May Day at Yale, 1970: Recollections

The Trial of Bobby Seale and the Black Panthers


Henry Chauncey, Jr., known as “Sam,” was born in 1935. He graduated from Yale College in 1957. He worked in various administrative capacities at Yale from 1957 to 1982. He then was founding CEO of Science Park Development Corporation in New Haven; subsequently president and CEO of Gaylord Hospital in Wallingford, Connecticut, and finally lecturer and head of the Health Management Program in the Yale School of Public Health. He is retired and resides in New Haven.

John T. Hill was born in 1934. In 1955 he received a BFA, in 1956 an MFA, both from the University of Georgia. After two years in the U.S. Infantry he came to the Yale School of Art and Architecture, receiving a MFA in graphic design in 1960. He taught there for nineteen years, becoming the school’s first director of graduate studies in photography. In 1975, on the death of his friend Walker Evans, he became executor of Evans’ estate. Since leaving Yale, he has designed and authored various books and exhibitions.

Thomas Strong was born in 1938 in Hanover, New Hampshire. He graduated from Dartmouth College in 1960. From 1960 to 1963 he served with the U.S. Army Security Agency in Europe and in Turkey. In 1971, he graduated from the Yale School of Art and Architecture, with a degree in graphic design. Walker Evans was his principal instructor in photography. Since 1968 he and Marjorie C. Gordon have directed the design firm Strong Cohen on Chapel Street in New Haven.

Henry Louis Gates, Jr., known as “Skip,” was born in 1950. He graduated from Yale University in 1973. Emmy Award-winning filmmaker, literary scholar, journalist, cultural critic, and institution builder, Professor Gates has authored seventeen books and created fourteen documentary films and film series. The recipient of fifty-three honorary degrees and numerous prizes, Professor Gates was a member of the first class awarded “genius grants” by the MacArthur Foundation in 1981, and in 1998 he became the first African American scholar to be awarded the National Humanities Medal. The founding director of the Hutchins Center for African & African American Research and the Alphonse Fletcher University Professor at Harvard University, he resides in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

This is a book with a story that has a happy ending. It is a story about the weekend of May Day 1970 on Yale’s campus. The weekend was a time when American colleges and radical movements were clashing, and there were arrests, buildings burned, and in at least one case students’ deaths. This book is the result of interviews with New Haven, Comeback and Yale University community members on the weekend of May Day 1970 and in ongoing reflections over the years with very different perspectives and political leanings. It is an effort to bring these various voices together and to present them for what they were and for what they represent. The words used here are those of the people we interviewed, and these words have been respectfully and carefully transcribed and published.

The authors are extraordinarily grateful to Henry Louis Gates, Jr., for adding his thoughts on this weekend in the introduction, for he was a student at Yale at the time. His comments add another important perspective on how it felt to be present.

May Day at Yale, 1970: Recollections


History/Photography

$30 US / $40 CN

www.prospectapress.com
May Day at Yale, 1970: Recollections

This book comes from firsthand experiences, both in words and in pictures. It offers a partial record of a community and an institution coming together to accommodate an event while deflecting its potential violence. The history of the New Haven Green bridges over four centuries. It has served as a place for worship, grazing cattle, staging revolutions, hanging the unlawful, and for hosting various causes and campaigns.

On the day before and on May Day of 1970, Yale University and New Haven prepared to host an agitated congregation of young civil rights activists with a diverse list of causes, but focused mainly on freeing Bobby Seale, the Black Panther leader. This book gives a glimpse of that diversity: diverse in cause, attitude, and dress. More important, it shows a common decency that defined the day. Yale and New Haven could be proud of avoiding any real violence and bloodshed.

Like an archeological record, this book not only documents the New Haven Green on that one day, but marks a broader shift in direction for the country at large. For those who remember being there, it seems painfully near. For later generations, it is likely a remote abstraction.
MAYDAY

ORSON WELLES
WED JUNE 10
2:30 & 3:00 FREE
May Day at Yale, 1970: Recollections

The Trial of Bobby Seale and the Black Panthers

Narrative by Henry “Sam” Chauncey
with photographs by
John T. Hill and Thomas Strong
taken before and during the 1970
May Day demonstration in New Haven
supporting Bobby Seale and the Black Panthers

Introduction by Henry Louis Gates, Jr.
Bobby Seale was born in 1936 in Dallas, Texas. He and his family lived in poverty for a number of years.

Seale and Huey P. Newton founded the Black Panther Party in 1965 as an organization for black and white people who wanted to fight what they saw as a racist society. Seale was a defendant in two trials: one as a result of the unrest at the 1968 Democratic convention and the other, the trial discussed in this book. Seale was not convicted in either trial.

Today he lectures around the country and is the author of *Seize the Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton*. 

*Photographer unknown, courtesy of the Joe Taylor Collection*
On the eve of May Day, 1970, a nation weary of a war increasingly perceived as immoral and rocked by ongoing racial tensions still raw from the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., awaited Armageddon in perhaps the most unlikely place of all: on the campus of Yale University in downtown New Haven, Connecticut, where I was a sophomore. Our expectations were that a mass demonstration of college students, black and left-wing radicals, and perennial “outside agitators” would sweep over the Green in protest over the jailing and unfair trial of two Black Panther Party leaders accused of conspiring to murder one of their own. Many thought it was the government that should have been on trial for manipulating the case to break the Panthers’ backs, while a far dirtier operation was underway in Vietnam. That no lives were lost by the following sunset was a miracle. Actually, much of the credit goes to the legendary president of Yale University, Kingman Brewster, and his special assistant, Henry “Sam” Chauncey, and to four black student leaders, Ralph Dawson, Glenn De Chabert, William F. Farley, Jr., and Kurt Schmoke, who answered the “mayday” call for peace that May the 1st, and in doing so, helped defuse what easily could have been “Kent State” before the real tragedy of the murder of protesting students at Kent State devastated the country three days later.

The facts are expertly reported in Paul Bass and Douglas W. Rae’s definitive book, Murder in the Model City: The Black Panthers, Yale, and the Redemption of a Killer (Basic Books, 2006). The murder of the 19-year-old Black Panther Alex Rackley in New Haven on May 20, 1969, resulted in the arrests of two Black Panther leaders, Ericka Huggins and Bobby Seale (in addition to the killers, also Panthers), as part of the federal government’s determination to crack down on the party’s growing media presence and popularity. By the following spring of 1970, the remaining Panther leadership set their sights on New Haven as the new ground zero in their war against “the system,” capitalism, and “white oppression.” Monitoring the situation at Yale was President Brewster and, in Washington, President Richard Nixon and FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, neither of the latter exactly on cozy terms with Black America.

The escalation began on April 14, 1970, when black area high school students, rebuffed at the local courthouse, took their frustrations out on the Chapel Square Mall. The next day’s reaction witnessed further violence at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, when the administration there locked its gates on 1,500 protesters massing in the streets with nowhere to go but the hospital. In response, the Youth International Party (Yippie) leader Abbie Hoffman announced that the Movement’s next step would be Mother Yale, as we affectionately nicknamed the institution that we had come to love.

To head off Hoffman, President Brewster, in a stunningly clever move, characteristic of the tenor of his presidency, conferred privately with Harvard point man, the law professor Archibald Cox (of future Watergate fame), who warned Brewster not to make the same mistake Harvard had made in locking down the campus. The fabled Harvard-Yale rivalry aside, this was a classic example of two brilliant men, both broadly liberal in their sensibilities and both national leaders, seeking to avert another campus disaster, one that would have enormously harmful ramifications throughout the academy, spilling over into the larger society outside, especially since both institutions had only recently begun to implement affirmative action admission policies that had led to the admission of the largest number of black students in the freshman class at either institution.

As May Day approached, Black Panther organizer Doug Miranda exhorted Yale students to burn their campus down in protest of Bobby Seale’s capture: “You ought to get some guns, and go and get Chairman Bobby out of jail!” His hope was to spark a more protracted strike, even if that meant risking the lives of my fellow Yalies. “That Panther and that Bulldog gonna move together!” Miranda shouted to thunderous applause at Battell Chapel on April 19—the anniversary of the Battle of Lexington and Concord, for what it’s worth. Soon, t-shirts with the two animals, one black, the other white and blue, peppered the campus. Stepping forward to lead the student committee was my friend, Bill Farley, who would be selected as a Rhodes Scholar in his senior year (Class of 1972). Farley, along with Ralph Dawson (Class of 1971), Moderator of The Black Student Alliance at Yale (BSAY), Glenn De Chabert (Class of 1970), and Kurt Schmoke (Class of 1971), who would be chosen as a Rhodes Scholar the year before Farley and would go on to be elected the first African American mayor of Baltimore in 1987, made the critical decision to open a back channel to President Brewster, even as Farley publicly warned of his plans to help shut Yale down. I remember when that decision was made: De Chabert, during an emergency meeting of the BSAY, said that he had come to the realization that the Panthers actually wanted to “heighten the contradictions,” as the left-wing saying went, by showing the country that even white, privileged Yalies could be the victims of the police brutality sure to ensue in the chaotic aftermath of the May Day rally. The BSAY would cooperate with Kingman, he said, to keep that from happening.
All of a sudden, it was the Panthers who had to be controlled. Supported, yes; but also their activities and influence controlled. And that was going to take some deft footwork. We became so alarmed, and frankly frightened, by the escalating threats that we attempted to force the black female members of BSAY to seek protection during the rally within the formidable walls of the Scroll and Key secret society, much against their wishes.

