ While quite varied in the details, reports focused on one of two main narratives. Some told of a fight erupting between a biker and a hippie, ending in the longhair getting shot. Members of motorcycle gangs had associated with Strip residents since 1966 but their numbers had increased starting in the summer of 1969, leading to clashes with hips. Other versions of the shooting reported that it resulted from a drug deal gone bad. Marijuana and LSD could still be purchased but heroin and other narcotics had become

⁶⁴ Phil Garner, “The Problem in Piedmont Park,” *Atlanta Journal Constitution Magazine*, October 24, 1971, 29.

⁶⁵ Howard Singerman, “Piedmont Epilogue,” *Great Speckled Bird* IV no. 42 (October 18, 1971), 11.

⁶⁶ “Shot in the Park,” *Great Speckled Bird* IV no. 28 (July 12, 1971), 4.

increasingly popular, bringing professional drug sellers into the park. Leaders in the hip community had making numerous attempts at discouraging the use of hard drugs but largely failed to check its growing popularity. Hip community leaders watched helplessly as the hard drug trade became widespread and turned dangerous. By the summer of 1971, junk-sick addicts and predatory sellers from other parts of the city roamed the Strip and took up residence in Piedmont Park.

The violence continued through the summer. During the first week of August, another shooting occurred. Drugs were clearly involved this time. On August 4, members of the hip community attempted to remove a young African American drug pusher from the park. They suspected he had been the source of some bad heroin which had caused several recent deaths. Following the confrontation the young dealer conferred with his supplier, an older African American man known in the community as “Everything” since he dealt in a wide variety of illegal drugs. “Everything” pulled a gun and fired into a small crowd nearby, injuring four people. Far from being frightened off by the shooting, several hip community members predicted more violence would occur since they intended to continue attempts at eradicating heroin dealers from the park. According to Rick Perry, the park was worth the effort. “The Strip was just gravel and concrete,” Perry stated, “but this is worth saving.”⁶⁷ Attempts to save the park did not include help from the police. A year of bad relations between the hip community and the police meant that any attempts by law enforcement to address the drug problem in the park would be met with a negative response from longhairs. The hip community planned to take care of itself. On August 31, park residents tried to prevent police from making a

⁶⁷ Keeler McCartney and Bob Rohrer, “Piedmont Fights Heroin Traffic,” *Atlanta Constitution*, August 5, 1971, A1; Orville Gaines, “Gunman in Piedmont Park Sprays Crowd, Hits Five,” *Atlanta Journal*, August 5, 1971, A1.

drug-related arrest by freeing the young woman as she was led away. This failed and the crowd then threw rocks and bottles at a police car. Some time later that same night another disturbance occurred and officers called in a police helicopter which hovered over the crowd, scattering it.⁶⁸

The situation continued to get worse. In October, two shootings occurred on successive days. On the 4th, two people suffered gunshot injuries following another attempt by police to arrest a drug user in the park. As two patrolmen led a young girl away the crowd began following them, shouting and throwing bottles. Concerned for their safety, the officers fired several warning shots and hurried toward their vehicle. Someone in the crowd returned fire, hitting patrolman Leon Jones in the abdomen. Jones' partner, officer L.R. Winn, pulled the wounded man behind a tree and called for more officers. Within minutes, scores of policeman swarmed into the park and herded the crowd, which had grown to several hundred people, on to the nearby streets. Kerry Reick, who had been in the park when the shooting started, suffered a bullet wound to the shoulder and received treatment at Grady hospital. It could not be determined if he had been shot by the police or the gunman in the crowd.⁶⁹ The following night a fight between longhairs in the park ended with gunfire, sending a severely wounded 18-year-old man to the hospital.⁷⁰

These incidents created further animosity between the hip and straight communities. Local columnist Leo Aikman lamented that the Park no longer served as a

⁶⁸ "Copter Breaks Up Park Disturbance," *Atlanta Journal*, September 1, 1971, A2.

⁶⁹ Keeler McCartney, "Officer Shot in Piedmont Park," *Atlanta Constitution*, October 5, 1971, A1, A16; Orville Gaines, "Two Wounded in Park Melee," *Atlanta Journal*, October 5, 1971, A1, A4; Gene Guerrero and Howard Singerman, "Piedmont Blowout," *Great Speckled Bird* IV no. 41 (October 11, 1971), 3.

⁷⁰ Keeler McCartney, "Another Park Shooting Critically Wounds Youth," *Atlanta Constitution*, October 6, 1971, A1.

“people’s park.” He had borrowed the term from the hip community itself, which used it as a means of claiming ownership of Piedmont Park following the conflict two years earlier over the original People’s Park in Berkeley, CA. Aikman used the term in the same manner, brandishing it as a weapon in an effort to reclaim the park for the straight community. “My own thinking,” he wrote, “is that Piedmont Park is a people’s park. Families are people, no matter what the counterculture says. They have a right to enjoy the park in peace and safety.” In the columnist’s assessment, the hip community had lost all claims to both the park and a place in society following the shooting of Officer Jones. They had become, simply, terrorists. If making the park safe again meant “marching the terrorists out because of their intolerant attitudes, then march them out.” “The answer to terrorists,” he concluded, “is not to accede to their every wish.”⁷¹

The *Bird*, on the other hand, did not find much blame in the hip community for the recent shootings. Instead, it placed responsibility squarely on the shoulders of the mayor and the police. The hip community, both in the Strip and in the park, had been under constant harassment for years, according to the *Bird*. While Mayor Massell and Chief Jenkins claimed they had been following a policy of toleration, the actions of the police revealed this statement as untrue. “Since Massell took office, the words have been ‘liberal,’ but the *actions* of the city are another thing altogether: harassment on the Strip, increasing grass busts, [and the] creation of para-military police operations with the addition of helicopters hovering over the neighborhood.” The solution, according to the *Bird*, did not reside in “more arrests, more narcs, and more guns. That policy had turned Atlanta’s freak community into another of America’s many battlegrounds.” The paper,

⁷¹ Leo Aikman, “Terror in the Park,” *Atlanta Constitution*, October 6, 1971, A4.

however, had few suggestions for dealing with the increasingly dangerous situation developing in the park.⁷²

The police force had also become divided over what to do about the park. Following the shooting, several officers labeled the space a “festering sore and devil’s playground” but could do little about it since their supervisors had told them to stay out of the park unless called there in response to a specific incident. “They ordered us not to go into the park,” one officer claimed. He wished that city officials “would stop babying longhairs” and let the police do their job. Confronted with these accusations, Massell denied the existence of any such order.⁷³ Jenkins, though, had his doubts about how to handle the situation. Despite authorizing the use of strong-arm tactics to clear the Strip of hips the previous year, he questioned applying the same policy in the park. His main concern resided in the possibility that if police turned the hip community out of Piedmont Park it would simply move *en masse* to another neighborhood. This scenario contradicted the most basic goal of the city’s policy towards the hip community. The city wanted to break it up, not repeatedly push it into new parts of Atlanta. Lacking a third alternative, Jenkins and other city officials had to decide between working closely with hip leaders to develop long term solutions and simply increasing pressure on the park residents. They chose the latter.

In the weeks and months following the shootings, policing of the park increased and city officials passed several new ordinances regarding the city’s parks. On October 7, Massell announced that a “special police detail, a mobile precinct and a mounted patrol” would soon be on duty in Piedmont Park. In his statement to the media, the

⁷² Gene Guerrero and Howard Singerman, “Piedmont Blowout,” 3.

⁷³ Gaines, “Two Wounded in Park Melee,” A1; “Clean Out Park, Fulton D.A. Urges,” *Atlanta Journal*, October 6, 1971, A7.

mayor proclaimed that “the park is a big place but not big enough to house punks with knives, guns and needles.” By the time the additional patrols began operating in the middle of the month Jenkins had expanded them to cover two other large city parks.⁷⁴ Parks Committee member Wyche Fowler hoped the new patrols would cover nearby Winn and Ansley Parks since “they have a different problem [homosexuals] in those two parks, but nevertheless a problem.” He also expressed concern that, “once Piedmont Park is cleaned out,” hips would migrate into these two parks, located in one of Atlanta’s more upscale neighborhoods.⁷⁵ The additional policeman began patrolling Piedmont Park aggressively. During a sixteen hour period starting on October 13, patrolmen made over seventy arrests for a variety of offences, from drug possession to “creating a turmoil.” The crackdown had its intended effect. Within days, hips had largely abandoned the park. Police also maintained an increased presence on the Strip, making numerous arrests to prevent park residents from migrating in large numbers back on to Peachtree Street.⁷⁶

The hip community stayed largely indoors during the winter months and city officials used the time to insure that the Piedmont Park would be returned to the people, excluding, of course, hip people. Massell signed into law an ordinance the previous September that closed city parks every night between 1 A.M. and 6 A.M. The Parks Committee had approved the new regulation during its September meeting in effort to do something about the large number of people sleeping the park. Committee chairman

⁷⁴Bill Seddon and Keeler McCartney, “Piedmont Gets Extra Patrols,” *Atlanta Constitution*, October 7, 1971, A1, A23; Keeler McCartney, “3 Park Horse Patrols Begin,” *Atlanta Constitution*, October 14, 1971, A1.

⁷⁵Parks Committee Minutes, October 12, 1971, Atlanta Board of Alderman Records, Kenan Research Center, Atlanta, GA.

⁷⁶Howard Singerman, “Only 12 Years, 2 Months & 6 Days, Folks,” *Great Speckled Bird* IV no. 43 (October 25, 1971), 2.

Buddy Fowlkes hoped the new law would reduce drug abuse in the parks but clearly this had not happened in Piedmont.⁷⁷ Starting in March, the Aldermanic Parks Committee began discussing several new regulations designed to keep the hip community out of Piedmont Park. One new measure required putting up a \$50 bond that would only be returned if groups cleaned up the park following the approved event. Another measure broadened the conditions for the revocation of a permit. Any event that could be “detrimental to the safety or best interests of the Citizens of the City of Atlanta” risked cancellation. Others made it more difficult to acquire a permit for a quickly organized event, tied the size of events to park size, and limited the duration of “open air meetings” to four hours. One measure required groups to hire off-duty policeman to insure events did not violate any city laws or park regulations.⁷⁸ The intent seemed clear. Examined collectively, the new regulations made it harder to organize the kind of events that the hip community had held in Piedmont Park over the past several years, such as rock concerts, political rallies and antiwar demonstrations.

Denied the ability to organize events, hips still attempted to congregated informally in the park over the spring and summer months. Not surprisingly, the police worked diligently to make them unwelcome. Patrolmen issued \$25 fines for walking across the park’s golf course. Officers also began selectively enforcing park ordinance 22-38, which made it “unlawful for any person, in any park, to, stand, walk or ride on the grass.” Police asked for identification from members of any group of six or more hips

⁷⁷ Gene Guerrero, “City Park Closed 1-6 A.M.,” *Great Speckled Bird* IV no. 39 (September 27, 1971), 6; Parks Committee Minutes, September 14, 1971, Atlanta Board of Alderman Records, Kenan Research Center, Atlanta, GA.

⁷⁸ Cindy Hilton, “Atlanta’s Parks: New Regulations, Restrict Use, Invite Harassment,” *Great Speckled Bird* V no. 26 (July 3, 1972), 14; Parks Committee Minutes, June 13, 1972, Atlanta Board of Alderman Records, Kenan Research Center, Atlanta, GA.

congregating in the park. The *Bird* claimed, not without cause, that a “police state” now existed in the park.⁷⁹ Pushed out of Piedmont Park and the Strip, the hip community seemed to be near an end.

Several articles about Piedmont Park appeared in the city’s two local newspapers during the spring and summer months of 1972. These stories revealed a much different situation in the park than had existed the previous year. References to terrorists, punks, and drug sellers brandishing guns had been replaced by vignettes of families happily enjoying the park again. Piedmont had returned to being “a park for all people,” and a “haven for families’ frolic.” Few mentioned the strict new ordinances and pattern of police harassment that drove the hip community away. One reporter did admit that the “dissidents” had been moved out “gradually,” but for the most part it appeared as if they had just vanished of their own accord.

The story of Piedmont Park during the 1960s and early 1970s told a more complicated story than simply a conflict between hips and straight local residents. Through most of the decade, the repeated unwillingness of Atlantans to restrict access to the park through bans on car traffic and the imposition of curfews revealed that the park existed as a place where people could gently push the boundaries of society’s norms and mores. Where else could people find a temporary place to sleep or engage in clandestine sexual activity if not in the city’s parks? Even in the last years of the 1960s, straight park users remained mostly undisturbed by the large numbers of hips in the park pushing against social standards of dress and behavior. Local residents would not tolerate, however, behavior in the park that existed clearly outside the law or widely accepted

⁷⁹ Bob D., “Police State in the Park,” *Great Speckled Bird* V no. 15 (April 17, 1971), 4.

boundaries of behavior. Homosexuals found themselves the target of attacks by local residents and police harassment before, during, and after the hip community claimed ownership of the park. The hip community's removal from the park only became necessary after it battled openly with the police and became a haven for hard drug use and violent crime. By the first years of the 1970s local residents and city officials undertook a strategy meant to make Piedmont a "people's park" again, but only for the right people. Events in the park between 1969 and 1972 also existed as part of a larger campaign to remove the hip community from Midtown completely. In the Strip during these years, hips encountered an increasingly more difficult set of problems as it became the mecca of the counterculture in the southeastern United States.

CHAPTER 8

HANGING OUT WITH THE STREET PEOPLE: SMACK, SALVATION, SOCIAL SERVICES AND THE STRIP'S DEMISE, 1969-1971

I'm glad I'm a street people, have it no other way

I'm gonna stay a street people until the day I die

“Street People,” Bobby Charles

A new hope settled over the Strip in the last weeks of 1969. Despite having endured near constant harassment by the police and an increasing number of violent attacks from elements in the straight Atlanta during the past few years, the hip district had managed to survive and expand. The number of Strip residents grew each year, new businesses which catered to hips opened on Peachtree Street, and, through the efforts of the *Great Speckled Bird*, the first attempts at an organized response to harassment and repression had occurred. In addition, the victory of Sam Massell in the mayoral election brought a politician to office who appeared willing to work with the hip community. It seemed that the “Great Hippie Hunt,” as *Time* magazine described the situation in Atlanta, might finally be coming to an end.¹

But, trouble loomed just over the horizon. The reputation of the Strip as a place where just about any experience could be had led more and more runaways and drug addicts from across the South to call the area home. A distressing number of young, homeless teenagers and older junkies, part of a growing population of “street people,” roamed Midtown by the first years

¹ “The Great Hippie Hunt,” *Time*, October 10, 1969, 28.

of the 1970s. Many of the original hip residents had left the Strip but those that remained, along with other members of the hip community, worked hard to address these problems. Over the next several years they would combine their efforts with numerous local organizations in an effort to bridge the gap between straight and hip society. Massell and other city officials, however, proved unwilling to leave Strip residents alone. Concerned that Atlanta would become inundated with hip people from around the nation during the summer of 1970, the mayor issued a new loitering ordinance and dramatically increased the police presence in the Strip, destroying any potential for cooperation between city officials and hip community leaders. By the summer of 1971 large numbers of hips had abandoned the Strip and relocated to Piedmont Park. Despite a small influx of people in the summer of 1972, the Strip's role as the physical center for the hip community had ended.

The Midtown Alliance and Community Center

Following the Strip riot in August 1969, Dan Sweat, the mayor's chief administrative officer, asked the Community Council of the Atlanta Area (CCAA) to investigate conditions in the area. The CCAA had been founded in 1960 to help address Atlanta's numerous social problems. Prior to the implementation of President Johnson's Great Society and the funding it provided to numerous U.S. cities as part of the War on Poverty, Atlanta had woefully inadequate social programs. According to Duane Beck, longtime director of the CCAA, half the people of Atlanta in 1960 were poorly housed, underemployment and unemployment were widespread, and "the public welfare system showed an unusual disregard for the condition of poor people." Most of these problems troubled the city's black communities but the CCAA started and supervised a variety of programs dealing with community relations and public health issues

around the entire metropolitan area.² Its preliminary study of life in the Strip, “The Fourteenth Street Area: An Interim Study” represented the first attempt to explore and analyze the district’s hip population. Observational rather than scientific in its methodology (it relied largely on interviews with members of the hip community) the study nonetheless provided city officials with a wealth of useful knowledge about the area. It concluded that, of the 20,000 people living in the neighborhood, students at area schools and colleges made up half of the population while 25% of the residents could be classified as “white collar workers.” Approximately 1000 had some kind of association with the local art scene and fully 3000 were hippies.³

The report also confirmed the existence of problems that the *Bird* had been discussing for the past eighteenth months: constant police harassment, maltreatment from local business owners, housing and job discrimination, and attacks from “rednecks.” It noted the growing runaway problem and the appearance of heroin and other narcotics in the neighborhood and offered a positive picture of the district’s hip residents. Differentiating them from the teenage “plastic” hippies who visit the Strip on weekends and then returned to their suburban homes, the “real” hips in the neighborhood appeared “highly intelligent—perhaps some of the brightest people to be found in the metropolitan area.” The report noted that the community had fallen into a “survival situation.” The constant assault on Strip residents from various fronts might drive out those most dedicated to the countercultural ideals of peace, love, and nonviolence. Those remaining would then be susceptible to militant political groups which advocated the use

² Duane Beck to Edward M. Abrams, January 22, 1973, Box 8, Community Council of the Atlanta Area Records, 1960-1974, MARBL, Atlanta, GA. Hereafter referred to as the CCAA Records.

