

FOUR ERAS OF STUDENT DISCOURSE

AT ATHENS STATE UNIVERSITY

by

GEORGE M. WADE

DOUGLAS MCKNIGHT, COMMITTEE CHAIR

ALAN L. WEBB

NATHANIEL J. BRAY

JOHN E. PETROVIC

STEPHEN C. TOMLINSON

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## ABSTRACT

This study examined 523 student newspapers from Athens State University from 1901 through 2000. The result is the discovery of unique student voices as expressed through perennial themes such as race and women's roles. These voices are periodized into four eras in which dominant values, beliefs, behaviors, and norms vary over time. These four eras are labelled the eras of conformity, collegiality, emancipation, and vocationalism to capture their central feature.

This study adds to the history of higher education by focusing on the expressions of students as reflected in the topics they wrote about in the student newspapers. The use of student newspapers as the primary source demonstrates how this type of evidence can be used to create themes which help understand the past. It also shows the development and changes in the perennial issues of race and women's roles in small southern colleges.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother Rebecca L. Wade and my wife Iverthy Wade. My mom taught me first to love books and then to love history. I will ever be grateful for her example of reading, thinking, and believing. Mi esposa Iverthy es la luz de mi vida, ella siempre sera mi amor.

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CHAPTER 1  
INTRODUCTION

**An Issue of Importance**

The December 1901 Athens College student newspaper contains an arresting declaration in favor of the disenfranchisement of African American men in the recently ratified Alabama constitution of 1901. The language is at once insulting and arresting to contemporary readers. It begins by characterizing the situation, “ever since the Civil War the southern states have labored under a curse, the curse of Negro voters” (The New Constitution, *The Athenian*, 1901, December). The piece further argues that “if the great men who framed the old constitution were alive at the present day, they would be the first to ratify the new, and to give their influence to disenfranchising the Negro” (The New Constitution, *The Athenian*, 1901, December). Finally, the author concludes, “the thinking men of Alabama had decided that in this state the negro vote should be gotten rid of...” (The New Constitution, *The Athenian*, 1901, December).

As shocking as this is to current thinking it reflects the values of the author. Indeed, it reflects what was considered acceptable for print in the student newspaper of Athens Female Institution. Between the current feeling of shock and the past elision of racism with popular opinion there is a difference of values, beliefs, behaviors, and norms which is expressed in a voice read in the student newspaper. Studying how these voices from the past are transformed

over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century promises to enlighten all those interested in the power of values in higher education. Yet, by 1975, a completely new student set of values as expressed through student voices in a September editorial in a September editorial of *the Athenian* are apparent. Nelson Simmons, Jr., wrote a piece that appeared as a letter to the editor for the September 22, 1975 edition of the student paper. Simmons took as his subject a rape trial of three black men.

Simmons begins by describing the criminal trial of three African American young men accused of raping a young white woman. What is striking about Simmons letter is the language used throughout to describe the majority white society. He begins by describing what he saw as he walked into the courtroom. "I discovered that the jury consisted of twelve old white men with red necks. The judge sat there throughout the trial picking his nose. It is a small miracle that he didn't pick his brain" (Simmons, 1975). There is a sense of suspicion about fairness of the justice system.

Simmons then goes on to characterize the trial in which, despite what Simmons considered sufficient doubt, convictions were secured. Simmons reaction to this is to cast the system of white society as fundamentally unfair to African Americans. His language quivers with rage.

Justice for the black man has never existed in American, the land of the free. There are too many contradictions here in America. I've discovered that justice is whatever the white man says it is. This trial taught me the true meaning of NAACP, Niggers aren't always colored people. (Simmons, 1975, pp. 2-3)

This is a contrast with the editorial from 1901. It raises curiosity and questions about the nature of the institution. Is this the same place? Geographically it certainly is. Yet, the choice of

what to write and what to publish for public reading is different. How did this situation come about? This consideration of choice in what to write raises the possibility that a distinct student voice can be found in student newspapers

Could one examine more student newspapers, for example, and discern a pattern of intellectual, moral, or social change? By comparing the same student newspapers from one institution over an extended time period could one detect changes in the way common themes are expressed? Is it not then probable, if changes in student voices are detectable that these could comprise different types of discourse that hold sway for a time?

This work will approach these types of considerations by an analysis of the changing words, tones, and expressions in the school newspapers by focusing on particular themes. These are the persistent themes of race and women's roles. There are two additional themes which are present during some time periods and not in others. These include religion and rebellion. It will primarily be interested in the time between 1901 and 2000 because the available evidence speaks to that timeframe.

This introduction will address the big picture of this type of study. It will primarily consist of two concerns—student newspapers as an evidentiary source, and historical context. The section on student newspapers as an evidentiary source will address the importance of these types of archived documents. The historical context section will give an overview of the institution of concern here and situate it in the context of the development of higher education generally.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study is about student voices in one institution of higher education. The research question is an historical question: How did student voices manifest in the student newspapers

over time? Two definitive themes which give expression to the student voices are race and women's roles. These two themes are in each era of student discourse and are essential to understand how students thought and felt about them. This study uses the term women's roles instead of gender roles. This is because during the time period of this study the man/woman binary is the accepted norm. Gender does not arise except in this context insofar as the student newspapers are concerned. A related objective is to understand the differences between the voices over time.

The idea that student words, tones, and expressions, could be examined and clustered into discursive eras is the essential feature of this study. This includes both direct writings of students themselves in a variety of forms such as editorials, letters to the editor, and so forth, as well as editorial choices by student editors about the types of articles to be included in the student newspaper.

From Athens Female Seminary through Athens College, to Athens State College, to finally, Athens State University some things have changed while others have remained the same. What could tie these changes together? The suggestion so far is that promise is to be found in the words, tones, and expressions of the students as found in the student newspapers. Over the history of the school these can be understood as types of discourses around the themes of race, women's roles, and when relevant, religion, and rebellion.

### **The Efficacy of Archives**

The research aim here depends on student newspapers that exist in an archive at Athens State University. The use of archives to reach past the living experience of the generation of which the researcher is a member is the distinguishing characteristic of historical forms of investigation (McDonald, 2004; Ridener, 2009; Yin, 2009).

Newspapers, as an evidentiary source require some explanation. They are sources of information certainly but how can their contents be categorized? Crane and Leshner (2018) offer a useful method. This consists of two questions to be asked and correlating these to a number of dimensions.

The first question is about what is reported. This can be differentiated the dimensions of topic, region, and time period. Differences in point of view will be evident along these lines. Next, they ask the question of how something is reported. This involves the dimensions of which sources are used, how they are used, and the impact of editors on the choice of how to present a particular item (Crane & Leshner, 2018). It is important to keep in mind that this is a heuristic for addressing newspapers, it is not a replacement for the work of reading, evaluation, and judgment. These must necessarily be exercises of historical decision-making and narrative choice.

Archives play an important role in this process. Archives are more than repositories of odd old documents. Archival history is based firmly in theory that has developed in response to various challenges associated with archival practice. Contemporary archival practice benefits by the work of archivists who developed or challenged methods and justifications for archival practices and collections. This practice became focused in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and passed through modifications by archivists in Europe and the United States until arriving at the current moment in archival theory and practice (Ridener, 2009).

With the advent of protest and other social movements in the 1960s and 1970s, archivists began to be sensitive to points of view not normally represented in archives. The voices of minoritized and marginalized groups began to be a concern for archivists as active searches for material representative of their experiences became a focus. Ridener (2009) calls this the questioning paradigm. The importance of this is that it creates space for more voices in archival

holdings. The main way of accomplishing this is through questioning of the main narratives made possible by older archival theory

Of note is that college archives tend to be better in more prestigious institutions. The prestigious institutions will have archives, a staff, an archivist, and a place to store records. There are, of course, institutions where archival work is shunted off to part-time duty given as additional duties (Straus, 1979).

College archives are an interesting mix of nostalgia and administrative need. On the one hand such archives serve the nostalgic desires of former students, faculty, and administration. This has been labeled the “collegiana collection” (Straus, 1979, p. 434). This will most often contain papers by the founders along with presidents and faculty. It will also contain diaries, scrapbooks, notebooks, old letters, and such things as candlesticks, handbells, fraternity pins and so forth (Straus, 1979).

On the other hand, some material in some archives are simply administrative records which are somewhere along the process of being retired and either permanently stored or destroyed (Straus, 1979). Organized college archives are a relatively recent phenomenon coming into their own during the decades from the 1950s until the present (Straus, 1979).

In either case, the main reason to maintain college archives is to aid in research. The broad research areas which most benefit from college archives are institutional history, intellectual history, social history, political history, and documentary editing. Thus, college archives are an excellent source for understanding the values of students as is the case in the research conducted here.

## **Student Newspapers As Evidentiary Sources**

There is one rich evidentiary source—documents, specifically student newspapers. These have an immediacy and focus on concerns of the moment not available otherwise since the student newspapers exist in archives. The student newspapers are characterized by their genuineness not by their objective accuracy. They represent the students' point of view and so are evidence of unique student voices in words, tone, and expressions.

They also bear the marks of the institution and therefore reflect the give and take between students and the institution. Issues and events at the school condition what gets attention in the newspapers. This lends a genuineness to the student newspapers that makes them a good primary source for the meaning creating aspects of student experience. The fact that there are so many newspapers stretching back to 1901 provides a solid basis for trend identification.

The newspapers are thus true reflections of the concerns and interests of students. There is a stability to the newspapers inasmuch as they are a chronological record of events at the school. They also contain a number of types of writing. There are polemical writings, obsequious praise, bureaucratic recitation of rules, sports pages, and a variety of student editorials. Taken together these different types of writing have promise to yield data for inferences about the student point of view over time. Of significance is that student editors chose what was included in the student paper. Their choices of what to include also indicate a point of view—a voice.

With regard to the sample this study will examine all of the available newspapers. This includes student newspapers through the year 2000. One strength of this approach is that all of the extant newspapers will be analyzed for themes bearing on student voice. This is a real advantage in that the need to use a sampling process on the newspapers is not necessary. The number of student newspapers is not so numerous as to make this an unrealistic task

necessitating the use of a sampling procedure. There are 523 total student newspapers available in the archives.

One problem for this approach is that there are some gaps in the student newspapers. Every student newspaper ever produced is not available in the university archives. There are some gaps of several years particularly in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Also, for example, there is a gap beginning in 1943 and ending in 1948. This means nothing is available for the end of World War II and some of the early incidents in the Cold War period.

This is a problem but not fatal for the study. There are fewer gaps the farther along in the century one searches. Despite the limitation, there are enough student newspapers from which to make inferences about the nature of student discourse over time. The gaps are not so extensive as to leave entire eras unrepresented.

The researcher used successive rounds of reading the newspapers looking for distinctive words, tones, and expressions. These will address the abiding themes of race, women's roles, and when necessary, religion, and rebellion. This can be helpful as part of an iterative process of discovery as historical investigations tend to be. Historians use whatever approach to interrogating data that will help them describe and explain the question under consideration. In this case this means the selection, collection, examination, and extraction of meaning from the available evidence (Gottschalk, 1950).

The institution exerted some influence on the students such that they placed into print items and attitudes that comported with the values of the institution more broadly. This is not particularly problematic for this study since this study aims to understand differences in the student voice—that is the words, tones, and expressions of students over time. The newspapers in this sense offer an excellent glimpse into what is permanent in students' voices over time.

This study also used photographs and drawings from the student newspapers. These lend context and immediacy to the voices under consideration. In each case, pictures or other graphical representations will illustrate how the students addressed the themes under consideration. The big idea then is that students have a recognizable and distinct voice in student newspapers, which can be sorted according to the different ways they express themselves about the themes of race, women's roles, religion, and rebellion.

### **Literature Bearing on This Study**

#### ***Dissertations That Use Student Newspapers***

There are a number of dissertations that feature student newspapers in some fashion. This goes beyond mere use to primacy. In those studies which feature student newspapers as the primary object of study these documents are considered in a few different ways. These include historical, qualitative, and mixed methods designs.

The qualitative and mixed methods studies consider questions such as use of student editorials to understand student attitudes (Howison, 1977); the degree of student newspaper censorship in public and private colleges (Loving, 1993); a study of the status of student newspapers through the perceptions of student journalists, faculty, and administration. (Hayes, 1982); an examination of role conceptions and enactments of people working for student newspapers, (Heath, 2019); a study of whether independent or journalism school subordination is the best way to manage student newspapers, Wilson (1977); an examination of the perception of the role of student newspaper among practitioners and college administrators, Files (1987); a case study of a Canadian student newspapers during the era of student activism in the 1960s, Poon (1976); and a study which surveyed a large number of colleges and universities about the

extent to which they solicited input from students regarding changes to the student newspaper, Stevenson (2002).

The historical approaches look at questions such as how student press reported on events during specific time periods (Armstrong, 2013); a history of the first seventy-five years of the University of Arkansas student newspaper *Alison* (2004); an historical examination between changing views of obscenity and the journalistic rights of student newspaper reporters (Clode, 1980); and a history of student newspapers at five historically black colleges and universities, (Haydel, 2016).

This study is similar to the historical approaches. It is unique in its use of student newspapers as an evidentiary source to make inferences about student discourse. In this respect, this study carves out a place in the literature by focusing on one institution over time using the concept of voices to illuminate eras called discourses. It interprets the past in terms of persistent themes discovered in the evidence about a type of society—student society.

This leads to a number of eras, which this study asserts are true based on the evidence. The evidence is of a variety of writings in student newspaper. These reveal attitudes, beliefs, sanctioned behaviors, and accepted norms. The contrast between the different eras is matter of discourses. Which voices are heard? How long do they predominate? What are the major themes they address? This study will provide a framework for understanding these questions through the agency of student words, tones, and expressions.

### **Books Using Student Newspapers**

In addition to dissertations there are books on the history of higher education which use student newspapers. These tend toward three uses. First, there are books that use student newspapers as primary evidence of something. Next, there are books that use student newspapers

as part of an interpretive scheme. Finally, there are books that rely on student newspapers as the main evidence for an interpretation.

Blevins offers a good example of how student newspapers are used as primary evidence. In chapter five of his history of Lyon College he has a section detailing athletic achievements during the period after World War II. This is a straightforward recitation of factual information used to make the point that basketball was the only varsity sport at the school for a time (Blevins, 2003).

This way of using the student newspapers takes them at face value, especially about events taking place at the school. The eras of student discourse at Athens rely on data such as this to contextualize the student voices as they arise and come to dominance. This use of student newspapers relies on them episodically to make points. This is the distinguishing feature of this type of approach to student newspapers as historical evidence.

Horowitz shows how student newspapers can be used in a more complete sense as part of an interpretive pattern. In her work on undergraduate cultures she weaves student writings with interviews to create her history. Thus, she will write about student newspapers as an activity that students engage in for their own purposes. Student newspapers in this sense are drawn into an interpretation of how the institution functioned.

This is beyond use of student newspapers as illustrations. Now they are a part of an interpretation of an institution. Horowitz does this in chapter four of *Campus Life* by describing how students used their positions on student newspapers as tests for later literary and activist work. Newspapers were a place to try out writing as well as a place to advocate for causes or critique the institution (Horowitz, 1987).

Leslie uses student newspapers as the main evidence for the values of what he called “students as gentlemen”. By this he meant the distinctive voice students created both in opposition to institutional policies and in the creation of their own social life. This chapter is replete with examples drawn from student newspapers—this includes a number of pictures (Leslie, 2006).

This sense of student voice is a key feature of the current study. As the uses of these three historians has shown, student newspapers are good sources for a variety of uses in creating history. One can use them as illustrations of points (Blevins), as institutional elements themselves (Horowitz), and as the main evidence for assertions (Leslie). This study used them as the main source for thinking about student voices over time.

### **Historical Context**

Athens State University is one of the oldest institutions of higher learning in Alabama (McLin, 1994). It began as an ecumenical Female Seminary, which was a type of Academy discussed below, in 1822 under the auspices of the local community (McLin, 1994). By 1842, it was sponsored by the Methodist church and underwent a name change to Athens Female Institute, in 1889 it became Athens Female College. It became coeducational in 1931, it desegregated in 1969, and by 1975 it became a state college (McLin, 1994).

When it became a state college it also changed to offer only upper division courses thus changing to take advantage of its place as a destination for those wishing to finish a baccalaureate degree after starting somewhere else. This included community college graduates, working adults, and retirees. Finally, it joined the state university system in 1998, as reflected by its current name (Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, 2017). Today, Athens State

University is an upper division undergraduate institution of higher education serving the needs of transfer students (Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, 2017).

The various forms of the institution of higher education at Athens are the subjects of scholarly writing in the history of higher education. Athens fits into these forms because it conforms to the pattern of these forms of higher education. First, it was founded as a women's institution, then became a religious institution albeit still a women's institution. Later it became a coeducational institution. As a coeducational institution it was a small, relatively unknown college.

This framework is reflected in the literature as four different types of institutions of higher education—religious, women's, invisible, and forgotten. The religious strain is foundational to the history of higher education given its role in the purposes for higher education. Religion and religious institutions have often been college builders. The women's education strain has a significant body of historical scholarship showing how this has grown and changed over time. The concept of invisible colleges refers to small, open or near open enrollment, mostly private colleges. Finally, the notion of forgotten colleges refers to public, regional institutions that are not large research universities.

Athens has changed over time beginning as a variant of the Female Academy. Rudolph and a number of other historians of higher education give special attention to the education of women of which Athens Female Seminary, then Athens Female Institute, and finally, Athens Female College is illustrative. Rudolph argued that the fusion of practical necessity married to enlightenment principles produced a type of intellectual and moral atmosphere capable of creating such institutions in a larger society dominated by men (Rudolph, 1962). Other historians

have emphasized the struggles to create these institutions (Hutcheson, 2019), and the distinctive discourses they produced (Farnham, 1994).

As the United States grew from the acquisition of territory gained through treaty, war, and purchase, it experienced, among other things, a concern with higher education. This included a variety of types of schools including academies. They cropped up everywhere Americans ranged during the years of western expansion. Athens, Alabama was one of these places.

Local settlers had the idea to educate girls and young women on par with men. This concept of purpose and determination operating within the social norms of the time is an early expression of a theme that will surface often in the evidence. In the event, the citizens of Athens wanted a school for girls enough that one of them donated the land for the original building (McLin, 1994). The citizens soon named trustees to govern the institution who in turn hired the original teachers (McLin, 1994). In curriculum, generally speaking, the female institute in Athens was a type of female academy.

The academy movement in America began as an all-male pursuit but gradually included women. This is a critical moment in women's education as these became the vehicle for a separate but earnest effort to supply women with an education that was on par with men. The curricula was not focused on women's roles even though the schools themselves were—this was path breaking though perhaps modest by contemporary standards. Women thereby had access to an education that engaged serious academic subjects (Farnham, 1984).

The religious strain is the product of church interest in college building. It has antecedents in the religious motivation in establishing colleges all the way back to the founding of the earliest institutions of higher education in America (Wicke, 1964). Harvard is but one

example of the early link between faith and education. Of the nine colonial colleges all of them, except the University of Pennsylvania, had a religious orientation (Ringenberg, 2006).

There is more to this than meets the eye. Of these nine colleges only three of them existed before the outbreak of the First Great Awakening in the 1730s and 1740s (Ringenberg, 2006). This was a forerunner to the Second Great Awakening from 1795 to -1835 (Ahlstrom, 1975). Both were highly emotional religious movements, which swept through large portions of the colonies at first and the states later. These movements gave impetus to the founding of religious colleges by religious bodies—particularly Protestant evangelical bodies such as the Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian and Episcopal churches.

Athens Female Seminary was just such a college albeit created for the education of women as well. These two founding aspects overlap at Athens. When the Methodists assumed control of the Athens Female Seminary in 1842 it joined religious motivations with women's education as reasons to have a college.

The religious strain gained significant momentum by the educational impulses imparted to religious denominations by the Second Great Awakening (Ahlstrom, 1975). This is more specific to the circumstances leading to Methodist control of the college in 1842 because the practices of the Methodists pursuant to the Second Great Awakening resulted in educational efforts such as the one at Athens.

The awakening was a frontier development. As the American republic expanded beyond the Appalachian Mountains religious movements went along. In particular, the Methodist denomination, by the use of dedicated itinerant preachers rode across the vast new land and implanted an evangelical faith which remains even into contemporary times (Ahlstrom, 1975).

The Methodists were the dominant evangelical denomination during the time of the Second Great Awakening (Ahlstrom, 1975). They, along with other evangelical denominations created a number of institutional expressions of their value system. These included tract and Bible societies, home mission boards, Sunday school unions, the temperance movement, and educational establishments such as academies (Wicke, 1964).

Denominations such as the Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians sought denominational expansion, which included education. In the case of Athens Female Academy, the Methodist church—a dominant church in Alabama at the time, took over an already established institution. It is no surprise that the Methodists took over Athens Female Academy. The denomination had been interested in education since its founding in America in 1766 (Godbold, 1944). By 1820, the Methodists had committed to create educational institutions whenever such was feasible (Godbold, 1944). Athens, Alabama was one such area where involvement in education was feasible.

The last two strains indicate the shift from a small, local college to a larger regional institution. This shift began for Athens in the 1930s when the college began to admit men. It was still a small, religious, local institution that was characterized by small enrollment and mostly nonselective admissions policies—the so called “invisible college” (Astin & Lee, 1972).

These small, religious, and local colleges persist as a part of the landscape of higher education in the United States. These are the so-called invisible colleges. When Astin and Lee studied them in the 1970s they were concerned with their continued viability (Astin & Lee, 1972). Later studies indicate that these schools as a whole are stable although they continue to have problems adapting to the constantly changing nature of higher education (Tarrant et al., 2018). Athens is a good example of the persistence of these types of institutions. It has had

education for the North Alabama and Tennessee Valley region as its aim since becoming coeducational in the mid-1930s (McLin, 1994).

The final strain of historical development is the college for forgotten Americans. This occurred in 1975 when the school became Athens State College under control of the state of Alabama (McLin, 1994). It became an upper division only baccalaureate granting institution. This sea shift demonstrates the resilience of the college. This transition from invisible to state institution moved it into another category of governance. Its history as a small college meant it had to react to the changing circumstances in order to survive. That it did so is a testament to the tenacity with which the leaders of the school strove to remain and serve the people of its region.

A college for forgotten Americans was defined by Dunham as falling somewhere along the developmental lines from state college to regional university. These colleges typically become publicly controlled after some years as another type of institution, such as a teacher's college (Dunham, 1969). This is precisely what occurred at Athens. It changed from a religious college to a state college and then finally a state university.