Brewster, Dawson, De Chabert, Farley, and Schmoke were natural allies: each a strong leader, each charismatic, each as strongly attached to his ethnic identity as he was attached to Yale. Black, and Blue. And while my three friends and fellow black students were, to a person, left of center and cultural nationalists, they never, even once, considered violence or anarchy a viable option for the black community, especially the black community at Yale. “Black and Blue” was our generation’s motto. And these three guys wanted to lead America, not destroy it. What’s more, nobody in their right mind wanted to see anyone killed in the process of protesting the miscarriage of justice that was occurring in the New Haven courthouse, or the Vietnam War. Only mad or desperate women or men embraced that option, and Dawson, Farley, De Chabert, and Schmoke were anything but mad: each had come to Yale to transform the system from within, not to tear it down. And each found in Kingman Brewster—most famous before the strike, I think, for his annual speech to the freshmen welcoming them to New Haven as this year’s cohort of Yale’s “One Thousand Male Leaders”— a model of how the power elite, at least as Brewster defined and embodied it, was dedicated to integrating the American power structure and simultaneously perpetuating the ruling class by diversifying it with “natural aristocrats,” as the saying went. And if ever this curious phrase applied to four born leaders, it was to Dawson, De Chabert, Farley, and Schmoke.

April ended with the worst boiling over: at a mass meeting on the 21st before a standing-room-only crowd at Yale’s Ingalls Rink, Black Panther David Hilliard (just that day freed from jail) was boldly challenging the crowd of thousands of our fellow students to “off the pigs,” when an architecture student, deranged enough to jump on the podium in the middle of Hilliard’s speech, was beaten by Hilliard’s security, much to the horror of all of us Yalies. Suddenly, “the Revolution” wasn’t just a phrase any longer; human beings like us were as vulnerable to violence as any inner-city resident being victimized by the police. “Fuck you! All power to all those except those who want to act like a bunch of goddamn racists,” Hilliard exclaimed, as he coaxed the crowd to recover from the stomping of that student, who ultimately was allowed to speak. We couldn’t tell if this guy’s incoherent mumblings were a sign that he had been imbalanced before he jumped on the platform, or a sign of how badly he had been beaten by Hilliard’s bodyguards. But the effect of that beating was terrifying, and I think it contributed considerably to our determination to protect this university of which we found ourselves a vital part and which, we suddenly realized, we had come to love.

With his options vanishing, President Brewster heeded Archibald Cox’s advice: after making a show of defiance, he “relented” by agreeing to keep Yale’s gates open on May Day. You might call it Brewster’s safety-valve plan. It included his decision to announce at the next Yale faculty meeting on the 23rd that academic “expectations” would be eased to avoid ruining students distracted by what was about to unfold. Immediately, some of the “Old Blues,” as we call our alumni, charged him with selling out. But Brewster was determined not to have any blood on his hands. More startling, perhaps, was the immortal prophecy he shared: “In spite of my insistence on the limits of my official capacity, I personally want to say that I am appalled and ashamed that things should have come to such a pass in this country that I am skeptical of the ability of black revolutionaries to achieve a fair trial anywhere in the United States.” Brewster’s honesty endeared him to us, but it would prove costly to his career.

Horrified by what he was hearing, U.S. Vice President Spiro Agnew opined critically, “I do not feel that students of Yale University can get a fair impression of their country under the tutelage of Kingman Brewster”— exacerbating the right-wing’s paranoia that the nation’s elite universities were a hotbed of liberalism and anarchy and affirmative action. More than a thousand alumni letters streamed in following Brewster’s announcement, most of them supportive of his leadership, but many calling for his head.

In the final days counting down to May the 1st, four thousand national guardsmen were ordered to New Haven to join local police in halting what we felt was the inevitable Armageddon, with reports swirling of stolen arms and explosives reinforcing powder-keg impressions and damaging town-gown relations at Yale. Breaking from the radicals about to run over the campus, the moderate Black Coalition in the area expressed the view that “in New Haven, as in most of the country . . . the white radical, by frantically and selfishly seeking his personal psychological release, is sharing in the total white conspiracy of denial against the black people.”
The final match was lit by then-National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger and President Nixon himself, when on the eve of May Day, April 30, Nixon took to the airwaves to announce an assault on Cambodia to a nation already exhausted waiting for peace to arrive in Vietnam. This only sent further shockwaves across campus, with hundreds of reporters descending on New Haven to tally the horrors about to unfold. On both offense and defense, President Brewster, working closely with his black student allies in secret meetings at his house, did his best to keep the police and protesters far apart. 12

When May Day finally arrived, tanks were at the ready in the streets, while the Yale flagpole had been greased to avoid any violently unpatriotic displays. If they couldn’t reach the flag, they couldn’t burn it. Prepping the protesters that morning, Yippie leader Jerry Rubin railed, “Fuck Kingston Brewster!,” and alienated the Panthers with his ridiculously immature declaration, “The most oppressed people in America are white middle-class youth…. We don’t want to work in our daddy’s business. We don’t want to be a college professor, a prosecutor, or a judge…. We ain’t never, never, never gonna grow up.” 13

The “Big Rally” kicked off at high noon, with what seemed to us like a hundred thousand protesters gathering on the Green. (The official number was around 15,000.) 14 Rock music blared. Whispers of a Weathermen presence filtered out, never to be confirmed. Mostly, though, a horde of speakers droned on into late afternoon and evening, before it was time for Beat poet Allen Ginsberg to chant his poem, which included the line, “O holy Yale Panther Pacifist Conscious populace awake alert sensitive tender.” 15

For the time being, it appeared that was going to be it. But then, at 9:30 p.m., the action shifted back to the Green, after a report, later known to be untrue, surfaced on the Yale campus that police were arresting black men upon entering. That was all it took to rile up the crowd. A half hour later, the marchers, a thousand strong, headed to the courthouse-side of the Green where they eventually collided with police teargas. A regrouping effort a few blocks away was further frustrated when a letter from “Chairman Bobby” Seale himself was read, warning the protesters not to damage the Panther cause. 16

At that point, panic and paranoia set in, with misfired reports about Yale’s gates being closed. Then, when that was about done, suddenly a pair of bombs went off in the Ingalls Rink basement, damaging the structure, but, thankfully, not taking a single human life. 17 No one knew anything for certain in the minutes and hours that followed, except that the hourglass on May Day had just about run out. I remember running through Old Campus, nose covered with a handkerchief to avoid the cloud of teargas and marijuana, as Ginsberg chanted still another mystical-political poem. So this was “the Revolution,” I thought to myself.

It could have been worse, far worse. As it turned out, there were no major injuries suffered, and only twenty-one total arrests were made. 18 While the next day saw some attempts to spark another round of protests, mostly they just fizzled. Kent State was just two days away now, followed by the murder of two students at Jackson State on the 15th. The shocking violence at those two campuses would live on in national memory forever, while the events of May Day at Yale receded, except for those of us who had been there and remembered what it felt like to stand on the precipice of Armageddon, and who live to remember that noble day when the privileged students at Yale took a stand against the unlawful persecution of the members of a radical black political organization because of their revolutionary beliefs.

“Call it luck. Call it brilliant planning. Call it a conspiracy between the Man and the Panther. Whatever the reason, death and destruction passed by New Haven,” Paul Bass and Doug Rae conclude in their book, Murder in the Model City. 19 (An excerpt appeared in the Yale Alumni Magazine in the July/August 2006 issue, to which I’m indebted for helping me recall the tick-tock of those intense days and months.) For many of us who witnessed this exciting time, it was the most noble moment in the history of Mother Yale.

Henry Louis Gates, Jr.
Class of ’73

2 Ibid., 117–119.
3 Ibid., 123.
4 Ibid., 126–127.
5 Ibid., 133 quoted.
6 Ibid., 136 quoted.
7 Ibid., 137.
8 Ibid., 138.
9 Ibid., 140.
10 Ibid., 142.
11 Ibid., 145–147.
12 Ibid., 149–152.
13 Ibid., 152–153.
14 Ibid., 153.
15 Ibid., 156.
16 Ibid., 156–158.
17 Ibid., 159.
18 Ibid., 160.
19 Ibid., p. 162.
May Day at Yale, 1970: Recollections

The period from the mid-1960s until the early 1970s was one of turmoil in America and on American college and university campuses. Much has been written about this period and, to a great extent, a scholar can easily find out “what happened.”