³ “The Fourteenth Street Area: An Interim Study,” Box 1, CCAA Records, MARBL, Atlanta, GA. The report does not explain why it considered the arts-related population as separate from the hippie community. These two groups had close contact in hippie districts around the nation and oral testimony from Atlanta’s hip community confirms the same situation in the Strip.

of violence. The recent appearance of SDS members in the Strip held out the possibility of this scenario becoming a reality, according to the CCAA.⁴

In the wake of this study and personal visits to the Strip, Beck concluded that the creation of new social services in the area held out the best hope of improving conditions by facilitating better communication between city officials and the hip community while also limiting the potential for future violence.⁵ Achieving this goal presented a serious challenge. The study made it clear that hip community members wanted to solve the runaway and drug problems themselves. Hip leaders complained that previous efforts by city agencies to address problems in the area ignored input from the hip community itself. The distrust this fostered among hips toward straight agencies led them to decline previous offers of outside help. This mistrust came from personal experiences in the Strip but also from general countercultural ideals that rejected organizations, hierarchies and groups which stifled personal creativity and individual potential. Beck therefore had to create an effective social agency that addressed the needs of the district's residents, helped facilitate a positive relationship between the hip and straight communities, but which also respected the alternative ideals of the counterculture. The result was the Midtown Community Center.

The center grew out of a series of meetings between representatives from the hip community, professionals who had worked in the area, and the CCAA. Beck made it clear that his group did not wish to "organize the hippies" or "foist on them services they neither wanted nor needed."⁶ During this initial meeting it became clear that a community center would be the best means of helping Strip residents. During the second organizational meeting all present

⁴ The Fourteenth Street Area: An Interim Study," Box 1, CCAA Records, MARBL, Atlanta, GA.

⁵ John Haydock, "Organized Citizen Participation in the Atlanta Hippie Community," (MA thesis, Emory University, 1971), 10.

⁶ Haydock, "Organized Citizen Participation in the Atlanta Hippie Community," 11.

agreed that hips needed to feel that the center belonged to them or it would not succeed. To help engender this belief and create support for the center the *Bird* organized a community-wide meeting in Piedmont Park on November 2, which revealed widespread acceptance for the plan. The Midtown Alliance, initially a collection groups and individuals that had been present at the first two organizational meetings, as well as the center's staff, formed to oversee the facility's operations. By the end of November the Alliance had signed a lease on a rundown house at 1013 Juniper Street, a block off of Peachtree Street. Detective Ray Pate of the Atlanta police played a major role in convincing the landlord to rent the house to the Alliance. Finally, an anonymous donation from a private foundation provided several thousand dollars to cover the center's operational expenses for six months.⁷

The center opened its doors on December 8, 1969 and proved instantly successful. It provided a few core services initially but would expand its offerings soon after. It ran a 24-hour "switchboard" that people in trouble or in need of information could call. The center possessed two large rooms so street people had a place to go during the winter months as well as providing space for staff to conduct various types of counseling services. Finally, the free clinic, which had operated out of several locations over the previous two years, relocated to the center. While the clinic still held hours only two nights a week, the center stayed open from noon to midnight every day. By the end of January it also served meals, ran a clothing exchange and job bureau, and provided legal aid.

The values of the New Left and counterculture, however, created problems for both the center and the Alliance. The center's staff consisted at first of three people in paid positions, who had been carefully screened, and numerous volunteers from the hip community. From the

⁷ "Fourteenth Street Multi-Purpose Center Report #1, October-November 1969," undated, "Fourteenth Street Community," undated, Box 11, CCAA Records, MARBL, Atlanta, GA

beginning, however, the counterculture's distrust of leaders and hierarchies hampered smooth operations at the center. In addition, many volunteers hoped that moving into a paid staff position would help them develop a sense of identity by being part of the center's "in crowd." As a CCAA report noted, many of these volunteers were "bright and able but with many personal problems." The staff divided duties equally which created "disorganization and further problems for there is no one final authority or coordinator."⁸ Other countercultural organizations experienced problems similar to those at the Midtown Community Center. In a study of similar groups in Boston, Leonard Davidson showed that these issues plagued facilities that attempted to avoid traditional bureaucratic structures. In fact, Davidson argued, "the attempt to stay nonbureaucratic is the key developmental problem these organizations faced." At the Free Form Free School, for example, the concern over the potential development of an elite cadre "prevented the leadership from stabilizing."⁹

Like the community center, the Midtown Alliance had its own initial difficulties. Between sixty to one hundred people attended meetings during its first few months of existence but by summer those numbers had dwindled to just a few dozen regular participants. The differences between New Left and countercultural ideologies played a large part in this problem. The New Leftists in the group strictly enforced the principles of participatory democracy during Alliance meetings. Like editorial meetings at the *Bird*, this policy resulted in sessions that could last hours. Most hips, regardless of their commitment to making things better in the Strip, had little patience for this type of thing and stopped attending. The change in membership also kept the Alliance from quickly settling on a permanent vision and purpose for the organization. Initial

⁸ "Fourteenth Street Neighborhood Project Report #2, December 1969-January 1970," undated, Box 11, CCAA Records, MARBL, Atlanta, GA.

⁹ Leonard Davidson, "Countercultural Organizations and Bureaucracy: Limits on the Revolution," in Jo Freeman, ed., *Social Movements of the Sixties and Seventies* (New York: Longman, 1983), 166, 170.

statements reflected the limited and moderate goal of serving as a “base for communications” between the hip and straight communities. In statements made several months later it appeared that radicals had come to dominate the Alliance, broadening its purpose and creating distance between hips and straight society. This politicization of the group may also have alienated the Alliance’s hippie contingent. By the first months of 1970 it now served to “provide a focus and drive for community growth” as well trying to “create an alternative life style and give a vision and direction to our future.” By June, the Alliance had assumed an openly hostile attitude to straight society. It now helped create a community that allowed people to live freely but since “our values are in opposition to the present sickness in America” it had trouble putting new programs at the community center into place due to resistance from civic leaders.¹⁰

Despite these problems and changes, the Alliance and community center successfully accomplished their initial goals. Both groups, while including straights, truly belonged to the hip community. In addition, they did create a bridge between the hips and straights. Community Center staff served on panels and attended meetings with other city agencies. The staff opened the center’s doors so other agencies could “listen, learn and observe” this new way of serving the people. Finally, it helped stabilize the Strip population by addressing its most pressing needs. It hoped to continue doing so. Future plans included a youth hostel, a drug treatment center, day care facilities and a recreation center. The first two items proved most important since, by early 1970, runaways and hard drugs on the Strip had created significant problems.¹¹

¹⁰ Haydock, “Organized Citizen Participation in the Atlanta Hippie Community,” 16-18; Midtown Alliance, “Press Release, June 9, 1970,” *Great Speckled Bird* III no. 24 (June 15, 1970), 2.

¹¹ “Fourteenth Street Neighborhood Project Report #2, December 1969-January 1970,” undated, “Report to the Christian Council of Churches on Our Progress With the Over-all Project in the Tenth Street Area and Our Immediate and Future Needs,” undated, CCAA Records, MARBL, Atlanta, GA.

Hard Drugs and Runaways Come to Town

Noticeable changes had occurred in the Strip population by the start of the new decade. As the district developed a regional reputation during the late 1960s as a welcoming “hippie colony”, it began attracting not only hippies but a growing number of runaways. These juveniles, some as young as twelve years of age, faced a much different environment than they had hoped to encounter. Finding adequate shelter and food proved difficult and many ended up either living on the streets or relying on invitations from older street people and hips to stay at their crashpads. The easy availability of drugs added to their problems, especially after heroin and other hard drugs became readily available. This situation proved even worse for young girls who faced the constant danger of rape and other forms of sexual exploitation. The Midtown Community Center provided some help for runaways but since it did not specialize in the problem, its impact was limited. It became clear that something more had to be done.

Atlanta did not have a unique experience with runaways. Hip districts in cities around the nation became magnets for children looking to either escape from dysfunctional and abusive homes or simply take part in the great quest for the authentic life that helped define the counterculture. Taking their inspiration from the Beats, many in the counterculture believed that “real” life could only be experienced by getting “On the Road,” the title of Beat author Jack Kerouac’s most well-known novel. Hip communities held a great allure to these travelers. They promised peace and love as well as “brotherhood and a substitute family to youth who had experienced unhappy and unstable family backgrounds.” Furthermore, hip communities legitimized behaviors condemned by parents and straight society, such as rebellion against authority, drug use and sexual experimentation. The Haight-Ashbury neighborhood witnessed a massive influx of runaways soon after its existence became nationally known, but numerous other

urban hip communities in cities such as Chicago, Washington, D.C. and New York City faced the same situation.¹²

Hip communities helped runaways in numerous ways, despite the dangers these districts also presented to independent juveniles. They provided runaways with several potential sources of income through jobs at hip businesses or by selling underground newspapers. Panhandling could be fairly lucrative as hip districts became tourist destinations. Hip community members mostly welcomed runaways, refusing to question what drew them to the neighborhood. The counterculture valued accepting people for who they were without question of judgment. As Karen Salter states simply, “the hippie community saw kindred spirits in runaways and reiterated the theme of taking care of its own kind.”¹³ The acceptance of large numbers of young teenagers into the community did create problems. Local police frequently entered hip districts looking for runaways and adults risked numerous criminal charges by taking in runaways. Attempts by police to arrest runaways could lead to resistance by hip community members. In June 1970 a crowd of several hundred people gathered in the Strip when the police tried to reunite a runaway girl with her family against her will. The police arrested six people after shouts and insults led to the throwing of rocks and bottles.¹⁴

The problems that runaways faced combined with their acceptance into hip communities led to the development of several types of alternative social services. Hip community members allied themselves with social agencies and religious groups to create solutions that provided help to runaways while also respecting their independence and freedom. Agencies that offered temporary shelter and family counseling sprang up around the country. Huckleberry House in

¹² Karen M. Staller, *Runaways: How the Sixties Counterculture Shaped Today's Practices and Policies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 74.

¹³ *Ibid*, 93.

¹⁴ Salter, *Runaways*, 92; “Finding of Girl Runaway Sparks Hippie Area Melee,” *Atlanta Constitution*, June 19, 1970, A15.

Haight-Ashbury and Looking Glass in Chicago were the first two, both founded in 1969, but by 1972 as many as 75 to 100 existed in cities around the country. These agencies, above all, respected the autonomy of runaways. Unlike state child protection services that controlled the movement of children by removing them from homes or “placing them in foster homes or juvenile facilities without their consent,” runaways came to alternative services of their own free will. Once there, runaways had the freedom to reject help or leave at anytime without fear that the agency would contact the police or family members.¹⁵

The Metro Atlanta Mediation Center provided these services to runaways in the Strip. The Bridge, as it was commonly known, came together in the spring of 1970 through the efforts of Greg Santos, a Catholic priest from the Monastery of the Holy Ghost in nearby Conyers, and Bob Griffin, a graduate student at Georgia State University. The agency provided counseling to families and temporary shelter for runaways. According to Santos, The Bridge aimed to “get the parents and kids together at the mediation center to work out their problems” but the best solution did not necessarily mean that the runaways would return home. The final decision ultimately rested with the child. Before arranging a meeting between a runaway and his or her family, the Bridge required that parents agree to allow the child to leave at the end of any discussion.¹⁶

City officials seemed sympathetic to this new approach. Across the country cities experienced a sharp increase in the number of teenage runaways who flooded legal and social service systems ill-equipped to handle them. In Atlanta, the police department documented a 50% increase in reported runaways between 1967 and 1970, and in 1969 alone received reports of 1400 runaways. Judge Curtis V. Tillman of the Dekalb Juvenile Court admitted that that law

¹⁵ Salter, *Runaways*, 96-98.

¹⁶ “Firm Seeks to Aid Hippie Runaways,” *Atlanta Constitution*, April 3, 1970, C1; Gene Guerrero, “Runaway House,” *Great Speckled Bird* III no. 16 (April 20, 1970), 11.

enforcement and juvenile agencies had not been designed to handle the large numbers of runaways. He remained open-minded about the Bridge, stating that “maybe this will be addition that will be worthwhile. Let’s look at it and see.” Santos had also been in touch with the Atlanta police department and Mayor Massell’s office, both of which offered positive reactions to the facility. Good relations with the police were of particular importance since they were required to take into custody any juvenile who has had a missing-persons warrant taken out for them. According to Santos, however, the department had been cooperating with the Bridge.¹⁷

The Bridge began counseling operations in January, 1970. The staff, composed of a mix of professional counselors and volunteers who had been runaways themselves, faced a major challenge. Estimates placed between 200 and 500 runaways in the Strip, some of them as young as twelve years old. The Bridge had difficulty finding the funds to rent a space for the center as well as convincing someone to provide a building once the money had been acquired. As a result, the Bridge conducted counseling sessions in the Midtown Community Center, various churches, and even on the streets during its first seven months. Despite the lack of its own facilities, the Bridge soon demonstrated its worth. By October, 119 runaways had been counseled. Girls made up 2/3 of this number. During the summer months, when the Strip population always increased, the Bridge counseled on average 1-2 persons a day. The bulk of runaways counseled were between fourteen and sixteen years old. In addition, 179 parents contacted the Bridge to report runaways.¹⁸

The case of “Cinnamon” provides insight into the Atlanta runaway experience and the role of the Bridge. Interviewed by the *Bird* for a multi-page expose on runaways in Atlanta,

¹⁷ Richard B. Matthews, “Kids Find A Hiding Place, New Perils, Few Answers,” *Atlanta Journal*, April 19, 1970, A8; “Firm Seeks to Aid Runaway Hippies,” C1.

¹⁸ “Overview,” undated, Box 42, Andrew J. Young Papers, Auburn Avenue Research Library on African American Culture and History, Atlanta, Georgia.

Cinnamon stated that she had made her way to Atlanta from Charlotte, North Carolina. Her parents did not “understand” her and, to make matters worse, both had alcohol problems. Within several months of arriving in the Strip she went to the Bridge. Instead of facilitating a reunion with her family they contacted the courts in North Carolina, which declared her an independent minor. Since then she had been living in a one bedroom apartment with six roommates, for which they paid \$30 a week. Cinnamon made money by selling *Birds* or panhandling for change. Although claiming that she had never been sexually exploited, she noted that many girls exchanged sexual intercourse for a place to sleep. Although she had never been arrested, police harassment and the lack of community spirit in the Strip had her thinking about leaving Atlanta and moving to a commune in Oklahoma with sixty other hippies from the area.¹⁹

By the summer of 1970 the success of the Bridge in working with runaways like Cinnamon led to an increase in funding and the opening of its own center. In August, the mayor’s office agreed to transfer \$9000 to the Bridge from a fund designed for police-community relations. This sum represented the federal share of a larger grant acquired through the 1970 Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act. The funds arrived the same month the agency managed to sign a lease on a building at 65 11th Street as a temporary runaway shelter.²⁰

Over the next year and a half the Bridge would expand its services. A new counseling center opened in the northern Atlanta suburb of Sandy Springs and through an alliance with the Metropolitan Atlanta Council on Alcohol and Drugs (MACAD), it began offering drug education programs. The Bridge, true to its name, continued attempts at creating connections between the hip and straight communities. It provided training sessions to local agencies, paid for by funds

¹⁹ “Interview with Cinnamon,” *Great Speckled Bird* IV no. 11 (March 15, 1971), 14-15.

²⁰ “Overview,” undated, Box 42, Andrew J. Young Papers, Auburn Avenue Research Library on African American Culture and History, Atlanta, Georgia; “Tight Squeeze Up for \$9,000 Grant,” *Atlanta Journal*, August 13, 1970, C10; y.c., “Bridge Ahead,” *Great Speckled Bird* IV no. 35 (August 30, 1970), 14.

from federal urban renewal projects, and spoke on average to thirty community groups a month. Its primary focus, however, remained on helping runaways in the Strip. From September 1970 to December 1971, it conducted almost 2,400 counseling sessions.²¹

In addition to The Bridge, two other facilities for runaways opened in the first years of the 1970s, the Salvation Army Girl's Lodge and the Truck Stop. Run by religious organizations these facilities operated under the same principle as the Bridge. Staff allowed runaways to have the ultimate control over their lives. Captain Judy Moore of the Salvation Army promised that "everything would be voluntary" and that clients could leave if they did not want their parents called.²² The Girl's Lodge opened in June 1970 on the second floor of an apartment building located at 127 11th Street. The facility had beds for thirty girls and provided free meals. Bob Griffin had concerns about the Salvation Army establishing itself in the Strip, claiming that he did not want any "bible bangers . . . frightening the kids." Capt. Moore soon assuaged his fears and the agency gained his endorsement as well as that of the *Bird*. The Girl's Lodge became the first center of its kind in the army's Southern territory.²³

In March 1971, the Truck Stop opened as the male counterpart to the Girl's Lodge. Larry McCoy, a Methodist minister who had recently graduated from Emory's Candler School of Theology, ran the facility. Located initially in the same building as the Girl's Lodge, the Truck Stop received funding from several local churches, including two Presbyterian congregations and the First Baptist church in Decatur, and fell under the control of Atlanta Methodist Urban Ministries. Both the Girl's Lodge and the Truck Stop provided emergency shelter, usually for no

²¹ Harcourt Klinefelter, Report on the Atlanta Hippie Community, undated, Box 6, CCAA Papers, MARBL, Atlanta, GA.

²² "Emergency House," *Great Speckled Bird* III no. 26 (June 29, 1970), 16. State law required that social service agencies that treated children under 17 first contact the parents before providing any help. Like the Bridge, staff at the Girl's Lodge left that decision up to the client and allowed them to leave if they chose not to call.