The hallmark of a forgotten college is that they grow out of something. Often this is a normal school—which were not quite colleges during the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Dunham, 1969). Thus, curricular issues tended to haunt these colleges, especially in the early years after they transition to institutions with broader concerns. In this case broader means regional.

Dunham noted that students in these schools tended to be decidedly middle-class in outlook (Dunham, 1969), as he wrote “these people are not black, poor, rich, or in the headlines” (Dunham, 1969, p. 83). These students were most often from rural, low-income areas. They took little note of national or international issues. Their focus was almost exclusively on the college as a means to improve their job prospects (Dunham, 1969).

This situation describes the college in Athens, Alabama almost perfectly. It had grown from a women's college, to a coeducational institution all the while being under the control of the Methodist church in the span of about one hundred fifty years by the time it became a state college. This last status emphasizes its orientation toward regional concerns—one of the so-called, “colleges of the forgotten Americans” (Dunham, 1969), the final strand by which the institution of higher education in Athens, Alabama can be understood.

### **Organization**

This study is organized into six chapters. There is the introduction, four chapters on different eras of student discourse, and a conclusion. Each chapter on the different eras of discourse will begin by describing a particular student voice. Then it will illustrate that voice through the recurring themes of race, and women's roles. Other themes such as religion, and rebellion will arise at various parts when these are relevant.

Each of the four chapters covering a definable era of student discourse examines these as they arise in the student newspapers. These are distinctive because they arise from a way of using words, tones, and expressions. These come to comprise a dominant voice for a time period which this study calls eras—the discourses as they are called here. There are four such eras: the eras of conformity, collegiality, emancipation, and vocation.

The first, the era of conformity, is the originating student voice that goes back to the earliest days of the college for which there are student newspapers available. In the 523 student newspapers there are references to a variety of different stories about the past, some of them referring to events in the deep past beyond the reach of historical evidence. These references offer tantalizing clues about how the school was prior to 1901, which is the year of the earliest extant student newspaper.

Each chapter on an era will examine how the student voices came to take a dominant tone in terms of words, tone, and expressions. The persistent themes will be race and women's roles with additional themes that are present in some eras but not all of them—these will include religion, and rebellion. Thus, a minimum of two and a maximum of four themes will be addressed. Each section will have an introductory section, which contextualizes the era in terms of important ideologies regnant during the era.

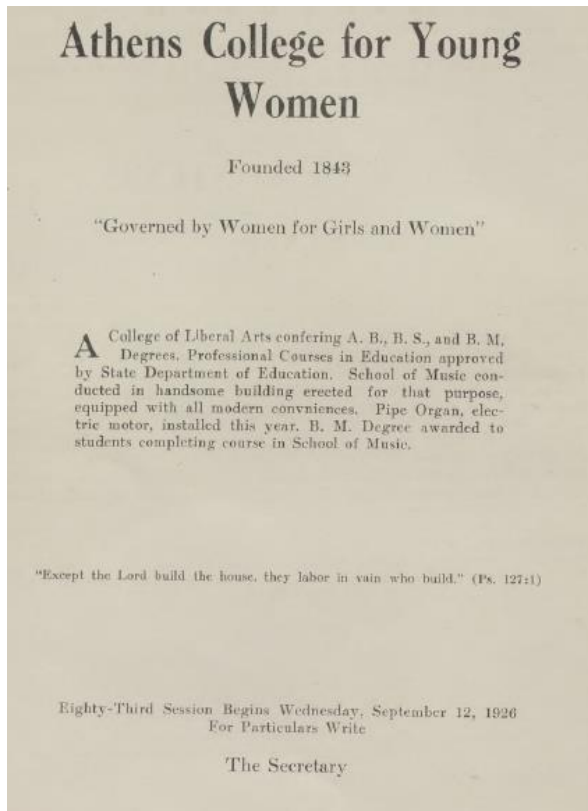
## CHAPTER 2

### THE ERA OF CONFORMITY

The first era identified from the evidence is called the era of conformity. At the time, Athens was a women's college and a Methodist college. The student voices represent the values, beliefs, behaviors and norms of students attending this type of exclusive institution. An indicator of this is from the August 1926 issue of *The Athenian*; the student newspaper was called *The Athenian* at the time. One can find there an advertisement for the school that contains language indicating what school officials thought it was all about. It says, simply, “governed by women for girls and women” (Advertisement, *The Athenian*, 1926, August 1).

## Figure 1

*Advertisement from The Athenian, August 1926*



In this originating period, the discourse is centered in women and women's roles and how these roles will be developed. The various events that received attention relate to a number of themes, from which inferences may be drawn. Of importance is the space allotted to the speeches of Mary Norman Moore in the student newspapers. Mary Norman Moore was the president of the school during the time period of the first era where a distinctive student voice may be found. Her speeches and talks show up in the student newspapers. In those speeches and talks the broad ideological framework of the college may be discovered. For example, her view of education was very progressive for its time, and very much focused on being competitive with men's education. The emphasis was on providing an education of as high quality as men's education.

Yet, President Moore's speeches can be read in another way—as the foundation for the emergence of a distinctive student voice. The types of arguments she used were broadly consistent with progressive era values in education. Race, however, shows up, not just in Moore's speeches but throughout the newspapers of the period. The fact that Moore uses race and presuppositions about race as evidence of her own progressive philosophy shows how deeply, and unconsciously these values operate. Race then is a necessary theme in this study.

It should not be a surprise that race is an issue in a southern college in Alabama, founded in 1822. The presence of blatant racist sentiments in the school newspaper in 1901 should underscore just how much the college bore the marks and the prejudices of its time. There are some overtly racist statements and racist sentiments recorded. This sits alongside an attitude of benevolence toward African Americans based on the progressive point of view.

This could be read as patronizing, but one might also read this as rather hopeful for the future, given the recognition that African American women in particular needed an education, which could lead to progress mentally and materially. This idea of extension of education to African American women stands in stark contradiction to the other blatantly racist statements and sentiments in the student newspapers.

Race is then subject to more than one interpretation. One can say that this society is a racist society and that would by and large be a true statement, but it is also a society that recognizes that people from other races, particularly African Americans, are indeed people and so need to have their education addressed. Those leading the legal and social acceptance of racial segregation were eventually going to have a difficult time holding to such ideas while recognizing one could be educated no matter what their race.

Another tension that arises in this time period is going to play itself out in future periods as well—women’s roles. There are a number of stories in these student newspapers that directly addressed address women’s roles. The majority of them speak to women’s roles as matter of women submitting to expectations of men. But here again, there is also tension, as in race, because there is a progressive ideal at work here.

This is illustrated in Mary Norman’s speeches, but it is also illustrated in some of the stories told—these are nascent controversies. Women, while presented as subservient are treated as of utmost importance to the college. Herein lies a contradiction that is bound to fester in future student voices. Even so, during the first era of student voices the submissive role holds sway.

This is the general framework for this chapter. It takes the student voice as a persistent phenomenon yet mutable to the decisions of individuals who gave expression to it. So, while they live in a type of institutional discourse, they are also evaluating the discourse. This comes out very clearly in the student newspapers.

This study will refer to it as the voice of conformity. The idea is that what governs the reasoning of the various writers in the student newspapers is to change in directions desirable to the institution. This expresses itself as a type of discourse in the choice of what to write and how to write in the student newspapers. It is a discourse of conformity, which accepts institutional ideals and is characterized by aspirations to achieve those ideals. Yet there is tension within it, as has already been mentioned.

In this respect, it bears some resemblance to ideas advocated by thinkers such as Habermas, who articulated a model of discourse based on intersubjective patterns of communication (Habermas, 1987). In addressing problems in reproducing discourse over time Habermas held that there can be disturbances in cultural reproduction when discourses lose their

meaning. In these instances, societies begin to doubt the legitimacy of their own discourse. In time this can result in a crises of the orientation of people toward their own culture (Habermas, 1987). This occurs in the college in Athens on more than one occasion, the beginning of which can be seen toward the end of the first period studied here.

Following Habermas, a bit further one can expect disruptions in society to be attended by feelings of insecurity in the general population. This idea that the collective identity somehow is not legitimate can have an alienating effect on individuals within that society (Habermas, 1987). Thus, when traditions deteriorate they are characterized by a mass disinclination to participate in those traditions. This aspect of the decline and eventual change in discourse also informs this study. But what makes this study unique is its emphasis on a persistent type of discourse that can be found in the way students talk about things as well as their choices about what to include in the student newspaper. The essential idea is that discourse is persistent, it reveals itself in voices, and it has within it tensions which can tend to legitimate, or delegitimize it to those who are participants in it. Over time, that can create inflection moments that result in change. That is the general orientation of this study. As mentioned, the speeches and writing of Mary Norman Moore, race, women's roles, and religion will be considered in the makeup of the first student voice—the voice of conformity.

### **Mary Norman Moore**

Mary Norman Moore was the president of Athens Female College from 1904 to 1916. She came at a time of transition in the college due to some financial difficulties, which made finding a male candidate difficult. She is a transitional figure inasmuch as she is a link back to the earliest years of the college due to her association with Madam Jane Hamilton Childs who was president of Athens Female Collegiate Institute from 1858 through 1869. Moore understood

the values of the college from this perspective. These were characterized by piety and dedication to educating women of character and intellect. In this respect, Moore's views show how a number of themes from this era come together and form the environment in which the original discourse of conformity grew (Address by Mary Norman Moore, *The Athenian*, 1912 January 1; McLin, 1992).

Moore's views were both a challenge to and an illustration of the times in which she lived. In the student newspapers, there are three particular writings of hers that are important, two of them are variations of the same address that she gave in January and April of 1912 to the educational conference of the Southern Methodist church. The other one is an article she wrote detailing the ideal women's college. She addresses a number of themes of interest to the discourse of conformity (Ideal College for Women, *The Athenian*, 1912, April 1).

The first theme, the one that is nearest and dearest to her heart, is the theme of women's education in the South. In particular, she wrote of white women's education, but she also wrote about the education of black women. She saw the education of white women as something that should be equal to men's education in quality, rigor, and efficacy for their future (Address by Mary Norman Moore, *The Athenian*, 1912, January 1).

With respect to black women, she acknowledged the limitations of her times based on Jim Crow policies, which insisted on the separation of the races. This is in tension with her strong inclination toward progressive educational ideals. In this vein, she held that all human beings deserve education of some kind. Her arguments were about what form that education should take. She believed that the education provided to black women should be provided by white women (Address by Mary Norman Moore, *The Athenian*, 1912, January 1).

Accepting the broadly held norms in southern society during her time she also advocated that such education as black women received should be separate from white women's education and most definitely separate from men's education. Moore's innovation was to outline a type of educational program wherein black women would be trained to raise the level of intellectual sophistication in their own communities. In this sense, Moore was advocating a progressive approach to the education of African American women.

This progressivism operated within a structure of separateness. Moore never challenged that structure, but she did advocate for a type of education that would eventually undermine the reasons for separateness. Education, to Moore, was to be related to the larger social and political reality in which it was situated. Her view was that education is for something besides mere learning. It is a means to an end for something, and that means to an end has something to do with making the society as good as it can be.

That good arises from an educated citizenry. Education then is absolutely essential to the type of thinking that the demands of the modern era pushed upon them. The modern world in 1912 was more industrialized, more mobile, and more involved with other nations. Moore saw the purpose of education in terms of meeting these demands.

The theme of progressivism or modernism as it was sometimes called in Moore's writings stands in relationship to educational reformers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In particular, she referenced Mary Lyon and her work in creating women's schools that had the same rigor as men's schools while still maintaining their separateness. This view of education capitalizes on women's ability to be educated in two ways.

First, women so educated can participate more deeply and more significantly in their broader discourse. This will include literature, music, art, and studies of this nature. Moore

recognized that some of these cultural aspects were provided in other female institutions, which Moore thought of as ornamental institutions. Ornamental institutions were, on Moore's view, not really colleges because the quality of their education lacked rigor, especially the type of rigor found in colleges for men (Address by Mary Norman Moore, *The Athenian*, 1912, January 1).

This is the second way that women have an ability to be educated. These ornamental institutions represented an approach to education emphasizing that women were to have characteristics cultivated. These included wit, charm, and domesticity, all in preparation for their roles as wives and mothers. Moore did not oppose this type of education, but she did hold that it was a limited view of women's education.

Moore wanted to go a step beyond this type of education for elevated domesticity. By discourse she meant the broader discourse, the intellectual discourse of western civilization. In other words, the type of discourse taught to men. During Moore's time this type of cultural education was accomplished through the study of Latin and Greek although innovations such as the elective system and the scientific curriculum were undermining this approach.

Moore held that the classical curriculum ought to be available to women in its proper place. There ought also to be room for what she referred to as a mathematical curriculum. This type of education prepares women for more than elevated domesticity. That something more can be preparation for many occupations and careers. Moore could not affect how southern society broadly viewed women's roles, but she could educate women to be prepared for opportunities beyond those strictures. This is a progressive ideal, which Moore fully embraced. It leads to her next theme—women's roles (Address by Mary Norman Moore, *The Athenian*, 1912, January 1).

With respect to women's roles, Mary Norman Moore was entirely traditional in that she accepted that the main role for women was to be mothers and wives. One of her fiercest

objections to the spirit of her times was about how women were discouraged from pursuing an education. That women ought to be lifted out of ignorance by education is something she had to emphasize. Moore observed that many women just did not think it was important to go to school because their families did not think it was important to go to school. Moore, although she acquiesced to the societal norms for women's roles wanted a more intellectually oriented and rigorous education (Address by Mary Norman Moore, *The Athenian*, 1912, January 1).

Moore's view of women is also related to her religious orientation. Moore was a committed Methodist; a committed Christian. She understood the world, including women's roles through the lens of Christianity in the form of southern Methodism of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. So, when she referred to religion in educational terms she was articulating an educational purpose or a vision. This vision is based on the idea that the will of God is slowly working its way out over time.

This religious view also situates her view of women's roles including education in the context of her times. There are two aspects of this religious view. One aspect is old-fashioned piety with its emphasis on the morality of women, particularly their sexual purity. The result is that women's virtue is guarded by norms governing contact with men. The ornamental education, which Moore rebuffs, is the educational expression of these ideas. Education in these terms is conducted separately from men by women for the education of women.

The other aspect of Moore's religious concerns was more social. This has a flavor of the social gospel. The basic social gospel idea was that the kingdom of God could be realized amongst people in the material world. This draws on principles drawn from the gospels that emphasize charitable or beneficent activities. This practical service ideal is in tension with the ornamental theory of women's education.

Moore recognized that church schools had taken the lead, especially in the South, in doing anything about education. That is to say, state supported education in the South had lagged behind other parts of the country. Moore expressed gratitude to the churches for filling in this educational gap. For these reasons, she made arguments to the broader church in terms of its ministry and mission to humanity, that education is as much a part of their work of Christian charity as anything else.

In this way, she laid the framework for a new emphasis in the various church efforts in education. This concept of education as ministry had the effect of joining citizenship with faith. This helped guarantee a broadly Christian view of the world or at least of the conduct of college studies under the presuppositions of a religious worldview.

Moore continued to frame her progressive view of education by comparing the development of education for women in the South to the education of women in the Midwest in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially the post-Civil War era. She began by observing that by the third decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Mary Lyon was making her educational reforms in the Northeast that Southern education for women was categorically inferior to men's education and to women's education in the North (Address by Mary Norman Moore, *The Athenian*, 1912, January 1).

In the South, women of means, were physically inactive during the antebellum period when they were attended by slaves. They may have been gifted intellectually, very often they were, but this tendency was underdeveloped in them. They did not have intellectual vigor because they did not study anything that had vigor. Instead, they preferred the ornamental version of education, including things such as singing, dancing, embroidering, dressing with grace, manners, and etiquette. This contributed to women's education being unserious when

compared with men's education (Address by Mary Norman Moore, *The Athenian*, 1912, January 1).

Contributing to this unseriousness was that southerners and particularly southern men were suspicious of any other kind of education. This means that only the ornamental version of education was taken seriously. Men, who, after all, earned the money that supported these institutions, preferred the status quo. Ornamental education therefore held sway through the early post-Civil War era in the variety of Southern female institutes, sometimes called seminaries or colleges or other similar names.

Midwestern women, by contrast, were more energetic, more self-reliant, and more resilient. Their familiarity with manual labor on farms and often in factories inculcated these values. These women worked alongside men, but they also went to college in places such as Oberlin.

In the South, women's ornamental education had developed along different lines. Such institutions as existed reinforced the ornamental education of women. Moore believed that Southern women needed the same quality of education as Northern women. This left the Southern women's colleges nothing more than colleges in name only but not in substance.

They left girls unprepared for serious study in Latin, Greek, math, or the natural sciences. Yet, she noted, favorably that by the last three decades of the 19th century, Southern women had begun attending places like Vassar, Wellesley, Smith, and Bryn Mawr. Moore held that the tide of the times was turning toward a broadening of support for high quality women's education (Address by Mary Norman Moore, *The Athenian*, 1912, January 1).

Yet, the contemporary discourse of Southern women's education was incentivized to remain ornamental in nature due to the financial arraignments of the schools themselves.

Women's colleges were funded by families through the payment of tuition and fees. This approach made education a product to be paid for and a product that had to meet the expectations of the customer. These customers were the families paying the bills, since they wanted an ornamental education this should be provided. Such was the economic logic for the status quo.

The financial argument was exacerbated, Moore held, because women's educational institutions were not popular. This left women's education in the precarious position of being subject to the whims of college presidents. These presidents could not make money off tuition alone. They were incentivized to create fees.

Moore had a real problem with this aspect of women's institutions financial arrangements. She called this the lease system. College presidents had to find a way to make extra money in order to have a decent living for themselves; they needed extra money. This extra money came from "the extras". Nearly every girl, Moore said, studied a couple of the extras. These were courses in art, music and subjects of this nature. These constituted profits beyond the regular tuition. School presidents could pocket this money. Taken together with the fact that families paid for this kind of education, the result was a most unserious type of education according to Moore (Address by Mary Norman Moore, *The Athenian*, 1912, January 1).

Moore's argument was not that ornamental education was entirely wrong. Her argument was that it was fine as far as it went, but that it did not go far enough. She did not say that the schools should not teach dancing or music or etiquette. Her point was about access and quality. Her idea was that education needed to meet the needs of as broad a population of women as possible. There is a marvelous quote from one of her speeches that captures both the tone and the substance of her arguments.

With reference to the education of the large numbers girls who have never come within the pale of our church institutions and the quarter of a million Anglo-Saxon mountain girls to whom even a third-rate education in a secondary school represents learning far beyond their dreams of attainment, shame it is upon us that these young women, most of them lineal descendants of patriotic women who sent their sires and sons to defend the liberty we enjoy, whose ancestor's blood colored King's Mountain and Eutaw Springs, shame it is, when the world is full of work, Christian work, pleading for women's hands and minds to perform, that we should leave our white sisters in their un-Christian ignorance to incite mountain feuds and to protect moonshine stills. (Address by Mary Norman Moore, *The Athenian*, 1912, January 1)

This is an outstanding statement of Moore's overall point of view and it blends together a number of themes. Notice the reference to the patriotic women. Moore chose to emphasize battles in the Southern theater of the American Revolution and not the American Civil War. Moore was a believer in a universal education that could appeal to any woman. Even though she worked in the South she wanted to appeal to a more general history for her patriotic examples. This avoided the lost cause version of the American Civil War rampant in the white community in the South after American Civil War. The hallmark of the lost cause was a retelling of a Civil War on terms favorable to the Confederacy especially minimizing the role of slavery in the causes for disunion.

Tellingly, Moore follows this with something like a missionary view of the prospects such an education would bring to all women. First, white Southern women and then black Southern women. Moore used the term Negro which for her time period was considered a descriptive term, not a pejorative term. Her view was that one of these women she referred to as

doing nothing but inciting family feuds and in protecting moonshine stills could in turn educate her black sisters. So, take a girl like that, educate her in a Christian college that has a vigorous curriculum of both the classics and mathematics and set her on this missionary educational endeavor.

This has ties to the prevalent racism extant in Southern society at this time. Another section of this work will address this topic more fully. It is worth mentioning here though that these fiscal realities reflect the prejudices and biases of the dominant political point of view during this era of Southern history.

That point of view would have been best captured by the white southern Democratic Party's racially exclusive purpose. For example, in the 1901 edition of the student newspaper there is an article that is overtly in favor of disenfranchisement of African American men in the Alabama Constitution of 1901. Moore never addresses these racist politics; she very tacitly accepts that this was the reality of her times. Yet, she does outline an educational vision which would tend to undermine such ideas. She does so in terms of race (Introductory, *The Athenian*, 1901, December 1).

This is done in one of her speeches about women's education. In this speech, she said that one of the problems with education was the education of black women, especially when it is done by northern women. These women, Moore held, were not sensitive to the nuances of Southern discourse and more specifically, the prejudices of Southern discourse. A southern white woman would know where to draw the line. This, of course, is an argument to preserve that type of discourse including the overtly racist social and legal arrangements (Address by Mary Norman Moore, *The Athenian*, 1912, January 1).

The blundering efforts of Northern white women would lead to ostracism from southern white society. So, Moore sees the supervision of black women's education by white women as a type of public good. A good in a very fundamental way, not just the superficial side of the life of a white woman.

The superficial manifests in the way black women copied white women in dress, manners, and habits—external factors. Moore has a more important aim. To expose them to the inner life of white women. The growing opportunity for women's colleges in this respect offer an opportunity for white women to do something of great good in the black community.

Moore advocated a certain type of sisterhood between black and white women. She believed that by being born and bred in the South, whether they were black or white, they became familiar with institutions, traditions and prejudices. These three dynamics could be characterized as the very definition of systemic racism, but Moore would not have seen them as a permanent condition. Moore's idea was that this was just the environment in which one had to work.

Moore saw women's work as broadening, and she connected that trend very specifically to what she called the great scheme for the redemption of the world. This is a very Christian theme. Moore ties it to the demands upon women to pursue careers as nursing, teaching, and also to be better homemakers. She referred to the fact that more women were becoming breadwinners in the modern post World War I economy. The church must answer the call to create a college that would be efficacious to the education of women. The colleges then become a leavening influence on the societies in which they find themselves.

Mary Moore's speeches and writings yield a lot of information about the environment in which the college discourse is going to arise. This leads to the themes of this period. The first,

unfortunately, is that the college, through its newspapers, is going to present a student discourse that thoroughly accepts racism regarding African Americans.