This book represents, not a “history,” but the recollections of three people, a university administrator and two talented photographers, who were present at one of the most publicized events of the period. Their recollections may help people understand and visualize not only what happened, but also how it felt to be in the turmoil.

On May 1, 1970, tens of thousands of primarily young radicals from outside New Haven, Connecticut, gathered on the historic New Haven Green to protest the trial of nine Black Panther leaders.

During this period the author of this narrative was an administrator and assistant to the Yale University president, Kingman Brewster. The two photographers were residents of greater New Haven; one a faculty member in the Yale School of Art and the other a graphic designer in New Haven.

Memories put on paper more than forty years after an event can be confused and partial. Photographs can help to bring accuracy, though even photos can mislead. We have tried to be accurate and clear, and we hope the reader will get a sense of what these days were like.

The primary goal of this book is to bring together these magnificent photographs and set them in context.

The Period of Challenging Authority

Nationally, all of this was born in the post–World War II era. In that war a great many male Americans served in the armed forces; many women did as well, while other women took on men’s jobs at home. By 1948 President Truman had integrated the armed forces. America was changing.
When the war was over, we had a new vision of America in which everyone, not just the old establishment, was supposed to be able to go to college, buy a car and a home, and live the American dream. Yet, as time went on, many Americans still felt, and in fact were, left out of this dream.

Many have attributed the unrest in this period to the Vietnam War. This was a profoundly unpopular war with a draft that impacted almost every male in the country. While the Vietnam War was a major factor in the unrest, it was merely one of a much larger set of issues that loomed over us, which I call the Period of Challenging Authority. A series of very significant things happened beginning with a book by Rachel Carson in 1962 called *Silent Spring*. This was the first popular book about the environmental damage being done to our natural eco-system – a challenge to the authority of the business/economic establishment.

The second was a book, *The Feminine Mystique*, by Betty Friedan published in 1963. This had a major impact on the beginning of the modern women’s movement and was a challenge to the authority of a male-dominated society.
The third was the assassination of President John Kennedy in 1963. Kennedy, for those of us then in our twenties, was the symbol of a new generation of young leadership. His election had been a challenge to the old political establishment.

The fourth was the assassination of Martin Luther King in April of 1968. King was, perhaps, the most significant leader of that generation, having mounted an incredibly successful, peaceful challenge to the authority of the white-dominated society.

The fifth was the assassination two months later, in June of 1968, of Robert Kennedy, President Kennedy’s brother, who was running for President. Bobby Kennedy was in some ways a blend of his brother and Martin Luther King. Bobby Kennedy was a superb politician, but he was as passionate about equal rights and the plight of the poor as any white person. While King was the most significant young leader of his time, Bobby Kennedy’s death, coming after King’s, represented to the young of the country the final burying of our hopes for a “new America.”

Finally, in 1969, there were the Stonewall Riots in Greenwich Village in which the gay and lesbian community challenged the authority of the traditional anti-gay establishment.
The first outbreak of radicalism at Yale, in 1965, was not about Vietnam or any of the issues mentioned above, but rather an active student protest after a popular philosophy professor, Richard Bernstein, was not given tenure. This was a challenge by students to the old-faculty authority of the past. The author of this text was assigned by President Brewster to take charge of daily operations at Yale in response to radicalism, whether from inside or outside the University.

Radicalism and challenges to authority were everywhere nationally. One of the leading radical movements was the Black Panther Party, a group of very intelligent, politically smart young black men and women looking to better life for those not yet inheriting the “American dream.” (It is important to mention women here, for it was in this period that women became leaders of major radical groups – long before they were in the “establishment.”) Too little is said about how much good the Panthers did. For example, they started school breakfasts for youngsters in the inner city and worked to improve education, particularly in Oakland, their home base. Some were very radical and urged the overthrow of the American government; but most were less so and had positive goals. A major leader of the Black Panthers was Bobby Seale.

The Black Panther Murder in New Haven

In May 1969 a young member of the Black Panthers, Alex Rackley, was tortured and murdered in New Haven. It was said that he was a police informer, and three other members of the Party in New Haven were charged with his murder. But the prosecutors also indicted Bobby Seale and other Panther leaders, charging that they had orchestrated the murder. Subsequently we have learned that Rackley was not an informer and that the police and FBI could have, but did not, prevent Rackley’s murder.

When it was announced in mid-March or early April of 1970 that all the defendants, including Seale, would be tried in New Haven, it became a national event. The trial was scheduled for early summer of 1970.

These are three excellent books which record, in detail, the events surrounding May Day at Yale. The first, *Mayday at Yale* by John Taft, was a senior essay written by a 1971 graduate. It is the best historical record of those events. It is out of print and only available in libraries. The second is *Letter to the Alumni* by the novelist John Hersey, a Yale graduate and master of one of Yale’s residential colleges in 1970. The third is *Murder in the Model City* by Paul Bass and Douglas W. Rae, the former a journalist in New Haven and the latter a professor in Yale’s School of Management.
**Quotas May Limit Yale Food Plans**

By CHECK CRITICISM

A disagreement has arisen between the Dining Halls and the Council of Master's over programs, particularly the inclusion of underclasses and new Yale Graduates in the College plans.

The Council of Master's has approved of a program for underclasses and new Yale Graduates, but the Dining Halls are opposed to the idea of including them in the College plans.

The Council of Master's has also proposed a program for underclasses and new Yale Graduates, but the Dining Halls have not yet approved it.

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National Guard troops in front of the Yale Daily News building
Thursday afternoon, the day before May Day.
In the legal events leading up to the trial, one day in court two Panther members were in the back of the courtroom quietly reading newspapers, while the white people were chatting aloud and reading. The judge slammed down his gavel and summarily sentenced the two black men to jail for contempt of court. This event, along with the trial itself, brought national reaction.

Even Yale’s president spoke out, saying at a faculty meeting: “In spite of my insistence on the limits of my official capacity, I personally want to say that I am appalled and ashamed that things should have come to such a pass in this country that I am skeptical of the ability of black revolutionaries to achieve a fair trial anywhere in the United States.” Everyone from the Vice President of the United States to many Yale alumni called for Brewster’s removal. Radicals, not just the Panthers but radicals of every sort, decided that they would all descend on New Haven for a rally on May 1, 1970. The radical rhetoric called for Yale to be burned down and the city destroyed. It soon became clear that we had to expect tens of thousands of radicals coming to New Haven and to Yale. And so, under Brewster’s leadership, we were tasked with figuring out what to do to keep Yale safe.

The Political Environment

On the right was Richard Nixon, who we subsequently learned had advocated for an explosion on an elite campus, hoping this would move the middle class into his political camp.

J. Edgar Hoover was head of the FBI and a conservative. He had almost unlimited power, and we subsequently learned he was being informed daily about events at Yale and that the FBI was tapping phones. The mayor of New Haven, Bartholomew Guida, did not like Yale. He saw Yale, in part correctly, as the mansion on the hill, arrogant and “above it all.” Yale, at that time, had no community relations program. Guida called in his police chief, James Ahern, and told him (as Ahern reported to the author), “If there is any rioting or danger, you are to funnel it all onto the Yale campus, and save the city.” Happily, Ahern was a close personal friend and we were able to construct some alternative plans without the mayor’s knowledge.

“... a group of students had decided to publish a free daily report of campus events in coordination with the Student Strike Committee. (Yale’s radio station, WYBC, supported the strike, but the Yale Daily News was editorially opposed to it and remained so until after May Day.) The stated purpose of the Strike Newspaper was to ‘provide a flow of information within the Yale community and from the Yale community to the outside media.’ The group established itself in Dwight Hall, where a printing press was available and where the newspaper’s staff was welcomed. The Strike Newspaper began publishing on Thursday [April 23] and issued a great deal of information in a way that encouraged the strike. Its very existence tended to give the strike a coloring of legitimacy, especially after the paper received positive support from the Council of Masters [of Yale’s residential colleges]. Before long, other prostrike organizations were also assisted by the administration.”

From Mayday at Yale (pages 74-75) by John Taft
MAY DAY

Below is a summary of recent reports on arrangements for the May Day weekend along with some summaries of recent events. A steering committee meeting last night set those plans as final. Committe members will be staffing information booths, 436-9115 throughout the weekend. Any changes in plans can be checked there.

SCHEDULE

Friday, at 10:30 a.m., a press conference in front of the Courthouse, with representatives of the Black Panther Party, the Panther Defense Committee, the Chicago Seven, from 12 to 4, rock music on the green. From 4 to 7, the rally, Abbie Hoffman, David Bellinger, Carol Brightman, Big Man, Saturday, from 10 to 12 noon, workshops in Yale buildings: Linsley Chitt, Woolsey Hall, Strathcona, and Connecticut Hall. More from 12 to 4. At 4, a rally on the Green; Artie Golec, Tom Hayden, John Proines, Jean Gerant, Ralph Abernathy, and others.