²³ Captain Stanley Jaynes, "Love on the Strip," *War Cry* (September 5, 1970), 16.

more than a few days, but helped its clients identify long term solutions during that time.

McCoy saw the Truck Stop as a “band-aid project” that did not provide any final solutions but offered clients a calm environment to begin dealing with their situation. Runaways made good use of both facilities. During 1971, for example, the Truck Stop helped a little less than 1800 people from almost every state in the nation.²⁴ Many of the runaways that came to these three facilities had a variety of problems that required serious treatment, including drug addiction. By the early 1970s, an increasing number of Strip residents, both teenagers and adults, had begun using hard drugs, especially heroin, a drug that hip community leaders saw as a danger to the Strip’s existence as a peaceful and welcoming haven.

The emergence of heroin in Atlanta’s hip community mirrored the experience in other cities around the nation. During the 1960s the use of drugs helped define the counterculture and, eventually, became a common element in the New Left. But, hippies and political radicals favored “soft drugs” such as LSD and marijuana. These drugs did not create a physical addiction, even with long term use. More importantly, they contributed to social change through opening up the mind of those who consumed them. In other words, consuming the right drugs was a key part on creating the new America that hippies and their supporters hoped to create. By the early 1970s the use of these drugs, especially marijuana, became increasingly popular in straight society as well. Fraternity members and young couples pushed aside their kegs and cocktails and began “toking up” behind closed doors on college campuses and in suburban bedroom communities. The use of hard drugs like heroin and other narcotics, however, had traditionally occurred among minority populations in inner-city ghettos. As a result, two

²⁴ Marjorie Jordan, untitled, *Great Speckled Bird* V no. 16 (April 24, 1972), 8-9; Diane Stepp, “He’s the Runaways’ Pastor,” *Atlanta Constitution*, May 29, 1971, A6; Harcourt Klinefelter, Report on the Atlanta Hippie Community, undated, Box 6, CCAA Papers, MARBL, Atlanta, GA.

separate drug cultures had developed in the United States. Whites occupied one, “where they moved from marijuana to hallucinogens to amphetamines,” while African Americans, who used heroin and cocaine, occupied the other. Surveys conducted in Haight-Ashbury and New York City’s East Village concluded that few hippies during the 1960s had experimented with drugs commonly found in the nation’s ghettos.²⁵

This all changed as the new decade began. The Free Clinic in Haight-Ashbury labeled 1970 “the year of the middle-class junkie” as a noticeable number of white middle class youths began using heroin in hip districts across the country.²⁶ How and why did this happen so rapidly? Several commentators laid the plan at the feet of President Nixon. The flow of marijuana from Mexico had been curtailed following the implementation of “Operation Intercept,” one of the opening salvos in the president’s war against drugs. This shortage, the thinking went, encouraged drug users to make the switch to heroin, which remained easily available. Other more conspiratorial explanations had Nixon intentionally flooding hip communities with heroin to “foster a quiescence . . . among America’s restive white youth,” a plan which had worked in the black ghettos of the nation’s cities. A third argument claimed that the nation’s youth had begun to despair over the killings at Kent State, the seemingly unending war in Vietnam and the splintering of the antiwar movement. They turned to heroin and other opiates to ease their pain. All of these arguments lacked evidence or contradicted other known facts, according to Eric Schneider.²⁷ Instead, he argues that hip districts themselves played a major contributing factor in the increase of heroin use by white youth. These enclaves not only contained spaces such as bars and pool halls that fostered heroin sales and consumption but also a population of experienced

²⁵ Eric C. Schneider, *Smack: Heroin and the American City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 146-147.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 142, 148.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 148-149.

drug consumers that encouraged its use and who could provide first-time heroin users with information on where to buy it, how to prepare it, and how to avoiding overdoses. As Schneider argues, “adolescents living in or near heroin retailing sites did not have to search for knowledge about drugs; rather the experience of heroin use was immediately available to them.”²⁸ Simply put, white middle class youth began using heroin in larger numbers starting in 1970 because more of them lived in urban spaces that encouraged its use.

Understanding how heroin made it into Atlanta’s hip community proves more difficult than for other cities. Hip districts in cities such as San Francisco and New York developed in decaying, working-class neighborhoods that possessed minority residents. When hippies began moving into Haight-Ashbury, they shared the neighborhood with African Americans who had migrated from the neighboring Fillmore district. This created a space in which the nation’s two separate drug cultures could meet. In addition, the first hippies moving into the area came from North Beach, home to the nation’s most famous Beat community, in which numerous people used heroin. As a result, first time users who turned to heroin after 1970 could easily locate the small number of white Haight residents who had become experienced heroin users or at least knew where to purchase it. This also proved the case in the New York, as hippies migrated from Greenwich Village, another of the nation’s bohemian centers, into the racially-mixed East Village.²⁹ Atlanta, however, presented an exception to this experience. The city’s history of racial discrimination in housing meant that, even though Midtown had been a working class neighborhood in the 1950s and had entered a period of decline by the 1960s, African Americans had not migrated into the neighborhood. Indeed, the southern border of Midtown, Ponce de Leon Avenue, was commonly understood to be the dividing line between white and black

²⁸ Ibid, xii-xiii.

²⁹ Ibid, 143-146.

Atlanta. In addition, no evidence exists to suggest that heroin use had become common among the bohemians who lived the neighborhood during the early sixties.

By the first months of 1970, though, heroin use had increased significantly in Atlanta. Reports noted that users congregated in two places, the Strip and around the Atlanta University Center, located in a predominantly black section of the city. Medical professionals familiar with the problem claimed that the local population of heroin addicts had increased from a “handful” in late 1969 to over 300 in the Strip alone by 1970. Some estimated that as many as 3,000 addicts lived in the metropolitan area. Those familiar with the hip community offered several explanations. Dave Durrett, a Universal Life Church minister and member of the Midtown Alliance, blamed it on the runaways. He noted that the 13 and 14 year olds were “irresponsible people” and were getting into heroin. Dr. Joseph Hertell, who ran the Community Center’s free clinic, considered the migration of addicts from other hip communities a major factor for the increase in heroin use. The collapse of the Haight and other urban districts put both hippies and addicts on the road to Atlanta, which had developed a reputation as one of the nation’s more welcoming hip districts. Gene Guerrero considered it the fault of the police, who focused too much on cracking down on the use of soft drugs, opening up the door for people to move to heroin and other hard drugs.³⁰ Tom Coffin agreed, later recalling how he saw dealers selling heroin out their cars at the corner of 10th and Peachtree Streets as police looked on, refusing to intervene. Coffin also subscribed to the theory that the Nixon administration played a role in bringing heroin into hip neighborhoods.³¹

³⁰ Ron Taylor, “Heroin Crisis Seen for Hippie District,” *Atlanta Journal*, March 20, 1970. A2; Harold Kennedy, “Drugsville is Right here—And Pushers Thrive in it,” *Atlanta Constitution*, A1; “Heroin: It Can Happen Here!,” *Great Speckled Bird* III no. 12 (March 23, 1970), 6-7.

³¹ Tom Coffin, interviewed by the Strip Project, available at: http://www.thestriproject.com/interview%20site/Oral_History_of_The_Strip/The_Coffins.html

Regardless of this complex set of potential reasons for heroin's sudden appearance, Atlanta's public health officials were wholly unprepared to deal with an increase in the city's drug addicted population. In fact, the state did not possess a single adequate public program for the treatment of drug addiction. Some addicts ended up at the Central State hospital in Milledgeville, a mental health facility, which did not possess a drug treatment program or a separate ward from drug addicts. Dr. Hertell refused outright to refer addicts there. Closer to home, Grady hospital attempted to deal with the problem but lacked the funds to create a drug rehabilitation program or train staff in how to properly care for addicts.³²

While officials scrambled to allocate funds and create programs to address the problem, the hip community attempted to take care of its own. On April 1, community leaders organized a march to discourage the sale and use of heroin. About 100 people paraded from Piedmont Park to Peachtree Street and then to a pool hall on 11th Avenue known as a heroin-purchasing center. The group carried signs with sayings such as "Tracks are for Trains" ("tracks" were the visible scars addicts developed after repeatedly injecting heroin into the same vein) and "Scag is a Drag" (a slang term for heroin). The protestors had constructed a 13-foot long needle with a person inside representing the "living corpse" heroin addiction created.³³ The march served as the opening move in the Midtown Alliance's new Anti-Hard Drug Campaign. Announcing the new campaign in the *Bird* under the banner "Its Not Hip," the alliance hoped to prevent an increase in the use of heroin and amphetamines by creating pressure in the hip community against the use of hard drugs and encouraging children in the wider Atlanta area to avoid experimenting with them. As part of the campaign the alliance sponsored a poster competition.

³² Christina Bledsoe, GET TITLE!!!!, *Atlanta Journal*, March 25, 1970, A1, 11; Taylor, "Heroin Crisis Seen for Hippie District," A2.

³³ Christena Bledsoe, "'Shoot to Kill' Attacks Drugs," *Atlanta Journal*, April 2, 1970, A2; Charlie Cushing, "Smack Flack," *Great Speckled Bird* III no. 15 (April 13, 1970), 7.

The winners would have their work exhibited at the 2nd Atlanta International Pop Festival that July.³⁴ Controlling hard drug use in the Strip proved problematic, however, since hips and street people became increasingly creative in finding ways of getting high. Rupert Fike recalled people in the Strip buying Wyamine decongestant inhalers at local drug stores and then cracking them open to get at the cotton ball inside, which was soaked in mephentermine, a type of amphetamine. He would see drug addicts on the street using bricks “like cavemen” to smash open the casing. They would then take the drug-soaked cotton ball, break it into pieces, put them into empty pill capsules and ingest them.³⁵

The hip community attempted to help these drug addicts. Homestead (soon renamed Renewal House) became the Atlanta area’s first drug treatment center. Located in the Strip, it only acquired a lease after the Atlanta Jaycees agreed to cosign the document. Like the Bridge, it was an alternative treatment center. Unlike programs in straight society that simply attempted to break the physical addiction, Renewal House existed as a therapeutic community that addressed the “underlying personality disorder and . . . desire to withdraw emotionally from the world” that led to drug use. Modeled on similar programs such as Daytop Village in New York and Synanon in California, former addicts made up much of the staff and the facility employed a treatment method based on “highly structured roles, hierarchical organization, group encounter sessions, [and] individual confrontations.”³⁶ The “almost messianic” nature of leadership in these programs generated criticism from within the hip community. In Atlanta, Renewal House staff leveled intense criticism at *Bird* reporter Mike Raffauf when he attempted to critique the

³⁴ “It’s Not Hip,” *Great Speckled Bird* III no. 18 (May 4, 1970), 2.

³⁵ Rupert Fike, interviewed by the Strip project, available at: http://www.thestriproject.com/interview%20site/Oral_History_of_The_Strip/Rupert.html

³⁶ Schneider, *Smack*, 172; Christena Bledsoe, “Addict Treatment Center Finally to Open Doors Here,” *Atlanta Journal*, April 21, 1970, A6.

program during an interview.³⁷ In addition to Renewal House, the Midtown Community Center also helped hard drug users through counseling sessions and referrals to Renewal House and other treatment centers that began opening in the area.

Coordination between drug treatment programs in the Strip occurred through the Metropolitan Atlanta Council on Alcohol and Drugs (MACAD), a private nonprofit agency. The agency grew out of a meeting in late 1969 called by the CCAA that brought together hundreds of people in Atlanta concerned about drug abuse. MACAD's board of directors, composed of numerous prominent civic leaders including Dr. Joseph Hertell, became embroiled in political struggles during its first years of existence but did manage, largely through Hertell's efforts, to funnel money into the Midtown Community Center.³⁸ Hip agencies in the Strip fully understood the importance of MACAD's role, noting that it acted as a "buffer" between them and state. By 1972, almost every agency operating in the Strip had difficulty finding money but MACAD helped keep those that provided drug treatment from closing their doors or coming under direct control by the state, a major concern for many staff members.³⁹

The realities of finding solutions to the runaway and heroin problems led to hip community to rethink its role within Atlanta society. Drawing on their experience with these issues and their attempts at creating alternative solutions such as The Bridge and Renewal House, hip leaders altered their thinking about the community's place in the wider city. In its first years of existence, the Strip had been a haven from an otherwise oppressive society aimed at its destruction. It was a liberated zone with recognizable boundaries. The relationship between the police and the hip community reinforced this viewpoint, developing an "us against them"

³⁷ Mike Raffauf, "Renewal House Criticisms," *Great Speckled Bird* IV no. 46 (November 15, 1971), 29.

³⁸ Gene Geurrero, "Right Wing Takes Control of MACAD," *Great Speckled Bird* V no. 8 (February 28, 1972), 13.

³⁹ Minutes of 10th Street Programs Interagency Meeting, August 1, 1972, Box 2, Drug Abuse Director's Subject Files, Georgia Archives, Morrow, GA.

mentality among Strip residents. As certain elements of the counterculture spread into straight society—smoking marijuana, flamboyant clothing styles, long hair on men—and hip community leaders began working on a regular basis with sympathetic members in a variety of social service agencies (the CCAA, CRC, MACAD), the boundaries that the hip community recognized began to crumble. Some began understanding the Strip as one community among many in the Atlanta area. It should no longer just look after its own, but accept a larger role in the city's civic life. In other words, through its attempts at solving more widespread social ills, the hip community developed a sense of legitimacy that deserved recognition by other civic leaders. This proved difficult to achieve as the debate over the construction of a new neighborhood park on the Strip demonstrated.

Helping the Street People

In addition to programs that addressed specific problems, the hip community embraced more general solutions to the growing numbers of transient street people in the Strip. In March 1970, hip leaders developed a plan for turning the site of a former public school into a neighborhood park. Debate over the plan saw the hip community clash with homeowners and local merchants and exposed competing notions of who should have control over the future of Midtown Atlanta. More than a simply a green oasis in the middle of a concrete jungle, the hip community considered the creation of a park in their neighborhood a symbol of a newfound legitimacy within Midtown and Atlanta more broadly. Interestingly, the arguments for this park contradicted those made by activists regarding the struggle for Piedmont Park. While hips envisioned Piedmont Park as a free space that facilitated the growth of a true counterculture, those who favored building Clark Howell Park (as the new space would be called) argued that it

would help legitimize the hip community and encourage dialogue between hips and city leaders through accepted political channels. While opposition to the park by local homeowners and businesspeople focused in large part on the negative impact street people had on property values, their statements before the parks committee also revealed their desire to deny the hip community the legitimacy it sought.

On February 26, representatives from the Midtown Alliance met with Massell for three hours regarding the state of affairs in the Strip. Among other issues, the mayor and Alliance members discussed turning the grounds of the former Clark Howell School, which had been closed down following a fire, into a neighborhood park. Located on Tenth Street a few blocks off Peachtree, the park would provide a much-needed public space for the increasing number of young transients living in the neighborhood. In addition to getting them off the street, the park could provide bathing facilities and vegetable gardens as part of a solution to public health problems. Massell stated that he was “generally sympathetic to the community’s efforts” and supported specifically the idea of a park. But, Massell warned the activists, rumors about the park had been circulating among local merchants and neighborhood residents. He expected these residents to oppose the plan during the next aldermanic parks committee meeting.⁴⁰

Massell had correctly assessed the situation. On March 10, city residents filled the Aldermanic chambers, a room usually reserved for meetings of the full board. After approving the minutes from the previous meeting, committee chairman Buddy Fowlkes took a head count of citizens who wanted to speak both for and against the proposed park. Fifty wished to speak in

⁴⁰ Gene Guerrero, “Our Own People’s Park?,” *Great Speckled Bird* III no. 11(March 16, 1970), 3.

favor of the idea and sixty-nine wanted to voice their opposition to the plan. Opening up the floor to comments, Fowlkes asked that those who favored the idea to speak first.⁴¹

Representatives from the hip community and numerous social agencies rose to voice their support for the plan. They emphasized that the process of building and maintaining the park would create new channels of communication between the hip community and city government, improve relations between hips and other neighborhood residents, contribute to easing several public health problems, and transform youthful rebels into contributing members of society. These lofty goals would be achieved in part by using the labor of hip residents to construct the park.⁴² Dave Durrett stated that it was “the responsibility of a community to help the community.” In this case, the community could help itself by making “useful citizens of long-haired people” through getting “our people involved in building a park.” Recognizing that the hips were “not going to disappear,” Mrs. Roger Reed of the Atlanta Branch of University Women encouraged the city to help “bring out the best in them.”⁴³ Several supporters also noted that the proposed park might help with the problems created by the recent introduction of heroin into the Strip by putting addicts and potential addicts to work.⁴⁴

Opposition to the park centered on two issues, the economic rights of property owners and the need to eliminate the hip community from the neighborhood. In explaining their problems with the plan, park opponents used language and images which refuted claims of legitimacy made by the hip community and denied that it had a right to public space or a role as equal members of the Midtown area. Pulling out a copy of the infamous “Motherfucker” issue of the *Great Speckled Bird*, Alderman George Cotsakis stated that paper favored the park and

⁴¹ Parks Committee Minutes, March 10, 1970, Atlanta Board of Alderman Records, Kenan Research Center, Atlanta, GA.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

spoke for the community. He then asked, “are we going to stand by and condone people who are bringing in narcotics and things that would hurt our town?”⁴⁵ Alderman R.A. Petree argued that appeasing the hip community would result in an overflow in the city of “rape, robbery, riot, disease, and dope” by the middle of the summer. “Vagrants and vagabonds,” he added, “are a blight on any city. Parasites without any visible means of support have their hands in somebody’s pocket. . . .” Petree and several others ran through a list of antisocial and unpatriotic behaviors committed by members of the hip community, including public urination, destruction of property, and flying the North Vietnamese flag at the community center. Opponents also floated the possibility that hips were responsible for the series of fires which plagued the neighborhood over the past year.⁴⁶

