

IT TAKES A RHETORICAL VILLAGE: RECONSTRUCTING THE PENN STATE STUDENT PROTESTS OF APRIL 2001

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“[Penn State] is a white academy in a white town—in a white country and by God it’s going to stay that way” (Weininger, “Black Student Leader”). This statement appeared in April of 2001 in an anonymous letter delivered to a reporter for the *Daily Collegian*, Penn State’s student newspaper. Of greater concern, the letter also contained a chillingly specific death threat directed at LaKeisha Wolf, who was then the president of Penn State’s Black Caucus, and a claim that the author had already murdered a black man and placed his body in a wooded area near the campus (Weininger, “Autopsy Reveals”).

This letter, and the threat it presented, sparked a period of student activism at Penn State’s main campus that took place over the course of eleven days, from April 21 to May 1. Protesters sought to use their actions and statements—and the media covering them—to force the university to act on their proposals for addressing the threat by mitigating the problem of race relations on campus. These protests, collectively named “The Village” by those involved, represented a rhetorical struggle between university administrators and the Black Caucus for influence in shaping university policy, a struggle in which the Black Caucus was able to achieve most of its goals.

My analysis reconstructs the events of The Village from a rhetorical perspective, utilizing two theories to support the argument: (1) rhetorical ecology; and (2) the importance of ritualized behavior and nonverbal rhetoric. I argue that the success of the student protesters can best be understood in light of these theories. The Village protests unfolded in three distinct phases, each set off by a catalytic event: the Blue-White spring football game, the “unity march” planned by the administration in response to the death threat, and the failed negotiations between administrators and Caucus members in the student union.

My analysis of these protests is informed by reports of the events in the *Daily Collegian*, Penn State University’s independent student newspaper. It would be impossible to claim with any certainty that this is an absolutely accurate account of what was said and done. It is, however, a compilation of several authors’ work over several days in that paper, and one article never contradicts the account of another. This consistency is an indicator, although not a guarantee, that the reporting is at least an acceptable representation of actual events. Furthermore, several national newspapers published accounts of the events that are also consistent with those described here (see Fletcher; Marks; Schemo). The advantage of the reports from the *Daily Collegian*, however, is that they are detailed, day-by-day accounts rather than the broad summaries from the national sources.¹

Rhetorical Ecology and Ritualized Behavior

Jenny Edbauer's conception of a "rhetorical ecology" provides the framework within which the complexity of the rhetoric of these protests can be adequately addressed. In this ecology, the traditional elements of the rhetorical situation—audience, exigence, rhetor, constraints, etc.—operate in concert with one another and with the time, place, and culture in which they occur. Edbauer seeks to incorporate the factors that influence rhetoric into a more complete and fluid picture of events that takes into account their history, movement, and social distribution. As she explains it, "Rhetorical situation is better conceptualized as a mixture of processes and encounters; it should become a verb, rather than a fixed noun" (13). Using this model, rhetorical analysis should take into account a broad range of factors that all definitively influence the way rhetoric ultimately develops, including aspects that, on the surface, might not seem directly related to the rhetoric itself. Rhetoric does not merely occur: any number of seen and unseen hands actively create it.

Edbauer develops the metaphor of a virus: rhetoric is infected by its surrounding context, exposed to the circumstances and exigencies from which it was created, and in turn infects the audience and develops a new and unique form; "a rhetoric emerges already infected by the viral intensities that are circulating in the social field" (14). Such a conception is particularly important for analyzing public rhetoric, since so many elements of the situation are uncontrollable and cannot be anticipated by a rhetor in advance. Because The Village protests took place in a number of settings with several very different audiences over a period of almost two weeks, the rhetorical elements were shifting throughout the process. Each of these elements had an indelible influence on the shape the rhetoric ultimately took, even as the rhetoric itself shaped them. In Edbauer's terms, the changing settings, audiences, and exigencies infected the protest rhetoric, and the rhetoric of the protester infects each of these elements.