Sunday, Black Music Festival. The location will be announced.

INFORMATION CENTERS

May Day Information will be available at five constantly staffed centers: Panther Defense Committee headquarters, 1064 Chapel Street; Connecticut Hall, Room 78, The Exit, 31 and College Street; and Bread and Roses, 328 State Street. Call 60212, or see the phone numbers listings.

FIRST AID

Get: it feels like hell, but it won't really hurt you. Wash. Rinse your eyes, wash your skin. Change clothes if you can. Cover your mouth and nose with a wet mask; cover your eyes with goggles or glasses. Don't wear lenses. Don't try vaeinelle unless you can wipe it off immediately. And don't panic.


TRIAL HISTORY

On May 1, 1969, the body of Allen Beckley was found in a swamp in Middletown, Conn. The next day Warren Kimbro, Debra Huggins, Margaret Huggins, Rose Marie Smith, Jeannie Wilson, Maude Frances, Frances Carter, and George Edward were arrested in New Haven. All were charged with murder and conspiracy to commit murder. Police sources stated an informant had been the deceased at 355 Orchard St. "And had witnessed an effort to compel him to confess to being a suspected infiltrator and informant for law enforcement agencies."

May 28 Loretta Lucas was arrested on the same charges. On June 6 Lonnie Nelson was arrested in Salt Lake City, Utah, and Landon Williams and Tony Hites were arrested in Denver, Colo.

On June 23 the New Haven Superior Court held a hearing on the charges. On July 4 a New Haven Superior Court judge set bail at $20,000. On July 7, 1969, the charges were dropped.

BLITHE FULLER

COMMENT

The arrests in Baltimore yesterday could not have been better timed to inflame an already tense situation. This action undermines the efforts of everyone here for peaceful, non-violent demonstration. It is to the government's advantage for us to turn to more direct violence. The time there is a riot, Richard Nixon and Spiro Agnew gain popularity in the United States. Too much is at stake to risk a violent confrontation. A riot in New Haven would not only turn America against the Panthers, but also against Yale, students, and all who have worked so diligently to end injustice in this country.

There are thousands of well armed troops dispersed in and around New Haven; they are there for one reason -- the struggle must go on, but on our terms, or on theirs; a debate would in no way help Bobby Seale and the Panthers. Newspapers throughout the United States have played down the New Haven demonstration thus far, and few people outside of the East know very much about it. If there is a riot, everyone will know about it, but all they will know is that New Haven was wrecked by a bunch of hippies, radicals, and effete intellectuals. This will not help our cause. We must stand together and wage our efforts for a NON-VIOLENT demonstration. It is the only way.
So the dangers to Yale were not just from the radical left, but also from the Nixon-Mitchell right and even the mayor of New Haven.

**Preparation**

As May Day approached, the nation became more nervous about what might happen. The attorney general sent an assistant attorney general to camp out here and keep an eye on things. The FBI sent extra agents into town. The CIA sent people here, as they believed foreign radicals would join in.

About 4,000 national guardsmen were mobilized and a plan for their deployment was developed. Marines were sent to the Naval base in Newport, R.I., with helicopters to bring them to town if needed. More than 200 state troopers prepared to move in, and every New Haven and Yale police officer was told they would have to be on duty for at least thirty-six hours.

Two men were ultimately most responsible for “keeping the peace” on this tumultuous weekend. One was Yale’s president, Kingman Brewster. The other was the relatively young New Haven police chief, James Ahern. Ahern was one of the few police officers in the country at that time who had studied modern methods for controlling large crowds and preventing rioting.

Perhaps the most significant event was that we were able to convince the state police, the National Guard, and the Marines to allow Chief Ahern to be in command of all the forces. It was the only time in American history, before or after, when a local police chief was put in such control.

We have all thought about the great philosophical question of whether the ends justify the means. This was the first time for many of us when we knew that “lives were on the line.” In attempting to keep the peace, we did things that were not always ethical. But we did them believing that preventing deaths and major destruction were what was important.

The University decided to react to all this in a very different way than had other universities facing similar difficulties. We concluded that there was no way we could keep everyone out of the campus and, while doing so, prevent serious injury or death and damage to Yale property.

We had six weeks available to develop a strategy.

Because President Brewster and I knew that our phones were tapped (but not who was doing it) and that the radicals had convinced staff at Yale to pass internal documents to them, we decided to make very little of our strategy available to everyone, particularly in writing. Rather, we decided to roll out our plans, making some moves public only at the last minute. Brewster was a pragmatic man eager to not be restricted and be able to “duck and weave” as necessary. We consulted with deans, faculty, students, masters of residential colleges, Chief Ahern, and community radical leaders, and we would learn new and valuable ideas from everyone. Throughout the planning period and the weekend itself, Yale’s great chaplain, William Sloane Coffin, was an independent force for good.

We decided that the ends – particularly preventing death and injury – did justify means that might not always be admired. We believed we should not stand on principle alone, but that we should be quick to change our minds if someone had a better solution to a given problem. In short, we did something that is so feared today – we made compromises.
Our “strategy” had three parts

First, we wanted to prevent death and human injury, and the destruction of Yale property.

Second, we did not want to disrupt the ongoing academic process.

Third, we had learned that virtually all the radical students at Yale, most of the radicals in New Haven, and many of the national radicals were people who had serious goals for social change and were not “dangerous” people – and I include most of the Panthers in that group. But there were a relatively small number of radicals – such as the so-called Weathermen – who did not hesitate to kill and to destroy property. We did not want to “push” the moderate radicals together with the dangerous radicals.

This was a time of rhetoric. The Internet did not exist; most comment about social change came in the form of the spoken word. It was loud; the language was often obscene and it went on and on. Yet for the moderate radicals, whatever they may have said did not always reflect all of their feelings.

The moderate radicals had high ideals, and they were pushing those ideals to the edge of accepted behavior. If one does this in life, it is often helpful to have an anchor in case things go wrong – perhaps a parent or a good friend. We had learned that it was critical not to worry about the harsh rhetoric and even difficult behavior, because we wanted those radicals to see us as people always willing to listen.
Bright College Years, 1971, a 52-minute-long documentary of the Yale protests against Nixon’s bombing of Cambodia (1970) was filmed and directed by Peter Rosen who made the film while studying at Yale’s film-making program. . . He is able to illustrate what is happening quite clearly without having to use a voiceover narration, and he allows people of all persuasions to speak for themselves. This includes alumni arriving to attend a homecoming football game, student protest leaders and radical activist Abbie Hoffman. Another issue the filmmakers explore is student reaction to the arrest of Bobby Seale and other Black Panther leaders in New Haven.

From a review by Clarke Fountain, Rovi
We believed that many of the national radicals were also moderate, despite their rhetoric.

We invited all the radicals who came to town to stay in the courtyards of the residential colleges, and we fed them for two days – lettuce, rice, granola, and water. Each college had a role: one was a place for younger children to be safe; another was for the radical motorcycle groups; another was a first aid station.

Every Yale student was allowed to go home and very few did so, but rather stayed and helped.

Having set ourselves a strategy, we had to focus on the tactics we would use to achieve it.

From the early 1960s when Yale began to admit ever larger numbers of minorities, the University devoted a great deal of time to work with the minority student groups – at that time primarily the black students and the then-called “Chicano” students, now referred to as Hispanic.
Deans, masters of colleges, and senior administrators worked to
develop relationships, to encourage and assist in every aspect of the
students’ lives and, particularly, to develop first-class academic
programs related to minority groups. Provost Charles Taylor spent
an enormous amount of his time with a committee of the Black Student
Alliance at Yale (BSAY) to bring about the Black Studies major. By
doing these things, we all had developed personal relationships with
the minority students and their leadership. This investment of our
and the students’ time paid dividends during May Day weekend.
What is needed in New Haven:
A call for a People’s Assembly
to free the Panthers — NOW!

The pigs murdered Fred Hampton in his bed; they murdered Mark Clark and little Bobby Hutton; Huey is in prison and Eldridge is wounded out of the country by racist dogs. The time to stop them is NOW!

They’ve taken the New York Panther 24, the New Haven 9, the sisters and brothers in Chicago, Los Angeles, Jersey City, and everywhere that the Black Panther Party has raised the standard of Black Liberation, and thrown them into concentration camps in true Hitlerian fashion.

Now this is your chance to go all out and execute the Chairman of the Black Panther Party as a symbol of terror against the whole Black Liberation struggle from coast to coast. Millions of people have awakened with indignation, outrage and hatred for the Nazi-like atrocities and have come to realize that the hour of decision in New Haven is approaching. The time to free the Panthers is NOW!

The war of extermination against the heroic Black Panther Party by the Nixon-Agnew-Mitchell Administration is of national and international significance. It is one of the gravest concerns in the 20 million Black people and to the people everywhere who oppose racism and support the Black Liberation struggle.