While the antisocial and possibly criminal behavior of the hip community concerned local residents, the new park’s economic impact to the area resided at the center of their complaints. If local officials allowed the hip community to become further embedded in the neighborhood through projects like the park, local residents and business owners feared that the costly and long-term investments they had made would disappear or be substantially devalued. Opponents of the park repeatedly explained the negative financial impact of hips on Midtown. This strengthened their argument against legitimizing the hip community, stating the mark of constructive and thoughtful involvement in straight society rested in contributing to the financial improvement of the neighborhood, not its devaluation. “Where do my rights begin and end?” asked Mrs. Chris Roberts. Roberts had come to Atlanta twenty-two years earlier, invested on 12th Street and that “it was the hardest money she ever owned.” Noting her years as a teacher and as the mother of a son in the military she complained that “as a property owner . . . property

⁴⁵ Guerrero, “Our Own People’s Park?,” 3; Parks Committee Minutes, March 10, 1970, Atlanta Board of Alderman Records, Kenan Research Center, Atlanta, GA.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*

has devaluated.” The merchants that Roberts and her husband had done business with left because they could not “fight it any longer. Any businesses are going to lose.”⁴⁷

Several real-estate agents presented the committee with figures to support their claims against the hip community. Ed Harris noted that following the recent fires a small building on 12th Street saw its insurance premiums increase from \$258 to \$1,040 a year. J.C. Gross of the Gross Realty Company stated that property values in the area had gone down and that it was “rather discouraging to hear people tell you they would not buy property in the 10th Street area any more.” Alex Fiksmen, owner of a local business and a holocaust survivor, claimed that since hips had invaded the neighborhood he had gone from grossing “\$120,000 to \$160,000 a month to shuttering his doors.” The most organized opposition to the plan came from the Uptowne Neighborhood Association, a recently formed group representing local property owners. Lawyer Hugh Ansley, hired by the association to present its case, argued that if the committee approved the park plan, local residents and business owners deserved financial compensation for the loss in property values and profits such a decision would create.⁴⁸

Following further comments by the audience, the parks committee cleared the chamber and went into executive session. Massell argued strongly that the hip community be granted use of the land since, besides being an “eyesore” its development “might serve as a doorway for communication between City Officials and that community.” Petree had little concern for what hips wanted, instead encouraging the committee to act like “intelligent people” and support the majority of people at the meeting who opposed the park since they were “respectable citizens who had worked hard for so many years to get their properties.” In the end,

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

the committee split its vote, with Massell and Alderman Dodson voting for the park and Fowlkes and Petree voting against it. Falling short of a simple majority, the motion failed.

The hip community offset the failure of the park proposal with the creation of several successful initiatives to harness the economic potential of its members. In March 1970, the Human Improvement Program opened its doors. It contained two services, a job referral service and the General Store, where local craftsmen who belonged to the coop sold their products. Bo Sewell, a former drug seller, started the coop as a way of turning his life round. Operating out of a storefront at 118 10th Street, it acted as a hybrid cooperative and commune. The members of the cooperative also lived together and held several weekly meetings that combined business discussions with personal encounter sessions. While aiming to show straight residents in Midtown that ‘the hip life-style can be pro-own business,’ he also hoped that membership in the cooperative would help with the Strip’s drug problems. Sewell explained that the only rule that General Store members had to follow was that they could not take drugs. He saw the creative outlet that the coop offered as the remedy for drug use since “one reason why hippies cling to drugs is because they don’t have anything else to keep them busy.” The communal living situation kept membership limited but it represented an important addition to the Strip.⁴⁹

Around the same time the General Store opened, a group of hip community craftsmen launched the Laundromat. Named for the business that had formerly occupied the space at the corner of 10th and Peachtree Streets, it functioned as a cooperative in which members split profits equally while contributing to operational costs. It also sold homemade goods on consignment. The Laundromat aimed to support the community by providing an alternative retail outlet for hips who opposed spending their money at stores that exploited the counterculture for sheer

⁴⁹ Maxine A. Rock, “Hips Can Make It, He Believes,” *Atlanta Journal*, December 21, 1970, D11; Roger, “. . . On the Day Shift,” *Great Speckled Bird* III no. 13 (March 30, 1970), 7.

profit. As the hip community grew and the Strip became a tourist destination for suburban “plastic hippies” and curious families, stores run by straight businessmen looking to profit from the counterculture (such as the clothing store, Merry-Go-Round), moved into the area. These “hip capitalists” gave little back to the community, often refusing to allow street people to loiter inside their stores during the winter months and failing to contribute to bail fund campaigns during periods of heightened police harassment.⁵⁰

The Laundromat ran on an alternative economic model and ensured that hip money “would stay in the community and . . . do a lot more than provide some dude with a big car, plastic clothes, and a fat bank account.” This type of venture tended to help the more stable members of the community. Young runaways with few skills or drug addicts would have a hard time taking advantage of the economic opportunity the Laundromat provided. Nonetheless, it allowed the more resourceful community members to support themselves without selling drugs, being *Bird* street vendors or, for women and gay men, exchanging sex for food and shelter. While the Laundromat struggled at times it ultimately succeeded, staying open on the Strip after the hip community abandoned the area.⁵¹

In addition to the expansion of social services and economic opportunities available to hips, several new religious organizations began ministering in the Strip starting in 1969. Two agencies, the Ministry to the Street People and Aurora, represented the complex relationship between religion and hip communities. The Ministry to the Street People represented an extension of social gospel principles from the civil rights movement into Atlanta’s hip community. The Aurora, however, originated from progressive leaders in local denominational

⁵⁰ Becky Hamilton, “Hip Capitalism??,” *Great Speckled Bird* III no. 38 (September 21, 1970), 4.

⁵¹ Miller Francis, Jr., “The People’s Store,” *Great Speckled Bird* III no. 6 (February 9, 1970), 17; Liza, “Laundromat Rings True,” *Great Speckled Bird* VI no. 6 (February 19, 1973), 28.

churches, some with quite conservative congregations, seeing the Strip as a place crying out for missionary work. In other words, while members of the street ministry shared the ideals of the hip community the Aurora grew from the belief of church leaders that it was their Christian duty to help those in need. Both groups, however, gained support from hip community leaders, particularly those with a background in civil rights activism. In addition, both aimed to strengthen the existing lines of communication between the hip community and Atlanta's straight society.

Harcourt "Harky" Klinefelter was the primary force behind establishing a ministry for street people. Originally from New Jersey, Klinefelter first came south in 1965 to join the civil rights movement during the Selma campaign. He left Yale Divinity School to do so. Working with the SCLC, the group offered him an internship and he spent the next two years as its Assistant Director of Communications. In 1966, he served as communications coordinator for the Meredith Mississippi March. In 1967, Klinefelter returned to Yale to complete his degree and came back south a year later to work for the SCLC's Poor People's Campaign. By 1969 he began working unofficially in the Strip, talking to the growing number of runaways, drug addicts and motorcycle gang members who had taken up residence in the neighborhood. That summer, he helped form the Metropolitan Atlanta Coordinating Committee as a means of overseeing a more formal project, the "Ministry to the Street People of Atlanta" (hereafter referred to as the Street People Ministry).⁵²

Klinefelter offered several explanations for why the hip community needed this ministry. He noted that the alienation from straight society many of the nation's youth felt led them to engage in destructive behaviors such as drug abuse and "sexual rebellion." In searching out places to engage in this behavior they gravitated to hip districts, where they experienced further

⁵² Ministry to the Street People of Atlanta Project Proposal, Box 11, CCAA Papers, Emory MARBL, Atlanta, GA.

hardship through a lack of adequate housing and, potentially, jail time. Klinefelter hoped that the proposed ministry would help these disillusioned and damaged children realize their “value and worth with other human beings and with God” by providing them with an “exploration of personal and social change in the context of a caring fellowship.” In addition to his new flock, he also believed that the church needed to change. It could no longer meet exclusively the needs of the majority and reject those on the fringes of society. The church instead needed to reach out and find those in most need of what it could offer. Finally, Klinefelter argued that recent organizational efforts by the hip community to help those in need proved it was ready for the type of project he proposed.⁵³

By 1970 Klinefelter had gotten the Street People Ministry up and running, due in large part to donations from a variety of churches and religious organizations in the local areas, including the United Churches of Christ, the Disciples of Christ and Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church. The committee rejected the idea of running the ministry through a storefront church or a coffeehouse, in part because the Methodist Church already operated one (the Twelfth Gate) but also because it wanted to avoid creating a situation in which street people needed to come to the ministry. Klinefelter felt it crucial that he confront them where they lived—on the street. Klinefelter’s home served instead as the ministry’s base of operations. Located just off Peachtree Street, he had purchased the house instead of renting it as a way of avoiding “landlord hassles.”⁵⁴

Klinefelter’s activities in the community, however, expanded far beyond simply providing spiritual guidance and help. The ministry admitted as much. In the 1970 Hip Services Directory (a project of the Midtown Alliance and the CCAA), only one of its four offered

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

services had a clearly religious purpose. The other three reflected a more general dedication to issues of social justice. In addition to “chaplaincy,” the group would provide “advising to individuals and groups concerned with positive societal change through peaceful means,” act as a “liaison between hip and straight communities,” and help with community organizing.⁵⁵ Clearly, the goals of the street ministry had been influenced by Klinefelter’s time serving with Martin Luther King, Jr. and the SCLC.

Over the next several years Klinefelter became involved in almost every aspect of life in the Strip and hip community. The list of events and issues he participated in included: helping organize antiwar demonstrations, providing housing for AWIN, starting a campaign to improve conditions in the city jail, nominating Detective Ray Pate for a service medal, counseling runaways, providing lessons in nonviolence to community members, helping protestors during clashes with the police in the Strip, leading the Anti-Heroin March, finding housing for homeless street people, serving as a founding member of the Midtown Alliance, participating in the April 1970 combination antiwar/sanitation worker’s strike march and, finally, getting arrested and put in jail for arriving at a client’s home at the same time the police raided the apartment looking for drugs. But, despite his ubiquitous presence, he and his ministry (of which he was the only employee) could only do so much and by 1970 problems in the Strip had become quite large. To help, another church-run agency, Aurora, opened its doors that July. Aurora, while addressing many of the same social problems as the Street People Ministry, did not find its motivation from a shared philosophy with the hip community. Instead, it developed out of a missionary zeal that saw the Strip as a foreign land and hips a different people whose lifestyle and ideals needed formal study before they could be understood and, ultimately, helped.

⁵⁵ Ministry to the Street People of Atlanta Project Proposal, Box 11, CCAA Papers, Emory MARBL, Atlanta, GA; 1970 Hip Services Directory, Box 1, CCAA Papers, Emory MARBL, Atlanta, GA.

Aurora developed from attempts by the First Presbyterian Church to deal with the growing runaway problem in the Strip. Located on Peachtree Street just north of 16th Street the church resided outside of the Strip's accepted boundaries but was close enough that several members believed it had a responsibility to help in the area. Alex Williams, the church's Minister to Youth, became the driving force in getting the church actively involved in the Strip. A Georgia native, he graduated with a B.A. from Emory and two master's degrees from Columbia Theological Seminary.⁵⁶ He became interested in the Strip when several of the church's teenage members began visiting it. After going there himself, Williams began slowly connecting the church to the hip community. In 1968, it allowed the free clinic, which had been operating in cramped quarters in the Twelfth Gate coffeehouse, to use the Scout Hut. By early 1970, the church allowed social service agencies to hold counseling sessions for runaways in one of its conference rooms as well as offering "Sensitivity Sessions," in the Scout Hut, which brought people from the hip and straight communities together in an attempt to foster understanding between the groups.⁵⁷

The wider Christian community in Atlanta also became interested in the Strip by 1969. That December the Christian Council of Metropolitan Atlanta (CCMA) called a meeting between hips and leaders from several local churches. The CCMA had developed as task force to study problems in the Strip and now wanted to hear what the hip community members thought they needed. In addition to child care and housing, Strip representatives stated that a recreational center would be useful. The Midtown Community Center could not offer this type of service given the size of its building and the other services it provided. In fact, the community center

⁵⁶ Biographical Information About the Rev. Alex W. Williams, Box 4, Alex Williams Collection, in the possession of Alex Williams (hereafter referred to as the Williams Collection).

⁵⁷ Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the Board of Deacons – First Presbyterian Church, April 13, 1970, Box 4, Williams Collection, Alex W. Williams "Some Reflections on First Presbyterian Church's Struggles with the Hippie Community in Atlanta, Georgia," unpublished, Box 4, Williams Collection

would change its name to the Community Crisis Center and focus more on the mental and physical health needs of Strip residents following a move to Peachtree Street in the summer of 1970. First Presbyterian and First Baptist Church of Atlanta agreed to take on the project.⁵⁸

The two churches faced challenges from several fronts in attempting to build support and find a location for the center. At First Presbyterian, some members of the congregation opposed any support for the Strip, either through allowing its residents to use church facilities or by providing money for a recreation center. Williams recalled that one woman in the congregation went so far as to remove her son from the church's Boy Scout troop because she did not want him to catch any diseases that hips may have left behind in the Scout Hut.⁵⁹ In an attempt to squelch these complaints, Williams took several of the congregation's most fervent Strip critics to the Midtown Community Center. The house's dilapidated state, along with the large number of people there under the influence of drugs, fostered a change of opinion.⁶⁰ Securing a lease for the center proved a thornier issue. One property owner backed out of a lease after it had been signed when he found out the building would be used to help the hip community. According to Williams, "he didn't want to have anything to do with hippies and . . . he didn't care to have anything to do with anyone who had anything to do with hippies." Eventually, a lease was secured for 1005 Peachtree Street in a storefront that had formerly housed the Junior League's Nearly New Shop.⁶¹

Funding for the recreation center proved fairly easy to acquire. First Presbyterian provided \$6000 and the First Baptist Church arranged for the Southern Baptist Convention's

⁵⁸ Alex Williams, "Atlanta's Aurora: An Evaluation," Box 6, CCAA Papers, MARBL, Atlanta, GA.

⁵⁹ Alex Williams, interviewed by author, July 27, 2009.

⁶⁰ Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the Board of Deacons – First Presbyterian Church, April 13, 1970, May 11, 1970, Box 4, Williams Collection; Beth Dawkins Bassett, *A Church on Peachtree: A Sesquicentennial Story, 1848-1998* (Atlanta: Book Development by Corporate Stories, 1998), 88.

⁶¹ Williams, "Atlanta's Aurora," Box 6, CCAA Papers, MARBL, Atlanta, GA.

Home Mission Board to pledge the same amount. In addition, several other local Presbyterian and Baptist churches would eventually give over \$10,000 a year to the center. The Home Mission Board also provided Aurora's first director, Don Rhymes, who arrived in Atlanta on July 1, 1970, the day that the center opened its doors. The name "Aurora," came from members of the hip community. Another word for "dawn," its proposers interpreted it as meaning that "this center brings new light, the dawning of new and better things for the community."⁶²

Aurora staff members did need to make efforts at convincing Strip residents that they could be trusted. The involvement of First Presbyterian did not represent the first presence of a mainline protestant church on the Strip. After all, the Twelfth Gate fell under the control of the Methodist Church and Bruce Donnelly had been working with hips for several years. In addition, several other religious organizations, such as the Salvation Army, worked in the area. An opposition to religion in a general way also did not present a problem for many Strip residents. Several hip community leaders had participated in the civil rights movement, which relied heavily on religion and religious institutions in fighting for social change. In addition, like their counterparts around the nation, many within in Atlanta's hip community began intense spiritual quests during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Some turned to eastern religions such as Buddhism or the Hindu-based Hare Krishnas (a sizeable Krishna group existed in Atlanta during the 1970s). Syncretic religions which integrated eastern and western religious ideas, such as Scientology and Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church, attracted others.⁶³

Some former hippies and political radicals who had rejected their Christian upbringings returned as part of the Jesus Movement. "Jesus Freaks," as they became known, saw Jesus as the

⁶² Atlanta's Aurora Budget, January 1, 1972-December 31, 1972, Box 4, Williams Collection; Williams, "Atlanta's Aurora," Box 6, CCAA Papers, MARBL, Atlanta, GA.

⁶³ For a insightful discussion of the spiritual quests of former New Left radicals and hippies see Stephen A Kent, *From Slogans to Mantras: Social Protest and Religious Conversion in the Late Vietnam War Era* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2001).

“exemplary revolutionary,” and the original outlaw. This view of Jesus as a radical outsider who challenged “the system,” appealed to members of the New Left and counterculture.⁶⁴ In Atlanta, those attracted to the Jesus Movement turned to the House of Judah, which operated out of a communal home on 14th Street. The House of Judah had been founded by David Hoy. Hoy adopted an oppositional and confrontational position to other church-based organizations in the Strip, going so far as to claim they “were being operated by the devil,” according to Williams. By the summer of 1971, an even more radical national Jesus Movement organization, the Children of God, moved into the 14th Street house and took it over, converting residents to its faith. The Children of God vehemently rejected mainstream American politics and institutional religion, a philosophy which proved also attractive to former radicals and hippies.⁶⁵

While most people on the Strip did not join these radical religious organizations or oppose the presence of groups such as the Salvation Army and Donnelly’s experimental ministry at the Twelfth Gate, the appearance of evangelical South Baptists did cause concern. As part of a larger collection of southern religions, Southern Baptists had played an important role in creating the region’s social and political conservatism. In addition, they had provided scriptural justification for the racial segregation that defined the South during the Jim Crow era. In other words, conservative southern churches helped construct the stifling social environment that many people in the Strip had left home to escape. This rejection of organized religion by the hip community in Atlanta reflected that of the counterculture and New Left as a whole. Many of the nation’s youth in the 1960s considered organized religion a key component in creating the banality of 1950s suburban America and the hyper-patriotism of the Cold War era. The young were not the only Americans moving away from the church. During the late 1960s and early

⁶⁴ Kent, *From Slogans to Mantras*, 137

⁶⁵ Williams, “Atlanta’s Aurora,” Box 6, CCAA Papers, MARBL, Atlanta, GA.