## **Race**

None of the following is presented with the purpose of shocking or offending the reader. The intent is to truthfully present the facts and to make the case for the student voice of conformity in the historical context of the times. This is the first section in which the actual words of students themselves are used and are indicative of choices made by students. Taken together these words and choices make the case for a tacit, thorough, and absolutely widespread sentiment of racism. Conformity to this ideal was as much a part of the discourse of conformity as attending chapel services.

Students wrote, spoke, and thought about African Americans in four ways. These ways relate to their view of the role of black people in society at-large. These ways are considerations of black people as inferior, unserious, separate, and subservient. Each of these attitudes can be found mixed together in a number of writings that assume they are true.

The earliest issue of the student newspaper for Athens Female College is from December 1901. In this issue, there is an editorial piece that begins with this shocking language, “Ever since the Civil War the Southern States have labored under a curse, the curse of the negro voters” (The New Constitution, *The Athenian*, 1901, December). This entry goes on to argue in favor of those provisions of the 1901 state constitution, which disenfranchised African American men.

The first attitude which comes through this piece is that African Americans are unserious in matters of political decision. Note the assumption that the southern states’ interests are synonymous with the interests of white people. In fact, there is a bald assertion that objections to

the Alabama constitution which claim it is inferior to the federal constitution misconstrue the original constitution (The New Constitution, *The Athenian*, 1901, December).

On this understanding, the original constitution was a product of a time when black people were mostly enslaved. This means that disenfranchisement was written into the original document on purpose. Strictly construed this view would mean that disenfranchisement, being the assumption of the founding generation, must be interpreted as settled law. To do otherwise is quite beyond the intent of the founding generation (The New Constitution, *The Athenian*, 1901, December).

Further, the basis for this determination in the context of 1901, according to this piece, is that African Americans are inferior. It accomplishes this by the mechanism of rules designed to exclude black men while not excluding white men. The rule was that no one could vote who was not of good character, either a soldier or descendant of a soldier, and who did not own at least three-hundred dollars' worth of property. The writer exclaimed, "This practically excluded every negro, without shutting out a single white man" (The New Constitution, *The Athenian*, 1901, December).

The writer then notes that Mississippi, Louisiana, North Carolina, and Virginia had already create similar provisions. This connects the Alabama effort to a widespread Southern effort at separation of the races and relegation of African Americans to an inferior place in such separation. Cut-off from any meaningful ability to participate in the franchise they were effectively put in a subservient role. This is the first way students wrote about race and it is clearly with an understanding that African Americans are inferior, unserious, separate, and subservient. It is worth noting here that the student newspaper records that slaves from local

plantations were the brick masons who helped build the original Founders Hall (Fact and Legend, *The Athenian*, 1990, November 1).

The next expression of race is found in two stories that join the political presumptions of white commitment to belief in the inferiority of African Americans with the attendant beliefs in their separateness, unseriousness, and subservience (Cooper, 1990). The students at Athens Female College mirrored these presumptions in their attitude toward President Theodore Roosevelt.

They disdained Roosevelt because they saw him as arrogant. Roosevelt apparently had issued orders for all departments of the federal government to use the standardized spelling of English according to Carnegie. The language from the student newspaper fairly drips with disgust.

The Athens Female College, however, begs leave to announce to the world through the columns of the *Athenian* that the spelling of Washington Irving, Sir Walter Scott, Charles Dickens, Edgar Allen Poe, W.M. Thackery and others of that noble company is good enough for our institutions of learning. (Editorial, *The Athenian*, 1906, October 1)

It is no surprise that the students would object to Roosevelt's relationship with Booker T. Washington. After the famous October 1901 dinner between Washington and Roosevelt at the White House the outcry from Southern racist politicians was immediate, strident, and laced with threats of violence (Cooper, 1990).

It is in this context that the students at Athens Female College weighed in on the pages of their student newspaper. After noting that Washington had recently given up his position advising Roosevelt on political matters, they go on to say, "while this is regarded as extremely unfortunate both for the president and the country it is thought that Mr. Roosevelt will soon

secure another ebon-hued statesman to assist him...” (Editorial, *The Athenian*, 1906, October 1). This is a directly racist sentiment.

The choice of language tells much about the endemic racism of the time and place. Note the choice to focus on skin color (“ebon-hued) as a marker of politics. Of course, on this view, Roosevelt would just find another advisor so long as he were black. Here then, is another way students talked about race—in a thoroughly racist tone. There are also two examples of how these racist sentiments were just a part of how these students understood normality.

The first incident illustrates the degree to which racist attitudes were intertwined with politics. It recounts the Japanese Ambassador in Washington making a complaint to Secretary of State Root. The complaint was about a California law establishing segregated schooling. The law, apparently, was that Japanese, Chinese, and African American (the article uses the common term “negro” to refer to African Americans), children attended segregated schools together. White children attended different schools.

This, of course, was not acceptable to the Japanese Ambassador who asked that Root get involved to change this policy. Root issued a statement saying that no state had the right to make such a law and that Japanese children should be allowed to attend white schools. This is interesting as far as it goes, and the student author of this editorial goes on to provide the rationale for ignoring this decree by Root.

First, the student author addresses the logic of this statement by Root. This comes in the form of a question. “If Japanese children are admitted to white schools why not Chinese and if Chinese why not Negroes?” (Editorial, *The Athenian*, 1906 September 1). Indeed, this question cuts to the heart of the matter. The author has a ready answer, however. The political fate of one who would uphold such a statement was surely bleak.

This even affects the supposedly fearless President Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt had to stand for election in 1908. How could he go before the voters of the state of New York with this position? Accordingly, Roosevelt “would hesitate a long time before he would say that New York white children should attend school with Negro children” (Editorial, *The Athenian*, 1906 September 1).

The second incident is almost casual in its presence in the school newspaper. It was common for the school newspaper to have a lot of information about individual students. There are a number of examples of this from the student newspapers between 1901 and 1931. These announcements included excitement over the fair, the new skating rink in Athens, the number of local marriages, and notes about which girls were visiting home and so forth.

Casually noted in this list is the fact that Miss Sarah Malone chaperoned a group of young boys and girls to see a presentation in nearby Decatur, Alabama. The 14 children had a great time. The presentation was a play called *The Clansman* (Editorial, *The Athenian*, 1906 September 1). This should sink in. This is the play based on the same book that was made into the original movie, *The Birth of a Nation*. The play, like the later movie, was an overtly racist portrayal of African Americans as unintelligent, subservient, and separate (Inscoc, 1987).

Taken together, the appearance of these two items in a student newspaper are strong evidence of the presumption of racism. One item normalizes the racist attitudes of voters and legitimates them through the reticence of elected officials to question these attitudes. The other sees the type of overt racism found in *The Clansman*, as wholesome for children. These elements of separateness, unseriousness, subservience, and inferiority are part of the shared values of the students.

Perhaps the most shocking entry about race during this period is a story from 1912 entitled “Priscilla and Her Parasol”. It recounts the story of Priscilla, an African American young woman who offers her services as a domestic servant to the author of the story, a Miss May. It is difficult to convey the degree to which the themes of subservience, inferiority, unseriousness, and separateness imbue this story. Priscilla is presented as an oddity. “I looked up from my sewing into the face of the blackest negro girl that I believe I ever saw. Her thick lips parted in a broad smile” (Priscilla and Her Parasol, *The Athenian*, 1912, January 1). This is just the beginning of a story, which sees Priscilla in distinctly racist terms.

Priscilla gets hired on at the pleasure of the Miss May to see how she would work out. In the course of her employment she relates that she has to go to a funeral but has no proper clothes to wear. The author graciously gives her some old clothes along with a red silk parasol. The story continues to relate a series of humorous (based on racist presumptions) events that occurred at the funeral based on the red parasol. Here is a representative sample. “Law, Miss May, dat was a bury’n’ what was a bury’n’. I ain’t never seed so many niggers glomerated in once place befo’ in dis nigger’s born days” (Priscilla and Her Parasol, *The Athenian*, 1912, January 1).

What can be said of this evidence? While they document racism they also situate racism in an institution of higher education at a particular time and the values that can be captured by a timeframe. People change during these timeframes. Why? How? One answer to that is in the type of discourse where these type of attitudes dominate—they do not always dominate. They also change.

One clue to this change is found in the values of key leaders such as Mary Norman Moore. This can translate into aspirations. Those aspirations can undermine the dominant values so that in time the basis for change becomes available.

One such basis, one that specifically tends to undermine racism, is in the view that African Americans can be educated. As noted, Moore believed they could and that they should be educated. She did believe that the races should be separate and that white women should educate black women. This view that they could be educated undermines the basis for thinking of them as absolutely inferior.

Writing about how values change over time is not an exercise in logic. It is an exercise in examining this type of evidence. On the one hand, there is no doubt of the racist values expressed in the student newspapers. On the other hand, there is no doubt that Mary Norman Moore provides a rationale for the education of black women that sees them as human in their own right. While accepting the societal norms Moore provided an educational vision for abandoning those norms—in time.

Another editorial from 1912 casts these type of aspirations within a distinctly racist framework. It commends missionary work in the Congo to educate African American women. It ties the uplift of people in Africa to an opportunity for African American women to do missionary work. The language still reeks with racism going so far as to assert that slavery in America created this missionary opportunity.

This is a twist on the old confederate defense of slavery as a positive good. Even so, the seeds of education here sown cannot logically endure in the same space as racism. They can endure in pre-rational form but eventually education will undermine and expose the gap between the unexamined racism and educational values, which must recognize African Americans as fully human.

## Women's Roles

There are a number of articles in the student newspapers that address women's roles. These often take the form of stories showing how these roles operated—these were object lessons in how successful women were in the world. Closely associated with those women's roles based ideals was a deeply held Christian faith. Together these created an important aspect of the ideological commitments necessary to support a discourse of conformity.

An early dynamic surfaces during this first period of Athens' history. There is tension between the ideal of womanhood as a wife and mother and the ideal of an educated woman as a person in her own right. This is conceived of as a result of an education. The habits of thought associated with a disciplined course of study and a regulated social environment allow women enter into a life of their own choosing. These are the hallmarks of such an education (The Influence of College Life, *The Athenian*, 1903, February 1).

This type education, however, exists in a world fraught with social norms of submission to men. The highest ideal remained marriage and motherhood. Even so a change in the way women conceived of their own agency vis a vis being educated begins to work as a type of intellectual leaven. The mastery of critical thinking by women is no less mastery than when it is accomplished by men.

This surfaces in a number of ways. One of the most striking comes from the March 1921 issue of *The Athenian*, in which it is plainly asserted:

No self-respecting girl could endure all the restraints that were formerly placed upon girls and women, men who have unlimited freedom can have no conception of the passionate revolt that girls feel against anything which threatens to deprive them of the little liberty they have won.

Yet, women feel the weight of conformity to men's expectations quite heavily. This leads to an assertiveness that accepts the traditional roles but transforms them in terms of broader social responsibility. These women will contribute to the world, they will be useful, and they will help solve problems because they have an education (Welcome Back to School, *The Athenian*, 1907, October 1).

In this context, there are three ways the student newspapers address the role of women. First, they accept the serving, submissive, and supportive role of women as an irreducible fact—a hard reality. Second, they convey the benefits and desirability of accepting this role in terms of highly romanticized stories. Finally, they write about how women reinforce this system of relationships with men through their own exclusively female social groups such as school clubs. The strain of rebellion against this surfaces as well and shines through these other modes of storytelling.

“The Story of a Uniform Hat” is perhaps one of the best illustrations of the penchant toward conformity fostered by the environment of Athens Female College. The hat is a metaphor for the nature of this environment. The fate of the unfortunate uniform hat emphasizes the idyllic paradise the school created for this uniquely privileged set of students (The Story of a Uniform Hat, *The Athenian*, 1909, February 1).

Reading the story gives no indication that Athens Female College was a place where anyone learned anything. It is not meant for that purpose. Rather, it is meant to show how the girls thought and behaved in their most natural social groupings—in activities with one another. To that end the story follows the fate of the hapless hat as it arrives in a box until it is finally used as fuel for a bonfire (The Story of a Uniform Hat, *The Athenian*, 1909, February 1).

Along the way, the reader learns that the hat was an obligation imposed on the girls by school authorities. This hat was one among several and was eventually given to a particular girl. She did not want to wear it at all but did, of course, because she was obliged to do so (The Story of a Uniform Hat, *The Athenian*, 1909, February 1).

The hat went several places the girl went and was treated poorly at each stop. First, it went home with her, about town, and to church. It then went with her to her home during Christmas where it was placed in a wardrobe and ignored until the time came for returning to school. After that, it was left on a table in the library until “the matron came along and carried me to the pound” (The Story of a Uniform Hat, *The Athenian*, 1909, February 1).

After being returned to the girl the hat finds itself lying on the girl’s bed for two weeks until another girl carelessly sits on the hat smashing it flat. After this, the hat accompanies the girl to an outdoor location where the girl joined other girls to socialize. Of course, the poor hat is left out in the elements and of course became soiled and unattractive. The story ends with the girls starting a bonfire into which all the hats are to be burned (The Story of a Uniform Hat, *The Athenian*, 1909, February 1).

The essence of the school discourse is on display in this story. There are a number of inanimate object stories scattered throughout this era of the school’s history. Each of them has a moral lesson. In this one there are two—conformity and rebellion.

This story has elements of conformity as well as an indication of an undercurrent of rebellion. This rebellion, as an attitude, will lay latent for the most part during this era of conformity. The dynamics of the college during this era are such that rebellion cannot dominate, yet it is there in paradoxical contrast to conformity.

The theme of conformity is evident in the obligatory nature of the hat. It must be accepted and worn on some occasions. The hat tracks important aspects of the student experience. There is a strong element of social relations. The hat goes to town, to church, it visits the girl's home, it goes to the library, the girl's room, and outside for social activities.

In each of these the requirement to have the hat is ever present. Yet, the girl is cavalier about this requirement. She stuffs it away when she visits home. She forgets it in the library. She leaves it out and another girl sits on it. She leaves it in the elements. Finally, it is burned in a bonfire (The Story of a Uniform Hat, *The Athenian*, 1909, February 1).

A simple story such as this one reveals something important about the student voice at Athens Female College. It is an isolated, privileged, conformist environment. The girls follow routines in church and town. These expectations are as much a part of the student discourse as attending classes.

Notice how the girls are not responsible for very much. This stands in contrast to an earlier clothing related story designed to show the subordination of African Americans. Just as Priscilla was shown to be ignorant, inferior, and separate, the girls here are shown to be clever, central, and essential. The student discourse this underwrites is broadly conformist despite the rebellion against the hat.

That rebellion cannot overcome the need for conformity as the story illustrates. The first point then about the student voice is shown to be strongly conformist with an undertone of rebellion. A more direct representation of the conformist nature of the school is shown in two exchanges of letters between students at Athens Female College.

The first letters are between a student who transferred from Athens Female College to the University of Alabama (Letter No 1, *The Athenian*, 1907, December 1; Letter No 2, *The*

*Athenian*, 1907, December 1). The second are from a first year student named Marguerite to her mother (Letters from Marguerite, *The Athenian*, 1909, March 1). Taken together they indicate the terms under which the discourse of conformity operated.

Perhaps the most obvious aspect of this is the hazing at the University of Alabama. This was quite different from the environment at Athens. This points up a difference between a coeducational institution and a women's college. The hazing at Alabama applied to all freshmen. It began by giving all freshmen the name "rat" (Letter No. 1, *The Athenian*, 1902, December 1).

Rats were required to tolerate a fair amount of mild hazing. This included being yelled at, required to do funny things such as sing on demand, or march around in groups. The most common feature was the requirement to use the word "rat" as a title in conversation with all upperclassmen (Letter No. 1, *The Athenian*, 1907, December 1).

Beyond this were the obvious advantages of the larger university given its material wealth. The use of elaborate and well-stocked libraries, the variety of courses, the greater numbers of friends, and the absorption with college football all created a different environment from Athens Female College. The answer back to this letter from the girl who was still a student at Athens shows more of the routines and how they contrast with Alabama.

The Athens of this era included requirements to adhere to a routine. This routine included when to eat, how to behave, and where to go. The routine for meals meant that students had no choice about the matter. In fact, Mary Norman Moore was typically present on Saturdays in order to conduct inspections. Presumably this was of dress, deportment, and attendance. Also, the girls were required to participate in some form of club activity such as art or music. All of these routines were enforced by an elaborate system of demerits resulting in a variety of punishments and corrective actions (Letter No. 1, *The Athenian*, 1907, December 1).

Girls were in a college environment that aggressively shaped their social lives. The ideals activating this were related to more than just intellect. As seen in the ideas of Mary Norman Moore, character development was the primary aim of a college education for women. This resulted in a highly standardized, routinized, and monitored environment. It is no wonder that girls conformed.

Going to Athens Female College was a matter of adjustment. There is a notional series of letters between a student named Marguerite and her mother written not long after Marguerite began attending Athens Female College. Marguerite runs the gamut of emotion from elation, to depression, to homesickness, to finally acceptance and reconciliation to the demands of college. Marguerite swings wildly between happiness and despondence as a result of these factors (Letters from Marguerite, *The Athenian*, 1909, March 1). This story, perhaps timeless in the nature of the first year college experience is also an indicator of the discourse of conformity—Marguerite, not Athens Female College, changed.

Another story about school life addresses the different reasons why girls go to college (Why did you come to college? *The Athenian*, 1921, January 1). There are three reasons, so says this article, for going to college. First, one goes because of parental obligation—Mom and Dad say to go. Next, one goes just to have a good time. Invariably this leads to cliques which undermine the unity of the student body. These cliques tend to ignore optional student activities. Finally, there are students who attend and participate as much as possible. These students get the most out of college life.

This emphasis on the best type of student is further evidence of the discourse of conformity. It permeates the thinking and feeling of students during this time period. Aberrations are roundly condemned. There is little room for dissent. These are all hallmarks of a strong

discourse of conformity. School was clearly about much more than classes. In fact, very little of what actually happened in classes is to be found in the student newspapers of this era.

The daily routines were an exercise in conformity. The ideals of womanhood and Christianity were primary goals of these routines. A look at how women's roles and faith worked to create this ideal is another aspect of school life expressed in the voice of conformity.

One direct example of this is from an advice column appearing in the school newspapers of this era. In this column the girl seeking advice is vexed over the possibility of losing her fiancé. This girl had changed her course of study from the regular college course to a business course. Her fiancé's father objected to this threatening to disinherit the boy if he did not marry a college graduate (Nellie Gray Heart Specialist, *The Athenian*, 1920, January 1).

What is Nellie Gray's advice? This quote says much about the centrality of the ethos of submission to men prevalent in the larger society; more importantly here it says much about the role the college played in reinforcing this ethos. Nellie Gray offer this advice "do not run the risk of losing him; take up your college work again. I assure you a good man is hard to find" (Nellie Gray Heart Specialist, *The Athenian*, 1920, January 1).

This ideal is overtly spelled out in a 1912 article addressing the elements of a successful girl. It is worth noting that the word "girl" is used to describe women students in many of the articles from the student newspapers. The choice of language is an indicator of their view of human development. "Girls" required a closely guarded environment in order to properly develop.

The ideal girl attends to her beauty and charm, says the article, and is concerned primarily with the happiness of others—not her own (The Girl Who Succeeds, *The Athenian*, 1912, April 1). Her work in life is directed toward the home and the everyday duties required

there. Yet, such a girl, with the proper education makes the home a place where intelligent conversation, and refined taste in literature, music, and art prevail (*The Girl Who Succeeds*, *The Athenian*, 1912, April 1).

One instructive and highly stylized story shows the ideal of relationships between women students. This story is entitled “The Club” and is found in the February 1, 1907 issue of *The Athenian*. It is about a school club and their troubles over one girl who was viewed as problematic because of her crass, vulgar, and unpolished ways. This story illustrates the power of the social norms expected of women. These are the norms indicated in the ideal girl story already discussed. This story shows how these ideals are reinforced by the girls themselves.

This story centers on a club at a female college. In it, Elizabeth, Fan, Dot, and Kate are going to play the leading roles. Elizabeth and Fan are roommates and officers in the club. They are both concerned with the aberrant behavior of a girl named Dot, who is friends with Kate. Dot does not conform to the social expectations of most of the other girls in the club and so Elizabeth and Fan, as officers, decide to remove her from the club.

The behaviors of concern are mostly about language. Dot used a lot of slang, and even some vulgarity. Even worse, these habits were spreading to the other girls! Something had to be done to get Dot to see the error of her ways. The story, quite tellingly, asserts, this must be done for Dot’s own good. The power of conformity during this era permeates even student regulating social groups such as this club.

The method of removal was to give her a letter detailing these concerns and to ask her to leave the club. All the girls in the club agreed to this in a private meeting and Beth dutifully delivered the letter. Upon delivering the bad news, Beth left Dot to think things over.

Dot was predictably upset and so was her friend Kate. Kate's disappointment affected the harmony of the club even disrupting plans to attend a dance. The girls had a discussion in which they considered apologizing to Dot and asking her to come back to the club. This was duly rejected but the girls remained upset and divided over how Dot was treated. Dot, for her part, maintained an icy silence toward the entire group which served as fuel for their disunity.

The story comes to a climax in a fashion completely in harmony with the student ethos of conformity which dominates this era of Athens' history. Dot finally goes to Elizabeth's room and tells her she and the other girls were right. Dot concedes that her behavior was not appropriate and tells her she will do her best to earn the respect of all the girls.

This story has a sappy almost maudlin tone. To contemporary readers it cannot but seem to be hopelessly old-fashioned and quaint. To the time, and to the audience for which it was intended however, this story is a powerful testament to what appropriate behavior and sentiments ought to be. It is a moral object lesson in the ethos of conformity.

## **Religion**

Faith is also an integral part of how students wrote about the college experience. The Christian religion and especially the Methodist practice of Christianity is paramount. Statements about religion permeate the college catalogues as well. Two good examples of this are in routines and tragedies. School routines show the centrality of religious practice during this era. Tragedy provides a particularly enlightening expression of faith. The typhoid fever epidemic of 1909 shows this particularly well.

With respect to routines, girls were required to attend the church of their parents' choice. The school day was organized around religious practices. There were two chapel services daily—both mandatory. There was a mandatory weekly prayer meeting. There was also

compulsory participation in the Missionary Society—a permanent organization (Religious Privileges, Athens College for Young Women, Catalogue, 1901).

This emphasis on religious practice also influenced both curriculum and faculty appointments. The 1901 school catalogue provides three “essential features” required of each college instructor. First, teachers must all be members of some Christian congregation. It did not have to be Methodist. Next, teachers had to be experienced and competent in teaching. Finally, they had to display social standing through elegance of manners (The Faculty, Athens College for Young Women, Catalogue, 1901).