Bobby Seale might have been kidnapped in any town in the U.S. for the Panthers have been framed up all across the country. The key to the decision in the struggle for the existence of the Panther Party is coming to New Haven. There can be no valid local restriction upon the struggle if it is the duty of everyone everywhere to do their utmost to see that the Panthers in New Haven are freed.

Where ceremonial demonstrations, however large, occur, there is the time and place, but, however, the burning need of the hour is to establish in New Haven a popular forum of the people which will do what is needed NOW! This PEOPLE’S ASSEMBLY will in fact represent the millions across the country who really want to see the infamous, racist framing ended. The PEOPLE’S ASSEMBLY would be so constituted as to have the broad confidence of the masses so that it can effectively counteract the conspiratorial chicanery, reverse the imperialist weapons who manufacture as the representatives of the people in New Haven but who are persecuting, in a fascist manner, true representatives of the people, such as the Black Panthers.

What is needed in order to ensure that we do not witness another precedent followed by an execution—such as the cases of Sacrist-Venezetti, the Rosenbergs, etc.—is for the movement to immediately establish in New Haven a center which would become a magnet to draw thousands upon thousands of people from all over the country. By their overwhelming presence they could exert great power and influence in New Haven to see that this outrageous framework is ended.

A broad coalition of groups firmly united on one common objective—on the willingness, determination, and ability to see that the legal lynching of the Panthers is stopped now—should constitute a PEOPLE’S ASSEMBLY. This would let the New Haven pig structure know that the people aren’t going to permit a framework. The assembly would summon the people together, deliberate upon measures to achieve the objective for

“A proposal to the movement by Youth Against War & Fascism,”
poster published at 58 West 25th Street,
New York, May 1, 1970.
Kurt Schmoke, later the mayor of Baltimore, spoke to the Yale College Faculty – the first student ever to be granted that privilege – on the importance of the issues Yale was facing as May Day approached. He was articulate and impressive. Ralph Dawson, Chair of the BSAY organized the black students in a Student Marshall corps who worked with the police, New Haven community leaders, and those of us in the administration. During the May Day weekend that BSAY group was extremely important in keeping the peace.

For the first time in Yale’s history we understood the importance of working closely with the city.

While we did not have the confidence of the mayor, the chief of police, James Ahern, was a close friend of mine and we shared views on what should be done. Ahern had been appointed a few years earlier by then-Mayor Richard C. Lee shortly before Lee’s decision to resign the office of mayor. This decision had resulted in Bartholomew Guida, the president of the Board of Aldermen, automatically succeeding to the mayor’s office. Guida kept Ahern on as Chief. Jim Ahern and I worked closely every day for weeks to keep the City’s efforts and Yale’s efforts on the same track.

Ahern was in his thirties and had been promoted over a number of more senior officers. He was not always popular with the force, but he was a firm leader. Both through ongoing education and by nature, he was a policeman who was in search of new policing methods. He was particularly interested in issues surrounding effective crowd control. He did not believe in “massive” police reaction to restless crowds. Rather, he used small groups of officers to separate out the people who were in the crowd just for “action” or looting, from the people who had genuine concerns. The former were individually taken in and removed from the crowd, while the latter were escorted and assisted in their protests. He used tear gas almost exclusively to end looting and similar activity and almost never to try to disperse a crowd of people with legitimate concerns.

Ahern had a wealth of contacts in the police world who educated us about radicals from other areas of the country who might come to New Haven. I had also cultivated contacts at other universities who shared information about radicals they had come across. My Harvard contact was Archibald Cox, a professor of law and aide to Harvard’s president during that university’s troubles. Cox became solicitor general under President Nixon and was later fired by Nixon after Cox refused to accede to Nixon’s demands during the Watergate scandal. Ahern and I used the information we gained from these contacts to separate out the violent radicals from the radicals who had earnest motivations.

President Brewster and other senior administrators spent hours and hours meeting with faculty, deans, residential college masters, and students to listen to their concerns and ideas and to explain what we were trying to accomplish. While this was time-consuming, it was an extraordinarily valuable exchange of ideas and information, keeping everyone on the same track.

Brewster worked closely with the dean of Yale College, the Dean of the Graduate School and the deans of the professional schools. It was our goal to maintain the “normal expectations” for the academic calendar. Ultimately this was an area in which we failed. As we moved closer to May Day itself, the pressures on everyone became intense.

A few students and faculty – and even an administrator or two – decided that they would leave town, fearing for their safety. Some students and faculty, as a matter of conviction, turned the classes into discussions about the issue at hand, thus leaving the normal course work undone. In the end the second semester for 1969-70 was not complete. But I would suspect that many faculty and students who were here would argue that it was truly educational.
York Street, near Elm, New Haven.
Finally, we were helped enormously by the work of Cyrus Vance, at that time a member of the Yale Corporation (board of trustees). In 1967 Vance had been a senior member of the Defense Department and was asked by President Johnson to go to Detroit to oversee Federal involvement in the riots that occurred there in July of that year. That report, “Final Report of Cyrus R. Vance, Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, Concerning the Detroit Riots, July 23 through August 7, 1967,” remains an extraordinarily valuable document. Vance came to New Haven on a number of occasions as we prepared for the weekend and played a significant role in our decision-making. We implemented a number of his recommendations in our strategy.

In part with help from Vance, the Federal and State authorities were convinced that Chief Ahern should be in charge of all the forces in the city during the May Day weekend. Thus he commanded not only the New Haven and Yale police forces, but also the state police and the National Guard and, though they were never brought in, the Marines stationed in Rhode Island. This prevented the kind of tragic event that occurred later at Kent State University.

We involved community leaders in all of our planning wherever possible. Almost all of the New Haven black community leaders were people with genuine concerns that needed to be addressed. Throughout the May Day period, while their rhetoric was harsh, their goals were positive. They worked with the police, with Yale, and with the Yale black students effectively and successfully.

We developed a communications program with a two-pronged effort. First, we kept everyone in New Haven and Yale informed about decisions as quickly as we could. We did not withhold information that might be inflammatory, but rather got it out and dealt with it as soon as possible. Second, we assembled the telephone numbers of key media people in case something happened in which the media would have an interest, and thus we could inform them rather than their “finding it out.” This was crucial when the Yale rink was bombed, for the police radio initially indicated that there were numerous injuries and a large number of ambulances were summoned. We immediately called all our media contacts and informed them that there had been no injuries at all, merely damage to the building. This prevented a “media frenzy” which might have in turn increased crowd reactions.

Finally, Brewster urged all of us to adopt his philosophy, mentioned earlier, of treating each and every person with respect when we met with them.
One of dozens of notices around Yale campus and New Haven Green.
May Day Weekend, 1970

People began to trickle in late Thursday, April 30. The major influx was during Friday, the first of May. There is no accurate estimate of the numbers, but a best guess is 20,000 to 30,000. The "visitors" seemed quite content with their housing in Yale’s residential colleges. It was warm and they slept in the courtyards, eating the healthy food and using public facilities in each college.

Yale had taken over an alumni building on Temple Street as our operation center, and it had a view of the Green but was a half-block from the Green. The building had dormitories on the top two floors where off-duty University police officers could get some sleep. These were the days before cell phones and the Internet, so the telephone was the only means of good communication (walkie-talkies could be listened in on) and we had about forty phone lines installed to different areas of the campus so we could get quick information.

The night of April 30 turned out to be the most turbulent time of the weekend. The New Haven police had skirmishes with small groups who tried to break store windows, vandalize buildings, and cause minor trouble. These groups seemed unrelated to those who had come to protest the trial. Chief Ahern handled them skillfully, using effective police work and minimal tear gas.

There were two buildings damaged during the weekend: an office space, near the court house, used by the radicals was arsened. The Yale hockey rink, which we had converted into a place for the radicals to use for a dance the night before the rally, was seriously damaged by a bomb while the radicals were in it – though happily none were hurt. It is hard to imagine that the radicals would have burned their own offices or bombed their own dance. Today we believe that this was done by associates of Attorney General Mitchell, who was so eager to have Yale fail.

The national radicals who came to New Haven met with us at 3:00 AM of May 1, the day of the rally, and we reached an agreement about who would do what and how we would keep the rally safe. Yet, in keeping with the times, the next day at the rally, President Brewster was called F------ Kingsley Brewer by radical leader who had been calling him Kingman just hours earlier in the morning.

The morning of May 1 dawned a warm, hazy day. As people moved down to the lower portion of the New Haven Green, there was an almost festive, rather than angry mood. One could see people playing the guitar, singing and dancing. Here and there an individual was giving an impassioned speech.

Behind the scenes, Chief Ahern had the National Guard between two and three blocks away from the Green and not visible from the Green. His uniformed officers moved around in groups of three or four officers, quickly stopping any untoward activity. Plainclothes New Haven and State police officers moved through the crowd, being careful not to aggravate anyone unless absolutely necessary. Tear gas was used judiciously when small groups engaged in minor vandalism, but the distant smell of it was a caution to those who might have been planning larger things.