1970s church membership dropped significantly for most faiths. Fundamentalist and evangelical religions, however, welcomed millions of new members. The Campus Crusade for Christ expanded rapidly in the 1960s by appealing to college students concerned about the increasingly radical political and cultural behavior they witnessed. In addition, between 1965 and 1975 the Southern Baptist Convention grew by 18%, becoming the nation's largest Protestant group.⁶⁶

For Aurora, these changes meant that its staff would need to temper its spiritual fervor in order to attract a clientele that rejected the notion of organized religion generally and could be downright hostile to fundamentalists and evangelicals. In some cases, this meant convincing conservative church groups to allow hips to address them, a technique used a few years earlier by Donnelly and other organizations. Williams later related how he asked a staff member of the *Bird* who had grown up attending a very conservative Presbyterian church in Mississippi to address a religious group outside Atlanta. During the car ride back, the *Bird* staffer expressed surprise that the audience had been willing to listen to him and that perhaps organized religion was not "all bad." In other cases it meant toning down public expressions of religious faith. Williams recalled one college-age Baptist volunteer who became discouraged when Strip residents avoided him, even going so far as turning around and walking away as he approached. Williams quickly saw the problem and kindly suggested that the young man not walk down Peachtree Street with an oversized bible in his hands. The plan worked.⁶⁷

The use of volunteers emphasized the missionary mindset of Aurora staff regarding the Strip, seeing the district as a foreign place despite being located only two blocks away from the church. In his discussion of Yorkville, Toronto's hip district, Stuart Henderson discovered the

⁶⁶ Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil Wars of the 1960s*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 222-223.

⁶⁷ Williams, "Some Reflections on First Presbyterian Church's Struggles with the Hippie Community in Atlanta, Georgia," unpublished, Box 4, Williams Collection.

same phenomenon. Once straight society recognized the physical boundaries of Yorkville and believed that hips controlled the district, it not only blamed them for its existence as a “site marked by illness, decay, and danger,” but began seeing the neighborhood as a place of “local-foreignness, at once present and removed from the local context.”⁶⁸ The Strip, like Yorkville, became a place that straight society wished to keep their children away from but also considered a tourist destination for out-of-town guests. The involvement of the SBC’s Home Mission Board in the funding and staffing of Aurora reinforced perceptions of the Strip as a foreign place. Williams made this same point in discussing the relationship between First Presbyterian Church and hips. “The challenge today,” he noted, “involves continuing support of the world wide missionary enterprise, while at the same time becoming a missionary in [the] immediate community. In our relating to the hippie community I have drawn heavily from the missionary experience. In many ways the Tenth St. area is comparable to the situation in which a missionary goes into a strange culture and seeks to find a basis of communication while at the same time not over adapting to the situation.” In other words, missionaries in the Strip needed to understand its residents to help them but did not want to begin thinking and behaving in the same manner.⁶⁹ It would not do for volunteers to “go native” by smoking marijuana or giving in to the sexual temptations offered by a braless female hip.

Achieving this goal required study and practice, which Williams provided. He organized a “Community Training Course” to help prepare church members for work in the Strip. The program’s registration form explained that the course aimed to “prepare dedicated Christian Laymen to bring to bear the Christian witness to those of the broader 10th – 14th Street Area.” It

⁶⁸ Stuart Henderson, *Making the Scene: Yorkville and Hip Toronto in the 1960s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 18-19.

⁶⁹ Alex W. Williams, “Report and Comments Concerning Community Ministries of First Presbyterian Church, Atlanta Georgia,” Box 4, Williams Collection.

would accomplish this goal by providing “encounter sessions with self, others, and God; develop an individual’s theology,” and study of the hip community. Participants began the program by answering questions regarding the Strip, such as “why should Christians become involved with hippies?” and “why do young people come into the 10th – 14th St. area?” Next, the group would hold meetings at some of the agencies that served Strip residents, such as The Bridge and Renewal House. The course ended by participants taking “The Plunge.” They would “go into” the hip district on Friday night with only \$2 and stay until Sunday morning. Williams noted that by this time in the program participants “had come to know their way around the community,” meaning they knew where to find cheap lodging, food, and the most informative experience. After successfully completing the course, these volunteers now apparently possessed the appropriate knowledge to provide help in the Strip.⁷⁰ In addition to the people who completed the course and the small paid staff, students from several regional religious colleges worked at Aurora as volunteers during summers.⁷¹

The evangelical nature and missionary mindset of Aurora staff and volunteers could have doomed the enterprise before it got going. Instead, the facility proved successful quite quickly. Several factors account for this accomplishment. First, as noted above, Aurora staff often muted their religious fervor and helped facilitate connections between the hip and straight communities. In addition, while the staff did not avoid advertising its role as a Christian-based center, it tended not to explain the center’s sponsorship unless asked. Both Williams and Andy Loving, the associate director, noted several occasions in which clients expressed surprise when told that Baptist and Presbyterian churches ran the center. In the words of one Aurora visitor, “Man, that

⁷⁰ Registration Form, Training Sessions for Work in the Tenth Street Area, Box 4, Williams Collection; Williams, “Some Reflections on First Presbyterian Church’s Struggles with the Hippie Community in Atlanta, Georgia,” unpublished, Box 4, Williams Collection.

⁷¹ Williams, “Atlanta’s Aurora,” Box 6, CCAA Papers, MARBL, Atlanta, GA.

is far out. That is really something different. I didn't think the church would ever do that. I didn't think it cared about us!"⁷² Second, Aurora provided much-needed services to Strip residents. As a recreation center it offered a space for people to come in off the street. In addition to games it held classes on weaving, pottery, and weaving. It also held counseling for runaways and drug addicts, and had showers and lockers for street people's use. The staff regularly opened up the facility to other agencies in the hip community. Harky Klinefelter held worship services there and the Bridge used the space for counseling sessions. Aurora also belonged to and hosted the weekly meetings of the Midtown Alliance. Third, street people occasionally coopted used the space for their own purposes. Most notably, it became a popular place to conduct drug sales off the street, particularly during the colder winter months.⁷³

Harassment by law enforcement officials also reinforced Aurora's place in the Strip, insuring hips saw it as a place for them. Police routinely entered the facility in search of runaways and drug sellers. Despite efforts by Aurora staff to establish a positive relationship with the police, officers working in the Strip could offer few encouraging words about the center, seeing it as little more than a place for drugs to be bought, sold and used. Several months after Aurora opened law enforcement officers assaulted Don Rhymes during an ill-conceived drug raid.⁷⁴ More than anything else, harassment by the police acted the most basic rite of passage for membership in the hip community. Finally, the timing of Aurora's opening played a role in its initial success. By 1970 more people than ever had made their way to the Strip and it seemed that the steady flow would become a flood that summer.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Williams, "Atlanta's Aurora," Box 6, CCAA Papers, MARBL, Atlanta, GA; "A Questionmark Peace," *Great Speckled Bird* III no. 43 (October 26, 1970), 10.

Making the Streets and Sidewalks Safe

The hippie hordes were coming. During the spring of 1970 rumors began circulating that a flood of hippies planned to move into the Strip that summer. The number varied wildly depending on who was asked and how close to summer the conversation occurred. Projections ranged from a few thousand to as many as fifteen thousand. Nobody knew the exact numbers but leaders in both the hip and straight communities agreed they were coming. Two factors contributed to the belief that Atlanta would be inundated with thousands of new hips. First, the late development of the Strip meant that it remained a viable hip district after many others, such as the Haight in San Francisco, had self-destructed. Real hippies and curious short-term visitors alike packed into these districts during previous summers but as others fell apart it meant more people would travel to fewer places. In addition, both hip and straight community leaders believed that a large number of people who planned to attend the 2nd International Atlanta Pop Festival, which would be held in Byron about 90 miles from the city, would relocate permanently into Midtown after the concert ended. In response to this potential crisis, Mayor Massell, who had been generally supportive of the hip community, made several decisions that destroyed any possibility of cooperation between city officials and hip leaders in addressing problems created by such a dramatic increase in the Strip's population. As a result, violence returned to the district.

In the weeks and months after he attempted to help the hip community build a new park, Massell made several decisions that eroded the goodwill that effort had created. On April 21, he signed a "vague and overbroad" new loitering ordinance composed of seventeen different sections. Entitled the Safe Sidewalks and Streets ordinance, it effectively made anything except walking purposefully on city streets illegal. That evening, police began enforcing the new law,

touching off a near-riot. When Patrolman J.T. Cochran arrested Richard Rochester in front of Chili Dog Charlie's (a straight-owned business friendly to hips), "the shit broke loose." Street people began throwing rocks and trash at a patrol car, destroying its windshield. The incident led to at least fifteen arrests and brought Massell to the Strip. Late that night, he met with hip leaders at the Midtown Community Center and attempted unsuccessfully to convince them the ordinance had not been targeted at longhairs in the Strip. Meanwhile, another hip community leader, Bongo, led approximately 150 people into Piedmont Park in an effort to diffuse the situation and discuss possible responses. The crowd agreed to go home and meet the next night at the park for a more formal discussion.⁷⁵

The April 22 meeting in Piedmont Park revealed growing tensions within the hip community. Members of the Midtown Alliance argued for restraint. They stated the community should suspend protests until the city had a chance to respond. This seemed acceptable to the crowd of several hundred Strip residents present until a few political radicals took the floor. One, pointing to several nearby patrolmen monitoring the meeting, asked "Do you think they understand peace and love? They are pigs." The crowd, however, rejected a call from the radicals for a militant protest. Frustrated, the radicals left the meeting. In the end, the crowd decided for an immediate nonviolent protest. Several hundred people marched out of the park and on to Peachtree Street where they proceeded to violate the ordinance by simply standing around. The police chose not to enforce the new law. The *Bird* offered a mixed response to events over the previous two days. While stating that the second meeting was the "most real community meeting held in the park thus far," the paper lamented that the community is "not really together politically." It paid particular attention to the issue of violence, since its potential

⁷⁵ John Spahr Haydock, "Organized Citizen Participation in the Atlanta Hippie Community," (MA thesis, Emory University, 1971), 28; Orville Gaines, "15 Arrested in Hippie Area, Rocks Hurlled at Police," *Atlanta Journal*, April 22, 1970, A2; Gene Guerrero, "Lurking with Intent to Loiter," *Great Speckled Bird* III no. 18 (May 4, 1970), 3.

use could split the community internally as well as turn straight Atlantans against it at a time when lines of communication had finally been established between the two communities.

Eventually, the city would amend the ordinance but only enough for it to pass constitutional muster. Over the next year, it would become one of the police department's favorite weapons in attempting to push the hip community out of Midtown.⁷⁶

In preparation for the influx of new hip residents to the Strip and in response to the recent disturbance over the loitering ordinance, Massell asked the Community Relations Commission to hold a town hall meeting on May 13 to discuss problems in the area. Formed in the wake of the 1966 Summerhill riot, the CRC aimed to prevent future disturbances by facilitating communication between the white and black community.⁷⁷ Town hall meetings became the forum for these discussions and the decision to hold one regarding issues on the Strip spoke to the existing tensions and the strong possibility that, if left unchecked, they could explode as thousands of young people flooded into the neighborhood that summer. Indeed, at the meeting numerous people projected that 15,000 hippies planned to descend on Atlanta because of the "tight community" that existed in the Strip. Hips also discussed the numerous ways in which they experienced harassment in the neighborhood. They stated that, because of their appearance, employers would not hire them and landlords would not rent to them. In addition, the police routinely harassed hips while refusing to follow up on attacks against them. Straight residents from the neighborhood had little to say but it seemed clear that they had come to the meeting opposed to the hip community and the discussion had not changed their minds. The commission

⁷⁶ John Spahr Haydock, "Organized Citizen Participation in the Atlanta Hippie Community," (MA thesis, Emory University, 1971), 28; Gene Guerrero, "Lurking with Intent to Loiter," *Great Speckled Bird* III no. 18 (May 4, 1970), 3.

⁷⁷ Haydock, "Organized Citizen Participation in the Atlanta Hippie Community," 29; Alton Hornby Jr., *Black Power in Dixie: A Political History of African Americans in Atlanta* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2009), 123.

promised to return in several weeks with recommendations based on the testimony they had heard.⁷⁸

On June 11, the CRC presented its recommendations at another town hall meeting. Overall, the commission's report tended to favor the hip community, a fact even the *Bird* recognized.⁷⁹ The Commission endorsed and requested funds for of the Midtown Community Center, the Bridge, the Homestead and the Human Improvement Project job co-op. It also requested that the police department place hand-picked officers in the Strip who could "relate to both sides of the community." The CRC planned to aide several agencies in finding temporary housing for street people and encouraged reluctant landlords to rent to hips. The report also stated, however, that word should be sent to hips in other parts of the country to avoid coming to Atlanta. The commission cited the lack of adequate housing and job opportunities in addition to the fact that "the city government intends to use every resource it has and even [use] whatever outside agencies are available in a tough crackdown on the sale of narcotics" in the area.⁸⁰

Several months before the city began this crackdown, Massell had already started to falter in his support for the hip community. One scholar has suggested that this resulted from a unified response from the hip community to the sanitation workers' strike that erupted in March. During the first Midtown Alliance meeting after the strike began, those present voted to support the workers. This had been the same position the local New Left adopted in previous labor actions but during those strikes the hip community failed to achieve unity over the issue since politically unconcerned hips proved willing to serve as "scabs," crossing the picket line to take the jobs of

⁷⁸ Community Relations Council, "Comments Made by Citizens at the Town Hall Meeting," May 13, 1970, Box 106, Sam Massell Papers, Kenan Research Center, Atlanta, GA; Richard Matthews, "Hippies, Others Tell Their Tales," *Atlanta Journal*, May 14, 1970, A6.

⁷⁹ Gene Guerrero, "Community Relations," *Great Speckled Bird* III no. 23 (June 8, 1970), 6.

⁸⁰ Community Relations Commission Minutes, May 26, 1970, Box 106; Town Hall Meeting Agenda, Community Relations Commission, June 11, 1970, Sam Massell Papers, Kenan Research Center, Atlanta, GA.

striking workers. This time, however, hip community leaders prevented this from happening. This united front upset civic leaders. Police harassment appeared to increase and both daily newspapers began printing stories about hard drugs invading the Strip, portraying the area as a ‘serious public menace.’⁸¹

Massell further weakened his support for hip Atlantans following the April disturbance in the Strip. On May 20, he called a meeting at his office to discuss the situation and the upcoming summer. The gathering included the director of the CRC, representatives from the business community, the Uptowne Neighborhood Association, the police and parks departments, local church leaders, and a “few other interested parties.” Interestingly, Massell did not invite any officers from the Midtown Alliance or *Bird* editors, the two most prominent organizations in the hip community. He did, however, invite Dave Durrett, the Community Center’s director. Durrett had been receiving some criticism in the hip community over the amount of time he had been spending in meetings with city leaders, which may have been why Massell believed he could “talk with him.”⁸²

It seems relatively certain that representatives from the *Atlanta Journal* and *Atlanta Constitution* attended. Soon after, both papers printed several articles highlighting the danger and violence present in the Strip. The *Constitution* revealed that straight business owners lived “in dread of hippies,” and feared violent retribution if they spoke out or tried to protect their livelihoods. Meanwhile, Eugene Moore, and editorialist for the *Journal*, attempted to resurrect the moniker “Tight Squeeze” as an alternative and more appropriate name for the Strip. The stretch of Peachtree Street that ran through the Strip had been known in the past as “Tight Squeeze” since, after the Civil War, the “mean folks” and Confederate veterans who lived in the

⁸¹ Haydock, “Organized Citizen Participation in the Atlanta Hippie Community,” 25.

⁸² *Ibid*, 31.

area made “getting through there with your life a tight squeeze” for the city’s more respectable citizens. Moore’s rather ham-handed attempt at drawing connections between the past and the present included noting that the area had been known for “rowdism,” “bawdism,” and that more than a few morphine addicts lived there. Taken together, these articles, along with the earlier ones on the district’s growing drug problem, painted a picture of the Strip as a den of iniquity in which straight people feared for their lives from junk-addicted, long-haired thieves and murderers. By the beginning of June, many straight Atlantans likely agreed with the *Journal*’s assessment that a time bomb had begun ticking on Peachtree Street.⁸³

On June 4, Massell announced his plans for diffusing it. That evening, he delivered a televised address that appeared on all three local network affiliates. He began by briefly chastising local straights, noting that even hippies “are protected by the law” and that, as mayor, he would defend the constitutionally protected freedoms of all Atlantans. The main thrust of his message, however, laid the blame for the deteriorating conditions in the Strip at the feet of the hip community. The plastic hippies, motorcycle gang members, professional drug pushers, even the “red-neck who comes to pick up girls or shoot out store windows,” came to the hip district because of “the atmosphere you created in the community.” While it made sense that drug sellers would be attracted to an area populated by regular users, the accusation that attempts by hips to create an atmosphere of tolerance attracted redneck terrorists seemed more an effort at attacking the victim, similar to blaming a rape victim for dressing provocatively.⁸⁴

⁸³ Sam Hopkins, “10th Street Area Merchants Live in Dread of Hippies,” *Atlanta Constitution*, June 1, 1970, A1; Sam Hopkins, “Some Fear Violence in 10th Street Area,” *Atlanta Constitution*, June 2, 1970, A1; Sam Hopkins, “10th Street Change Benefits Some, Too,” *Atlanta Constitution*, June 3, 1970, A1; Eugene Moore, “It’s Still a Tight Squeeze There—And a Good name for Hip Area,” *Atlanta Journal*, May 31, 1970, A23; Richard B. Matthews, “A Time Bomb Ticking on 10th Street?,” May 6, 1970, A1.