The second theoretical cornerstone of my analysis addresses the importance of nonverbal rhetoric. Because so much of the rhetorical strategy of the protesters focused on actions rather than words, a theory that can account for the impact of nonverbal rhetoric is needed. Xiaoye You presents a reading of the Confucian *Analects* that addresses this concern. You argues that Confucian rhetoric focuses on the existence of ritualized behaviors in everyday life, and the expectation that those rituals will be carried out. There is great rhetorical power in ritualized acts, according to You's reading, and developing ritualized behaviors in oneself and in others was Confucius's preferred method of gradual, but dramatic, social change. Developing and carrying out rituals is a rhetorical action in the sense that it creates an environment in which those who participate in the ritual are accepted members of a community, and affirm their membership each time the ritual action is performed. Deviations from the accepted ritual behavior are met with resistance, and community members expect those around them to reciprocate the behaviors.

A consequence of this inclusive power of ritualized behavior, however, is that *not* performing an expected ritual can become a deliberately rhetorical action that seizes the attention of the audience and sends a distinct message. In an American context, for instance, when two people meet for the first time, there is an expectation that when one will extend his or her hand, the other will reciprocate, and the two will shake hands. This action is by no means natural, nor is it universal, but it is ritualized in this culture to the point that it is expected. One who refuses to shake hands, however, is sending a rhetorical message, perhaps of disdain or unwelcome. This second facet of ritualized behavior, the power of disrupting an audience's expected ritual, also played a crucial role in the development of The Village protests.

Phase 1: Black and Blue-White

The first phase of the protests occurred on April 21, 2001, when twenty-six students marched onto the field of Beaver Stadium before the annual Blue-White spring football game. Penn State has a tradition of strong football culture that affects nearly all aspects of campus life. More than 20,000 people attend the annual spring football game, and actual games in the fall consistently attract more than 100,000 fans, including 20,000 students. "The students ran to the 50-yard line at the end of the national anthem, locked arms and huddled on the ground," simply waiting to be removed by the police (Gorney and Miller). The police led the protesters to vans outside the stadium, where more than thirty people had gathered in support of the protesters. The students were protesting what they perceived as an inadequate administrative response to the threatening letter. As one of the protesters explained, "This is a protest against death threats and the university's cover-up of them. . . . The university is not doing anything" (Gorney and Miller).

This first action of the student activists in what became a long struggle with the administration shows a clear understanding of effective rhetoric. At a university with such a strong football culture, a group seeking to gain the attention of the university community could hardly have chosen a more effective venue than the spring football game. "Without this demonstration today, all students would be blind to the fact that students' lives are in imminent danger," said Black Caucus Vice President Sharleen Morris of the protest, illustrating the rhetorical intent of the action (Gorney et al.). This was an early illustration of the importance of incorporating a wider social context into rhetorical analysis to create a fluid ecology.

This first protest was also a demonstration of the significance of interrupting ritualized behavior: the Blue-White game is an annual tradition that has become imprinted on the collective consciousness of the Penn State community. By disrupting that ritual, the Black Caucus put itself in a position to maximize the impact of its rhetoric by garnering not only a large audience, but also an audience that would be shocked by the interruption of its yearly ritual. It is important to note that this action also demonstrates the danger of upsetting beloved rituals. The Caucus could have potentially alienated the entire campus community from their cause by

delaying or preventing the occurrence of the Blue-White game. The only thing that could have combated such an uproar would have been if they were able to infuse their rhetoric with sufficient *pathos*, given that they believed Ms. Wolf's life was at stake, to justify their action. And members of the Caucus clearly attempted to maximize that aspect of their action, as evidenced by one protester's comment: "The bottom line is that black people are receiving death threats and no one cares" (Gorney and Miller). Additionally, the form of the rhetorical action was important. The protesters wanted to create enough of a disruption to raise awareness of a wrong they believed was being ignored, but not so much of a disruption as to irreversibly turn their audience against them. For this reason, the students protested before the game began and created only a brief disruption.