The rally went off without a hitch; lots of rhetoric; no violence. May 2 saw a small rally of about 7,000 people and by May 3 most everyone had left town. We had not slept for a week. We all were too tired to celebrate and we are glad we did not, for a few days later four Kent State students were shot to death by National Guardsmen.

Later, Seale and the Panthers were tried and the jury was unable to reach a verdict. The prosecutors decided not to retry the case.
What Did We Learn?

University administrators found the period from the late 1960s to the early 1970s pressured, intense and, for some, educational. There were a number of presidents and their associates who just could not take the pressure and left office during, or soon after, riots on their campuses. Others were fortunate enough to make it through the period and most learned an enormous amount.

I believe there were five lessons we learned at Yale.

The first relates to President Brewster’s way of dealing with people. If you go into the Grove Street Cemetery in New Haven, you will see the following quote from a speech he gave, on the wall around Brewster’s grave: “The presumption of innocence is not just a legal term; rather it lies in the commonplace belief in the innocence of the stranger.”

Brewster genuinely believed that each person who came to see him, who challenged him or petitioned him, had value and should be seriously listened to. The most radical person could, after conversation, find common ground with Brewster. And from this common ground compromise could almost always be found. This attitude was a far cry from the old, paternalistic, authoritarian attitude held by many college and university administrators.

We found that students, in particular, were wonderful partners in keeping the peace.

Second, we learned that radical ideas are not, in and of themselves, bad. We learned to listen to them, because the radical ideas of today might well be the gospel of the future. Those who challenged authority in that period – on civil rights, on the environment, on the rights of women, on sexual orientation, and on ill-advised war – were almost always right. Their methods were harsh and unsettling, but the principles they were fighting for were valid.

Three Humorous Stories

Two or three days before May Day, we asked Vance to come to New Haven and review our logistical plans. He was most complimentary of everything, with one exception. When the telephone system was explained to him he asked for a demonstration. So someone in a distant location was asked to call in. When the phone rang at the bank of forty telephones we could not tell which one was ringing and Vance smiled. He suggested we have lights on every phone!

I had learned from Archibald Cox that two bus loads of the Weathermen planned to come to New Haven for the rally. The Weathermen were, by far, the most dangerous of the national radical groups. Over the years they had destroyed buildings and murdered innocent people.

Chief Ahern and I did not want them in New Haven. After careful planning we were able to find out the bus line they were using, convinced the bus line and the police to work with us, and then prevent the Weathermen from getting to New Haven. The two buses stopped on the Massachusetts Turnpike as though there were a mechanical failure in the lead bus. The drivers got out, removed the alternators from both buses, and were immediately picked up by an unmarked police car. The disabled buses were left on the highway and the Weathermen went into the woods, never to be seen in New Haven.

We knew that the weather prediction for May Day called for very warm weather. We also knew that there might be tear gas floating around. We had window air conditioners installed in the operations building. (These were the days before universal air conditioning.) However, we neglected to adjust each unit to recycle internal air and, as the tear gas began to flow, it came right into the building, causing tears among our crew!
Third, the most difficult role of the college or university administrator is to find the fine line between allowing dissent and maintaining the ongoing activity of the academy. The primary goal of a college or university is the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge. That one principle should not be compromised. But that pursuit and dissemination requires freedom of action, thought, and speech. While the traditional pursuit of the truth on the one hand and the radical pursuit of a new truth, on the other, will at times conflict, the administrators and faculty must find a way for both to be carried on.

Fourth, many people have asked me whether the events surrounding May Day had long-term impact on Yale. With one exception, I do not think so. Yale as an institution did not change in any dramatic way. But in one sense, I do think Yale changed and for the better. When the effort to admit large numbers of minority students began, there was some skepticism both within Yale and among the alumni ranks. For some it was innate racism; for others it was reaction to change. However, during the May Day period of intense pressure and interaction the Yale minority students’ extraordinary leadership eliminated the skepticism from most minds. For those of us who were not members of a minority group it was an awakening experience of real importance. The young men and women were as courageous, smart, and intelligent as anyone at Yale.

Finally, to accomplish an atmosphere in which these pressures can exist while the work of the institution goes on, people on all sides must learn to find compromise. To find compromise between parties who disagree there must be a modicum of respect. Kingman Brewster often said: “We must not allow disagreement to fester into disrespect.” Thus his respect for every individual, the respect for the validity of new ideas and the ability to keep that respect healthy, proved essential.

Henry “Sam” Chauncey
Memorabilia, media comments, with photographs by John T. Hill and Tom Strong

Marcus Calls for Poll on Ouster of Brewster

Hartford – State Senate Majority Leader Edward L. Marcus today charged that “the flag of anarchy seems to be the Yale mascot” as he bitterly condemned Yale University President Kingman Brewster Jr.’s recent statement on the courts.

Marcus, a Yale graduate himself and a New Haven lawyer, proposed that a “national poll of all Yale graduates and students” be taken to determine whether Brewster should be retained as president. The Democratic lawmaker made his criticism and proposal in a two page letter to Brewster.

James Mutrie, Jr., State Capitol Reporter, New Haven Register
April 27, 1970, page 1

Centerfold from May Day New Haven handout (front cover shown on page 21).

The four symbolic animals are, from left to right: bulldog, panther, alligator, and pig.
(The alligator represents the lesser-known New Haven Underground organization.)
Peaceful Weekend Planned

BY SCOTT HERNDOL

A 15,000-student faculty
committee monitoring demonstrations for May Day activities has been established, a representative of the committee said today.

The committee has been formed in response to a request from the administration of the State University of New York at Buffalo, where the demonstrations are scheduled for May Day.

The committee will consist of representatives from the faculties of the State University of New York at Buffalo, the State University of New York at Albany, and the State University of New York at Stony Brook.

The committee will meet at 10 a.m. on May 1 to discuss the demonstrations.

The meeting will be open to the public and will be televised.

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On April 30, law student Richard Balzer displays an armband to be worn by legal observers to help maintain order at the rally.

*United Press Telephoto, Photographer unknown, Courtesy of the Joe Taylor Collection*
Yale Art and Architecture Building,
corner of Chapel and York Streets.

Tom Strong
Chester Kerr, director of Yale University Press, on bicycle near the Yale Art and Architecture Building.

Tom Strong
Professor John Hersey, beside National Guard jeep, across the street from the Yale Art and Architecture Building Thursday afternoon, the day before May Day.

Gentree Ltd., York Street adjacent to the Yale Art and Architecture Building.

The text written on the plywood reads:

"Free the Panthers!"
"We demand immortality"
"The February 35th Movement"
"Freakology"
Guard Arrives to Aid Police

What seems certain to be the largest political demonstration in New Haven’s history began today on the city’s historic Green.

Organizers expect between 20,000 and 30,000 demonstrators, as well as several thousand National Guardsmen, an undisclosed number of State Police and the city’s 425-man police force. In addition, 4,000 Marines and Army paratroopers have been moved to military bases in Rhode Island and Massachusetts as a precautionary measure. They will be brought to New Haven if needed.

Despite intricate and myriad precautions to prevent violence, the city was nervous.

Francis J. Whalen, assistant city editor, and Sam Negri, staff reporter, New Haven Register
May 1, 1970, page 1

State Street near Corner of Chapel Street

While the mass of demonstrators did not notice them until last night, the National Guard surfaced in New Haven yesterday afternoon a few blocks from the Green.

Hidden in the complex of governmental buildings near the site of the demonstration were forces of the State Police as well. The Guard was deployed at 3:45 yesterday afternoon, in areas near the Green. Although no forces were within view of the demonstration, large groups of Guardsmen were stationed around the city.

Three main contingents formed the brunt of the deployed force. One group numbering about a hundred stationed itself on York Street, across from the Davenport-Pierson College area. A second large force was reportedly stationed in the vicinity of the Grove Street Cemetery. This contingent was also said to number one hundred, according to eyewitnesses. The third major Guard forces are part of the Task Force Bravo, the designation for all troops standing by in the New Haven area.

Lewis Schwartz and Thomas Kent, Yale Daily News, May 2, 1970
Broadway on May Day morning

A painted red rifle with the words “In the spirit of CHE!” referring to Che Guevara, appearing on the plywood protecting Cutler’s window.
Tom Strong

Broadway on May Day morning.

opposite: Blue Jay Cleaners, Broadway
Common Reason Must Prevail

An explosive situation is brewing in New Haven over the impending Black Panther murder trial and the times call for an immediate lowering of the heat and cooling off of passions. Outside influences have invaded the City and are weaning, cajoling and haranguing – with intemperate, spiteful rhetoric – the Yale community and the City's own high school population into acts of protest that can serve no purpose but to disrupt the City's normal life and its climate of calm and order. The threatening situation now boiling in the City must be brought to a halt. Voices of calm and reason must come forward and be heard loud and clear.