Athens Female College was clearly in the business of creating graduates of character and intelligence. The foundations of character were actively professing Christianity. The types of instructors required dovetailed nicely with the requirements for participation in religious practices. This is tried significantly during the typhoid fever outbreak of 1909.

Typhoid fever broke out at Athens Female College in October 1909; students began dying by the 10<sup>th</sup> of November. Between October 1909 and January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1910, at least 50 students in a class of 200 had become ill. At least six died. During the crisis, President Mary Norman Moore consulted with the local board of trustees and local doctors after which she granted a recess of school activities and instituted a quarantine for those afflicted (Typhoid Fever Outbreak, *The Athenian*, 1910, May 1; The Epidemic of 1909, *The Athenian*, 1990, November 1).

The role of faith in this crises is illustrated by the memoriam to Florence Brown. Brown was secretary to Dr. Mary Norman Moore. During the epidemic she insisted on remaining at the college and caring for those girls who were quarantined. During this service she contracted the

disease and died on November 5<sup>th</sup>, 1909. In Dr. Moore's memoriam which appeared in the school newspaper she features the role of the Christian faith in Florence Brown's life.

The centrality of Brown's faith is emphasized in terms of her personal piety and her observations of religious practices. Brown exhibited the highest ideals of Christian charity and service to others during this trying time. Moore frames Brown's life in terms of an active faith lived out in the crises (In Memoriam, *The Athenian*, 1910, February 1).

Athens Female College illustrates a type of college which featured religious practice as the primary shaping force on all college activities. From the requirements that teachers be Christians to the many religious services students were required to attend, to the framing of the typhoid fever crises in terms of Christian values, Athens Female College was overtly Christian.

This is consistent with Benne's well known typology in which the degree to which a Christian worldview was present is the deciding factor in describing and classifying a college as a specifically Christian college. This typology examines vision, public rhetoric, membership requirements, academic departments, chapel attendance, ethos of piety, and church support and governance. In this sense, during this era, Athens Female College is an orthodox Christian college (Ringenberg, 2006).

### **Conclusion—The Discourse of Conformity**

A type of voice shines through the many stories appearing in the student newspapers during this time period. An important factor is that the school newspaper was thought of as a place where the girls could express themselves. The November 1, 1920 issue of *The Athenian* puts it this way, "whether it be a good joke or a beautiful thought beautifully expressed, the *Athenian* should be an expression of Athens College students both when they are serious and

thoughtful and when they are merry” (What do you think about it? *The Athenian*, 1920, November 1).

The student newspapers are therefore excellent sources for how these students thought, felt, and acted. As noted earlier, there is a nascent strain of discontent about the submissive role of women. In fact, there is a type of contradiction involved with the idea that an education is liberating in the sense Mary Norman Moore described and the continued submissive role of women generally. The voices of discontent are muted but they are present.

The first student newspaper of the next era of student voices is December 1931. Up until that point such objections to conformity as exist come in terms of opposition to the view of women as subordinate. There are some few articles such as one from March 1921 that offer some hints at the aporias associated with educating women. Education itself acts as a type of solvent stripping away and laying bare the illogical and presumptive nature of male hegemony. In time this will apply to racism—but not yet.

The March 1921 issue of *The Athenian* has an article which discusses the changes being wrought by women’s improved education. This article asserts that the era of physical prowess is over. In its wake comes the dominance of intellect. In this respect women are every bit the equal of men. The time has come for women to assert their own freedom to contribute to this new reality and to reject the idea that men create standards of behavior for women (The Girl of Today, *The Athenian*, 1921, March 1).

Men, after all have made great fools of themselves over the centuries. Smoking, for example, is a masculine habit. It is of course possible for women to smoke though it is frowned upon. More importantly though is that smoking is harmful to one’s health. So, while women

could use their newfound freedom to indulge they should not take license to do so (The Girl of Today, *The Athenian*, 1921, March 1).

Women, in other words, can create a new ideal of how to be an intelligent human being that is better than what men have created! This means that a new age of women has dawned in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and women's education has done much to create these conditions. The responsibility accompanying this reality is to bring everyone along—even men, to creating a better future for everyone (The Girl of Today, *The Athenian*, 1921, March 1).

This type of thinking is comparatively rare during this era, but it does exist. This is particularly so later in the era. Something important is clearly happening as a result of education. The ideals of this education are captured in these aspirations from a student newspaper of the next era of student discourse. This is from the May 18, 1935 issue of *The Athenian* and is addressing the meaning of an education at Athens College, “it bequeaths to all an indestructible tradition of ordered life, eccentric personality, and spiritual ideals that serves slowly to transform them into citizens of righteousness” (History of the class of 35, *The Crow's Nest*, 1935, May 18). This, and other developments point toward the next era of student discourse and serve as a good transition point to those considerations.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE ERA OF COLLEGIALITY

This student voice arises primarily from the addition of men to the student body. It is a hybrid voice as it contains strains of conformity, rebellion, and vocationalism. Conformity and some mild rebellion were evident in the first student voice; during this new era, these strains will be rearranged to meet the new dynamic of male students.

The era of collegiality is distinguished by the continuing adoption and adaptation of practices and organizational forms regnant in American colleges and universities of the timeframe between 1934 and 1960. Just as state universities were gaining the distinctive features that made them into the modern university, so Athens was attempting to do. There arose organized sports, clubs, and activities designed to emulate the collegial environment spreading during this time frame (Rudolph, 1962, Veysey, 1965, Thenlin, 2004). The student voice of collegiality is an educational environment in which learning was primarily concerned with vocational potential. It is also a social environment in which students express their values, beliefs, behaviors, and norms.

Vocationalism was the reason for going to college and so influenced the college experience. This is the essence of the era of collegiality. The persistent themes of race and women's roles show how the changes taking place at the college are reflected in the words, tones, and expressions of students.

## The New Era

The student newspapers of this era address a number of issues that indicate the types of dynamics that gave occasion for the student voice of collegiality. An advantage of using school newspapers is that they are similar in the topics they cover and the concerns they foreground. Their concerns are with what is of interest to students, and they show the students intellectual and emotional expressions. This makes the task of close reading for evidence of change a challenge, but it also offers an opportunity.

The opportunity is to find representative samples of time periods. A good example of that for the discourse of collegiality is the issue of *the Athenian* for the 26<sup>th</sup> of September 1949. This edition has a feel to it best described by the words of one of the articles—"A New Era" (A New Era, *the Athenian*, 1949, September 26).

There are references to the old industrial unit having been discontinued. The industrial unit was the brainchild of President E.R. Naylor in the early 1930s. This was a program allowing selected students to pay for tuition, dorm room, and cafeteria meals by working in a textile operation which made undergarments. World War II ruined the supply stream for raw materials required to run this operation and so it closed (A New Era, *the Athenian*, 1949, September 26).

By 1940 these facilities were the object of a bargain between a Chicago garment manufacturer and the city of Athens to bring a plant to Athens. This is a move away from the old Naylor led experiment with the industrial unit, the college stood to get some rent for use of some buildings (A New Era, *the Athenian*, 1949, September 26). This is a trace of history left in the memory of students in the student newspaper.

Of interest is a string of facts one can learn from this issue. There is a note that the first full blown graduation ceremonies since before the war were held. Also, boys outnumbered girls

by three to one! There are notes that some students and professors served in the military during the war. A number of buildings on campus were being renovated—the theme of change, freshness, rejuvenation in the aftermath of the war are evident in the spirit of this edition. Also, of note is that the school newspaper is changing its name from *The Crow's Nest*, back to *The Athenian* (*The Athenian*, 1949, September 26). The following quote from the September 26<sup>th</sup>, 1949 issue of the *Athenian* sums up the ethos of the era of collegiality at Athens College.

A new era is underway in the colorful history of century Athens College—an era marked by a revived spirit of fellowship and togetherness and a period of reconstruction, remodeling, and putting new life in the buildings that housed our predecessors. A venture into the football world, a move to make the local school meet the requirements of the Southern Association of Colleges and Universities and a new, progressive administration are some of the too numerous to mention reasons for the new era at Athens College. For many years, the pattern of life on the campus has been confined to the conventional, the traditional or the thing that suited the tradition. A period of near stagnation has engulfed the school--no progressive spirit has shown itself. Now the school is at the turning point--we can either continue in our prosperous new era or fall back into the great vat of inactivity and don't-care attitude that we have just left. Think it over members of the student body, the choice is yours. (A New Era, *the Athenian*, 1949, September 26)

Another representative issue of *the Athenian* is from December 1950. This issue has a few items emblematic of a small regional college and what that means for the local community. First, there are two articles about rules--one outlining the rules on smoking and another outlining the rules on absences from class. Both have language which shows the bureaucratic and authoritarian nature of the school (*the Athenian*, 1950, December 1).

The policy on missing classes shows these themes of authority and bureaucratic control. No student was allowed to miss even a single class without explicit permission from the college dean. The night school students would obtain permission from the night school dean. Only illness of the student or an immediate family member (or something similarly grave) would qualify for consideration (Absence Regulations Explained at College, *the Athenian*, 1950, December 1).

Further, there was a sliding scale of punishments relating to absences which also included tardiness. One unexcused absence resulted in probation, two resulted in suspension for one semester. If a student was tardy three times this would constitute one unexcused absence, of course six meant suspension for the semester (Absence Regulations Explained at College, *the Athenian*, 1950, December 1). During the era of collegiality these types of rules were taken for granted although there were complaints about them from time to time. They will, tellingly, become a flashpoint for student activism during the next era—the era of emancipatory reason.

There are also articles about the personal lives of students and alumnae. One quite representative article is the obituary of Mrs. Annie Elizabeth Carter who attended Athens during the 1860s. She went on to live in the local area and raised a number of children one of whom (Inez) graduated from Athens in 1908. Also, this issue mentions that there is a night school at Athens College. This portends an important change. Who is able to attend college and how they are taught will in time become mostly a night school experience (*the Athenian*, 1950, December 1).

Dr. Perry B. James was president of Athens College from 1949 to 1959 (McLin, 1996). Like Mary Norman Moore before him, Dr. Perry wrote and spoke about educational topics. His

contributions found in the student newspapers are a good example of how a small, regional, religious college came to embrace a broadly liberal view of education.

James was hopeful that education would be a force for good. Writing in 1957 James outlined the context of education and parlayed that into a vision of education which showed the continued faith in the efficacy of a liberal education. He began by noting that at the time three mission students were attending American colleges and universities and that by 1970 this figure was expected to double (Education the Hope of the Future, *the Athenian*, 1957, October 25).

For Athens this meant, according to James, a necessity to grow. This aspiration would fuel the vision of the college to meet the practical needs of a growing Tennessee Valley in North Alabama. James envisioned this as a kind of trust between the community and the educational institutions writ large (Education the Hope of the Future, *the Athenian*, 1957, October 25). James saw education as a public good for these reasons.

James' language is imbued with the hopefulness of the time. This hopefulness in the efficacy of education to meet the changing technological demands of the age is at the heart of his view of the college as a public good. He points to the buildings on campus which are shot through with the symbolism of the Christian faith. James saw the institution itself as a kind of trust with the past which is oriented toward the practical needs of the future (Education the Hope of the Future, *the Athenian*, 1957, October 25).

James noted the suffering, indeed the despair of the times. In a world threatened by the tensions of the cold war James held forth the old fashioned liberal arts college as the way to a fuller and improved life for all citizens (Education the Hope of the Future, *the Athenian*, 1957, October 25) James stated it this way:

[o]ur strength must be a unique compound of economic freedom and spiritual idealism. Victor Hugo wrote that "greater than the trend of mighty armies is an idea whose hour has come." That hour is here and now when Americans must face as never before their responsibility for a more adequate system of education from the kindergarten through the college. The hope of the future rests upon the youth of today who are trained in ethical concepts, in the dignity and worth of the individual; trained to value the right of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness in a free world. (Education the Hope of the Future, *the Athenian*, 1957, October 25)

James contrasted this hopefulness to the despair of communist countries. He noted that communism amounted to an attack on the liberal way of life. Colleges, as centers of reasoned discourse and academic freedom were essential to resisting communist attacks on the intellectual and moral centers of American society (Education the Hope of the Future, *the Athenian*, 1957, October 25).

James therefore believed that higher education must broaden its scope to include both liberal arts as well as specialized studies in the sciences. The times demanded this approach and Dr. James was dedicated to accepting the challenge at Athens College. This encompassed students coming to understand how their studies created a relationship to the natural world, to society at large, and to God.

All of this encouraged James. His view was that an aggressive program of building and recruitment of new students was necessary. By joining this ambition to the need for education James forged an aggressively idealistic approach to education (Education the Hope of the Future, *the Athenian*, 1957, October 25).

Finally, James tied all of this to a commitment to democratic liberty. James saw liberty as the property of educated citizens. In a world more technologically oriented an education was necessary in order to maintain individual liberty. Otherwise those in power would simply regulate life in as many ways as possible. Avoiding this required an educated citizenry—this task only higher education could perform, according to James (Education the Hope of the Future, *the Athenian*, 1957, October 25).

James saw in the growing Tennessee Valley an opportunity to provide educated people for the jobs sure to come. He saw the dedication to education along with the practical aim of providing an intelligent workforce as necessary. Athens College had an opportunity to educate future leaders in North Alabama (Education the Hope of the Future, *the Athenian*, 1957, October 25).

This era then is abundant in topics to interrogate. Taken together these topics will reveal the nature of the student discourse of collegiality at Athens College. Over time, Athens College asserted an identity of vocationalism but it was expressed in a collegial environment. The evidence of the type of student voice which developed suggests that race and women's roles are persistent themes. Religion is important in this era as well since Athens was still a Methodist affiliated school. There is not much in the way of rebellion but there is tension evident in religion, race, and women's roles issues. This will surface in discussion of those themes. It is important to note though that this tension lays a foundation for open rebellion as will be found in the next era of student discourse.

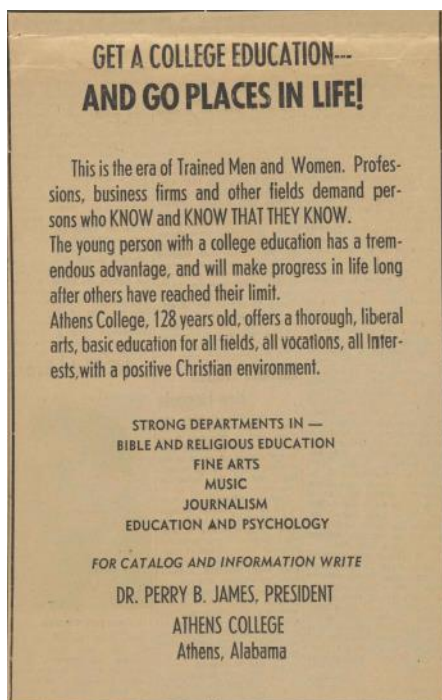
## **Religion**

Figure 2 shows an advertisement for the college from the 1950s. It illustrates several themes from the era of collegiality; religion is among these themes. What stands out is how

religion is decentered a bit as a reason to attend Athens College. Notice how the main selling point is the usefulness of a college education for job and career prospects. All jobs, careers, and vocational pursuits are within the potential of a college graduate. Yet, this is set in a Christian environment. Also, religion is among the academic programs that Athens College particularly emphasizes.

### Figure 1

*Advertisement from The Athenian, 1 June 1950*



During the era of collegiality, the religious nature of the college underwent a change. Religion became decentered as a main purpose to attend Athens over time. It never completely disappeared. In fact, it was dominant in that it was among the very few required activities. Chapel attendance is an example of this aspect of religion at Athens College. Religion as a reason to be in school and as a place of religious consecration weakened over this era until by the end it was only a place where one could study religion academically.

This unfolded in several ways. There are surveys which appear in the student newspaper at various times which will show how student opinion about the place of religion in the college experience showed a decline in its importance. There is also the annual religious emphasis week activities which will also decline in intensity over time. Finally, there are a number of social expressions which included religious themes and show how a broad liberal protestant consensus came to characterize the ideological type of religion practiced at Athens College. The best example of this is chapel attendance.

There are three student surveys during this era which paradoxically show both the importance of religion and the slow decline in the primacy of religion in the life of the college. Taken together they give a glimpse of how students felt about religion. These feelings are helpful in understanding student discourse in its religious expression.

The first survey, from December 1939 sought to gauge student attitudes toward on-campus religious programs. It asked three questions. The first asked if students believed they had received any direct benefit from religious organizations on campus. Seventy-percent said yes, 16% said no, and 14% said this was doubtful (Poll of Campus Opinion, *the Crow's Nest*, 1939, December 1).

The second survey is from November 1940. The first question on this survey asks if students enjoyed the nightly vespers services. This was a voluntary activity. Students overwhelmingly responded positively to this question with 99% responding yes. Next, the survey asks if students would have chosen the current leaders in the various religious organizations on campus. This also gets a positive response with 93.7% of respondents indicating yes. The lowest rating is for a question specifically addressing the religious character of the college (Poll of Campus Opinion, *the Crow's Nest*, 1940, November 30). This question asked if students would

prefer to be at Athens with an overt religious identity, or another institution without a strongly religious point of view. To this, 87.3 % indicating they would prefer Athens, while 12.7% indicated they would not prefer Athens (Poll of Campus Opinion, *the Crow's Nest*, 1940, November 30).

Finally, in a more general survey of student interest in articles in the student newspaper an interesting development occurs. The survey asked students to indicate which columns and items in the student newspaper they found most enjoyable. The largest block of topics which garnered interest were the various gossip columns—these garnered 50% of the positive responses. Interest in the sole religious material—sermons, was a mere 5% (Student Poll Held at College on Crow's Nest, *the Crow's Nest*, 1948, April 30).

The religious nature of the school was accepted by the students. In many cases they believed the sundry religious programs and organizations were beneficial to them personally. It would not be accurate to say that religion was a consuming aspect of college life at Athens. Student interest in newspaper columns indicates as much. This data point shows a live and let live attitude toward religion.

The emerging situation was ripe for change. Religion loomed large in the life of the college but not necessarily in the interest of the students. The potential for loss of interest in religion was certainly present even though the overwhelming number of students supported religious activities and prefer the religious environment of Athens College.

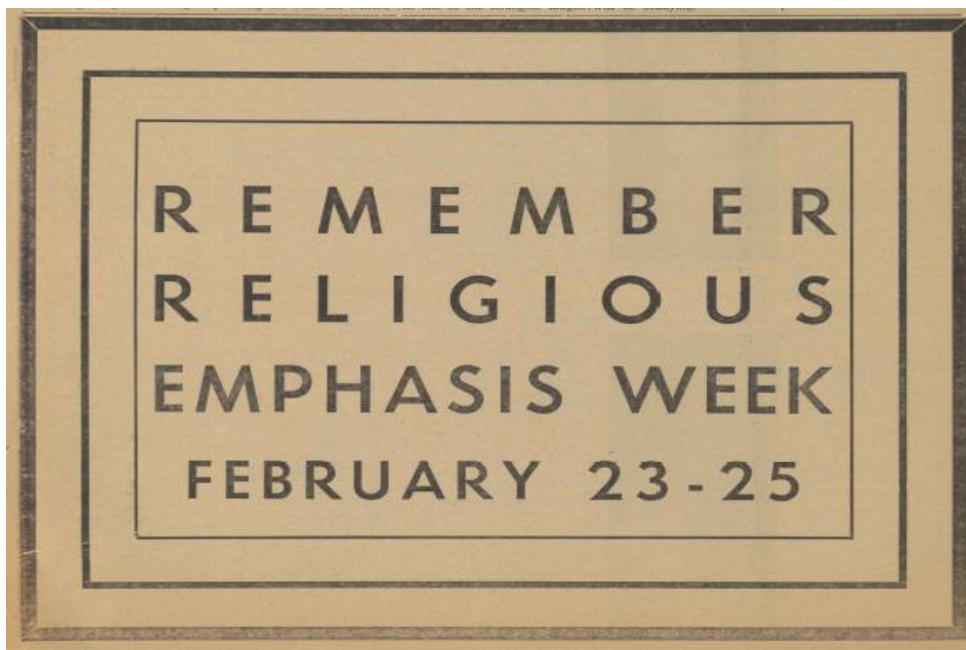
Even so, Athens College was not a monastery—it was a small Methodist school. As students navigated this environment they certainly knew they were in a religious school. The question becomes: what difference did religion make? One answer to that is in another practice—religious emphasis week.

Religious emphasis week was an annual event throughout the period of collegiality. It was born of the decline in the YWCA as the primary expression of campus-wide religious impulses. Just as the YWCA had been an organization for religious expression in the form of meetings, trips, and religious services, so religious emphasis week came to be a campus-wide expression of religious themes. The Student Christian Association—a body representative of all types of Christian organizations, sponsored this annual event.

Religious emphasis week was regularly featured in the student newspapers of this era as well as being listed as part of the school year in the yearbook (It did us good, *the Crow's Nest*, 1941, October 4; Religious Emphasis Week, *the Athenian*, 1957, October 4; *The Columns*, 1957).

**Figure 2**

*Religious Emphasis Week, 22 February 1960, The Athenian*



The 1941 religious emphasis week was reported on in the student newspaper. The week consisted of vesper services and sermons. These were aimed at the moral and spiritual

development of students. The overwhelming message was that Christianity was central to the life of an educated person. Dr. Naylor, the president of the school preached as did other members of the administration and faculty (It did us good, *the Crow's Nest*, 1941, October 4).

The 1957 religious emphasis week observations are also reported on in the student newspaper. This issue provides a valuable reference point as it includes the opinions of several students on the topic of religious emphasis week. While the comments are mostly positive they do not indicate an environment of religious coercion (What is religion in life week? *The Athenian*, 1957, February 19). Athens was a religious school, but it was not fundamentalist. It did not require assent. This sets it apart from those type schools.

First, it had to appeal to reason as well as custom and tradition. It also had to show that religious conviction was important to a flourishing life. Finally, it had to create an ecumenical atmosphere. The students made comments which illustrate each of these themes.

A common thread was that students should take the opportunity to talk about religion in a context where they could relate it to the problems they faced. The college atmosphere, further, was best for broadening ones view of religion through exposure to topics they had probably never thought about much. Finally, the week should result in more overt expressions of religious practices such as prayer and church attendance (What is religion in life week? *The Athenian*, 1957, February 19).