⁸⁴ Address by Sam Massell, Mayor of Atlanta, June 4, 1970, Box 106, Sam Massell Papers, Kenan Research Center, Atlanta, GA.

He then further distanced the hip community from straight Atlanta by declaring the Strip an “intensive care section” of the city. He failed to explain exactly what this term meant but the increased presence of “toughs” and hard drugs in the area combined with the potential influx of several thousand new hips created a situation that demanded action. First, organizations such as the CCAA, the Kiwanis, and local churches had pledged their support, financially and otherwise, in helping existing agencies in the Strip expand their services as well as create new ones (such as Aurora). Second, law enforcement efforts would be increased through more training for police regarding drug issues, the implementation of a “hip marshal” program in which community members voluntarily patrolled the Strip, and the creation of a new satellite precinct, quickly nicknamed the “Pig Pen.” This was the first time the Atlanta police department had opened up a neighborhood precinct.⁸⁵

Finally, Massell stressed his belief that two hip communities existed, a good one composed of “flower children,” and a bad one which attracted hard drug users and criminals. He requested that the good hips stay away from the Strip until the police rid the area of the bad elements. The implication seemed obvious. That summer, any longhair in the Strip would be considered a bad hip and subject to suspicion and arrest from the officers assigned to the Pig Pen. The hip community rejected this analysis as a willful misrepresentation of the situation. “The mass media and the mayor . . . are developing the notion that there are two hippie communities—a ‘bad’ one that loiters, blocks doorways, creates violence, and a ‘good’ one which believes in peace and love. There is only *one community*, which has asked for the city’s cooperation in its efforts to strengthen itself.”⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Address by Sam Massell, Mayor of Atlanta, June 4, 1970, Box 106, Sam Massell Papers, Kenan Research Center, Atlanta, GA; Gene Guerrero, “A Together Community,” *Great Speckled Bird* III no. 24 (June 15, 1970), 3.

Confrontations between the police and Strip residents began immediately after Massell's address and continued for several weeks. Fifteen minutes after the speech ended the Pig Pen opened its doors and all sixty four members of the new precinct spread out into the Strip. They behaved in a restrained manner but hips did not appreciate their presence. Staff members from the Midtown Community Center called a meeting in Piedmont Park. Approximately 300 people attended, most of them angered at the mayor's actions. All wanted a peaceful summer and agreed that Atlanta remained "one of America's more open cities for freaks" but they also remained determined not to surrender the Strip. The crowd then joined hands and "snake danced" its way back on to Peachtree Street. Participants shouted "we want the Strip," and "we shall not be moved," before the line broke and up and the group continued to loiter along 10th Street. That same evening, Massell made an appearance in the area, strolling along Peachtree, shaking hands with policeman and enduring shouts of "to hell with Massell," from a crowd of hips. By the end of the weekend, however, it appeared that the hip community had temporarily left Peachtree to the police and tourists who, despite Massell's plea, still came in droves to see the few hips that dared venture on to the streets of Midtown.⁸⁷

This proved a temporary reprieve and the situation soon turned sour. On June 12, two policemen were injured and a young man shot when a small group of about five people attacked the officers during a narcotics arrest.⁸⁸ A far worse disturbance occurred June 18 when police attempted to take a female runaway into custody. After she initially broke free from them they grabbed and began beating her. This attracted a crowd that quickly grew in size to between 300 and 400 people. They shouted at the officers to let the girl go and threw several objects at them

⁸⁷ Guerrero, "A Together Community," 3; Hugh Nations, "64 Man Police Unit Patrols Hippie Area: Mayor Makes Tour in Clampdown Bid," *Atlanta Journal*, June 5, 1970, A1; Richard B. Matthews, "Police in Strip Outnumber Hips," *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, June 7, 1970, A12.

⁸⁸ Keeler McCartney, "2 Policemen Hurt, Youth Shot in Melee," *Atlanta Constitution*, June 13, 1970, A5.

including a rock which struck one policeman in the head. A call for reinforcements went out and soon about twenty police cars arrived in the Strip. Officers began clearing the streets and, according to the *Bird*, beat and arrested people indiscriminately. According to Patrolman J.L. Melton, “it was just short of a riot.”⁸⁹

By the end of June it became apparent that the uptick in violence had created problems within the hip community as well as between hips and city leaders. The Community Center claimed that only paid outside agitators had thrown rocks and bottles during the recent disturbance but others disagreed, claiming that hips simply refused to endure any more police harassment. This disagreement reflected a diversity of opinion within the Midtown Alliance in regards to what must be done to protect and preserve the community. Dave Durrett urged restraint and peaceful means of dealing with the police. Others, including the more radical *Bird* staff, refused to dismiss the need for violent resistance and urged the hip community to remain united. “The community is coming together in a real way,” Gene Guerrero claimed, “the future will be a struggle, but if we stay together we can make it.”⁹⁰

Problems with straight Atlantans also plagued the hip community. The CRC’s call for donations to help the Strip agencies it endorsed in the June report had yielded only three donations totaling \$225. Massell further damaged his relationship with the hip community when he mailed a letter to underground newspapers around the nation, including the *Berkeley Barb* and the *Los Angeles Free Press*, asking hips to stay away from Atlanta. “Unless you have bread [money] and a pad,” the letter stated, “please find your thing somewhere else. City laws prohibiting drugs and loitering are being strictly enforced.” The Midtown Alliance, which had

⁸⁹ Ned Kelly, “An ‘Incident’ on the Strip,” *Great Speckled Bird* III no. 26 (June 29, 1970), 2; Orville Gaines, “Runaway Girl Sparks Melee in Hip Area,” *Atlanta Journal*, June 18, 1970, A1, 20.

⁹⁰ Kelly, “An ‘Incident’ on the Strip,” 2; Gene Guerrero, “Community,” *Great Speckled Bird* III no. 27 (July 6, 1970), 22.

initially agreed to such a letter being issued, rejected Massell's communique. It issued its own letter and asked underground papers not to run the mayor's or print both alongside each other. "The mayor's ad is a hoax," it began, before arguing that while the hip community tried continually to deal with its problems creatively and in cooperation with the city, local politicians enacted measures meant to provoke violence, not avoid it. "We welcome freaks to Atlanta. Help us create a new nation here," it concluded.⁹¹

Beyond these issues, the aggressive patrolling of the Strip by the Pig Pen facilitated the growth of ill feelings and bad tempers among hips. While the presence of the new patrolmen appeared to have reduced the number of attacks against hips, any goodwill this generated disappeared in the increased number of arrests made for loitering, small-time marijuana sales and jaywalking. On June 7, for example, police arrested twenty-one people at the Tom Jones Fish & Chips, including the manager and assistant manager, for blocking the doorway of the establishment. Most of the problems originated with new officers assigned to the Strip. Hips believed that law enforcement officials with experience in the area treated them better than the new arrivals. City officials also expressed concern over the behavior of some Pig Pen officers. One voiced his displeasure over the fact that several officers habitually visited the lobby of an adult film theatre on Peachtree Street and even made their way inside on occasion. As opening day of the 2nd Atlanta International Pop Festival crept ever closer, the *Atlanta Journal* reported on the growing tensions and possibility of radical resistance in the Strip. Almost all the elements needed for an outbreak of violence on a large scale were present. The only thing missing was the thousands of new hippies that would arrive with the music festival.⁹²

⁹¹Richard B. Matthews, "Hippies Call Massell's Ad a Public Relations Gimmick," *The Atlanta Journal*, July 17, 1970, A12; "Sam the Sham," *Great Speckled Bird* III no. 26 (June 29, 1970), 4.

⁹²Gene Guerrero, "We're Really Going to Screw You," *Great Speckled Bird* III no. 25 (June 22, 1970), 2; Richard B. Matthews, "Tight Squeeze Tightened," *Atlanta Journal*, June 21, 1970, A2.

Then an interesting thing happened—the hippies failed to show up. To be sure, they did make it to Byron. Attendance estimates for the three-day festival ranged from 250,000 to 400,000. Events in rural Georgia that weekend mimicked the Woodstock concert held in upstate New York the previous summer. The promoters, who had hoped to make a profit, waived the ticket price the opening day when 100,000 people pressed against fences near entry gates, demanding to be let in for free. The facilities were woefully inadequate. Water proved an especially precious commodity as the temperatures topped 100 degrees. Dr. Joseph Hertell, who had been doctoring people in the Strip for the past several years, served as the head of the festival’s medical team. At one point he requested two military helicopters from nearby Fort Benning to evacuate the sick since several nearby roads have been closed. Highlights of the concert even included Jimi Hendrix playing the “Star Spangled Banner” on the 4th of July as fireworks exploded in the night sky. Despite the potential for disaster, the festival had been a success. Then, everybody left. Leaders in Atlanta’s hip and straight communities believed the festival would serve as a key source for the thousands of new permanent Strip residents but this never occurred.⁹³

Bullets, Bikers and the End of the Strip

The lack of a massive influx of hips, and the national media attention it would have garnered as Atlanta became the nation’s new Haight-Ashbury, helped reduce tensions in the Strip initially but ultimately marked the beginning of the end for Atlanta’s hip district. Through the rest of the summer and into early autumn Atlanta police kept constant pressure on Strip residents.

⁹³ “Atlanta’s the Biggest—And Maybe the Last?,” *Rolling Stone*, August 6, 1970, 14; Eugene Alvarez, “How Tiny Byron (pop. 1,368) Became: ‘The Woodstock of the South,’” *Georgia Journal*, XII no. 2 (Summer 1992), 17-19; Richard B. Matthews, “Many New Faces Dot Strip But There’s No Huge Crowd,” *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, July 12, 1970, B2.

Captain B.F. Marler, head officer at the Pig Pen, noted with pride that he and his men had been able to halt “the tendency of ‘street people’ to form a mob every time officers tried to make an arrest.”⁹⁴ But, while arrests continued at a steady pace, the failure of thousands of hips to invade the Strip worked against the need for a satellite precinct. In the weeks after the Byron festival Police Superintendent Oscar Jordan reduced the number of officers assigned to the precinct twice, leaving seventeen officers patrolling the Strip on the weekends, and even fewer during the week. In late September, Police Chief Herbert Jenkins announced that the Pig Pen would be phased out by the end of the year. A reduction in the number of hips in the Strip acted as part of Jenkin’s reasoning for shuttering the precinct.⁹⁵

Others had noticed a reduction in the number of hip people in the Strip but this happened every year as winter approached. The movement of older Strip residents out of the district existed as a more serious concern for hip leaders. While numerous hips stayed to work in the agencies that served runaways and other street people, it seemed that the contingent of “true hips” dwindled as the number of street people and weekend hippies increased. Dave Durrett noted that “everyone I consider part of the hip movement has moved away from the Strip.” Clarence Greene, Massell’s liaison to the hip community, concurred. “Most of [the] responsible hippies have moved out,” he stated, “the ones on the street now don’t have the philosophy of the true hippie.” In short, Greene considered them simply “thugs.” In its 1970 report on the Strip, the CCAA clearly noted that “older, more stable hips” were leaving the area due to the presence of violence, hard drugs and the “apathy of newcomers.”⁹⁶ But, the continued perception among

⁹⁴ Richard B. Matthews, “Hippie Area Riot Called Just a Fluke,” *Atlanta Journal*, October 12, 1970, A1.

⁹⁵ Hugh Nations, “Atlanta Hip Area Returns to Normal,” *Atlanta Journal*, July 9, 1970, A2; Richard B. Matthews, “Police Phasing Out Hip Area ‘Pig Pen’,” *Atlanta Journal*, September 23, 1970.

⁹⁶ Richard B. Matthews, “Hippie Area Beats Summer ‘Heat’ But What’s Next?,” *Atlanta Journal*, October 8, 1970, A1; “Tight Squeeze—One Year Later,” October 1, 1970, Box 1, CCAA Papers, Emory MARBL, Atlanta, GA.

straight Atlantans of the Strip as a haven for real hippies led to different interpretations of the era's last major disturbance in the Strip.

On Saturday, October 10, police and Strip residents battled each other in a riot that lasted several hours. As had happened in the past, the arrest of two hips touched off the melee. Months of suppressed frustration within the hip community over police harassment finally exploded forth as a crowd of several hundred people gathered at Peachtree and 10th Streets, the center of the hip district, and began throwing rocks at the police. The officers called in reinforcements and blocked off Peachtree between 10th and 11th Streets. While details of the event are sketchy, it seems certain that it escalated when, for reasons unknown, one if not several police officers began firing their weapons into the crowd. This caused the crowd to scatter and begin running wildly through the district. Rioters broke the windows of several storefronts, including a drug store on Piedmont Avenue whose owner had a reputation for being particularly hostile to hips. They also tore up concrete chunks from the sidewalks to hurl at the police. On Juniper Street, the rioters turned over trashcans and used the garbage to start fires in the middle of the road.⁹⁷

The police also seemed on the edge of losing control, randomly kicking in the doors of apartments and hip agencies, including the Community Crisis Center. On several occasions rioters and police exchanged gunfire, although miraculously only one person, a rioter, received a nonfatal wound. Bob Griffin, co-founder of the Bridge, suffered injuries after being struck repeatedly on the arm by nightstick-wielding policemen while trying to help several people off the street. He only escaped further harm after being pulled into a building by one of the women who worked at the Salvation Army's Girl's Lodge. Two people claimed that after they dove on the ground to avoid being hit by gunfire police arrested them for violation of the Safe Sidewalks

⁹⁷ "More Police Vowed in Hippie Area Riot: Mayor to Request Additions to Force," *Atlanta Journal*, A1, 19; Matthews, "Hippie Area Riot Called Just a Fluke," A1, 19; "Atlanta Police Use Tear Gas to Quell Riot in Hippie Area," *New York Times*, 23.

and Streets Act. Apparently, they were loitering. The police eventually used tear gas to disperse the crowd several hours into the melee. In the end, officers arrested twenty-six people. Several policemen suffered injuries, including one officer who lost five teeth after being hit in the mouth with a brick.⁹⁸

Reports in the two daily papers generally failed to look very closely at who was involved and how the riot got started but some familiar with the Strip and the hip community offered their assessment of what happened. Eileen Schroeder stated that most of the rioters were ‘weekend kids,’ who had been instigated into action by several radical members of the community. Dennis Doherty, director of the Community Center called it “a game’ for most people involved, although a few “stop-the-pigs types” played a part in riling up the crowd. Denis Adelsberger of AWIN seemed less sure of who ultimately held responsibility for starting the riot but did reject the outdated myth of the nonviolent “peace and love” hippie. He argued that “people assume that ‘hippies’ don’t start riots or fight or hit back or carry guns. Or throw bottles. The fact is they do.” For Adelsberger, the repression and harassment longhairs in Atlanta routinely had endured over the past few years killed the utopianism of the early counterculture and replaced it with cynicism that brought out a basic survival instinct.⁹⁹

Life in the Strip changed little after the riot. The Midtown Alliance developed a set of recommendations to improve relations between the Strip residents and the city but few officials seemed willing to keep the lines of communication open. Even Massell, who had proved so willing in the past to meet with hip community leaders, refused to commit when the Alliance asked the CRC to organize a town hall meeting to discuss options. The Strip did, however,

⁹⁸ “More Police Vowed in Hippie Area Riot: Mayor to Request Additions to Force,” A19: Eyewitness Accounts of Strip Riot, *Great Speckled Bird* III no. 42 (October 19, 1970), 2-3.

⁹⁹ Matthews, “Hippie Area Riot Called Just a Fluke,” A1, 19; Denis J. Adelsberger, “Peachtree and Tenth,” *Great Speckled Bird* III no. 45 (November 16, 1970), 4.

become a topic of debate in the lieutenant governor's race, mostly through the efforts of Governor Lester Maddox. The state constitution barred Maddox from running again for governor in 1970 so, in order to remain in politics, he ran for Lt. governor. Maddox, while popular with conservatives and white supremacists for his unwavering support for segregation, was also a bit of a publicity seeker, a trait which led to a reputation for being less than entirely serious about his duties as a public servant. His embarrassing behavior on a nationally broadcast television program in 1970 led singer-songwriter Randy Newman to include Maddox in the lyrics of his song "Rednecks," writing that the governor, "may be a fool, but he's our fool." (meaning he belonged to the South).¹⁰⁰

Maddox also cultivated a reputation as a strong supporter of law and order. The Strip riot, occurring so soon before the November election, proved a topic he could not resist taking on. In the days after the riot he promised to send in GBI agents to conduct drug raids (the first raid led to the beating of Don Rhymes). He also stated that he would authorize the use of state police for riot control if local law enforcement did not prove up to the task. The end of Maddox's interest in the Strip came with a visit to Piedmont Park on October 24. Addressing the crowd of about 200 hips Maddox had just told them that "to find true peace you must turn to the Prince of Peace" (Maddox was a devout Christian and wielded his religion like a sword politically), when Midtown Alliance members interrupted the governor's speech to demand he enter into a dialogue with them. The governor refused and promptly left the stage. Contacted later at the governor's mansion he stated unequivocally that he would not meet with any hip community leaders until they learned how to behave themselves.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ "Maddox, Mayor Agree on Drug Control Move," *Atlanta Journal*, October 13, 1970, A1; Harry Murphy, "Maddox Threatens to Police Atlanta," *Atlanta Journal*, October 13, 1970, A2.