The wider rhetorical ecology of the event also suggests the effectiveness of this particular action on this particular day. Because of the popularity of the Blue-White game, the group assured themselves of wide media coverage. Further, because every news account would also include the motive for the students' action, they could reasonably expect that the negative publicity of a racist death threat on the Penn State campus would force the university administration to at least respond to their calls for action. This first action also immediately had an impact on other people who had no direct connection to the Black Caucus. The supporters around the police vehicles as the protesters were arrested were an example of the kind of viral effect that effective rhetoric can have. They had been infected by the rhetoric of the Black Caucus members and the form of their rhetoric, "chant[ing] and rais[ing] their fists in support as each student was taken from the stadium police barracks" (Gorney et al.).

Shortly after the incident, Steve MacCarthy, a university spokesperson, explained that, while the university disapproved of the students' actions, it took their concerns seriously. The university was trying to "promote an attitude of unity and cooperation," he said, and had planned a "unity march" to highlight that attitude for April 24 (Gorney et al.). In my interpretation of this first response, the rhetorical goals of the university administrators are also clear: they hoped to convey empathy for the concerns of the students while assuring the public that the actions of the university were already sufficient to address the problem.

A second spokesperson for the university, Bill Mahon, highlighted this strategy: "There is not a day that goes by that people aren't looking into the issues that the world faces and that are in the microcosm at Penn State" (Gorney et al.). In my analysis, Mahon's statement seems sufficiently vague, in that it avoids repeating the claim of the Black Caucus members that they were being specifically targeted, but is also sufficiently sympathetic to general concerns of social injustice so as to avoid sounding apathetic. This is important because the administration also seemed to want to counter the claim of black students that they had more at stake and thus required special attention. To this end, Mahon explained that "the [unity] march is to show that this kind of attack, even though it was on a particular individual, is considered an attack on the whole Penn State community" (Henning). Here, the subtle rhetorical action is to undermine the

protesters' *ethos*, their authority to demand action from the administration, which the students had claimed for themselves in the wake of the death threats. If the attack was on the "whole Penn State community," then no segment of that community had any authority to demand that the administration respond to their specific concerns. The march, an event well organized through accepted channels, was the rhetorical response to the sudden and unlawful actions of the student protesters. The university may have been attempting to show that its response, institutional and measured, was more acceptable and more effective than the "rash" response of the protesters. Using the framework of ritualized behavior, the university was appealing to the desire of the community to return to the expected customs and rituals of administration response and student acceptance.

Returning to the broader ecology of this rhetoric, it appears that the administration was addressing those members of the audience who were sympathetic to the concerns of the protesters, but disapproved of their disruptive behavior. One of the most interesting insights from Edbauer's theory is the importance it places on "counter-rhetoric," since rhetoric in response inevitably adds some *ethos* to the original claim (20). Simply by responding to the protesters, however measured that response may have been, the administration was effectively conceding that their actions merited a reply. Here, a response may have been necessary in order to stop the virus of the students' rhetoric from spreading to a greater portion of the audience than had already been infected. The administration did not have to worry about the segment of the audience that disdained both the students' message and their actions, so its counter-rhetoric was not tailored for it. Equally, the audience members who were already convinced that the administration had not responded sufficiently would be deaf to its claims to the contrary. But by speaking to those in the audience who were hesitantly engaged with the protest, and trying to prevent them from developing a full-fledged association with the students, the administration carefully quarantined the spread of the activist rhetoric.

On Sunday evening following the protest at the stadium, members of the Black Caucus organized an event to present their concerns, and their demands, to the Penn State community in a controlled setting. The impact of their first action was already clear, and the rhetorical infection was spreading: more than four hundred people packed the meeting room to show their support for the Black Caucus. The goal of this meeting was to use the *ethos* and *pathos* of the death threat to demand larger changes in the university. The Caucus wanted to continue to shift the audience's perception of the opponent from the one person who wrote the letter to the administration, which, in the estimation of the Caucus, did not do enough to prevent such actions. Chentis Pettigrew, a member of the Caucus, makes this strategy abundantly clear: "We have to understand that it's not about one hateful person at all, but about the system in which we live that breeds this hateful mentality" (Lang and Weininger).