Finally, there were social practices which show the importance of religion during the era of collegiality at Athens College. The best example of a social practice is chapel attendance. Chapel provided the administration the opportunity to emphasize ideological commitments. These included a liberal protestant emphasis in religion and a broad commitment to a liberal arts education.

Chapel also was the subject of a growing rift between the students and the school administration. A growing divide over the mandatory nature of chapel is evident throughout this period. Students make regular comments in interviews and columns noting their opposition to any coercion in attending chapel. The administration responds in several columns noting the absolute requirement to attend and outlining measures for verifying student attendance.

The ideology expressed in chapel is a blend of liberal protestant Christianity and broad liberality of mind resulting from a liberal arts education. It is worth noting here that these ideological commitments will come in tension with the growing emphasis on vocationalism in the school curriculum. In time, this will come to a crisis. That crisis will come to fruition in the next era of student discourse. For now, the ideological commitments are clearly stated in the student newspapers.

Dr. Naylor stated the contrast between traditional Christianity and the “new religion” as he calls it (Religion is Subject of Chapel Address, *the Athenian*, 1940, February 17). Naylor was referring to a change in emphasis in Christianity that surfaced in mainstream protestant denominations beginning in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and continuing through the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This emphasis stressed the social and aspirational nature of the Christian message. It was a form of social ethics and stood in contrast to the individualistic evangelical Protestantism regnant in the United States (Hordern, 1955).

This first ideological commitment will ironically lay the foundation for later protests. These will take the form of environmental concerns, and opposition to the war in Vietnam. For the moment they are part of the ideology most referred to in chapel. It does this through the inculcation of a socially aware liberal protestant Christianity. Chapel, as a required religious exercise is the place where this foundation is laid.

Another ideological commitment is illustrated by comments made by Dr. James in March 1958. James' topic is the importance of books in opening the mind to the wider world of experience (Books in the life we live, *the Athenian*, 1958, March 6). Books provide the door to this opened and broadening mind. This is the product of an education. This is another strain of thought brought out in chapel services—the benefits of wide reading.

These ideological commitments will adjust to institutional tension over time. As the school struggles with solvency issues the solution will eventually be to become a state institution. In that environment, by the late 1990s nearly all vestiges of the collegiate ethos will be gone. The process by which this occurs will transform the school into a more vocationally oriented institution. Thus, sentiments such as James' view of the place of books in the life of an educated person will attenuate. For the moment, chapel is the site of this liberal educational expression.

Finally, chapel attendance became a cause for tension between the administration and students. There were strict requirements for attending chapel, student assemblies, and meetings of the Student Government Association. The administration described this as a privilege of attending Athens College. Interestingly, day students were required to attend all services while night students attended only those occurring during the night school schedule. Attendance was monitored by student numbers assigned for the purpose (Athens College Chapel and Assemblies for Students to Attend, *the Athenian*, 1953, October 10).

This way of describing the requirement shows a potential rift—the experience and therefore the requirement of day versus night students. In time, the night school will be the majority of what the university offers. It is noteworthy here that the different requirements of day and night students is a part of school policy.

Not all students saw this as a privilege. Student discontent with mandatory chapel attendance surfaces in the student newspapers. In interviews and feature stories of students this comes out in surprisingly subtle ways. For example, in an interview with a student who came to Athens from Pennsylvania the student mentions his belief that mandatory chapel attendance should only be once a week (May I Present Jack McCorkle, *the Crow's Nest*, 1940, March 16).

Another student, from 1960, the last year of the era of collegiality, was the subject of an interview. This student, Thomas Rudder, had started Athens College but then enlisted in the Navy. Twelve years later he returned to Athens College to finish his degree. He notes that his pet peeve was mandatory chapel (College Student 12 Years, *the Athenian*, 1960, May 2).

This was not confined to the odd student here and there. In a 1955 column in the student newspaper there is a complaint on behalf of the entire freshman class. The complaint is that chapel tends to be boring. There is no music, in fact, the grand organ located in McCandless Hall where chapel is often held was the object of speculation. Did it work? No one had ever heard it! Further the students resented faculty diligence in checking to ensure every student was present (A Freshman Looks at Chapel, *the Athenian*, 1955, October 18).

This last theme of using wry humor to show their distaste for the boring chapel programs is amplified in a 1957 student parody of the faculty. A group of drama students performed this parody, of all times, during an actual chapel service! There were several small skits portraying the eccentricities of various members of the faculty and the administration. One of these took direct aim at chapel. A student, posing as the dean, offered a solution to the chapel attendance problem. Each student should hold hands and repeat the words "We will come to chapel" three times (Shocking "Expose" Reveals Whims of Faculty, Staff, *the Athenian*, 1957, April 23).

Of course, not all students were this critical of chapel. Yet even those supportive of chapel still observed that it needed to be interesting (Chapel Programs are Varied, *the Athenian*, 1959, November 9). Chapel then became the site of a developing rift between students and administration. This was so even when the students were not of complete unanimity of opinion about chapel. The battle lines were roughly what they would be in the next era of student discourse—the era of emancipation. These were the lines between authority and conformity. In time, authority would fail to maintain student assent for cooperation in anything much less chapel.

## **Race**

Race continued to be consistent with the attitudes of the broader society. That is to say they were frankly racist. Yet, during the era of collegiality countercurrents begin to surface; they never supplant the regnant racist attitudes, but they do provide a logic which will eventually undermine them. It is this logic which stands out. It does, however, exist in the midst of some shocking inhumane, degrading, and ignorant racial attitudes.

There are a number of ways this surfaces in the student newspaper. First, there are directly racist descriptions of people, especially African Americans. Next, there are other minoritized groups which are also described in derogatory terms although none so much as African Americans. Also, interestingly, during this time there are students from Cuba who attend college at Athens. They are never described in derogatory terms. Racism, like other ignorant worldviews, does not require consistency.

Then, there are what might be called social and political expressions. This commentary takes the form of opposing civil rights legislation, making observations about how African

Americans lived, and the United Daughters of the Confederacy as a presence on campus. This all adds up to a most unwelcoming attitude toward African Americans.

Finally, there is a glimmer of hope that these racist attitudes could change. There are sincere efforts to show that African Americans are neighbors and deserve respect. This comes about through school clubs and some writers in the school newspaper. These voices provide a public logic, which could in time undermine racist attitudes.

Regarding overt expressions of racism there are a number of examples. These examples show that racist attitudes were accepted as a matter of course during the era of collegiality at Athens College. It comprised the unstated assumption of what was acceptable.

One story from 1934 is about an African American farmer who calls President Roosevelt on the telephone. It is important to bear in mind that this story was meant to show the positive leadership qualities of President Roosevelt, yet the stereotypical language used to describe the black farmer is striking.

Sylvester, the farmer, calls Roosevelt in order to prevent the bank from repossessing his farm. Roosevelt arranges for an extension of his loan terms. The story asserts this is evidence of how great a leader Roosevelt was since he took the time to help a humble farmer. Consider, however, this language attributed to Sylvester:

After repeated attempts he finally managed to get President Roosevelt to the phone. The President said, "Who is this?" The man answered, "Dis is Silvester." Silvester who?"

"Silvester Harris, dese men wants to take my cotton and land and de papers say to call on you, so here I is." (The World Today, *the Crow's Nest*, 1934, March 3)

This presentation clearly emphasizes Sylvester's ignorance and simple-mindedness. The fact that it is considered normal to make such a presentation is strong evidence of the cultural

acceptance of racial denigration. This simple story, designed to show positive leadership qualities, situates itself in an environment of racism.

Related to this is another very short vignette from 1953. Consider the overtones of this piece, which was intended to be humorous. “Colored Minister: "Budders and sisters, I will preach to you tonight on hell. Brudder Smith will sing, "When De Roll Am Called I'll Be Dere””. (Colored Minister, *the Athenian*, 1953, October 1). This is another example of the tendency to cast African Americans as ignorant and as objects of humor. While it is true that these are not themes elaborated on with frequency—that is also not the point. Of interest is what it means that they should surface at all and the assumptions which they carry.

Another piece comes from 1957—deep into the era of collegiality. It is important to bear in mind that collegial activities such as clubs, athletics, and so forth coexisted with attitudes such as the ones here. They are all part of the student discourse.

The context of this piece of writing is that it was included in an issue of the *Athenian* for Founder’s Week that year. This was an annual celebration and included activities such as special plays by the college players—a drama club. It also featured homecoming day for alumni; special convocation speakers; a barbecue; and the crowning event, the Founders Festival culminating with the coronation of the Founder’s Queen (A Tribute to Moderation, *the Athenian*, 1957, October 25). This edition of the student newspaper presented items of general interest—including the following story.

The plot revolves around a lynching. It presents in vivid and grisly detail the particulars of a white mob removing a hapless African American from a jail in Kentucky. They took him across the state line into Tennessee and hung him by the roadside. They also shot him and lit a

fire underneath him, “with intent to destroy the body” (A Tribute to Moderation, *the Athenian*, 1957, October 25).

Soon they discovered another African American who had hidden from them in brush nearby. This fellow was returning from a coon hunt. Upon discovery, they took him from the brush and “swore to take his life if he ever dared reveal what he had beheld that night. The old man protested that the whole thing was purely an affair of the white folks” (A Tribute to Moderation, *the Athenian*, 1957, October 25).

The end of the story combines racial horror and racial denigration. The mob threatens the man, and the author of the piece portrays him similar to the pieces already examined in this section—as ignorant and an object of derision. The leader of the mob points to the hung, shot, and burned body of the African American and says he got what he deserved. To which the “old man craned his neck about and gazed for a moment upon the grisly spectacle. "Well boss" he said fervently, "it looks lak to me that he got off mighty mighty light" (A Tribute to Moderation, *the Athenian*, 1957, October 25).

This story contains all the elements of racism already indicated. Furthermore, it adds the dimension of casual acceptance of such racial violence, intimidation, and denigration. It is perhaps the most difficult story to read in the entire corpus of *the Athenian*. It represents the depths to which racism had inured these students to the presuppositions of their own racial superiority. The truth is that this passed as if it were normal because it was normal.

There are also social and political expressions. Three examples are found in opposing civil rights legislation, making observations about how African Americans lived, and the United Daughters of the Confederacy as an influence on campus.

In an article called “Dixie Rage,” the writer lamented the great evil of using the power of the federal government to enact President Truman's Civil Rights Program (Dixie Rage, *the Athenian*, 1948, April 30). One has to read twice the opposition to things like anti-segregation laws, anti-lynching laws, Jim Crow laws, and poll taxes. This article is a bald-faced support of segregation and solidarity—among southern whites. It is important to understand that this is an argument against the federal government doing all of these things while holding to the view that these things are within the purview of the states all the while giving full throat to segregation as a policy program (Dixie Rage, *the Athenian*, 1948, April 30).

Another example of how African Americans were regarded as something outside the norms of Athens College comes from a 1941 issue of the student newspaper. It records a trip into the city of Athens by a group of students. During the trip, they observed what must surely have been an African American young woman or perhaps a child. They expressed their sentiments as follows:

Farther on down the street we had to crane our necks to be sure that we had really seen a dark skinned girl walking along in bright red anklets, without shoes! We had. And what's more, a minute or so later she passed us again, still happy in her primitive splendor. (Gal About Town, *the Crow's Nest*, 1941, November 29)

The presentation of the girl in this story is further evidence of the place of race in the student discourse. Being white is the norm against which everything is judged. The evidence is cumulative in the direction of this conclusion.

In an innocuous enough piece in 1958 there is the announcement that Miss Carrie Lee Evans was awarded the Mary E. Mason scholarship by the local chapter of the United Daughters

of the Confederacy (Wins UDC Scholarship, *the Athenian*, 1958, September 1). This simple fact points to the pervasive nature of the white southern lost cause narrative of the Civil War.

The United Daughters of the Confederacy was an organization dedicated to the propagation of a pro-confederate understanding of the American Civil War—the lost cause narrative. They were at the height of their power in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when they were a political force (Wilson & Ferris, 1989). They influenced choices in school curriculum, created their own museums, placed statues, and infiltrated higher education in the form of clubs and in this case scholarships.

In this way, the dominant narrative of the lost cause became an assumption—a part of the air they breathed. This ties into race because it denies outright the centrality of slavery as a cause of the Civil War. It also decried the overweening interference of the federal government into southern affairs. All of this, of course, gives license to racists to dominate thought and thereby racial relations during this era.

Finally, on the topic of denigrating minoritized people the evidence is mixed. There are examples of mocking, derisive, attitudes toward Chinese and Native American groups. At the same time, a group of Cuban students attended Athens. These students were celebrated and spoken of in terms of social equality.

There is a 1934 humorous essay loosely based on the story of Pocahontas and John Smith. It is an important story because it demonstrates what was considered acceptable for humor. The story is fraught with phrases such as:

[f]rom behind a banana tree sprang about fourteen hundred and thirty-three bold bad redskins - "Ugh, John Smithum, come forth," commanded Big Chief Slide-off-The-Bank. But poor John stumbled and came forth. The Injuns got in huddle formation and placed

Johnnie on the cold ground with his head-on a hunk of granite. (Historic Events, *the Crow's Nest*, 1934, November 3)

A similar example of racialized humor is found in a 1958 issue of *the Athenian*.

Something called Chinese love poem appears. It is an example of mocking humor at the expense of accents.

Nice night in June, star shine, big moon, in park on bench with girl in clench me say me love. She too like love. Me smart me fast, never let chance pass. Me say O. K. wedding bells ring ring, Settle down, happy man. Another night in June, star shine, big moon, ain't happy no more, carry baby, walk floor. wife mad, me fuss, me mad, me cuss life one big spat, nagging wife bawling brat me realize at last me too darn fast. (Chinese Love Poem, *the Athenian*, 1958, December 16)

These two examples demonstrate the casual acceptance of stereotypical attitudes toward different racial groups. Taken together with the evidence so far these are strong indications that racism was endemic to the student discourse at Athens College during the era of collegiality. Yet, there is also evidence that these attitudes were being undermined.

Not every minority group was mocked, derided, or denigrated. Also, there is evidence of an ideological clash among the students. Some students defended the racialized environment of the school while others genuinely sought to understand minorities as equals. This evidence points to an historical cause of change—student discourse as a concomitant of organizational discourse found a basis for emancipation from organizational discourse in the emphasis on the intellect and learning. Thought, it seems, in such an environment will not honor past attitudes merely because they are past attitudes. In other words, tradition falters where reason grows.

Figures 4 and 5 are pictures showing Magdalia Rodriguez and Vicente Sanchez, two Cubans who attended Athens College in the 1950s. These two students are early examples of a trend that will continue in the next era of student discourse—the presence of international students. In these early examples it is important to note that each of these students is celebrated. They have successful experiences at Athens. Their ethnicity is never a cause for denigration or humor.

### Figure 3

*Magdalia Rodriguez, 1 September 1950, The Athenian*



### Figure 4

*Vicente Sanchez, 1 November 1953, The Athenian*



Another way in which racism was undermined at Athens College is found in the genuine interest in minorities among student clubs and social groups. There was a growing sense of the unique experiences of African Americans in particular. The best evidence for this is from student columnists and the activities of student organizations.

The first such reference is a small article in the 17 November 1934 issue of *the Crow's Nest*. The writer commends Carl Carmer's classic work of folk stories about Alabama. This is significant inasmuch as Carmer's book was among the first works to directly expose Alabama's racism, lynching, and Ku Klux Klan activity (Carmer, 2000). As such, the book was controversial to some southerners who resented the way it presented race relations in the state.

This short column addresses the controversy by noting that in their opinion Carmer had not treated Alabama unfairly. He had merely emphasized the strange and unique aspects of the state. No one, this author concluded, should be offended by the book (Words from a Bookwork, *the Crow's Nest*, 1934, November 17).

Another piece of evidence indicating a basis for change comes from student organizations. The Phi Sigma literary society sponsored a program addressing "the American Negro" ("American Negro, Phi Sigma Theme", *the Crow's Nest*, 1940, April 6). This program included presentations on the life of Booker T. Washington; African American musical compositions; a discussion of "negro" discourse; and selections from "negro" poems ("American Negro, Phi Sigma Theme", *the Crow's Nest*, 1940, April 6).

This represents a genuine attempt to engage African American discourse in a way that had not heretofore been evident. This is a small change in the direction of seriously considering the humanity of African Americans, but it is a change. It is not widespread throughout the college yet, but in time, this impulse will create the conditions for change.

There is a fascinating article from a 1942 edition of *the Crow's Nest*, which outlines what is at stake in current disruptions over race. In this article, the author strings together a number of vignettes about racial attitudes. These are noteworthy because they all compare unfavorably with white society. Yet, there is a type of logic at work here, which undermines racism. This quote

captures the central question: “Is there nothing of permanent value in the white civilization our fathers have built up with so much sacrifice? Must we not preserve it at all hazard, teach hatred for those races that threaten it?” (Who is my neighbor? *the Crow’s Nest*, 1942, February 14).

The article is quite enlightened for its time advocating:

Science has to tell us something about the consequences of different social arrangements and actions. The Bible and the religious literature of all times have to be studied anew before we can be sure that our attitudes to "neighbors" in the widest sense represent a really consistent moral philosophy and not merely spasmodic and even contradictory attempts. (Who is my neighbor? *the Crow’s Nest*, 1942, February 14)

This author recognized that an inflection point had been reached. The attitudes expressed in the vignettes were indeed racist in sentiment. In this reflection, the question of efficacy is paramount. Are not the old attitudes unable to meet the challenges of a changing multi-racial society? Indeed, they were.

### **Women’s Roles**

There is the continuing development of attitudes toward women’s roles based norms. During the era of collegiality, there is a strong inclination to continue viewing women as subordinate to men. This shows up in the ideals expected of women and in social practices, which governed them more closely than men were governed.

The ideal of women as charming, beautiful, cultured, and graceful is maintained. These are related to the roles women are expected to play. This made concerns about voice, poise, and hair arrangement important (Good Grooming, Charm and Grace are the essentials a Girl Should Acquire, *the Crow’s Nest*, 1934, January 27).

Men's attitudes were that women were desirable. This is unsurprising given the change from a women's college to a coeducational institution in the 1930s. In almost any column in the student newspapers from the 1930s where women are the topic, they are defined in relationship to masculine expectations. This includes sentiments such as:

Some will, some won't, some do, some don't, do you? I mean keep your date waiting, put on makeup every chance you get, smoke all the cigarettes you can, giggle every opportunity you have, (very silly like), use a cute little lisp, "very baby like" you are supposed to be grown-ups. These are a few of the pet aversions of the boys I know, but none of them have the courage to say anything about it. They are probably afraid they will lose their future prospects, or "sumpin"! (Likes and Dislikes, *the Crow's Nest*, 1940, April 20)

Yet, women, in this new environment begin to assert their own voice. The introduction of men and women together on campus, not surprisingly, fostered romantic relationships. The school itself attempted to control this through regulations on activities and on restrictions on men's presence on campus. The women living on campus seem to have known they were the objects of desire and comment upon how foolish the men behave in attempting to gain their attention, "something in the air that makes young men jump fences and walk on their hands just to make an impression" (A Skirt's View of Athens College, *the Crow's Nest*, 1940, May 11).

Further, they become aware of the disparity in the rules regarding women and men. One girl asks, "Why are the girls under such terrible rules while the boys have no rules at all? Just because we are girls is no reason for so much partiality to be shown" (Chatterbox, *the Athenian*, 1940, December 14). These sentiments will grow in the next era of school discourse but during this era they begin to surface in earnest.

There is good reason for these sentiments by the girls. The college itself contributed to the difference in treatment because it endorsed rules designed to restrict men's access to women by making women accountable for their whereabouts. A good example of this is rules on dating. In one prominent example, the rules for dating are printed in the school newspaper.

These rules allowed juniors and seniors to date once during the week and once on the weekend; freshmen and sophomores could only date on weekends. Girls were required to sign in and out at the dorm. Further dates were required to meet them in the lobby; a first date with a new boy required introduction to the dorm hostess who could, on her own discretion, refuse to allow the date for any reason whatsoever (Rules for Girls Dormitory, *the Athenian*, 1953, September 1).

The status of women at Athens College during the era of collegiality is that they are full participants in the cultural life of the college but there is a distinct emphasis on their physical beauty. This can be seen in their status as objects of beauty celebrated in ceremonies and honors. The following series of pictures from the student newspaper show this emphasis on beauty.

**Figure 5**

*Four Most Attractive Girls, 4 April 1936, The Crow's Nest*



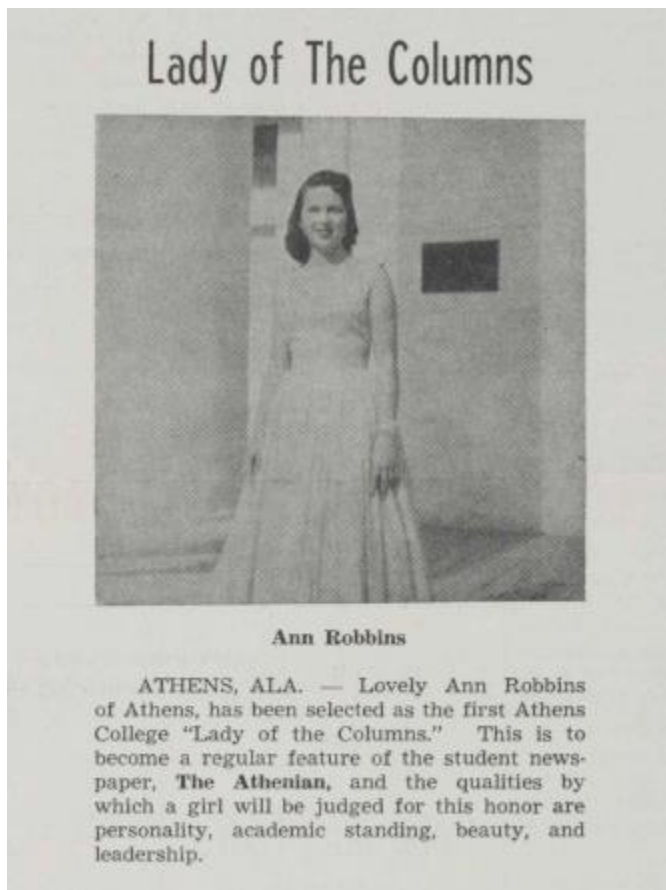
**Figure 6**

*Romance and Fashion, 31 January 1942, The Crow's Nest*



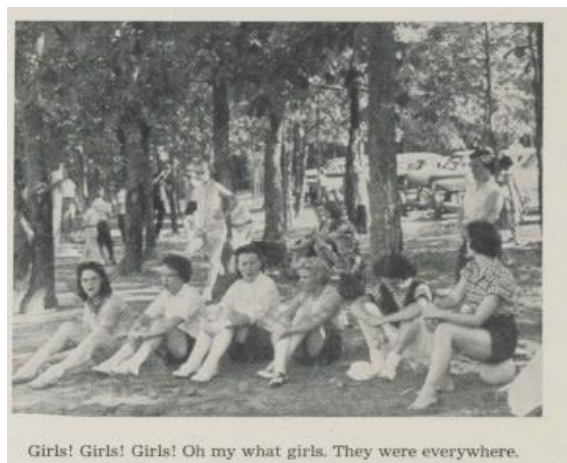
**Figure 7**

*Women's Roles Understood, 3 July 1957, The Athenian*



**Figure 8**

*Spring Picnic Accentuates Female Beauty, 1 May 1958, The Athenian*



**Figure 9**

*Societal Norms Were College Norms, 14 December 1959, The Athenian*



## Figure 10

*Overt Sexualization of Women in Cartoons, 9 November 1959, The Athenian*



Women's roles are different from men in the era of collegiality. Their natural role is defined in relation to men. Their physical beauty is emphasized although their intellect and dignity are also emphasized—at least through most of this era. By the late 1950s, some evidence of the sexualization of women is evident. This era will end with the status of women in flux. The next era—the era of emancipation, will show the paradox which will arise from a simultaneous growth in women's power to define themselves and a continued sexualization of women.