¹⁰¹ Richard B. Matthews, "Maddox Quits Talk After Hippie Nudge," *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, October 25, 1970, A1, 4; Tom Coffin, untitled, *Great Speckled Bird* III no. 44 (November 1, 1970), 4-5.

The behavior of Strip residents had become increasingly more troublesome by the fall of 1970, especially as more members of motorcycle gangs moved into the area. Bikers had been a presence in the Strip almost from the hip community's beginnings but did not always fit into the role that New Leftists and countercultural adherents crafted for them. While they often professed to be the district's *de facto* security force, protecting hips from attacks by outsiders, bikers also routinely beat up the same hips to get money or drugs. But, the hip community would see bikers as kindred spirits throughout its existence. This did not just happen in Atlanta. Across the nation, hip communities maintained a constant if strained relationship with bikers that only made sense by understanding how much white middle class youth had come to romanticize motorcycle gangs and violence by the late 1960s.

For many, bikers embraced the same authentic individualism and rejection of social norms that attracted millions of white middle class youth to the counterculture and New Left. Ken Kesey's Merry Pranksters were the first hip group to develop a relationship with bikers by clandestinely getting a gang of Hell's Angels to take LSD in 1966. Surprisingly, they liked it, as well as the casual sex provided by young hippie women under the banner of free love. For Kesey and other hips, biker gangs, through their embrace of motorcycles, represented the same freedom, authenticity and community that they hoped LSD would help them acquire. The confluence of motorcycles and drugs became a powerful symbol of the quest for freedom, as seen in possibly the most well known film about the 1960s counterculture, *Easy Rider*.¹⁰² In this movie, released in 1969, two hippies embark on a cross-country motorcycle journey as part of a drug deal, taking LSD and living life at its most free and unrestricted only to die at the hands of rednecks while riding through the South.

¹⁰² Henderson, *Making the Scene*, 192-193.

The late 1960s New Left and counterculture also glamorized violence as a radical means of self-expression and political change. The Weathermen (and later, Weather Underground), composed mainly of middle class white youth, demonstrated this best as they rampaged through the streets of Chicago during the 1969 Days of Rage protest, smashing windshields and shop windows, goading the police into fighting them. Once the group had gone underground, bombing became its preferred means of revolutionary violence as it detonated devices in corporate headquarters and the Pentagon in the early 1970s. Many young, budding revolutionaries across the country viewed these acts as a necessary part in bringing down the corrupt establishment. They found reinforcement for this mindset in another film, 1967's *Bonnie and Clyde*, cheering on the “gorgeous, youthful and vivacious” outlaws, portrayed by Faye Dunaway and Warren Beatty, as they machine-gunned their way through the Midwest. The bikers’ existence as outlaws, both literally and figuratively, combined with their open embrace of violence and willingness to employ it without thought, led many hips to see them as a representation of the “radical refusal of normality that [they] professed to respect above all else.”¹⁰³

The embrace of violence-prone biker gangs created problems both in Atlanta and nationwide. Members of the Hell’s Angels gang killed an audience member while serving as security at a concert in California in 1969. This, however, did not deter the organizers of the 2nd Atlanta International Pop Festival from using members of local biker gangs to guard gates and fences in Byron, a situation that became troublesome as thousands demanded free entry to the concert. Violence would have likely erupted if the promoters had not agreed to the crowd’s demand. In addition, the *Bird* printed regular reports of muggings and sexual assaults committed by bikers. These incidents increased as several bike gangs moved into the Strip after the pop

¹⁰³ Ibid, 193-194

festival. Participants in the recent Strip riot told of a rumor circulating about a war between two biker gangs, the Outlaws and the Regents, that would take place that day, increasing tensions and a sense of foreboding.¹⁰⁴

Despite these problems, the hip community continued to defend bikers although it resisted claiming them as full members. This occurred in part because hips would occasionally use bikers in attempts at self-patrol the Strip. Bongo recalled that when heroin first appeared on the Strip, some members in the hip community teamed up with bikers to rid the neighborhood of hard drug sellers. He stated that sellers would get two warnings to not conduct open air drug deals in the Strip (it was acceptable to deal drugs out of a local pool hall). If they returned a third time, bikers would take him to a second floor apartment in a building a block off Peachtree Street, “slap him around, beat him up, steal his money, steal his dope and then throw him from the second floor into the dumpster.”¹⁰⁵ This type of activity may have helped in the short term but eventually worked against the community as many in Atlanta came to see the growing number of bikers and an increase in biker-related violence as a sign that “true” hippies and hip leaders had abandoned the Strip, leaving it to criminals, drug addicts and murderers.

The focus on bikers in the area intensified after the December shooting death of Barney Leigh McSherry, also known as “Tree” since he stood 6’ 7” tall. On December 29, Tree attempted to enter “White Columns.” Once home to the French Consul, the large mansion at Peachtree and 14th Streets had been converted into a rooming house and became the Strip’s first crash pad. For several weeks before the shooting, bikers in the area had gotten into the habit of entering White Columns late at night to rob its residents. The longhairs living there finally

¹⁰⁴ James T. Wooten, “The Life and Death of Atlanta’s Hip Strip,” *New York Times Magazine*, March 14, 1971, 36; Eyewitness Accounts of Strip Riot, 2-3.

¹⁰⁵ Bongo, interviewed by the Strip Project, available at : http://www.thestriproject.com/interview%20site/Oral_History_of_The_Strip/Bongo.html

decided to defend themselves, a decision which led to a gun battle with bikers two weeks before Tree's death. On the 29th, Tree attempted to enter the building but a resident armed with a shotgun confronted him. When the biker reached in his pocket to get his revolver, the longhair fired, ripping away part of Tree's face, leaving him dead in a pool of blood. When police arrived, they arrested all seventeen residents on charges of murder. In addition, they found "an arsenal of guns, one stick of dynamite, 18 Molotov cocktails," and a wide variety of drugs. The story made national headlines when it became known that one of the people arrested was Robert T'Souvas, a Vietnam veteran involved in the massacre of hundreds of civilians in the village of My Lai in March 1968. A few days later, a local judge dropped the charges against all the longhairs involved, including those against John Roberts, the man who pulled the trigger, after declaring that the shooting had been done in self-defense.¹⁰⁶

Two very different interpretations of the event emerged. Some in the media attempted to portray the killing as part of an ongoing, formal feud between hips and bikers. The *Atlanta Journal* claimed that Tree had been a "probate" with a biker gang, a role which was 'somewhat similar to a pledge to a fraternity,' and that the inability of hips and bikers and co-exist in the area led to the killing.¹⁰⁷ Reporters and local officials also helped create the notion that the Strip had descended into a state of lawlessness once the bikers arrived. Reporter James Wooten worked the most diligently at crafting this narrative in several pieces he wrote for the *New York Times*. Claiming that bikers had "displaced peace and love" in the neighborhood, he conveniently failed to mention the numerous confrontations between hips and the police over the previous two years. His articles also painted the district in as negative a light as possible, noting the proliferation of "dozens of cheap boarding houses," and "dark dingy bars" in the area.

¹⁰⁶ Harcourt Klinefelter, Report on the 10th Street Area, undated, Box 6, CCAA Papers, Emory MARBL, Atlanta, GA; Orville Gaines, "Shotgun Slaying Here Linked to Hippie Feud," *Atlanta Journal*, December 29, 1970, A1,4;

¹⁰⁷ Gaines, "Shotgun Slaying Here Linked to Hippie Feud," A1.

Wooten went further. This was the neighborhood where James Earl Ray stayed while stalking Martin Luther King, Jr before assassinating him in April 1968 and the place where *Gone With the Wind* author Margaret Mitchell died after being struck by a car while crossing Peachtree Street.¹⁰⁸

The local media and city officials followed Wooten's lead, painting the Strip with broad, dark strokes. Police Chief Herbert Jenkins stated that he believed the area "is no longer a hippie community. It's just a stopover place for outlaws and criminals from all over the nation." One officer went further. "This is just a bad place. It has always been bad and I think it always will until it stops attracting irresponsible people. They don't give a damn for the law—none of them—not the bikers not the hippies, not the rednecks, none of them."¹⁰⁹ Governor-elect Jimmy Carter pledged that one of his first tasks after being inaugurated would be coordinating law enforcement efforts to help control crime in the area. The Strip's image for lawlessness only increased after it became known that, on the same night that Tree died, bikers had kidnapped four young Florida tourists visiting the Strip. All were tortured and one of the men, George Gwynn, murdered, his body dumped about 50 miles south of the city. Jenkins warned that "it's dangerous down there, whoever you are," and advised both local residents and tourists to stay clear of the area.¹¹⁰

Members of the hip community created an alternative narrative. The *Bird* noted that Tree "was not a member of a bike club," although this was more of a technical point than anything else since he clearly associated with bikers. More importantly, hips refuted claims that a feud

¹⁰⁸ James T. Wooten, "Motorcycle Gangs Terrorizing Once-Calm Atlanta Hippie Area," *New York Times*, 40.

¹⁰⁹ Gregory Jaynes, "We Want it, We Take It," *Atlanta Constitution*, January 8, 1971, A15; Wooten, "Motorcycle Gangs Terrorizing Once-Calm Atlanta Hippie Area," 40.

¹¹⁰ Bill Shipp, "Carter Pledges Fight on Hip Area Crime," *Atlanta Journal*, January 1, 1971, A1; "Youth's Torture Reported in New Atlanta Slaying," *New York Times*, December 31, 1971, 1; Wooten, "Motorcycle Gangs Terrorizing Once-Calm Atlanta Hippie Area," 40.

existed between them and bikers. Confrontations did happen but these paled in comparison to the more serious threat the police and other civil leaders posed to the Strip's existence, they argued. Gene Guerrero interpreted the feud story as part of larger efforts at destroying the hip community. He asked, "Why do the police and the straight press push the notion of a 'feud?' Because if we don't watch it, it will keep us divided at a time when we must be together to survive."¹¹¹

Survival of the hip community by the first years of the 1970s, however, had come to mean different things to its members. Some began to see the Strip's demise as a necessary part of that survival, leaving it to the street people and moving on. Protecting junkies, runaways, and the homeless from straight society, once seen as an essential role for the hip community, now might mean its downfall. The future of the Strip came up during a meeting of the Midtown Alliance in November 1970. Joe Roman of the Twelfth Gate argued that the district's continued existence should not be encouraged since it stifled creativity and "brings down the heat [police] on the community." Bongo argued that the community needed to spread more deeply into the neighborhood surrounding the Strip. He favored Piedmont Park and, as seen in the last chapter, this ultimately became the last stand for the city's hip community. Others, such as Dennis Doherty, considered the Strip just a "phase" in the hip community's existence. Harky Klinefelter offered a similar assessment, claiming that the Strip had served its purpose as a gathering point for the hip community in its early years but never had been synonymous with the community.¹¹² By the summer of 1971, it became clear that the Strip had entered its death throes. That June, long-time hip community member Ted Brodek stated simply "I think the Strip is dead." Doherty

¹¹¹ Gene Guerrero, "14th Street Shooting," *Great Speckled Bird* IV no. 1 (January 4, 1971), 3; Margaret Hurst, "Scene of Slaying Held Unsafe for Occupancy," *Atlanta Journal*, January 1, 1971, A6; Midtown Alliance, "We . . . the People," *Great Speckled Bird* IV no. 4 (January 25, 1971), 2.

¹¹² Roger, "Community Meeting," *Great Speckled Bird* III no. 46 (November 16, 1970), 2; Klinefelter, Report on the 10th Street Area, CCAA Papers, Emory MARBL, Atlanta, GA

offered a slightly more optimistic assessment, predicting that it would last perhaps through the year.¹¹³ But the larger reality of the situation could not be ignored. As older hips left the area, police continued harassing local residents and the street people began moving to Piedmont Park, the Strip's death knell had rung.

In August, 1971, businesses on Peachtree Street scrambled to find ways of making up lost profits. While hips had regularly patronized local businesses, straight tourists provided most of the profits when they entered the Strip to gawk at hippies. The movement of the community out of the Strip and into Piedmont Park earlier that summer, combined with the area's dangerous reputation, had significantly reduced the Strip's tourist trade. In response, approximately twenty-one business owners began meeting in an effort to generate ideas about how to increase traffic into their stores. Conflict soon developed. Hip businessmen recommended trying to lure the hips back. If that happened, they reasoned, the tourists would also return and bring their purchasing power with them. Older owners who had been operating in Midtown since before the development of the Strip wanted no part of those efforts. Pleased that the hips had left the area, they wished to see nothing but straights visiting the stores now. The two camps were soon attacking each other. One hip businessman called the older merchants "hardnosed rednecks living in the past."¹¹⁴ The divisions led to the formation of separate organizations. The hip camp formed the Peachtree Business Association while the older merchants revived the defunct 10th Street Business Association. Even after it had left, the hip community still had the power to create turmoil on Peachtree Street.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Richard B. Matthews, "Hippie Culture Spreads But 'The Strip' Fades," *Atlanta Journal*, June 29, 1971, A6.

¹¹⁴ Ron Taylor, "Hip Area Stores Seeking Customers," *Atlanta Journal*, August 27, 1971, A21; Ron Taylor, "10th Street Merchants—Hip, Straight," *Atlanta Journal*, September 1, 1971, A2.

¹¹⁵ "Gap Between Merchants Narrows in 10th Street Area," *Atlanta Journal*, September 15, 1971, NF2.

The Strip played a vitally important role in the hip community's development. The district provided spaces that acted as landmarks in the community's earliest days. People in Atlanta and across the South looking for the New Left and counterculture could visit places such as the Catacombs, the Twelfth Gate, the *Birdhouse*, or even the sidewalks along Peachtree Street and find like-minded people. These places also made it easier for the hip community's opponents to find it. With few resources to draw upon in his first years of existence, Strip residents had little choice but to suffer at the hands of a city government and police force hoping to rid the city of hippies. These efforts failed as the Strip became the epicenter of the Southeast's largest hip community and leaders emerged to protect it. By the first months of 1970 life on the Strip had diversified and improved through the creation of the Midtown Alliance and the contributions of local social service agencies and churches. Hopes ran high in the hip community that the Strip could develop into a safe, stable, and peaceful haven for longhairs from around the country. These hopes came crashing down within months as an increasing number of vulnerable runaways, weekend hippies, drug addicts and bikers entered the area's population of street people, destabilizing life in the Strip and encouraging the police to continue harassing its hip residents. As tensions mounted violent incidents occurred more regularly, culminating in the October 1970 riot and the shooting deaths of Tree and George Gwynn that December. Several hip leaders pleaded for unity as the street people moved east in Piedmont Park and older hips left for more peaceful neighborhoods. The Strip had served its purpose and the community had moved on.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION: REMEMBERING ATLANTA'S HIP COMMUNITY

“Other sections of the country have written almost the minutest details of their history, even to magnifying the Boston Tea Party and Paul Revere’s Ride into an importance which has permeated the national consciousness, while the South has permitted its history to lie unworked and many of its major figures and movements to remain to this day unhonored and unsung.”

E. Merton Coulter¹

*They paved paradise and put up a parking lot,
With a pink hotel, a boutique and a swinging hot spot*

“[Big Yellow Taxi](#),” Joni Mitchell

On a sunny Saturday over Memorial Day weekend in 2008, the Atlanta hip community came together for a reunion of sorts. Billed officially as the “BirdBlast” it marked the 40th anniversary of the *Great Speckled Bird*, which had begun publication in March 1968. Held in an industrial space on the southside of Atlanta, the event featured numerous displays of *Bird* covers and articles, highlighting the diverse set of issues and causes the paper embraced during its initial eight year run. The festivities also included speeches by former *Bird* staffers, including founder Gene Guerrero, environmental activist Neill Herring and Nan Grogan Orrock, a member of the Georgia House of Representatives. David Simpson made an appearance. Staying true to its underground press and activist roots, funds collected at the event went to support alternative media, including WFRG Radio (a product of the 1960s), Atlanta Progressive News and

¹ W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Where Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 1.

Democracy Now!. Upon entering the venue, attendees were asked to sign a petition asking for the digitization of the *Bird*'s entire run.² In a corner near the entrance, the [Strip Project](#) set up a booth. Created by several former Atlanta hippies, the Strip Project ran a website dedicated to telling the story of the hip community in Midtown. In addition to its own display of hip life in Sixties-era Atlanta, its organizers collected oral testimonies.

Long overshadowed or ignored in studies of the New Left, counterculture, and underground journalism, the veterans of Atlanta's hip community started crafting their own narrative of the past. They would not go unhonored and unsung. In the months and years after the *Bird*Bash, these veterans continued to spread the word about the Sixties in Atlanta. The Strip Project website expanded and a travelling *Bird* exhibit made its way around Atlanta. The histories contained in these projects added a much-needed perspective to the story of 1960s America, especially its connections to the South. Scholars have recently begun shining light into this darkened corner of the nation's past and the involvement of veterans from the time only help to illuminate it further.