Editorial, New Haven Register, Thursday, April 23, 1970, page 16
Shoppers, Employees Staying Home
Many Downtown Businesses Forced To Close

Business today was clobbered by the Black Panther rally, as thousands of shoppers and workers avoided coming into New Haven. Many stores and offices and some factories are closed because of the fear of disorder. All stores in the Chapel Square Mall, the “showcase” of the downtown retailing area, are closed.

The Greater New Haven Chamber of Commerce had recommended that stores and other businesses remain open, but this is being widely ignored.

Walter Dudar, business editor, New Haven Register, Friday, May 1, 1970, page 45

opposite:
Liggett’s, on the northwest corner of Broadway and York.

The text written on the plywood reads:
“General Accident Insurance has cancelled our policy.”
“We’re off to the rally!” “Free the Panthers!”
Entrance to Pierson College on York Street.
The gentleman in coat, tie, hat, with cigarette, at left, is a Yale Campus policeman.

Pierson established one of the main first aid centers in its common room. The staff of doctors, medical students, and nurses treated over thirty cases, all for minor injuries. One of the earliest cases was an allergic reaction to the peanuts in the Familia.

Sam Swartz and Greg Fullerton, Yale Daily News, May 2, 1970
Entrance to Davenport College on York Street.
Hand-painted signs on a sheet that was put up before the rally.

Davenport set up a family and child day-care center, which handled about two dozen youngsters. Several undergraduates played babysitter all day with the tots, who ranged in age from a few months to six years.

Sam Swartz and Greg Fullerton, Yale Daily News, May 2, 1970
Tom Strong

Saybrook College wall, corner of Elm and Park Streets, looking south.

Tom Strong
Brewster Statement
At News Conference
Defends Skepticism

By RICHARD FUCHS

Brewster's Kennedy administration has come under increasing scrutiny in recent weeks. Despite early optimism, the administration has faced several major challenges that have raised questions about its effectiveness and legitimacy. This has led to increased skepticism among some critics, who argue that the administration is not as competent as it appears.

In response, Brewster has held a news conference to address these concerns. He has defended his administration's policies and has emphasized the need for continued reform and progress. He has also defended his administration's approach to handling the challenges it faces.

The news conference has been well-received by many critics, who believe that it has helped to dispel some of the skepticism that has been directed at the administration. However, there are still some who remain skeptical and will continue to monitor the administration's progress in the coming weeks.
Old Campus with portable toilets, before the rally.
New Haven Green, before the rally.

John T. Hill
New Haven Green, northwest corner of Temple and Elm, early afternoon, May Day.
Northwest corner of Elm and Temple, early May Day afternoon.

Among the banners carried to the rally on May Day were:

Free the Panthers
Women's Liberation
Stop Racist Attacks on Panthers
Unemploy [Kingman] Brewster
Compensate Workers
Fight Ruling Class Attacks on Black People
Killing Animals Creates Killing of Men
Smash racist ROTC
U.S. out of Trinidad and S.E. Asia
The New Haven Green across from City Hall (above and at right).

Tom Strong
Allen Ginsberg, second from the left, and
Kenneth Mills, assistant professor of philosophy at Yale, right of center.

Tom Strong
Allen Ginsberg, Jerry Rubin, and Abbie Hoffman.

John T. Hill
Yippie leader Jerry Rubin kicked off the May Day “Free Bobby Seale” demonstration with a rousing two-hour monologue that drew yells, foot-stomping, and raised fists from two-thirds of an audience of 1600 in Woolsey Hall early yesterday afternoon. Rubin, a charter member of the Chicago Conspiracy, declared that all schools were “concentration camps” and urged that “Yale University be closed down forever.” “The most oppressed people in America are white middle class youth,” he said. “Yale students are more oppressed than children in the ghetto, who are fighting for revolution. Yale students are fighting to protect only the b-------.”

He described Yale as “a racist place where they separate the rich from the poor. Yale is a criminal place because here rich white America has declared war on the black and the poor.” Rubin asserted that “a fair trial for Bobby Seale is totally impossible because the laws of this country are to protect property and therefore automatically oppress black people.” “If Bobby Seale, not Teddy Kennedy, had been driving the car that went over the bridge with Mary Jo Kopechne,” said Rubin, “he would have been lynched.”

Jeffrey Gordon, Yale Daily News, May 2, 1970

Over 20,000 Expected At May 1 Start

The Chicago Conspiracy Seven, Attorney William Kunstler, the Rev. Ralph Abernathy, and a crowd estimated by rally supporters at from 20,000 to 30,000 persons will arrive in New Haven next week for three days of demonstrations, beginning May 1, in connection with the Black Panther trial here.

The major events planned for the demonstrations are a mass rally on the New Haven Green from 4 to 8 p.m. on Friday, May 1, and a “summing-up” rally on Yale’s Old Campus Saturday afternoon, according to Peter Countryman, a spokesman for the Black Panther Defense Committee, which is co-ordinating the plan.

Stanley Fisher, Jr., staff reporter,
New Haven Register, April, 24, 1970, page 1
Although the crowd was docile at the rally which started at 4:00 p.m., May 1, the speeches it heard were not.
Four main points were repeated in the speeches:

- the necessity of freeing Bobby Seale
- the pervasiveness of the U.S. policy of imperialism and racism against both the people of Southeast Asia and the blacks in this country
- the need for continuation of the struggle against the government after this weekend until “the people finally win”
- the need for non-violence this weekend because the time was not right for violent revolution

Michael Sherman, Yale Daily News, May 2, 1970
Standing beneath flags emblematic of the “Legalize Marijuana” movement, the Chicago Conspiracy Eight, minus one, opened the May Day rally with speeches before a crowd of newsmen and demonstrators elbow-to-elbow in the Center Church on the Green today.

Phrased in revolutionary rhetoric, the Conspiracy announced an enduring commitment to work for the freedom of Black Panther Bobby Seale and other Panthers through non-violent means, a commitment which begins actively today.

Jerry Rubin was born in 1938. He dropped out of Berkeley and joined the left-wing radical movement, opposing the Vietnam war, supporting black movements and the legalization of marijuana. He joined the “Yippie” movement and was the foremost advocate, among radicals, of using modern communication methods to promote radical causes. He appeared before the House Un-American Activities Committee of the Congress dressed as an American Revolutionary radical!

Lights from still and television cameras flashed on Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin, John Froines, David Dellinger, Rene Davis, Thomas Hayden and Peter Weiner of the Conspiracy Eight and David Hilliard and Elbert “Big Man” Howard of the Black Panther party as they addressed the throng.

Froines opened the conference by introducing the speakers and asserting that the “Conspiracy will come back here again and again until all nine (Panthers being held for trial here) are free.”
Jerry Rubin, dressed in red pants and a multi-colored “tie-dyed” shirt with the “Legalize Marijuana” flag hung cape-like from his shoulders, opened the conference by announcing that one reason for coming to New Haven was to “destroy the concept of the Conspiracy Seven,” declaring that they should be called the Conspiracy Eight to include Bobby Seale. “Just because that racist Judge (Julius) Hoffman has put him in jail doesn’t mean that Bobby Seale isn’t part of the Conspiracy. Anyone who calls us the Conspiracy Seven is a racist.”

Rubin promised that the Conspiracy is not “going to rest, to sleep until Seale is free” and asserted that the police raid on Black Panther headquarters in Baltimore, Md. Thursday is “an attack on all of us.”

Speaking next, “Big Man” also referred to the reported raid, charging that police have made this town an armed camp, and in Baltimore they moved to establish another conspiracy and murder. He claimed that search warrants “give the pigs the right to kick down the doors of our offices and our homes … in attempts by pigs to annihilate our leadership and the entire Black Panther party.”
“Abbie” Hoffman was born in 1936 and was a co-founder of the Youth International Party, or the “Yippies.” He participated with many of the radical leaders, including Seale, Hayden, Hoffman, and Rubin, in the violent protests of the 1968 Democratic National Convention.
Tom Hayden, born in 1939, was arguably the most important radical leader of this period. He was a “freedom rider” in the south; president of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS); drafted the Port Huron manifesto, which rejected bureaucracy and authority; violated the law by going to North Vietnam during that war; and took his radicalism into politics as a member of the California State legislature. He has been called “father to the largest mass protests in American history.”
Born in 1910, Jean Genet started life as a vagrant and petty criminal, but was best known as playwright, poet, and essayist. His works were provocative and challenging. In the late 1960s he became active in politics in France, the U.S., and the Middle East. The Black Panthers invited him to the U.S. in 1970. He was an intellectual leader of the radical movement worldwide.

Elbert Howard, "Big Man," served as translator for Jean Genet. He was also a key figure in the Panther organization.
Kenneth Mills, assistant professor of philosophy at Yale.
“Artie” Seale, the first wife of Bobby Seale, and Michael Tabor.