In order to continue to develop their argument, the activists also needed to present their demands as essential, given the facts of the situation, rather than dependent on their emotional perceptions of it—in other words, they needed to show the argument’s *logos* appeal. Members of the Caucus addressed this cornerstone of effective rhetoric when they delivered a presentation entitled “Failing the Black Community,” in which they outlined their understanding of the problems with the racial climate at Penn State point by point. The presentation highlighted the fact that more than one hundred black students had received racist threats over the last three years at Penn State. The presenters claimed that the university, with knowledge of these threats, had done too little to prevent them and as such was at least in part responsible for the more specific threat received by LaKeisha Wolf.

In an attempt to turn the focus of their supporters from the imminent threat of the notes to their perception of the larger problem, protesters claimed that “most Big Ten Universities have larger African and African American Studies (AAAS) Programs. Penn State has three core faculty members and 15 affiliates, while Michigan State University, for example, has more than 75 core faculty members and 38 affiliates” (Lang and Weininger). This shift is crucial, because from this point the motivation for the Black Caucus’s rhetoric became persuading the administration to enhance its commitment to diversity at Penn State.

The protesters made this demand in an attempt to mitigate what they perceived as a hostile racial climate on campus. Because the Caucus had argued that the problem was not merely one act of racial hatred but rather an environment that they believed fostered such behavior, its members reasoned that the appropriate response would address that environment. They wanted the university not only to provide protection for Ms. Wolf and other black students in light of the threat, but more importantly to improve the climate of race relations in which it had occurred by more actively enhancing and embracing diversity. Whether or not this is a valid demand in the wake of a death threat is not the concern of this analysis. The important fact is that, by drawing a connection between imminent danger and an academic department they believed to be underfunded, the students had moved to establish the *ethos* behind their demands for the university to act in this particular way.

The rhetoric of the Black Caucus was also shaped by the university’s plan for a unity march. The students’ response was indicative of the struggle to come: members were upset that they had not been involved in the planning of the event and claimed that it was another example of attempting to cover up the problem without truly addressing it. Calling the march “insulting” because the university had not consulted the Black Caucus in its efforts to combat racism, member Joseph Dawkins said, “The university only seems to come up with feel-good ideas,” not concrete plans for improvement (Gorney et al.). In my view, by planning its own event and by obtaining the support of more than twenty student organizations other than the Caucus, the administration had moved to take back the initiative and regain control of the situation. It moved

to contain the spread of the virus by incorporating the university community in a ritual that subtly undermined the Black Caucus' claim of unique authority.

Such careful scripting on the university's part would ensure that the message it sought to convey would be able to reach as many members of the audience as possible. The unity march, as planned, would have been an excellent example of good rhetoric from the university's standpoint: press coverage of the event would have been positive, and the administration would have been portrayed as responding to the problem affirmatively and inclusively. But because such an account did not foster the perception of the situation that the Black Caucus wanted to disseminate, it was in the Caucus's rhetorical interest to prevent the university from managing the public response to the threat and the corresponding media coverage. Caucus members had to counter with rhetoric that underscored their claim that the university was ignoring their pleas for help at a time of great danger.

Phase 2: Dis-Unity March

With this strategy mind, the Black Caucus took very effective rhetorical action when it usurped control of the administration's march. Here, You's reading of Confucian rhetoric again plays a crucial role in the analysis. Because a large number of people had gathered for the event, expecting a presentation of the university's response to be given by Penn State President Graham Spanier, they were in a position to be shocked, and as such to be a more attentive audience, by an alternative message. The student activists had exactly such a message in mind. Using a bullhorn to counter the officially organized microphone, members of the Black Caucus declared, "We claim this march for the students. This is not an isolated problem; this is a structural and administrative problem" (Cooke and Khadr). By portraying the march as an instrument of a disingenuous administration, and their takeover as in the interest of the students, the Black Caucus members attempted to weaken the administration's position. They also sought to involve the gathered audience in their action, to spread their rhetoric to encompass as many in the crowd as would embrace it. This was a critical move, because if the audience had refused to recognize their presence—or worse yet, had responded harshly to their disruption of the expected event—their rhetoric would have been irreparably undermined: no rhetoric can be effective without a receptive audience.