### **Conclusion—The Discourse of Collegiality**

The discourse of collegiality is characterized by an earnest attempt by the administration of Athens College to create a genuine college experience for students. Their purpose was to foster a religious education that also helped students get jobs. This era inherited the norms regarding race and women's roles which were regnant in the society-at-large and the old Athens Female College in particular.

These norms defined who held status and how it was apportioned. In seeking to become a college in the mold of the liberal arts tradition, it in fact became something of a hybrid. The turn

toward vocationalism, necessary to attract students, undermined the pure liberal arts tradition. It also undermined the extracurricular trappings of clubs, fraternities, sports, and so forth. What student has time for those things when their education is a matter of job skill acquisition?

During the era of collegiality Athens College developed a workable answer to this question. It did everything. It had a small religious liberal arts atmosphere. It had a night school. For a time it had an industrial unit. Yet, the tensions of this era were evident enough in the constant return to concerns about apathy. Further tensions are noticeable even though mostly latent regarding race and women's roles.

The explosion of student rebellion, which will occur in the era of emancipation is not evident in this era. The tinder is certainly there—race, women's roles, religion, and the latent tension in each, but they do not flame up. In the next era, the era of emancipation that flame will burst forth. The student discourse of emancipation is the result.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE DISCOURSE OF EMANCIPATION

During the period from roughly 1960 through 1974, Athens College changed dramatically. It changed from a small, private, Methodist, liberal arts college to an upper division only state college. The student discourse during this period was the most turbulent of any era of student discourse. A voice developed and came to dominate during this time, which is best characterized by its resistance to authority.

In retrospect, this was a transitional period between the old period of collegiality with all its trappings of traditional college life, and an emergent vocationalism with its arid atmosphere of individual self-interest. The student voice which rose to dominance between 1960 and 1974 became unmoored from the traditional values of the college and served as a solvent to melt traditional loyalties and the social basis for the legitimacy of the old collegial establishment.

Thus characterized by resistance to authority it had a number of distinguishing features. The features can be described as a style of discourse. Student discourse during this era expressed itself in writings in the student newspapers. The style of discourse, which came to dominate, was combative, judgmental, impatient, and at times, given to dramatic actions—all of these features manifested most powerfully in opposition to the college administration.

Two additional aspects of this time are important. First, the collegiality continued and overlapped this newer discourse, but the newer voice came to dominate although it never erased the older voice of collegiality. There will therefore be much evidence of tension between

elements of the collegial ideal and this new ideal. Second, the newer voice provoked a reaction—a conservative reaction rooted in loyalty to the religious traditions of the college. What developed was a clash between the traditionalists and this new group, which disrupted the life of the college. The college appeared to be a traditional college, but it would have a radically emancipatory voice come to dominance.

This dominance shows up in the topics and tone of writing in the student newspaper. The concerns of these students are expressed in these characteristically combative, judgmental, impatient, and sporadically dramatic writings and behaviors. What unfolds then is a student discourse, which expects the experiences of the young generation to be taken as seriously as the experiences of the older generation. An acerbic style of communication in service to a program of emancipation from the norms and mores of the past is the single most significant goal of this era of student discourse.

### **Ingredients for Radicalism**

This section will examine the evidence for the discourse of emancipation by looking at the persistent themes of race and women's roles. It will also address a few controversies which show the emancipatory reaction in the voices of those students who believed in it. These will include attendance policies, opposition to chapel and convocation, the student food rebellion of 1965, the Student Government Association (SGA) as a locus of student discourse, and the conservative reaction. One preliminary matter is a demographic change referred to as the great northern invasion.

The northern invasion was an attempt by the school to aggressively recruit students in the northern states; this much has already been noted in the era of collegiality, but it really takes off during this era. The northern invasion began during a period of growth and it ended in a period

of decline. The northern invasion in this era took place between 1965 and the early 1970s, when the campus population grew from around 400 to over 1,300. The influx of northern students was an important part of this growth (Enrollment Reaches All-Time High- 768, *the Athenian*, 1964, September 28; Enrollment of 1050 Expected in Fall, *the Athenian*, 1965, May 25).

Who were these students? Most of them were from New Jersey, New York, or Pennsylvania (Long Trek Home, *the Athenian*, 1967, May 16). They came to Athens for a number of reasons. First, it was a small college. Some of them were looking for a small college where they could go after they failed at a larger institution somewhere else. Athens had some promise to be a charming southern atmosphere where they could have a good time in college (A Tribute to Coach Belcher, *the Athenian*, 1969, May 19).

These northern students discovered some things they did not like about Athens College. They hated boring professors. They also did not like the lack of social life in a small southern town. Most of all, they did not at all like living in the dormitories; a large population of the dormitories was comprised of these northern students (Athens College, Utopia U?, *the Athenian*, 1971, November 9).

In 1972, there was an article in the student newspaper noting that local students had grown to 76% of the student body in contrast to just a few years ago when they were only 50%. The northern invasion had its heyday from 1965 until the early 1970s. There is no doubt these students had an influence on the student discourse. There is no doubt they had an influence on some people's perceptions of the degree of apathy and disrespect displayed by some students. In this regard, the northern invasion was a part of the moment when the discourse of emancipation came to the fore at Athens College.

The combativeness, impatience, and judgmental nature of this discourse are evident in a number of issues that arose. Two good examples to introduce these elements are student opposition to strict attendance policies and student opposition to chapel attendance. The student newspapers gave full voice to the sharp differences of opinion and are a good introduction to the style of discourse prevalent in the discourse of emancipation.

The new cut policy established in 1966 was that students were allowed one absence for each hour of a course. A three hour course would allow three absences, a four hour course allowed four absences. The administration allowed no leniency for causes of absence. The policy was a wooden-headed response to conditions the students thought required far more flexibility (School Policy Revisited, *the Athenian*, 1966, August 23).

One student argument noted that the administration seemed fixed on preserving an antiquated notion of control that was out of step with current times. Because the administration wanted to use an archaic iron bell instead of a modern buzzer system students often did not hear the final warning before absence was registered. Being late counted as a full absence. All of this was up to the discretion of individual professors (Editorial, *the Athenian*, 1966, October 25). This, was the nub of the problem

Students came to see themselves as paying customers. They did not seem to want much in the way of coerced obedience to rules for no other purpose than obedience, After noting the arbitrary nature of judgment about excuses for absence this student notes, “this policy is a slap in the face to each conscientious student at Athens College who realizes his responsibilities on class attendance” (Editorial, *the Athenian*, 1966, October 25).

There is a new spirit of challenging authority structures in the name of student rights. This takes the form of individual and generational authority. The view seemed to be that students

were smart enough to be treated like they were smart enough. Hence, the tone of these editorials is especially chary on the fact that the students were not consulted.

The student asserts that these new policies were enacted over the summer without student input. Dr. Hauser, the Dean, will note that the policy was based on the recommendations of the SGA (Editorial, *the Athenian*, 1966, October 25). This reasonable sounding answer fails to see the sea change in attitude coming from the students. Dr. Hauser also defended the bell as something honoring tradition, which students also favored.

The trouble with this is in the attitude of the students. They disagreed among themselves about how a new cut policy ought to be administered. Some favored grade reduction schemes while a strong voice in favor of open attendance with no cut policy is also found in the student newspapers. The cut policy controversy shows a new insistence on autonomy by the students. In demanding a voice this generation of students was different from prior generations. In the past, there were flashes of this type thinking—now it erupted into open challenges to the administration's hegemony in rules making. Consider the tone of the following editorial.

It is also an insult to the campus intelligence and maturity to suggest any abuse of the system. Students get good grades because they work for them regardless of the system under which they work. The few immature students who do poorly through their own faults would have no excuse to rely on for their indiscretions were the policy open.

(Students Favor Cut Policy, *the Athenian*, 1967, October 30)

Chapel and convocation attendance shows the deepening divide. What started as an infrequent rumble of discontent with chapel eventually became open criticism. This is quite significant in the development of student discourse as it shows a change. Earlier generations of students in the 1920s and 1930s had openly described their religion in vivid terms. This began to

change somewhat in the 1950s and broke into open disagreement by the mid to late 1960s. The changing attitudes toward chapel and convocation are a good indicator of the nature of the discourse of emancipation.

The tone of student disagreement became sharper and more combative during this era. Students came to see chapel as a matter of religious indoctrination that ought to be left to the discretion of students. This was in a Methodist College! The complaints are not unalloyed but rather mixed together with the growing trend toward student autonomy even in a religious college (Why Chapel? *the Athenian*, 1963, April 22).

One early example from the student newspapers complained that chapel is essentially boring. The types of programs offered were uninteresting and monotonous. Further, the religious aspect was thought of as too coercive (Why Chapel? *the Athenian*, 1963, April 22). Interestingly, students seem to have appreciated the religious environment but rejected the compulsory elements of both the chapel and later the convocation programs.

Students saw chapel as a place where Athens as a church related school could inculcate its values. What they balked at was the ethos of indoctrination they associated with chapel. This was so despite the benefits they saw in chapel. These included such things as hearing announcements, being a time when faculty and students gathered together, and spiritual emphasis (Why Chapel? *the Athenian*, 1963, April 22).

Yet the element of compulsion became an intractable problem as the administration and some students allied themselves against students bold enough to complain. This boldness came to dominate the discourse. As the administration increasingly sought out policies to underscore institutional authority the dissenting students increasingly turned to the student newspaper to express discontent, as Figure 12 illustrates.

## Figure 11

*Compulsory Convocation, 1 March 1966, The Athenian*



The style and tone of discourse grew more impatient and polarizing as both compulsory chapel and later convocation was more controlled, monitored, and punitive. An important tension was between students who saw themselves as autonomous and an administration which situated itself as the arbiter of what was necessary to a Methodist program of higher education.

In time, various compromises were attempted. One idea was to gain student acceptance through representation in the planning and execution of these programs. This would have included input into the speakers and programs chosen for chapel and convocation. None of this included student choice about whether to participate in chapel or convocation. This power was not surrendered during the period of emancipatory student discourse. Indeed, it was a flashpoint in why emancipatory student discourse arose (Why Chapel? *the Athenian*, 1963, April 22).

The administration posted ever more strict rules for monitoring and verifying student attendance at such programs as Figure 12 also attests. The language of this administration notice about convocation rules reveals the exasperation which must have been at a fever pitch due to

students failing to attend. “In spite of the many lists, memos, Athenian articles and schedules much confusion persists concerning the convocations program. This is the last opportunity for public communication on this subject; therefore, read this final notice carefully” (Final Notice on Convocation Policy, *the Athenian*, 1967, May 16).

Students did not take this lying down. It is important to note the language of their resistance. In their insistence upon being treated as autonomous individuals—even in a religious college, they adopted a new language—the language of criticism. Students delighted in pointing out such things as the shoddy facilities provided for these programs (The Spartan, *the Athenian*, 1966, January 25). They also had no problem pointing to faculty apathy about these same programs. A good sample of the flavor of this critique is this observation from 1965.

Persons seated directly in front of the speaker and at the north and south ends of the court have alike voiced the complaint that most of what sounds like the background noise from a tape of the Gemini astronauts' conversations with mission control. We question the good sense of having compulsory convocations, but if students are expected to attend them, it is only fair to the distinguished speakers and the audience that adequate provision be made for communication from the rostrum to the bleachers. (Convocation Dilemma, *the Athenian*, 1965, December 14)

Student autonomy was at the heart of these disagreements. The administration seemed not to notice the growing discontent. They certainly did not anticipate the acts of outright rebellion that came to characterize the new student spirit of autonomy. The two outstanding examples of students acting out their discontent was the student food rebellion of 1965 and the SGA rebellion culminating in the 1970 request to dissolve the Student Government Association. These two actions show the degree to which student notions of autonomy had become a resolute

aspect of their self-understanding. Along the way, they reveal the strident nature of the student discourse of emancipation.

The food rebellion of 1965 has two distinct parts—the rebellion itself and the controversy surrounding administration attempts to censor reporting about the rebellion in the student newspaper. Both are signal examples of outright defiance by a group of students. This is a first for the college. Up until this point, complaints had been aired in the student newspaper over a variety of issues such as the cut policy and chapel and convocation. In this case, students took action to disrupt an operation of the school.

The facts are fairly simple. Food complaints were a common theme in the student newspapers of this era. One can find some complaint about food in a number of articles and editorials. This time was different because of action by the students. On the 28<sup>th</sup> of April 1965 a group of students gathered outside the cafeteria where they refrained from entering. They waited until about 10 minutes before the cafeteria was scheduled to close and then entered in one large crowd. This was an attempt to overburden the food service system (Students Protest School Food, *the Athenian*, 1965, May 3).

These students were frustrated and organized. They were frustrated by what they perceived to be administration foot dragging in responding to student requests for redress of the substandard food service. Citing a survey given earlier in the school year they noted the overwhelming student dissatisfaction with several aspects of the food service.

The survey indicates a majority of students did not like the food (73.8%); did not like how the food was served (57%); did not like how the food was prepared (75.7%); did not like the appearance of the food (56%); and did not like the variety of the food (87.2) (Students Protest School Food, *the Athenian*, 1965, May 3).

Students had grown tired of administration promises to do something about the food situation. In this act of rare defiance they made their point. This point came with a price—suppression of their voice in the student newspaper. It also accomplished something—a meeting with the college president and the dean.

The administration's first reaction was to quash news of the food rebellion from spreading. Apparently, the first edition of the student newspaper bearing news of the event was not allowed to be distributed. The student response included hyperbolic language such as, "from whom are we hiding the truth—and can it be hidden? What so secretive happened that freedom of the A. C. press was murdered" (Students Protest School Food, *the Athenian*, 1965, May 3).

Following this failed act of censorship and suppression of the facts, the administration reacted with more assertions of authority and then held an open meeting so that the president and dean could hear these grievances for themselves. An important point of contention was that students had no faith in any administration promise to do something later after a period to study the issue—these students wanted answers now. They got a few answers, which seem to have calmed things down.

These answers consisted of some concessions to student demands. Mealtime hours were altered to better suit student schedules. The requirement for formal dining was restricted to one night a month (a requirement to wear dress suits to dinner). The student reaction to this is not entirely promising. The voice of emancipation can clearly be heard in this response.

We students appreciate the position of the administrators, but we want some assurance that our position is appreciated, too. Complaints of indigestion, ulcers and a few other common ailments too personal to mention in print are all too frequent. We need something done now—some proof that the proper authorities are working for us. Granted,

there has been some improvement in this area, and we are grateful for small favors. But it's difficult to have faith in the higherups when we are given only a small taste of promises that are worn thin by time. (Students Protest School Food, *the Athenian*, 1965, May 3)

This really is a different discourse from 1901, 1920, 1930, 1940, 1950, or even 1960.

It says something important about the discourse that this came to print. The very values of rational dissent undermined the administration's heavy-handed attempts to maintain control. Higher education institutionally fosters critical thinking and is somewhat hoisted on its own petard when it tries to censor—the very purpose of rational thought is inimical to such authoritarianism.

In the 10 May 1966 edition of the school paper is a reflection on the food rebellion. This piece credits the rebellion with some positive changes. Yet by February 1969 problems with the cafeteria crop up again, even under the new management. By that time, the school president, Dr. Philpot called a group of students to his office to discuss student unrest over perceptions of poor food service (Cafeteria Complaints Topic for Discussion, *the Athenian*, 1969, February 2).

Complaints about food were a consistent theme during the era of emancipation. Over time the administration reasserted control over issues such as dress and behavior while conceding very little to student demands. The point of the discourse of emancipation was not to solve such problems but rather to assert student autonomy. The great food rebellion of 1965 illustrates this around a single issue. Of more concern was the growing dysfunction of the Student Government Association.

The Student Government Association became ground zero for the conflicts, which comprise the period of emancipation in student discourse. The controversies and attempts to

assert student power is the most salient organizational expression of that discourse. The student insistence on being heard and given primacy in college policies regarding a number of issues clearly shows the attributes of impatience and uncompromising combativeness that is the essence of the student discourse of emancipation.

At the same time, a conservative reaction set in as these controversies unfolded but it was never able to dethrone the discourse of emancipation. It does however contrast sharply with that discourse. Therefore examining the SGA controversies of this period are instructive as to the nature of the discourse of emancipation.

The 1960s began with promise as regards the SGA. There was optimism that rewriting the school constitution would advance the interests of students in a way that was harmonious with the administration (SGA Rewrites Constitution, *the Athenian*, 1960, May 5). Even the old bugbear of apathy was seemingly on the road to extinction through a reorganization of the SGA to align more with the interests of the varied student body (Lagging interest in Student Government, *the Searcher*, 1963, April 22).

There was such a reorganization in 1970. At that time, the general assembly format was replaced by a unicameral legislature comprised of senators representing various constituencies. These included off campus men, off campus women, Panhellenic, and each dormitory (SGA to disband general assembly, *the Athenian*, 1970, February 24). It was just here that the real troubles began as the newly organized SGA sought expansive powers for the autonomous judgment of the SGA itself in all matters affecting student life.

This autonomy included freedom from oversight by institutional units such as the office of student personnel. The demands of students were for more freedom in making their own decisions free from the overweening influence of the administration through offices such as

student personnel (Circumlocution, *the Athenian*, 1970, February 24). This theme dominates the 1970 school year and leads to one of the more dramatic acts on the part of students.

Students were increasingly dissatisfied with the administration in its role as overseer of conformity to the religious mores of the Methodist Conference (Editorial, *the Athenian*, 1970, February 24). A good example of this involves administration heavy-handedness in enforcing school policy. The following quote, while lengthy is among the best written examples of the ethos of emancipation. Note especially the insistence that the student point of view is as valid as the administration's point of view. Also, note the language. It is strident and insistent in its defense of the autonomous moral authority of students. The biting tone speaks to the spirit of the time.

Problems that are causing division must be exposed and worked with openly with a sense of purpose. I can only say that I want Athens College to be a shining and living monument to my success - This I'm sure is what most people here want. To you- unbending, hard, ruthless Department head; To you uncompromising, militaristic, administrator; to you unknowledgeable, bigoted staff worker, must we beg for our existence - must we become sniveling cowards jumping to satisfy your every whim? And to you who somehow don't stand out because you are the instruments of these cancerous entities look at yourself, don't be used unknowingly. Perhaps this is a sound of alarm - if you hear the bell then perhaps it is tolling for you. Go out and look you may find someone hurt in the shuffle of trying to get out of the burning building. Perhaps you can help. Too many times the student, who is innocent, suffers the blows of this "GODZILLA". True some students will cause trouble, will do wrong, but the methods of correcting these Athens College with its problems is destroying the student body through

its disciplinary methods and college services. The majority of students are not guilty of any crime and they suffer because administrators proceed in their honorable endeavor with the assumption that students are guilty or will be guilty of some supposed crime. To move on I would like to afford a glimpse of what I've experienced through my journey of talking to members of our community. This glimpse of the problem is not very pretty but look at it you must. In this picture 1984 may sound very real. To: (Students Unnamed)  
From: Student Personnel Date: February 17, 1970 I have received word from reliable sources that you were drinking and were intoxicated in the dormitory on Saturday night, February 17, 1970. I am placing you immediately on social probation pending the investigation of this matter. If this should occur again, you will be subject to immediate suspension. You are to call and make an appointment with Student Personnel office to see me on Monday morning. Six students received this letter, a copy of which is in the possession of an Athenian Reporter. The issue at point is not the implication of the crime of alcohol in a dry county, but the method being used here. I wonder who may be looking in your window now. (Editorial, *the Athenian*, 1970, February 24)

The March 1970 issue of the Athenian picks up on the Godzilla motif mentioned in this jeremiad. This is captured in Figures 13 and 14 along with other drawings from the period.

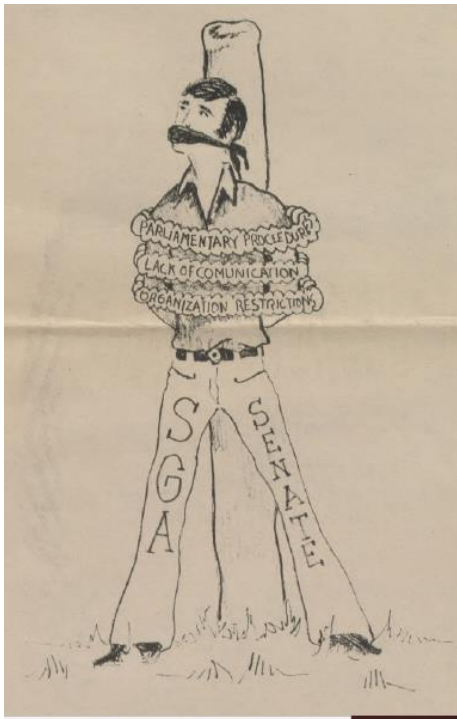
**Figure 12**

*Mocking the SGA, 8 November 1966, The Athenian*



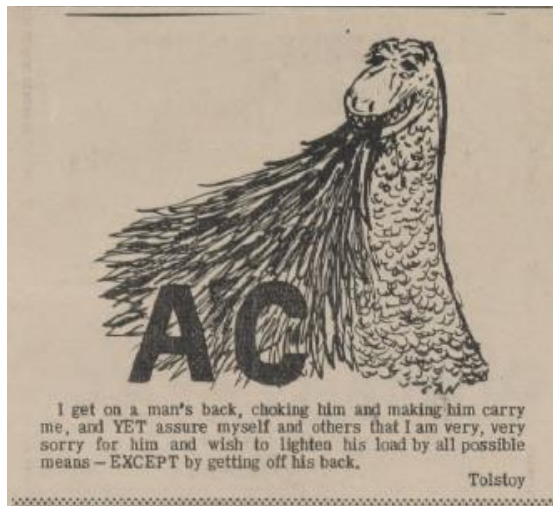
**Figure 13**

*More Student Discontent, 16 March 1970, The Athenian*



## Figure 14

*Student Resistance Illustrated, 8 November 1966, The Athenian*



This is the background for the SGA controversy in 1970, which resulted in an act of open rebellion. The sentiments of the students, or at least the loudest voices in the student newspaper were ripe for action. The addition of action to mere grouching is an important accomplishment of the student discourse of emancipation. While it could be acidic in its language and highly suspicious of the motives of the administration, it did create an environment for action.