These projects should be rightfully celebrated but also approached with some caution. They attempt to do more than simply reveal the facts of the past in hopes of creating a more complete and fact-based history. They also produce an historical memory of the past. Through remembrances picked and chosen from a myriad of past events and personal experiences, these participant-historians assign levels of significance, convey selective knowledge and "create interpretative frameworks that make the flux of experience comprehensible."³ In some cases, this means that the history of Atlanta's hip community has been altered, distorted or simplified to fit these frameworks. In part, these efforts have helped perpetuate the notion that the Strip and

² This project came to fruition. The *Great Speckled Bird* can be read online at <http://www.library.gsu.edu/gsb/>

³ Brundage, *Where Memories Grow*, 5.

the *Bird* possess the stories most worth telling. As this dissertation has shown, these were elements within a much more complex hip community. This project hopes to provide a narrative and analysis that can be used in conjunction with these other histories to provide a more complete picture of life in Sixties Atlanta.

Atlanta's hip community existed far beyond the experiences of the *Great Speckled Bird* and hips on Peachtree Street (although they were quite an important part of it). In an attempt to celebrate the most positive, confrontational, or remembered parts of the city's hip community, many of more controversial, unseemly and less radical elements get overlooked. Activists at Emory and Georgia State universities, for example, rarely embraced radicalism or confrontational tactics more commonly found in the community's other organizations and movements. These campuses, though, played an important role as training grounds for local activists as well as safe spaces for necessary gatherings of radicals from across the city, state and region.

In addition, the diversity of the city's antiwar movement deserves recognition. The desire to protest the Vietnam War did not exist only among the nation's radicalized white youth but among all races, age groups, and places on the left of the political spectrum. In Atlanta, the movement grew out the city's civil rights and pacifist organizations, groups more liberal than revolutionary during the middle of the 1960s. The first activists worked diligently to build a movement through strategies that had the best chance of success in a socially and politically conservative part of the country. Its efforts met with limited success. As the movement became more confrontational, liberals and middle-aged members left, leaving the local antiwar efforts to

an ever smaller group of white radical youth more interested in adhering to a specific party line than attracting new converts.

Conflicts in the antiwar movement mimicked those that occurred throughout the hip community. These differences, however, should be recognized as a necessary function within a vibrant, complex hip community, even if they reveal some of the negative aspects and regrettable excesses of the Sixties. The messy ideological battles among the *Bird* staff over the paper's content and direction deserve an equal place besides its efforts at building the hip community and confronting the establishment through acts such as putting the word "motherfucker" on the cover for members of straight society to see as they took a tour of Atlanta's hippie colony.

Finally, life in the Strip and Piedmont Park proved far darker and more complex than is often remembered. The good vibes created through Sunday concerts and the revelatory experiences of tripping on LSD and smoking marijuana, coupled with expressions of communal spirit, such as battling the cops, Bongo's efforts at feeding people in the park and the creation of the Midtown Alliance, need to be placed alongside the community's darker aspects. Defending drug use became questionable as heroin and amphetamines appeared on Peachtree Street. Hips on occasion sexually exploited female runaways in the name of free love. Violence also occurred with more regularity during the last years of the community's existence than is generally recognized. Some hips today may regret defending a community that began to turn on itself through knife fights and gun battles. In the end, however, this complexity offers the best evidence that a true hip community existed in Atlanta.

This leaves only the question of when Atlanta's community ceased to exist. As with the New Left and counterculture, this proves a difficult question to answer. Scholars of postwar U.S.

social movements over the past several decades have tended to view these histories using as long a lens as possible, developing concepts such as the “long Sixties” and “long civil rights movement.” While these analytical structures can improve our understanding of causation and consequence, they can also diminish the distinctive qualities, contributions and timeframes of movements. In his insightful examination on the demise of the New Left, Doug Rossinow discussed the intense debate among historians over attempts at pinpointing an end date for the movement. While the first historians of the era clearly located its demise at the end of the decade, those that came later rejected that analysis, pushing the New Left further and further into the 1970s. Some refused to recognize a definitive end at all or blurred the borders between the New Left and a longer national narrative of universalism and progress. For Rossinow, though, these attempts confuse the “New Left as a political outlook and the New Left as a social movement.” After all, “a collective self-consciousness is not so easy a thing to trace into oblivion, but after a certain point it simply is no longer in evidence.”⁴

The end of Atlanta’s hip community exemplifies this point well. When, exactly, was the experience of community no longer in evidence? One way of marking its end would be to look at the physical representations of the community. In other words, when did the organizations that hips belonged to, the demonstrations they organized, and the districts they occupied disband or fall apart? Unfortunately, the complexity of Atlanta’s hip community works against this type of analysis. From its peak in 1970, the hip community faded away over several years. The student movement at Emory died first, soon after the 1970 Kent State demonstration, but the Georgia State movement charged on for several more years. Hips left the Strip in large numbers

⁴ Doug Rossinow, “Letting Go: Revisiting the New Left’s Demise,” in *The New Left Revisited*, ed. John McMillian and Paul Buhle (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 244-47, 252.

by 1971 but moved to the park the next summer. The *Great Speckled Bird* lasted until the bicentennial year. Which of these events best mark the community's demise?

A more useful tool resides in finding the point at which the community itself felt it no longer existed. When, in other words, did the "we-ness" of the hip community disappear and why did it occur? Harky Klinefelter considered it gone by the end of 1971, exclaiming in a CCAA report that, "the Atlanta Hippy Community is Dead! Its spirit lives on but its body is dead." Bruce Pemberton of the Bridge, would likely have agreed with Klinefelter's conclusion. Emphasizing the changes along Peachtree Street he stated in June 1971 that "a year ago I could spend five hours on the Strip, rapping the whole time. Now I can walk down there and literally not see a person I know." Others argued that hips still composed an identifiable "community of ideals," that, while no longer located in the Strip, continued to put their ideals into practice in places spread out over the metropolitan area.⁵ Ultimately, this approach also proves frustrating.

I argue for a middle ground that incorporates these statements with larger trends and changes at the local, state and national level. In doing so, it becomes clear the hip community entered its final decline by the last months of 1971 and ceased to exist completely by 1973. Three factors support this conclusion. First, the importance of the Strip and Piedmont Park to creating a communal consciousness cannot be over-emphasized. Opposition to mainstream society and culture played an important role in creating the "we-ness" for Atlanta's hip community. However, this opposition needed a place to be put on display and the Strip and park provided the best space for this to occur. In order to confront straight society as a community, it needed a place to do so. In the Strip, as in other hip districts, this confrontation took on a

⁵ Harcourt Klinefelter, Report on the Atlanta Hippy Community, undated, Box 6, CCAA Papers, MARBL, Atlanta, GA; Richard B. Matthews, "10th & Peachtree Drama Get a New Cast," *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, June 27, 1971, E1; Richard B. Matthews, "Hippie Culture Spreads but 'The Strip' Fades," *Atlanta Journal*, June 29, 1971, A1.

performative quality, as hips paraded for straight tourists, showing off their long hair, flamboyant clothing styles and openly consuming drugs.⁶ The Strip was where you “performed” hip. One local reporter correctly assessed the Strip’s theatrical aspect, noting that “it is a . . . stage show, played free of charge to a drive-by audience. It is unchoreographed and undirected . . .yet . . . it has remained near the top of the entertainment list for Atlanta residents and their guests.”⁷

Removal of this stage had a significant negative impact on the hip community.

The removal of the Strip’s performative aspects reveals only part of the story of the hip community’s demise. As hips left Midtown and took up residence in other neighborhoods, such as Virginia Highlands and Little Five Points, the possibility existed that a new street theatre could develop. This did not happen for the simple reason that being hip no longer needed a main stage and, in fact, had lost its audience by the early 1970s. As countercultural elements permeated mainstream society most of their radical, foreign and frightening aspects softened and disappeared. Where once long hair could get male students suspended from school and generate lawsuits, now corporate executives began growing theirs out and wearing brightly-colored paisley ties to the office. Middle-class, middle-aged American couples explored their sexuality together, listened to rock music and experimented with “New Age” religious beliefs. Marijuana use dramatically increased. Even in the Deep South, the nation’s most conservative region where the loudest and strongest backlash against the excesses of the Sixties emerged in the late 1970s, the counterculture had lost its edginess. According to *Atlanta Journal* reporter Richard Matthews, “with local high schools and colleges filled with long-haired, wildly dressed, pot-smoking young people, it is no longer easy to single out a member of the ‘hip’ community.”

⁶ Stuart Henderson, *Making the Scene: Yorkville and Hip Toronto in the 1960s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 109-141.

⁷ Richard B. Matthews, “10th & Peachtree Drama Get a New Cast,” E1.

The hip lifestyle no longer seemed the threat to American life straights once thought, judging by the presence of “shaggy-haired young business executives in downtown Atlanta.”⁸

Politics also played an equally important role in creating Atlanta’s hip community and several key events diluted the oppositional nature of hip politics. Civil rights issues and the Vietnam War brought together radicals from across the South more than any other issue. Even in Atlanta, which civic leaders billed as “the city too busy too hate,” politicians and straight residents remained wary if not dismissive of changes to the city’s racial status quo and continued to support the Vietnam War through the end of the decade. By the first years of the 1970s, however, times were changing as African Americans began occupying the corridors of power. Maynard Jackson won election as the city’s first African American vice mayor in 1969 and would become Atlanta’s first black mayor in 1973. In addition, Mayor Sam Massell appointed blacks as chairmen of the Board of Alderman’s Finance Committee and, in a powerfully symbolic gesture, the Police Committee. In addition to local issues, events at the state and national level had an impact of hip politics. In 1970, Georgians elected Jimmy Carter as their new governor, replacing segregationist Lester Maddox. While fiscally conservative and committed to advancing the state’s economic interests, he did change the debate over race in the state, claiming in his inaugural address that “the time for racial discrimination is over.”⁹ Finally, the Vietnam War ended in January 1973. No other single event brought together the hip community politically and represented its opposition to mainstream society as clearly as the war. Its end removed a crucial organizing tool for political hips in Atlanta and others in hip

⁸ Mark Hamilton Lytle, *America’s Uncivil Wars: The Sixties Era From Elvis to the Fall of Richard Nixon* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 375; Gael Graham, “Flaunting the Freak Flag: *Karr v. Schmidt* and the Great Hair Debate in American High Schools, 1965-1975,” *Journal of American History* 91 no. 2 (2004): 522; Richard B. Matthews, “All in the Mind, You Know,” *Atlanta Journal*, June 28, 1971, A1.

⁹ Alton Hornsby, Jr., *Black Power in Dixie: A Political History of African Americans in Atlanta* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2009), 130; Numan V. Bartley, *The Creation of Modern Georgia*, 2nd ed. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 231.

communities around the country. These political and cultural changes not only reflected how much the Sixties experience had entered mainstream society but signaled that the need for separate hip spaces had disappeared. Atlanta's hip community disappeared along with it.

The demise of the hip community, however, did not end attempts at creating progressive change in Atlanta. As occurred around the country, participants in the New Left, counterculture, and local hip communities carried on their activities long after the movements themselves had passed from the scene. In Atlanta, the demise of the Strip and increased police harassment in Piedmont Park dealt a serious blow to the countercultural elements of the city's hip community. The counterculture's beliefs in anti-capitalism and anti-materialism made it difficult to sustain a contingent of hippies once a neighborhood that could support such an ideologically-based lifestyle disappeared. But, the notion that Atlanta needed to possess neighborhoods in which alternative forms of cultural exploration could exist persisted. Members of Atlanta's hip community moved to the Little Five Points neighborhood and helped begin its transition from a conservative working class neighborhood into the city's leading hip district. It currently possesses numerous coffee shops, ethnic restaurants, vintage clothing stores, night clubs, Charis books (the South's oldest feminist bookstore), and WRFG radio, a progressive radio station founded by several members of the hip community and GSB staff, including Harlon Joye, which features numerous programs on public policy, social justice and alternative musical styles.

As notable as the hip community's cultural legacy is, its political legacy looms even larger. Several activist groups founded during the late 1960s and early 1970s pushed on through the decade and further. Those most dedicated to working class issues and Marxist doctrine continued working in the New Communist Movement of the 1970s. Other hip community members such as Miller Francis played important roles in helping build what has become the

Southeast's largest gay and lesbian community in midtown Atlanta. One of that community's most important activist groups, the Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance (ALFA), grew out of the Atlanta's Women's Liberation Center (founded in part by female staff members from the *Bird*) and endured a lengthy existence, finally disbanding in 1994.

The environmental movement captured the attention of several hip community members, including Stephanie Coffin, who co-founded the Georgia Power Project in the early 1970s. The GPP filed several lawsuits against Georgia Power and the Southern Company over issues of pollution and price-gouging. Neill Herring, who wrote for the *Bird* and participated in the antiwar movement has become one of Georgia's most active and well-known environmental lobbyists. Tom Coffin became Atlanta's Senior Arborist. In 2008, a controversy erupted after the city fired Coffin before he could reprimand his subordinates for not enforcing the city's tree code. Coffin brought a whistleblower lawsuit against the city and won.

Numerous former hip community members continued their commitment to social justice issues. Gene Guerrero, one of the *Bird's* original founders, worked for the American Civil Liberties Union for years and is currently employed with the Open Society Policy Center in Washington D.C. working on issues related to the nation's criminal justice system. Guerrero's former wife, Nan Grogan Orrock, who also helped found the *Bird* and travelled to Cuba as part of the Venceremos Brigade in 1970, served in the Georgia House of Representatives from 1987 to 2006 when she won election to the state senate. She has been involved in the passage of the Georgia Family Medical Leave Act, the Georgia Hate Crimes Act, and the Omnibus AIDS statute.

In 1984, most of the people mentioned above along with several other original staffers including Steve Wise, Bob Goodman, Barbara Joye, and Bud Foote, re-launched the *Bird*.

Concerned with the nation's movement to the Right and President Ronald Reagan's decision to fan the flames of the Cold War, the *Bird* embraced progressive politics and, as it did in the Sixties, aimed to serve as an inclusive sounding board for the city's political and cultural Left. In addition to maintaining connections between the white and black communities, the new *Bird* embraced Atlanta's changing population and reached out to its growing ethnic immigrant neighborhoods. Despite these lofty goals, the paper failed to gain an audience and folded nine months later which, in the end, may have been for the best, as the paper's demise freed up its staff to put their efforts in causes they cared most about. For many, the work still continues.

Several local journalists began penning post-mortems for Atlanta's hip community soon after its demise in 1973. The *Atlanta Gazette* printed one of the first just a year later. Focusing on the Strip and the *Great Speckled Bird*, reporter John Dennis helped develop the misconception that these two elements defined the city's hip community completely. Nevertheless, he provided a thorough and largely accurate history of the area and dissected the possible reasons for the Strip's demise. The article proved generally sympathetic to the hip community while scolding the city for its poor treatment of Atlanta's hippies and radicals. Dennis wondered if civic leaders had learned anything from the experience. "As it seeks the pearl of 'international city' status, will it learn to appreciate and to plan for the diversity that is the hallmark of great cities?, he asked. He offered no answers but concluded on an optimistic note. "Let's hope," he stated, "that the next neighborhood where artists and free thinkers congregate won't end up a criminal's and developer's war zone."¹⁰ Perhaps city leaders and Atlanta's next hip community could finally find a new way of living together.

¹⁰ John Dennis, "Death of the Strip," *Atlanta Gazette*, I no. 3 (September 17, 1974), 13.

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APPENDIX

SONGS ABOUT THE STRIP

I discovered the following songs while doing research for this project. They provide two different but equally compelling views of life in the Strip.

“Tenth at Peachtree”

By Donnie Monroe

*I found some beauty in Mid-Town Atlanta
At the corner of Tenth and Peachtree Street
Longhair and beards, and a whole lot people,
Walking around in their bare feet*

(refrain)

*And under the stars, I heard the guitars,
In the back of Atlantis Rising.
Hundreds of people milling about,
Saw their sign, then heard them shout,
“Come join our Freedom song!”*

*Establishment comes down here and there
In their status symbols coming to stare
Saying, “What are these words, they sound so strange to me
This talk ‘bout men are born free”*

(refrain)

*Saying, “Sure I see the stars, and I hear the guitars,
But just what’s Atlantis Rising?
Why all the people milling about, what strange shout,
Come join Their Freedom Song!”*

*Mama, lock your door and keep your daughter home,
Don’t let her on the “Tight Squeeze Street,”
She might come home with a brand new philosophy
Asking questions that you can’t meet*

(refrain)

Cause under the stars, she'll hear the guitars

And buy a "Bird" at Atlantis Rising.

Join with the people milling about, then come home to shout,

Mama, Join our Freedom Song!⁶¹⁰

"I've Got the Tenth Street Hippie Blues"

By Bill Martin and Joan Johnson

Down on Tenth Street Atlanta there is no room for squares like me,

There living on loving marijuana and LSD

They don't work and they won't fight, just hang around the corner day and night,

What our city coming to, I've got the Tenth Street hippie blues

The mayor says he's had it, man he's sending in the fuzz

They're will take them to the Pig Pen, I really hope he does

The flower children ought to know they're nothing but bad news

I've got the Tenth Street hippie blues

See the long hair couple as they walk along the Strip

Wonder if they coming back or leaving on a trip

Which one's a girl, which one's a boy, I really wish I knew

I'm telling all the world I've got the Tenth Street hippie blues.⁶¹¹

⁶¹⁰ Gene Guerrero, "Play It Again, Sam," *Great Speckled Bird* III no. 28 (July 13, 1970), 5.

⁶¹¹ Bill Martin to Reverend Harry Fifield, January 17, 1971, Box 3, Alex Williams Collection.