When Spanier began to read his prepared speech, a speech that highlighted the actions of the university to combat hate at Penn State, protesters shouted over him with chants of "We want a dialogue," "Rhetoric," and "Continuance of the disrespect" (Cooke and Khadr). Each of these claims goes directly to the strategy of the Caucus: to gain a greater role in decision making by undermining the current efforts of the administration. The Caucus demanded a meeting with Spanier to discuss its demands for the response to the death threats. In the tense atmosphere, Spanier pressed on and finished his speech in an attempt to show that he would not dignify the protesters by responding to them, another nod to the importance of counter-rhetoric. When

Spanier concluded his remarks, however, he introduced another speaker, who was willing to recognize the protesters. At their continued yelling, he relinquished the microphone to LaKeisha Wolf, an action that, in my view, effectively ceded the march to the protesters.

When Spanier began to leave the usurped rally, Wolf spoke into the microphone: “President Spanier, you’re walking away from me right now. My life is threatened, and you are walking away from me” (Cooke and Khadr). With this remark, Wolf sought to highlight the imminent danger that she faced, augmenting the *pathos* of her argument and, by extension, her own *ethos* to speak. She also furthered the strategy of portraying the administration as unresponsive and unsympathetic, and ensured that the university would be concerned about the negative publicity it would receive. The image of the university president walking away from a frightened and weeping student, however unfair to the administration such a representation of the event is, was one that resonated with the audience and would be damaging to the administration’s *ethos*. After some of the other speakers encouraged the group to meet with Spanier away from the tension of the march in the HUB-Robeson Center, Penn State’s student union building, Assata Richards, a Caucus member, took the microphone and addressed the crowd. “‘This is a game of divide and conquer and we’re not going to play that game,’ Richards said. She asked, ‘Should we move or should we stay?’ The crowd responded, ‘Stay!’” (Cooke and Khadr). These two moments were critical, as the crowd officially announced its support for the Caucus members, and Spanier was left on the outside of the growing movement. The virus of the students’ rhetoric had now spread to the majority of an audience that had originally assembled in support of the administration’s unity march, but which now vocally supported the students in their struggle with the administration.

But Spanier, apparently not ready to concede rhetorical victory, waited outside the HUB while the usurped rally continued a few hundred feet away. He refused to be pressured into returning to the rally, attempting to reaffirm his authority over the situation. The stalemate ensued for several hours, and the crowd, which had numbered a few thousand, dwindled to several hundred (Cooke and Khadr). The fact that several hundred people were willing to stand outside for several hours and show their support for the Caucus is evidence of how pervasively their rhetorical virus had spread. Finally, the Caucus organized a small group to go to the HUB and meet with Spanier. Importantly, the majority of the students who had remained followed the group to the HUB, packing it and awaiting the outcome of the meeting.

The true testament to the effectiveness of this rhetoric is that the university administration, including the president, met with Black Caucus members for several hours that evening. After the meeting ended, Steve MacCarthy said of the Black Caucus, “They were unyielding on everything. . . . That’s why it’s so difficult to negotiate—because they just demand and they don’t negotiate.” Further, Bill Mahon told the press that “black student leaders have been known to walk into university offices unannounced and demand a conference with administrators” (Cooke and Khadr). In my view, sharing this information was clearly rhetorical, aimed at under-

mining the *ethos* of the student protesters to maintain the upper hand in the public perception of the situation. I believe the administration was furthering its rhetorical strategy of portraying the Black Caucus as unreasonable and their actions as obstructionist with these statements, arguing that the students were insubordinately unwilling to comply with the ritualized behavior for resolving conflict. And yet, because of the larger ecology of the protest—there were several hundred students awaiting the result of the meeting, it was late in the evening, and tensions were running high—the administration found itself in a hostile environment. The negotiation process was being forced upon them, largely on the students' terms.