At first, this action takes the form of attempts to assert student power over their lives at the school. This meant directly challenging the authority of the student personnel office to intrude into private decisions about a number of issues. Among these issues were open dorm visitation and the expansion of fulfillment of religious requirement outside the Judeo-Christian tradition (Women's Dorm Hours, *the Athenian*, 1970, December 1; Course Requirements, *the Athenian*, 1970, December 1).

The student officials of the SGA did not get the support of the administration in affecting the changes they sought. In a dramatic act in December of 1970 the student senate submitted 14 proposals to the administration the most significant of which was the proposal recommending

dissolution of the SGA. The motion was tabled pending discussion of its validity, but the students had made their point.

They cited administration adherence to archaic policies, ignoring proposals by the SGA, and the resulting ineffectiveness of the SGA to truly represent the student body (Editorial, *the Athenian*, 1970, December 1). This act of desperation on the part of the student body representatives shows the discourse of emancipation in action. Taken together with the opposition to attendance policies, chapel and convocation, and the student food rebellion of 1965, the Student Government Association controversy demonstrates a new and aggressively vocal student discourse at Athens College.

Yet not all students agreed with the discourse of emancipation. A decided conservative reaction can be found in the student newspapers of the era. The conservative reaction manifest in attempts to maintain the status quo of a liberal arts college. It sought to preserve elements of the collegial environment in such practices as clubs, fraternities, sororities, and sports. It also expressed itself in editorials and other student writings, which condemned the type of students it saw as rebellious—in other words, the discourse of emancipation.

Conservatism in this context is simply the impulse to defend the traditional form and practices of the past. It arose in opposition to the tone and vehemence of the discourse of emancipation. The examples cited above are the types of expressions the conservative response opposed.

The idea of conservatism has no other common sense of purpose besides a defense of the traditional form and practices of the college. The organizational expressions, for example, are varied and not related to one another in any way other than being part of the same college. What ties them together is their preference for operating within the context of the college as it existed.

This means these organizations did not have a common ideological theme, but they did have a common appreciation for the necessity of the way the college administration conducted the business of the college. In this respect, they are distinctly different from the discourse of emancipation—the difference is gratitude for the college. The discourse of emancipation, as has been seen, was all too willing to act in disdain of the norms required for the status quo.

Clubs and other types of social, service, and academic organizations continued to grow during this era and are examples of conservatism in the sense indicated. New clubs arose which reflected changes in interest. These included clubs such as the young republication club (College Young Republican Club Formed, *the Athenian*, 1962, April 22); the Alpha club, a service club (Alpha Club, *the Athenian*, 1963, September 30); and Sigma Tau Delta, a national English fraternity (Sigma Tau Delta, *the Athenian*, 1963, September 30). There was even a club for students interested in automobiles—the Precision Club (Precision Club, *the Athenian*, 1965, February 17).

The most significant development was in the area of social clubs. The introduction of national social fraternities and sororities cemented a tie between student social interest and activities and administration officials. This in turn created these social fraternities as embodiments of an influential subset of students who understood the college as a good organization—at least in terms of the fraternities and sororities organizational support for the college.

A 1965 study of the feasibility of bringing national fraternities and sororities to Athens College emphasized the prestige, which accompanied such an enterprise. Dr. McCain, President of Athens College offered a good example of why Athens would consider allowing such organizations on campus. He said, “national social groups have generally proved to be a valuable

asset on the small college campus. They provide valuable social, moral, and educational benefits to the student members" (Fraternity Study Gets Underway, *the Athenian*, 1965, February 17).

There followed a number of articles where arguments in favor of fraternities appeared. These tended to support the social fraternities along the lines of benefits associated with a close-knit, familial group. Virtues such as friendship, learning to live with others, polish, good habits of study and personal behavior, and teamwork (In Favor of Fraternities, *the Athenian*, 1965, April 6).

Notice that these values are inconsistent with the discourse of emancipation. The hallmark of the discourse of emancipation as it developed at Athens College in the 1960s and 1970s is absolute insistence on equality in all things between administration and students. Fraternities and sororities arrived on campus in a spirit of cooperation with the values of the administration.

By 1965, Phi Mu sorority arrived on campus; by 1966 Zeta Tau Alpha fraternity was installed. In 1966, an interfraternity council was established. This council was established to ensure smooth relations between the fraternities and sororities present on campus at the time. These included Phi Mu, Zeta Tau Alpha, Delta Sigma Chi, Tau Lambda Phi, and Sigma Tau Epsilon, among others (Greek News, *the Athenian*, 1966, February 22). .

An important purpose of the council was to "help boost college spirit and to support concerts and other school functions" (IFC Founded, *the Athenian*, 1966, February 11). This is a clear expression of intent to cooperate with administration officials—a conservative tendency. Throughout student newspapers of this era it is not uncommon to find each of these fraternities and sororities expressing sentiments of cooperation, and promotion of common ideals between the administration and these social organizations. In this sense, these organizations support the

conservation of institutional values. Figures 16 through 21 are a series of pictures from this era illustrating what fraternity and sorority life looked like.

**Figure 15**

*Fraternity Activity, 10 May 1966, The Athenian*



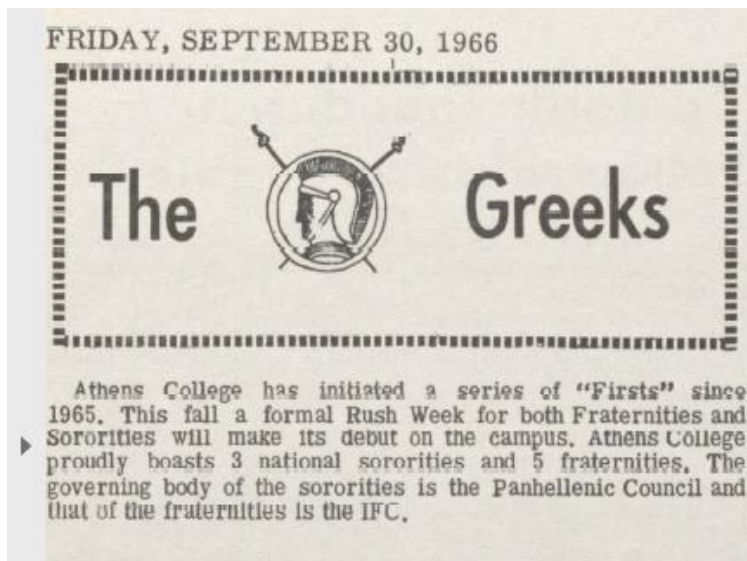
**Figure 16.**

*Sorority Activity, 30 May 1966, The Athenian*



**Figure 17**

*Rush Week Announcement, 30 September 1966, The Athenian*



**Figure 18**

*Zeta Tau Alpha, 25 November 1969, The Athenian*



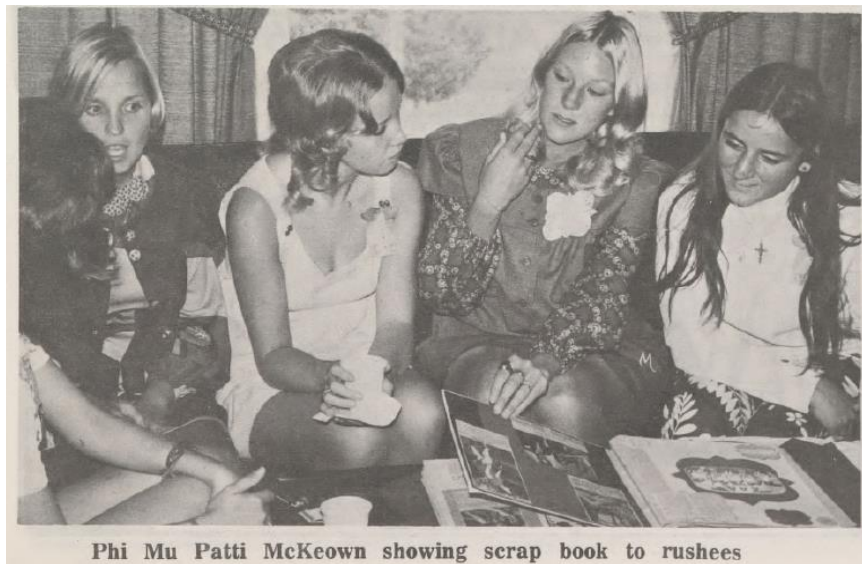
**Figure 19**

*More Social Activity from Greek Life, 16 March 1970, The Athenian*



**Figure 20**

*Sorority Life, 1 December 1970, The Athenian*



These pictures show that fraternities and sororities forged an identity, which required the college in order to thrive. They were social organizations certainly, but they had no meaning outside the organizational structure of the college. Their very existence is testament to gratitude

for the college itself. In forging student identity, they also forged college identity during the era of emancipation in student discourse.

Sports also served a conservative function in this era of student discourse. Sports existed at Athens College prior to the era of emancipation. Athletes also had no other purpose than to play well in whatever competitive area they involved. Yet, sports achieved prominence in this era. As they did so they too came to embody support for the status quo. In this sense, they were conservative in the sense followed here.

Sports emphasized discipline, teamwork, and excellence. Just as sports served a role in increasing the prestige of other colleges and universities, so they played that role at Athens College. They also played a role in race relations at the school. In terms of the conservative reaction, sports did not provide arguments against the discourse of emancipation but they did support the legitimacy of the institution. This undermined the emancipatory pattern of discourse rooted in discontent, grievance, and impatience, which expressed itself in strident dialogue and disruptive actions.

Baseball, basketball, wrestling, gymnastics, and soccer were the sports played at Athens College. Basketball, in particular became the most important sport since these teams enjoyed the greatest success. Winning a number of conference championships and going to the league championship a number of times; basketball at Athens College was big news in the 1960s and 1970s.

Two articles from *the Athenian* during this era illustrate how basketball became identified with Athens College. The first was about the nature of college basketball players. It affirms the values of sport, but it also adds this “he is your personal representative on the court, your symbol of fair and hard play. He may not be an All-American, but he is an example of the American

way” (What is a basketball player? *the Athenian*, 1965, January 19). Is there a more clear way of stating the case for the goodness of college itself? Colleges with sports were more than academic institutions as such their efficacy was as unquestioned as city hall or the corner church.

This efficacy was in terms of preserving the institution and increasing its prestige. This can be seen in the relationship between the city of Athens and the college. During the 1960s, the basketball team had quite a bit of success. Coached by Oba Belcher, the Athens teams of the 1960s won their conference championship twice; they even made three appearances in the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics finals. They had some success there in 1963 winning one game before losing to eventual third place finisher Grambling (A tribute to Coach Belcher, *the Athenian*, 1969, May 19). This success led to a closer relationship with the town of Athens.

In these ways the clubs, fraternities, sororities, and sports, helped foster an atmosphere that accepted the institution. The more visible acts of rebellion stemming from the discourse of emancipation sit uncomfortably against this background. In fact, they are jarringly different. For the first time in school history, the contradictions of the student discourse became evident. During the era of emancipation the discourse which arose was ignored by these types of organizations. The task of taking on the logic of the discourse of emancipation fell to individual students and some administrators in the pages of the student newspaper.

These more rational approaches can be divided into two groups for convenience. First was the students and administrators who responded to actions and attitudes of those voicing the concerns of the discourse of emancipation. These often appeared in letters to the editor in the student newspaper. Second were the many columns written for the student newspaper by the college Chaplain, Dr. Curtis Coleman.

It was principally the tone of student rhetoric, which provoked the conservative reaction. A consistent theme was the value of forbearance, tolerance, and empathy, which the conservative element understood to be necessary for progress to be made on the issue raised by students. The discourse of emancipation is quite distinct from this approach. It is in support of the autonomy of students, but the discourse is striking. As always, it is impatient, judgmental, and inclined to cynicism toward administration motivations.

Examples abound in the student newspapers. Food was an almost constant source of complaint. One such complaint surfaced in the 16 December 1968 issue of the *Athenian*. After listing a number of deficiencies in cafeteria services such as food appearance and taste, and noting the uncleanliness of facilities, a student wrote these words. They are a good indicator of the tone of emancipatory reason.

If these conditions were present at schools such as Temple, Penn State, Columbia, UCLA, etc. There would surely be student demonstrations until conditions were changed. How long does this college expect the students and faculty to tolerate these disgusting conditions. If this letter has made anyone angry connected with the cafeteria — it was meant to. Perhaps some changes will be made. Hungry - Mark Robbins. (Letters to the Editor, *the Athenian*, 1968, December 16)

The purposeful emphasis on intentional insult, while quaint by contemporary standards of mass communication were shocking in 1968 because they were still new. The administration responded to this by rebutting some claims and promising to investigate others. Included in this is an observation that captures what the conservative reaction was about, “in your mention of demonstrations, I know you realize that these things only bring more grief” (Letters to the Editor, *the Athenian*, 1968, December 16).

This back and forth covered the entire period of the discourse of emancipation. The two sides were talking past one another on almost every issue because of a fundamental disagreement about the limits of student autonomy in making decisions affecting them. Issues such as hair length standards, agitating for open dorms, compulsory chapel and convocation attendance, and similar student concerns became the flashpoint for these pointed exchanges.

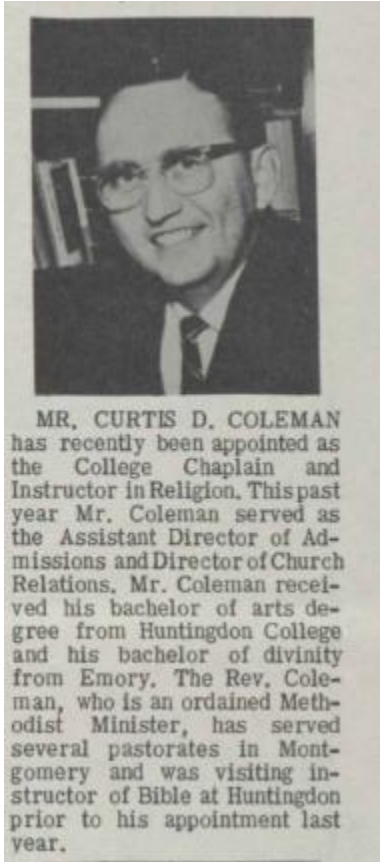
The essence of the conservative reaction was that Athens College was a type of institution. The rules of the institution were clearly laid out in publications such as catalogues and student conduct guides (the “A” book). As such, students were obliged to conform to those standards. The free choice of attending Athens entailed the responsibility to act within those norms (Freedom for Athens, *the Athenian*, 1972, April 24). An observation from Dr. Mildred Caudle is a good example of these sentiments.

You want more freedom in your dorm life. Are you responsible enough to handle it? Whether you realize it or not, you are in the process of evolving life-long patterns of behavior. Do you intend to drop out before you are ever in? Your administration may save you from some of the frustrations that you have hitherto known; the faculty may rescue you from the deepest abyss of ignorance; your fellow students will probably preserve you from social isolation and your parents will, no doubt, provide the material support necessary for an era of indolence. BUT WHO IS GOING TO SAVE YOU FROM YOURSELF? (Editorial, *the Athenian*, 1970, April 20)

This shift in emphasis to character is another hallmark of the conservative reaction. There is no better source for this theme than the writing of college Chaplain Dr. Curtis Coleman. Figure 22 details the Dr. Coleman’s background.

## Figure 21

*Dr. Curtis Coleman, College Chaplain, 13 July 1967, The Athenian*



Dr. Coleman was in an almost perfect position to respond to the challenges of the student discourse of emancipation. He wrote a column called *Thinking Aloud* in almost all the issues of *the Athenian* from the time he became Chaplain. He consistently drew the students' attention to the benefits of a virtuous life. These virtues included characteristics inimical to the discourse of emancipation.

Chaplain Coleman could be counted on to write about themes that encouraged character attributes consistent with the college's Christian purposes. While he wrote in specifically Christian terms, much of his writing was a call to thoughtful cooperation with the college in obtaining an education... To this end, he discouraged the discourse of emancipation by emphasizing virtues which would soften its sharp edged style of discourse.

His recurrent themes were right attitudes (Thinking Aloud, *the Athenian*, 1968, October 28), such that students should strive to help others instead of hindering them with grievous words. He also, encouraged students to take the long view of their time at Athens, by which he meant that students should participate in contemplative, self-reflective practices in order to become the best person they could be (Thinking Aloud, *the Athenian*, 1968, July 29). All of this ran against the impatient and demanding discourse of emancipation.

Coleman could be found exhorting students to think about how events of even the most tumultuous times could serve as a basis for redemption—for starting over. A good example of this is found in his 9 January 1969 column. His words, if taken seriously, would certainly put a damper on the overheated rhetoric of the discourse of emancipation. This column is a good example of the general tone and subject matter of his writings.

I am sure most of us would like to take an eraser and cancel out some of the past of the old year of 1968. Unfortunately, we do not have the powers of a cartoon character at this point. We do have the abilities and opportunities to "begin again" in this new year to write a different chapter in our character history. We do this as we live in the dimensions of the spiritual, mental, material and physical. Many of us are making resolutions for this new year. This is a commendable practice to be sure. Among these resolutions might be one to make the material dimension of our life a help rather than a hindrance to us and to others. Another might be to grow mentally through the discipline of study. To strive to be physically fit by proper exercise and avoiding any habits that will weaken the blessing of a healthy body. A resolution which would enhance the value of all of these would be for us to determine to grow spiritually by daily exposing ourselves to the truths of the Holy Scriptures. (Thinking Aloud, *the Athenian*, 1969, January 9)

Of course, this contrasts with the rhetoric of the discourse of emancipation. Taken together the type of writing which arose in opposition to the spirit of the discourse of emancipation comprises a rearguard action in attempting to shore up the legitimacy of administration authority. Yet, the emancipatory spirit would not simply stop suddenly. It abated in time as the environment changed—especially after the school changed to a state supported institution.

The issues of race and women were also developing during this time period. Each of these shows how some aspects of the discourse of emancipation were necessary in order for positive change to occur. They introduce the troubling reality that discourses are related to values—some of these values are negative. How the discourse of emancipation influenced the issues of race and women is another important lens to use in understanding how the power of such a mindset operated.

## **Race**

Athens College did not comply with the 1964 Civil Rights Act until the 27<sup>th</sup> of December 1967. The board of trustees voted to do so with twelve voting in favor and seven voting against compliance—hardly a ringing endorsement. It is telling that the student newspaper acknowledges this in the context of receiving federal aid in the form of scholarship and loan funds (Compliance Pact Signed. Fed Aid, *the Athenian*, 1968, January 15).

Student comments in the student newspaper recognized the sea change this represented in the life of the school. A sense of the hypocrisy of a Methodist affiliated college finally desegregating is palpable among students. Students pointedly observed the shame in being the last such college in Alabama to comply with civil rights legislation. They seem to have recognized that this would be a challenge to some white students. Thus, pointed questions

surfaced. What would students do when they sat in class with African Americans? What about having an African American teacher or roommate (What Will Happen Now? *the Athenian*, 1968, January 15).

This was a big change for the college, but it occurred in a context of racial segregation and the attendant racist attitudes, which fostered such segregation. There are stories in the student newspapers, which illustrate both the type of discourse and the symbolic aspects of this context. These show the ingrained nature of racism at the school. It would not be the case that compliance with federal law would obviate the harms arising from the racist environment that had heretofore existed at Athens College from its very inception. Student discourse itself, in time, would attenuate such racist attitudes.

An example is that student objections to the use of campus maintenance personnel shows how the issue of race operated as a permanent scar on institutional memory. The objection surfaced in 1967 when students complained about maintenance personnel being diverted to work on renovations to the old slave house near the president's house. The students perceived this to be a project, which came at the expense of maintenance on the dorms (*Athens Slave House, the Athenian*, 1967, December 11).

That there was a slave house which Athens maintained fits in with a larger picture of tacit acceptance of such symbolic artifacts. There are also regular features in the student newspaper that implicate the cultural tolerance of racist themes. Figure 23 is a good example of how such tacit acceptance erupted into public presentation. This picture combines the imagery of the confederate battle flag with an idealized womanhood. The title is "Reb-Belle", which was a regular feature in nearly every issue of *the Athenian* from this era.

## Figure 22

*Reb-Belle, 29 March 1966, The Athenian*



This imagery indicates what is assumed as normal to the discourse where it arose. The symbolism of the battle flag alone served as a reminder of violence against African Americans during the Jim Crow era. Reb-Belle combined “Rebel” with “Belle” meaning southern belle. The Reb-Belle title conjures thoughts of the old confederacy as well as the idealized picture of genteel southern white women during the ante-bellum and Civil War era.

There are no stories in the student newspaper during the period of emancipation in student discourse similar to the overtly racist stories in past eras of student discourse at Athens College. Something new was that African American students began to make their voices heard, sometimes this manifest in quite jarring ways. A most striking example of this comes from a student named Nelson Simmons, Jr.

Simmons wrote a letter to the editor in 1975 where he wrote about a rape trial of three black men. Simmons made a series of sweeping generalizations about the nature of white society

with respect to the sexual preferences of black men, the history of often false accusations of black men raping white women, and the injustice of trials for black people during those times (Letter to the editor, *the Athenian*, 1975, September 22).

Further, Simmons went on to recount the trial of these three black men in a manner that made the trail appear to be right out of the pages of the worst of Jim Crow era oppression. There are lurid depictions of the victim, and consistent attribution of malfeasance in practice on the part of the judge, prosecutor, and defense counsel (Letter to the editor, *the Athenian*, 1975, September 22).