John T. Hill
“Artie” Seale was a strong member of the Black Panther Party. She actively supported her husband and maintained a full-time job at the same time. Her income provided funds for much of the beginning of that movement, including their first guns for defense. She is said to be writing a book about these experiences.

John T. Hill
Peace in the Air

Just prior to the start of Saturday's rally, a sky writer left a peace sign over New Haven Green. Tweed New Haven Airport had no record of this flight. The tower controller reported the incident to the New York control center.

New Haven Register
May 2, 1970, page 9
His Own Crusade

It was essentially a rally in support of the Black Panthers, but other causes were represented. This man seems to be crusading for a universal vegetarian diet.

New Haven Register

John T. Hill
Richard Balzer, Yale law student. According to FBI records Balzer was the official photographer for the Black Panther Party.

*John T. Hill*

Paul Helmle, Yale architecture faculty.

*Tom Strong*
National Guard on Elm Street near corner of Church Street.
New Haven police chief, James Ahern.

Fire gutted the New Politics building, corner of Elm and Church, Saturday night.

Photographer unknown, Courtesy of the Joe Taylor Collection
**Evening Outbursts Follow Peaceful Rally**

Demonstrators, Police Engage In Skirmishes On Tear Gassed Green

By Tom Warren

Confrontations between black Panthers and police erupted late last night as police attempted to prevent a group of demonstrators from entering the campus for the first time. The police reported that 17 demonstrators were arrested during the confrontation.

The police dispersed the crowd earlier in the evening in an attempt to restore the area, but an estimated 200 demonstrators persisted. The demonstrations continued throughout the night.

The police reported that several arrests were made and tear gas was used to disperse the crowd.

By Michael Sherman

Quiet Afternoon

Rally Hits Racism

Other speakers at the rally included David Hilliard, a journalist at the New York Times, and Professor of Philosophy at York University, and Alix, an assistant professor of philosophy at Yale. The Rally Comics, a group of students, also spoke at the rally.

The rally continued through the afternoon and evening, with speakers addressing issues of police brutality and systemic racism.

By Stuart Rose

Black Areas Stay Cool, Expect Continued Peace

The National Guard was called to the scene last night to disperse the crowd. The Guard withdrew from the area last night.

The National Guard was called to the scene last night to disperse the crowd. The Guard withdrew from the area last night.

Assistant Professor of Philosophy Kenneth Mills addressed the crowd at approximately 18:00 on the Yale Strike, telling the gathering that the society of black people on the Yale campus is facing a crisis.

Mills, a leader of the rally, said: "We are facing a crisis in this society. You must understand that the crisis is not just black people. It is a crisis for all of us."

Mills added that the crisis is not just economic but also political.

Mills went on to say that the black people on the Yale campus are facing a crisis that is not just economic but also political.

The rally began with a speech by the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who spoke about the importance of unity and the need for black people to stand together in the face of adversity.

King said: "We must stand together. We must not surrender to the forces of racism and oppression."

The rally was attended by hundreds of black students and supporters, who expressed their solidarity with the black people on the Yale campus.

The rally ended with a call to action, with speakers calling for the black community to come together and fight for their rights.

The rally was a powerful demonstration of the solidarity of the black community and the determination to fight against racism and oppression.

EVENING OUTBURSTS FOLLOW PEACEFUL RALLY
Cover and lead articles
designed by
Hiram N. Ash
MFA, Graphic Design
Yale Art and Architecture, 1960

Photography unknown,
courtesy of the Joe Taylor Collection
Polara

Those notes, the chords, that melody...
It's Bacharach...
I travel to childhood,
I've landed in the back of the "Polara"
I crank down the window...
The sky is bluer than I realized,
I see the familiar heads in the front seat,
Yes they lead the way, Mom, Dad...
Traveling through the sixties with their kids,
I know I'm being sheltered...
I hear the sounds of Vietnam...
Dr. King? Why? Who did that?
Robert Kennedy? He was John's brother...
"Where we goin' Ma?"
"Uncle Al's for a few days"
"Why Ma? Why can't we stay home?"
"They say there may be riots,"
"What is riots Ma, what are they?"
"People are unhappy, they want everyone to know."
"Hey Dad, think we can swim in Uncle Al's pool?"
"Don't you always Joey?"
"Yeh, guess I do ... you mean it's ok to have fun during the riots?"
"Sure it won't change things ..."
"OK Dad ... what do you think will change things ...?"

Joseph James

Like many New Haven families,
the parents of this ten-year-old poet-to-be collected their young and left to visit friends—
away from the chaos that was expected for
May Day.

This is a another firsthand recollection.
Acknowledgments

This complex and worthy project could only have been taken on with the passion and dedication of a multitude. Some were unborn in 1970 and for a few, it is vivid still. For all, it seemed not a job, but a meaningful work that deserved their best efforts.


We thank Walker Drew Strong for the discovery and selection of articles in the New Haven Register from April 1970.

George W. Edwards was our trusted consultant regarding Black Panther Party history.

Joe Taylor contributed key images from his trove of historical New Haven ephemera.

David Wilk, Yale 1972, offered his editing, production, and publishing skills. He was standing on the Green, May 1, 1970.

Copy editing and fact checking were done by Judith Schiff, John Wilkinson, David Baker, and Steve Wasserman.

The initial book design was produced by Margaret Watkins and Laszlo Feher. In a benign daylight heist J.T. Hill took their design and made changes with the counsel and consent of its originators. Separations were produced by Hill.

The final book reflects their collective efforts.

Unless noted, all printed ephemera is from the collection of Tom Strong.
Henry Louis Gates, Jr., known as “Skip,” was born in 1950. He graduated from Yale University in 1973. Emmy Award-winning filmmaker, literary scholar, journalist, cultural critic, and institution builder, Professor Gates has authored seventeen books and created fourteen documentary films and film series. The recipient of fifty-three honorary degrees and numerous prizes, Professor Gates was a member of the first class awarded “genius grants” by the MacArthur Foundation in 1981, and in 1998, he became the first African American scholar to be awarded the National Humanities Medal. The founding director of the Hutchins Center for African & African American Research and the Alphonse Fletcher University Professor at Harvard University, he resides in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Thomas Strong was born in 1938 in Hanover, New Hampshire. He was graduated from Dartmouth College in 1960. From 1960 to 1963 he served with the U.S. Army Security Agency in Europe and in Turkey. In 1971, he was graduated from the Yale School of Art and Architecture, with a degree in graphic design. Walker Evans was his principle instructor in photography. Since 1968 he and Marjorie C. Gordon have directed the design firm Strong Cohen on Chapel Street in New Haven.

Henry Chauncey, Jr., known as “Sam,” was born in 1935. He graduated from Yale College in 1957. He worked in various administrative capacities at Yale from 1957 to 1982. He then was founding CEO of Science Park Development Corporation in New Haven; subsequently President and CEO of Gaylord Hospital in Wallingford, Connecticut, and finally Lecturer and Head of the Health Management Program in the Yale School of Public Health. He is retired and resides in New Haven.

John T. Hill was born in 1934. In 1955, he received a BFA; in 1956, an MFA, both from the University of Georgia. After two years in the U.S. Infantry he came to the Yale School of Art and Architecture, receiving a MFA in graphic design 1960. He taught there for 19 years, becoming its first director of graduate studies in photography. In 1975, on the death of his friend Walker Evans, he became executor of that estate. On leaving Yale, he has designed and authored various books and exhibitions.
May Day at Yale, 1970: Recollections

The Trial of Bobby Seale and the Black Panthers


May Day at Yale, 1970: Recollections

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The authors are extraordinarily grateful to Henry Louis Gates, Jr., for adding his thoughts on this weekend in the introduction, for he was a student at Yale at the time. His comments add another important perspective on how it felt to be present.

Henry Louis Gates, Jr., known as “Skip,” was born in 1950. He graduated from Yale University in 1973. Emmy Award-winning filmmaker, literary scholar, journalist, cultural critic, and institution builder, Professor Gates has authored seventeen books and created fourteen documentary films and film series. The recipient of fifty-three honorary degrees and numerous prizes, Professor Gates was a member of the first class awarded “genius grants” by the MacArthur Foundation in 1981, and in 1998 he became one of the two African American scholars to be awarded the National Humanities Medal. The founding director of the Hutchins Center for African & African American Research and the Alphonse Fletcher University Professor at Harvard University, he resides in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Campus on the weekend of May Day 1970 is a story of people with very different perspectives working together. The pictures and the text try to present how ominous the threat of this invasion seemed while those involved tried to find a peaceful solution. This is a book with a story that has a happy ending. At a time when American colleges and radical movements were clashing, and there were arrests, bloodied heads, buildings burned, and in at least one case students’ deaths. The story of the radical invasion of New Haven, Connecticut and the Yale University campus on the weekend of May Day 1970 is a story of people with very different perspectives working together to find a peaceful solution. It is a story to provide us with a reminder of the history we created while there worked together to find a peaceful solution.