At the meeting, Black Caucus members provided a list of their demands, including the creation of an “Africana Studies Research Institute,” hiring ten tenured faculty members in the AAAS department by the start of the 2002-03 school year, founding scholarships for AAAS majors, and giving the Vice Provost for Educational Equity the power to police other departments for commitment to diversity. As they left the meeting, university administrators called the demands “unreasonable” (Cook et al.). The students were further prepared with strategies to ensure that the perceived exigency of their demands was maintained. Two members of the Caucus, including Wolf, claimed they would participate in a hunger strike until the administration acquiesced to their demands (Cook et al.). University officials refused to give in to students' demands, however, and finally left the meeting at around 10:30 p.m., suggesting to me the administration commitment to regain control of the dialogue.²

Phase 3: The Village

After administrators left the meeting, Black Caucus members and hundreds of supporters gathered sleeping bags and set up camp in the HUB, a central building on campus through which thousands of students pass daily. Several hundred students spent the night there, vowing to remain until the demands of the Caucus were met. This gathering became known as The Village, a name that would become synonymous with the entire affair (Cooke, “Standoff Continues”). Students posted signs around the HUB that read, “We will be heard!” “Stayin’ strong no matter how long,” “We’re not happy in Happy Valley!” “Unite in love!” Further, they strategically covered the plaque that dedicated the building to students so that it read “Occupied by Students—April 24th, 2001” (Cooke, “Standoff Continues”). Each of these slogans illustrates the goals of the protesters: to portray the administration as insensitive and apathetic and to unify the student body against that apathy. In an early sign that the rhetoric of the Caucus was sufficiently persuasive to be successful, on Wednesday the administration asked the university police to drop all charges against the protesters who took the field during the Blue-White game (“Police Likely”). This was a fundamental demand of the second protest and was concrete evidence that the Caucus's argument was increasingly effective in the developing rhetorical ecology.

Much in the way Edbauer describes how rhetoric spreads to embody new causes and

develops as more actors become involved, the protesters were joined by a second group, Classroom without Walls, on the first full day of the sit-in. Classroom without Walls was dedicated to environmental causes, and the comment of one of its members perfectly demonstrates Edbauer's concept of the *aparallel* development of one rhetoric as it spreads (10): "The issue is the university losing sight of its mission—to serve the common good. There is a huge corporate role affecting curriculum and research here on campus" (Morris). This group, initially supportive of the Black Caucus because the university was not serving their perceived common good, developed its own position within the rhetorical ecology, and became a separate branch of it. Surely a concern with the role of corporations on campus had little to do with the Black Caucus's goal that began the protests, but the impact of the original group's rhetoric had spread and developed, encouraging other groups with grievances against the administration to join in.

Throughout the second day of negotiations, no agreement was reached. Administrators presented a plan of action to the Black Caucus that spokesperson Steve MacCarthy called "as far as the administration was willing to go. I think this is the final step for us . . . there's not a whole lot more we can change" (Funk and Weininger). The student protesters remained firm in their resolve to have all of their demands met, however. Black Caucus members expressed their intention to occupy the HUB indefinitely if necessary: "We are here until this is over" (Cooke and Hymowitz). On Thursday, student protesters called the administration's plan of action "unacceptable without further changes" and demanded that those changes be made (Cooke, "A Plan, but No Consensus"). In The Village, a community of several hundred students had coalesced and continued to sleep, eat, and work within the walls of the HUB.

In this community, the students developed their own ritual: "At the turn of each hour, students linked hands in the air and chanted a community prayer: 'Now, more than ever, all the brothers and sisters must come together—all the brothers and sisters everywhere—must see that the time is in the air. Common blood flows through common veins and common eyes all see the same. . . . Now, now, now! . . . Ashé, Ashé, Ashé!'" (Cooke, "Standoff Continues"). A group that had taken full advantage of the influence of disrupting expected rituals was now utilizing the rhetorical power of ritual for its own benefit. This ritualized activity brought members of the entire community together and reaffirmed their commitment to each other and to their cause every hour.

