

Module 09: The 1960s: Who Won? Student Protest and the Politics of Campus Dissent

Evidence 12: Steve MacGregor, "Crowd of dissenters rallies in Wash. D.C.," May 1970

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Introduction

Like the previous guest editorial, the article below from *The Collegiate Times* celebrates the activist response to the U.S. invasion of Cambodia and the killing of student protesters at Kent State. Steve MacGregor's writing style gives readers today a sense of the free-for-all countercultural environment that encouraged experimentation with unconventional forms of expression. MacGregor was clearly excited about traveling to Washington, D.C., to partake in the enormous May 11 protest against the war, a gathering where committed activists and outspoken young radicals took center stage. Yet a careful read of his account— particularly of his references to VPI in the second paragraph and at the end of the selection — reveals how anomalous his D.C. experience actually was.

Questions to Consider

- Why did MacGregor complain about his fellow students at VPI? What did he critique them for?
- What does his article suggest about the campus climate?

Document

Crowd of dissenters rallies in Wash. D.C.

Gotta go to D.C...: Big rally...howcum nobody's got any room?... What's wrong with you guys?...11:30 Friday night and I still can't get a ride... Joe, can you go?... you can? WOW!... leave at 12... Man, we got a long way to go... I've got a map and we can stay at my roommate's house. Look at all of the people sleeping...WOW...There's a fire, let's go over and see what's going on...Hi people, what's going on?

Yeah, we just got in...Va Tech...No man, we havn't shut down yet and I don't think that we will...Bunch of apathetic so and so's down there...You

from Kent State?...Sorry about what happened... Hope we can stop it from happening again... Where you from?...Ohio State, Cornell, U.Va., Berkley, Kansas State, Princeton...Nice to see you guys down here... Let's split guys...O.K.... walk around monument... Look at the people... Hey, this isn't 100,000 people.... Something is wrong...Hey Steve, I'm beat, let's go back to Bob's and go to sleep...O.K...Head back down 95 to Alexandria....Hey there's one, no two convoys of National Guard..."Remember Kent State, you murderers!"...Ah, there's Bob's house...Still early...6: +30... Oh well...Here comes his father... "No sir, we're not outside agitators, we're friends of Bob" ... Other three go in basement and go to sleep... can't go to sleep... Drink coffee, wash Bob's car... Read newspaper... What to do if you get arrested, get gassed, pass out, get food poisoning, everything... Hope that none of this happens... Got to be a peaceful demonstration...

What time shall we leave...Starts at 12:00... Guess we better get there early... Leave about 10:00... No problem getting back to D.C... Not too many cars... Park behind Smithsonian... Plenty of room... Where are all of the people?...Walk down Mall towards Monument...A few more people, but not enough... Plenty of button sellers and Coke dealers... WHERE IS EVERYBODY?...Walk up Monument grounds and look over hill to white house...There they are...Wow!...Look at all of those people... They're all over the place... Let's go down there... Boy, It's getting hot.. Can't take my shirt off... Has more lenses and film... Start looking at the people... I've never seen so many in my life... Everybody says HI... Start taking pictures... Should have bought more film... Gaekscraggle... Look at those speakers... Must be a fantastic sound system... Try to find a seat... Still can't believe all of the people and they're still coming... Finally get a seat...HOT!...Listen to announcements from the Medics..."Cover your Head"... "Take salt pills"... "Drink water"... "Let the Medics through"...Where are the speakers...They can't get through the crowd...There they are!... Too hot...Gotta move...Look at all of the people!...Watch the people in the fountains...Liberate the water!...Some girl liberates her blouse...NO BRA!...Women's Lib...None of the girls have any bras...Look at all of the weird people..."Getcha free copy of this or that"...Give some money to the Black Panthers, MOBE, Women's Lib, SDS...Everybody wants money...Still walking...Gotta get some breeze...Here comes a college delegation with a big banner...Everybody cheers...Here comes U.Va....Standing ovation...Where's Va Tech?...Lousy COWCOLLEGE...nobody cares...

Source:

Steve MacGregor, "Crowd of dissenters rallies in Wash. D.C.," *The Collegiate Times* (13 May 1970), 3.