

Lake Forest College:

A History of Protest (1967-75)

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Lake Forest College has often been characterized as a small and sleepy school, largely disconnected from the larger political context of the world around it. Complaints about the apathy of the students and their disinterest in activism have resounded around campus since the early 1960s.¹ Despite this perception, Lake Forest College has a rich legacy of protests, community action, and struggles for student rights. This semester, I've been researching these protests and curating an exhibit for the Lake Forest College Archives and Special Collections.

The second half of the 1960s and the 1970s saw an explosion of student action and involvement at Lake Forest College. Groups like Black Students for Black Action (BSBA) did crucial work fighting for the equality of all students at the college and ensuring equitable opportunities for future students. There was a sustained effort to hire black staff and faculty, as well as expanding the curriculum to include courses that foregrounded women, people of color, and the environment.² There were protests, sit-ins, teach-ins, love-ins, community debates, public forums, walk-outs, and many other kinds of non-violent action. Lake Forest College students went to marches in Washington D.C. and New York City, started inner-city tutoring projects, and volunteered in black voter registration drives in the South. After the explosive Kent State Shooting in 1970, students fostered the growth of a network of social services and action groups, such as the Drug Information and Rescue Service or the Student Economic Co-Op amongst others, that supported students and the local community.³ Black Students for Black

1 Lake Forest College Archives and Special Collections, *Stentor*, Vol. 81, No. 1.

2 Lake Forest College Archives and Special Collections, *Stentor*, Vol. 83, No. 30.

3 Lake Forest College Archives and Special Collections, *Stentor*, Vol. 84, No. 27.

Action published the *Black Rap*, a newsletter/literary journal that was distributed to 500 schools across the country and internationally.⁴ These years were highly transformative for the college, and laid the foundation for many of the active student groups and outreach projects still in place today.



Lake Forest College Archives and Special Collections, *Stentor*, Vol. 84, No. 26.

The exhibit currently on display in front of the Archives and Special Collections in the basement of the Donnelley and Lee Library traces this history, from the first protest ever held in Lake Forest in 1967 to the mid-1970s. Drawn from the school's archival material, the exhibit includes photos from the Photograph Collection, and snippets from old issues of *The Stentor*, as well as pamphlets and publications. A virtual component of the Protest exhibit is in development and should be available by the end of the semester. It will include a website with all of the images and information included in the physical exhibit plus many more that didn't fit in the exhibit space. The virtual exhibit explores protest at the college past 1975, discussing pro-choice actions, the AIDS Quilt Memorial Quilt Project, and environmental groups and activism on campus. An interactive iPad will be added next

4 Lake Forest College Archives and Special Collections, *Stentor*, Vol. 85, No. 3

to the exhibit with a scrolling slideshow of bonus pictures. This exhibit and the research that went into it barely scratches the surface of the resources available in the Lake Forest College Archives and Special Collections, the school's art collection, and its strong alumni network. There's so much more to learn and uncover, and my hope is that this exhibit will inspire other students to do some of their own digging into the school's past. Especially in today's political environment, the visibility of this history is very important. Lake Forest College is very much a part of the world around it.



Lake Forest Archives and Special Collections, Photograph Collections, Box 92, Folder 8.