On Friday, the university presented the students with a new proposal, one that "agreed to the creation and preliminary funding of an Africana Studies Research Center, the expansion of the African/African-American Studies Department and the restructuring of the Vice Provost for Educational Equity position" (Cooke, "A Plan, but No Consensus"). While this proposal met a large number of the demands of the students, demands that the administration had initially called "unreasonable," the student activists were not satisfied with the proposal and vowed to stay put. The proposal did not meet the budget goals the students had set forth, nor did it give the Vice Provost explicit power to review other colleges' budgets to ensure they met diversity

standards, and the students felt that these shortcomings rendered the proposal unacceptable. With the end of classes nearing and the students apparently unwilling to concede any of their demands, the administration seemed poised to wait out the protest.

Yet an event that neither the students nor the administration could have predicted or controlled reinvigorated the students' commitment to their demands and lent their rhetorical position even more pathos—the *pathos* of real fear. Police found the body of a black man who had been murdered in Centre County on Saturday, April 28 (Petrina). The discovery disturbingly mirrored the claim that the author of LaKeisha Wolf's death threat made in his or her letter: the body that police found was located fewer than twelve miles from Penn State's campus in a secluded wooded area. This event instantly added new exigency to the rhetorical ecology of the protests, as the immediate threat of violence returned to the forefront of the protesters' concerns. Although Pennsylvania State Police immediately issued a statement claiming they had no evidence to link the body to the death threat, it did little to quell the concerns of the students gathered in the HUB. The administration was in the unenviable position of negotiating in this newly altered ecology, one of added urgency and immediacy. The discovery of the body also brought the press back to the campus: any that had left in the lull of the stalemate had a riveting new aspect of the story to cover. Any attempt by the administration to portray the students as unreasonable or overreacting could seem cold and desperate given the new circumstances. In the rhetorical ecology that the students had helped to create, this development shaped the situation such that the administration had little choice but to acquiesce to the protesters' demands.

On Tuesday, May 1, the administration presented a revised version of its plan that incorporated even more of the demands of the students. This plan, entitled "A Plan to Enhance Diversity at Penn State," created an Africana Research Center and funded it with an average of \$175,000 a year, increased the number of full-time faculty in the AAAS department to ten, created five AAAS scholarships for a total commitment of \$25,000 a year, contained a recommendation to the Faculty Senate for a strengthened diversity curriculum requirement, and gave the Vice Provost for Educational Equity the authority to review the diversity progress of every college, albeit without the authority to withhold funding from departments ("A Plan to Enhance Diversity"). Effectively, every demand that the Black Caucus made at the beginning of the protests was met, a result reflected in the fact that the final piece written for the *Daily Collegian* about the protests in the spring semester of 2001 was simply entitled "Students Succeed in Village" (Swift).

Conclusion

Perhaps the most compelling illustration of the illuminating power of the theory of rhetorical ecology is the exigency that the discovery of the dead man's body lent to The Village protest. An event outside of the control of any of the actors may have been the deciding factor in the outcome of the rhetorical struggle. The body was found on the last Saturday before the

end of spring classes, and it is easy to imagine a different result should the ecology have developed differently. The powerful draw of the ritual of students leaving campus after finals to return to their homes may have trumped their desire to continue with the protest. Major figures in the student group were seniors who would have carried on the ritual of graduation and may have given up the struggle in light of their changing personal ecology. Any number of other, seemingly more pressing, rituals to which the students could have attended may have undermined their motivation for sustaining the rituals of the protests. The conclusion of this analysis is that this specific confluence of events all molded the rhetorical ecology such that the student protesters were almost necessarily successful. One small modification of any of these factors may have resulted in a shift of them all. It is only through the unique perspective provided by the two foundational theories on which the analysis is based that the importance of each factor, and its role in the outcome of The Village, is evident.

Notes

¹ Because I did not personally attend any of the protests, I have no firsthand knowledge of them that would either confirm or refute the information contained in these reports.

² This analysis pertains only to my view of the rhetorical motive behind ending the meeting that evening. It is entirely possible, and indeed perfectly reasonable, to suppose that the administrators intended to end the meeting in order to consider the students' proposals before carrying on negotiations. In the tense environment and wider context of the protest, however, I believe the primary motivation for the action, from a rhetorical standpoint, was to regain control of the terms of negotiation.

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