Thus, a contradiction is evident. The use of symbols and titles from the old confederacy and the new, sometimes shocking, voices of African American students stand in tension. Simmons writing is something of an anomaly in the student newspapers. More common are efforts of African American students themselves to use the academic and intellectual tools of the college to advance their position within the college discourse.

Glimmers of this appear in notices about television programming featuring African American themes. The *Black Journal* program appearing on a variety of educational television programs is one such program (Black Journal, *the Athenian*, 1969, January 9). More direct activities on the Athens College campus followed.

These included programs designed to give voice to African American students. They also were meant to raise the consciousness of the entire school—students, faculty, and administration. These were programs in black studies and black history. These programs included a variety of activities ranging from discussion groups to presentations of art, literature, and music influenced by African and African American discourse (Black Studies Week, *the Athenian*, 1971, February 8; Black History Week, *the Athenian*, 1982, February 10).

It is important to note that both the college and the local community cooperated in these efforts. The city of Athens and Limestone County assisted by advertising and providing space for activities. Moreover, it was not unusual for local African American political leader such as Dr. John Cashin of Huntsville, to speak (Black Studies Week, *the Athenian*, 1971, February 8; Black History Week, *the Athenian*, 1982, February 10).

Black students begin to appear in pictures in the student newspaper in the 1970s. They first appear in pictures of student athletes. This involves a paradox. There is some evidence that black student athletes might have understood their presence on campus to be exploitative. The inclusion of an article by black athletes at the University of Pittsburgh offers some proof that Athens College students at least understood this to be an issue (The Negro Student in Athletics, *the Athenian*, 1968, March 25).

The observation of these students at the University of Pittsburgh was that black student athletes were seen mostly as commodities and not individual people. Valued only for attributes such as speed, agility, and strength, they resented not being taken seriously as students, scholars, and intellects (The Negro Student in Athletics, *the Athenian*, 1968, March 25). While this does not directly reflect the views of black student athletes at Athens College, one must wonder if it did not.

On the other hand, athletics was a path to education for those African American students who excelled in such pursuits. It was also a source of prestige. One of the earliest pictures of an African American student in the student newspaper then is of Vernard Hendrix who was recruited to play basketball at Athens College as Figure 24 demonstrates.

**Figure 23**

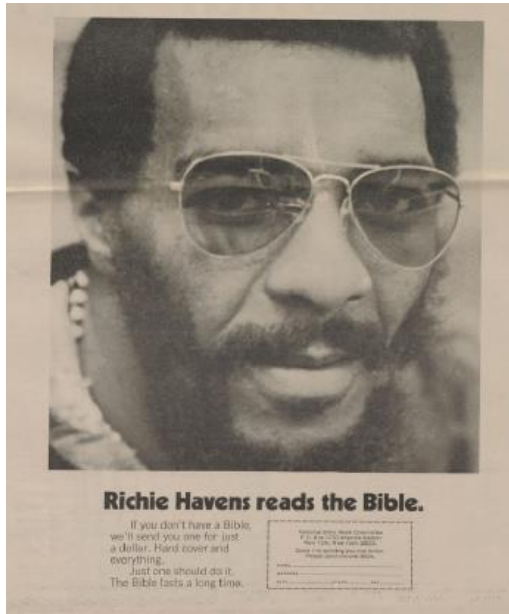
*Among the First African American Students to Appear in the Student Newspaper, 19 May 1971, The Athenian*



The normalization of African American students on campus continued unabated throughout the period of emancipation in student discourse. There were more frequent pictures of student athletes. In time, pictures of African American students engaged in other activities besides sports began to be seen. Additionally, advertisements in the school newspaper began to use African American celebrities. Figures 25 and 26 demonstrate these two developments.

**Figure 24**

*African Americans in Advertisements, 6 December 1971, The Athenian*



**Figure 25**

*African American Student Casually Appears in Student Newspaper, 2 November 1972, The Athenian*

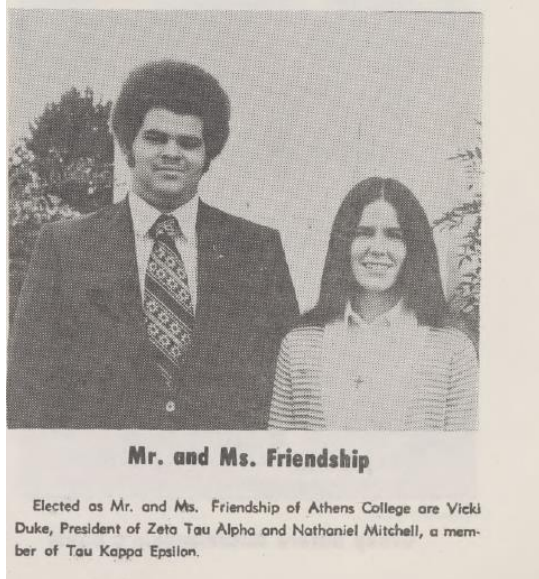


African American students became part of the normal life of the college. They were supported in creating outlets for their talents. They were also part of normal school social life. In

pictures which speak volumes when compared with the past; this is quite evident as Figure 27 indicates.

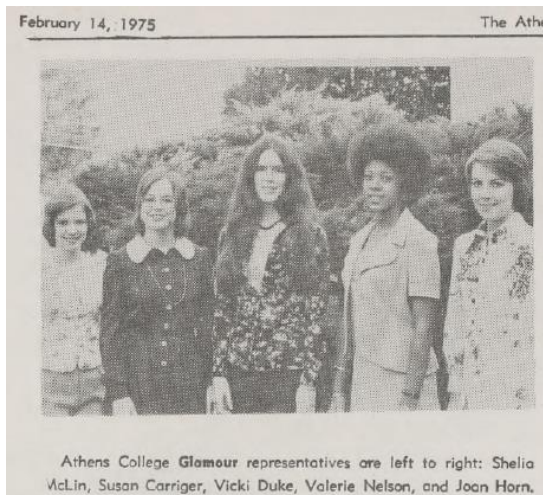
**Figure 26**

*Normalization of African Americans on Campus, 14 February 1975, The Athenian*



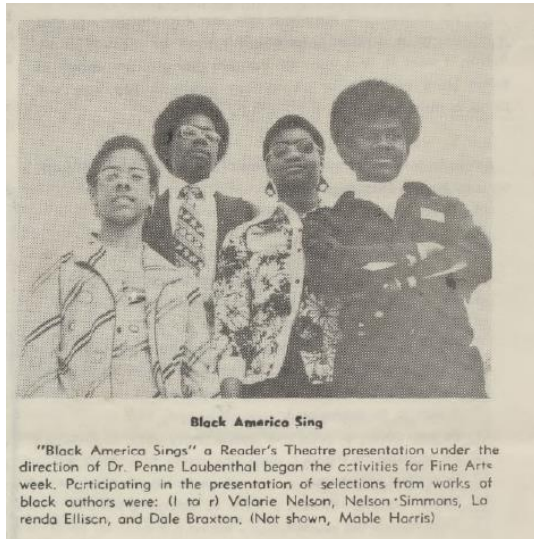
**Figure 27**

*Intersection of Women's Roles and Race, 14 February 1975, The Athenian*



## Figure 28

*New Emphasis on African American Accomplishments, 2 May 1975, The Athenian*



Finally, diversity influenced how race was understood at Athens College. As noted in earlier sections, international students had been at Athens in each era of student discourse. The places these students came from were associated with places where the Methodist Church had missionaries. Thus, even in the era of Jim Crow students from Asia and Latin America attended although not in large numbers. Even so, they were present.

Compliance with the 1964 Civil Rights Act also created opportunity for students from Africa—and they came. They offered a different perspective on what it meant to be black at Athens College. Two, in particular, were featured in the student newspaper—Cuthbert Mutsiwetoga, and Booker Mukahanana. They were both from Rhodesia, at the time an apartheid state where overt legal racism was institutionalized. Booker, in particular noted the stark difference between Rhodesia and the United States.

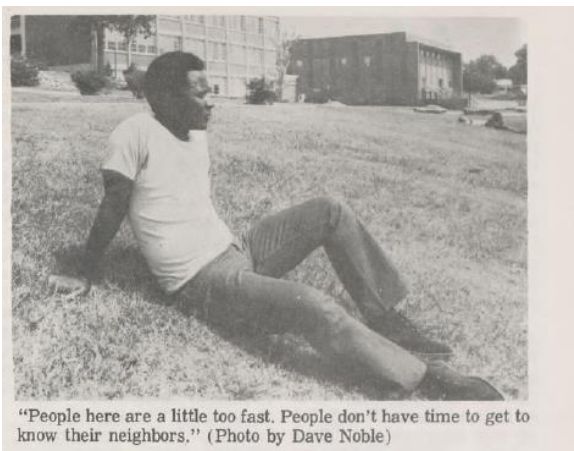
Another difference between the two countries involves racial discrimination. Rhodesia is governed by a tiny minority of whites who insist on separation of the two races down to having different benches in public parks. "Here there are individuals who are prejudiced

but the prejudice isn't institutionalized or supported by laws.” (Mr. Mukahanana, *the Athenian*, 1975, February 28)

Pictures of both students appeared more than once in the student newspapers of the era. They were part of the cultural milieu of the era of emancipation in student discourse. Given the upheaval among students during this era their presence adds diversity to the student discourse.

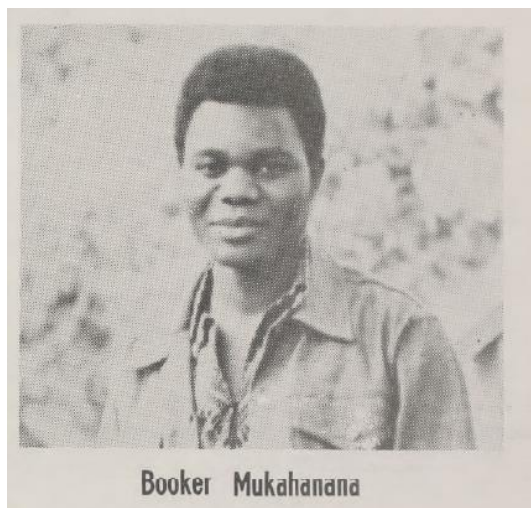
**Figure 29**

*Cuthbert Mutsiwetoga, 6 October 1972, The Athenian*



**Figure 30**

*Booker Mukahanana, 28 February 1975, The Athenian*



What picture emerges about race from this evidence? At the very least, it is certain that this era is unlike all previous eras of student discourse. Gone are the denigrating jokes and stories about African Americans. Still present are symbols and narratives of the past which reminded everyone of the racist nature of the college in its past and the society where it was situated.

Yet, upon compliance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, albeit late, real changes occurred. Opportunity in sports, although contested, was real. The steady integration of African American students into social and creative activities was something new. Finally, the presence of international students from Rhodesia brought viewpoint diversity—further evidence that skin color was an issue in places outside the United States.

Another group which experienced some change during the era of emancipation in student discourse was women. The status of women continued to develop. Yet, activities and programs operated with highly sexualized ideological commitments. Women were presented as separate from men in roles and sphere of influence. Women themselves seem not to have worried much about this but they did insist on having a voice in the life of the college.

### **Women's Roles**

There is paradox and irony in women's roles during the era of emancipation in student discourse. They are presented often in highly sexualized connotations. These include articles, feature stories, pictures, advertisements, and humor. At the same time, women are given a voice in the student newspapers of the era. In these, they make quite vocal demands for equal treatment to men especially in decisions about whom they would allow to visit them in the dormitories.

Women students at Athens were by-and-large a part of an awakening discourse during this era. Indeed the discourse of emancipation played an important role in elevating the voice of students to importance. Students, including women grew to have no compunction about

expressing their views. This illustrative quote is from 1971, during the time when the Equal Rights Amendment legal status was in question. “if we've been able to look past the burning bras, the unshaven legs, the picket signs and protest marches — that women, indeed, are discriminated against in jobs, that their roles dictate their goals, that their sex determines their hex” (For Women Only, *the Athenian*, 1971, April 19).

The paradox was in the penchant for women to be presented in terms of their physical desirability. This is most evident in the student newspapers. Articles about women include references to their use of sexuality to control men, their beauty, and how men are threatened by women. At the same time there are articles where women demand autonomy in determining their associations and movement and also their support for increased women's rights generally especially in the form of the Equal Rights Amendment.

Yet, the most striking elements of the student newspapers are pictures, advertisements, and humor. These are primarily sexualized presentations of women. The contrast with women demanding greater autonomy is quite striking. Humor and advertisements capitalized on stereotypes about women in order to amuse readers.

Some examples of both the sexualized presentation of women as well as their emancipatory demands are in order. One such example comes from language. This sample from an article about dating implies women used their sexuality to manipulate men. “every time he tries to tell her anything she smiles that sweet smile of hers and your mind becomes blank and SHE tells you what to do” (Cupid Speaks, *the Athenian*, 1960, February 22).

Another lens on the view of women as a necessarily separate category of persons can be found in an article idealizing womanhood in general. The article uses the idea of making a statue

to honor southern women as a rhetorical device to create an image of women. It is a somewhat maudlin attempt to honor women by emphasizing their feminine traits as paramount.

The artist must prove that they are adequate to caress a rugged face, or change a diaper, or play a guitar, or scrub red mud from a porch or patio, or punch keys on the checkout register at the supermarket, to hold a hot coffee urn, or "mash" a telephone button, or tie on roller skates, or riding boots, to hold reins, or hands that can aim or guide a 350 Atlanta assembled Ford, or "mash" the lever to vote for the Madison County referendum, or hold a Baptist hymnal, or write patterns of poetry. (Statue to Southern Women, *the Athenian*, 1963, April 22)

This idealized portrait of women situates them in traditional roles of childbearing, child rearing, and management of family matters. It shrouds this in romanticized imagery of serving family, God, and society. Words are but one aspect of how women were presented.

Pictures contribute to the paradoxes surrounding women. The Reb-Belle pictures have been presented in the section on race because of the racialized nature of the pictures. They also show a strong tendency to emphasize physical and erotic aspects of women. The figures below show several of these which are a mere skimming of the large numbers of these types of pictures in the student newspapers of the era.

**Figure 31**

*Reb-Belle, 22 March 1965, The Athenian*



**Figure 32**

*Reb-Belle, 25 May 1965, The Athenian*



**Figure 33**

*Reb-Belle, 8 March 1966, The Athenian*



**Figure 34**

*Reb-Belle, 27 July 1966, The Athenian*



Humor, advertisements, and feature pictures also presented women in the context of sexuality. Much of this is evident in Figure 36. Notice the emphasis on physical desirability in these pictures. Women are presented as something to be pursued by men here. Also, notice the feature picture of four women students from Athens College in bikinis. These indicate a cultural orientation toward how women can be presented—what looks right is a part of what roles are considered important. In this case, the emphasis is on physical beauty and erotic potential.

**Figure 35**

*Advertisements Emphasized the Physical Aspects of Women, 24 October 1967, The Athenian*



**Figure 36**

*Humor Emphasizing the Physical Attractiveness of Women, 15 January 1968, The Athenian*



**Figure 37**

*Another Advertisement Showing Women in Erotic Terms, 16 February 1969, The Athenian*



## Figure 38

*Athens Women Students in a Sexualized Presentation, 22 July 1969, The Athenian*



Alongside such presentations, women began to use a strong voice laced with the characteristics of emancipatory discourse heretofore described. Women began to speak out aggressively for autonomy. They wanted to have their ability to choose honored. Women expressed this desire in articles demanding freedom of association in the dormitories and in voicing support for the Equal Rights Amendment, which was circulating through its legislative process during the early 1970s.

Women expressed this in the language of emancipation. They understood justice to be at the heart of their argument. How could anyone justify treating women as if they needed special moral protection unnecessary for men? Increasingly they used aggressive and spirited words as this example regarding dormitory visitation demonstrates.

A point in particular which is of great concern is women's hours. The men on this campus are quite fortunate that they may come and go as they please, without needing permission slips from parents, sign out sheets, and permission slips from the dean of women.

Actually, it is hard to understand why a young women of 22 or 23 should need fall

subject to such strict protection is beyond realization. Why should a young lady who is legally responsible for her own welfare be forced to follow these hours or need permission to go to certain places? It is time to realize that women need a certain amount of freedom, also. Having to follow the strict women's policies is like being captive in a minimum security prison. Yes, like a prison. If a young lady does not abide by these outdated gestapo rules she must suffer the punishment of being banished from school (which some feel is the lesser punishment) or be campused (meaning: confined to one's room with the exception of having to attend class). In other words the girls are subject to solitary confinement, or as the German's once called it: "put in the cooler." (Women's Dorm Hours, *the Athenian*, 1971, May 19)

This is an extraordinary quote. It combines the demands of women in the hyperbolic language of the discourse of emancipation. Note especially the provocative comparisons of dorm visitation policy to prison and totalitarian governments. This is the sound of emancipatory discourse.

Finally, there was a trend toward support of ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. Students showed awareness of the arguments made by Friedan, de Beauvoir, and other feminists. This awareness is something quite new during this era of student discourse. The women students of the 1970s are not the same culturally as the women students of the 1920s, 1930s, or 1940s. There was evidence of this nascent value in the 1950s as noted in the section on the discourse of collegiality.

What is new in the 1970s is awareness. The awareness of discrimination in jobs and the attendant limitations on freedom of movement and association is a major factor. Furthermore, there is awareness of one important response from higher education—the establishment of

women's studies courses and departments in colleges and universities in the 1970s (For Women Only, *the Athenian*, 1971, April 19).

In one quite telling poll of student opinion in 1973 there is a mixed result. The question was about whether the students supported the Equal Rights Amendment. The anti-ERA voice was strongly against this citing weakening of the family and women fighting in combat units as reasons. The pro-ERA voice was just as strongly in favor due to women being equal to men. There was however strong support for equal pay for equal work in all voices in this article (AC Answers, *the Athenian*, 1973, April 8).

The paradoxical presentation of women in the student newspapers demonstrates how the discourse of emancipation operated. It was bold in asserting both grievances and proffered solutions to those grievances. It was chary of advocating traditional values—including ironically Methodist values, when they stood in the way of increased autonomy for women. In language and insistence on being heard women demonstrated the discourse of emancipation.

Yet, women were sexualized in presentations in the student newspapers. This reflects broader trends in areas such as advertising but also notes specific pictures presented in the student newspaper showing women in scant clothing. The overt use of these types of presentations also says something about the student discourse of emancipation—clearly addressing such issues was not paramount to women during this era.

This discourse began to attenuate when the school changed from a Methodist affiliated small liberal arts college to a state supported upper division college. The elements considered in this last section show how this slide toward a new student discourse manifested. This set the college adrift from its past. The current was toward vocationalism. This was the view that college was only about education for a job or career. The collegiate trappings become irrelevant

over time and eventually disappear almost entirely. The power of the student discourse of emancipation was also broken. What follows was a student discourse of vocationalism; this is considered next.

### **Conclusion—The Discourse of Emancipation**

The discourse of emancipation occurred at a moment ripe with change. Issues of race, war, diversity in the student body, and a growing secularism threatened the unity of this Methodist affiliated institution of higher education. The elements of the discourse of emancipation shine through in the newfound boldness and audacity on the part of students as they insisted that their voices be heard and be taken seriously.

This new spirit of emancipation held little regard for the traditional values of the college and most specifically resisted attempts to form character. In issues ranging from chapel, convocation, the honor code, to grooming standards, and female visitation policies, the students carved out an identity. This identity served to threaten the rationale for having a college such as Athens with its emphasis on conformity.

This provoked a response in the form of conservatism. When seen as the impulse to preserve tradition and to be grateful for the institution, conservatism describes a legitimate counter-weight to the spirit of emancipation. In the end the clashes during this era are resolved by the school changing governance from the Methodist conference to the state of Alabama.

The student discourse of emancipation illustrates the kinds of student movements that could arise during the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s. They played out at Athens College until the college was forced by financial considerations primarily to become a state upper division only college. This set the stage for an irony—the hegemony of a discourse of vocationalism which

had been fostered at Athens College in the night school. In time the discourse of the night school became the discourse of the school itself.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE DISCOURSE OF VOCATIONALISM

#### **College for Jobs**

The student discourse of vocationalism is a discourse characterized by employment and career related concerns as motivations for attending college. The distinguishing feature is an approach to education that sees it as a market. The institution was expected to preserve the market for education. No one looked to the institution to develop character or provide social opportunities as has been the case in the previous college eras.

Vocationalism is both a word to describe a discourse and a word to describe what the institution became during this timeframe. It changed from the previous three eras all of which had some degree of collegialism. These three student eras are distinguishable in terms of the type of discourse they created. Each created a dominant discourse which persisted until altered or displaced. They each overlapped and showed signs of continuation. First, this was as a women's college, next it was collegial, then it was emancipatory, finally it was vocational.

This section will continue that examination in terms of the dominant discourse, which arose among students during the period 1974 through the end of this study in the year 2000. This discourse was vocationalism. This vocational discourse had effects on the dynamics of the types of student discourse examined so far. These include race, and women's roles. The student discourse of vocationalism itself has a number of distinctive components.

First, there are industry connections that deepen and come to dominate. There is also an emphasis on practical education. This is education to get a job in the new economy that emerged in this time period in American history. The reality of working with students, which had been part of the college's life since at least the 1950s, takes a central role in creating the student discourse of vocationalism.

Working students became something of the norm throughout this era. This includes students returning to college later in life. Typically, these students attended college to get some kind of technical certification, to complete their education, or to retrain themselves to do something else with their lives.

There was also a reaction against vocationalism both as a discourse and as the general environment in which the school operated. One might call this reaction conservatism in the sense of an impulse. This impulse was for gratitude toward and preservation of traditions, norms, and practices from the past. This impulse has been discussed in the considerations of other eras. In this era however there is a new expression of this conservatism—romanticism.

As the recognition grows throughout this period that something has been lost there is evidence of nostalgia for the past, which fostered these fading aspects of collegial life. The discourse of collegiality dies a slow death during this period. This romanticism is manifest by expressions of the memory of faculty and students that became entwined with notions of conserving and preserving an ethos found in the institutional past.

There is a type of energy at work during this era. It is difficult to describe precisely however it can be understood as contradiction. During this time period, there is a drift towards the student discourse of vocationalism, but it is fraught with contradictions—these frame the discourse.

This first contradiction can be found by contrasting the words of important school leaders and the results of various student surveys. Three leaders are of particular importance, Dr. Sandridge, Dr. Chasteen, and Dr. Bartlett all of whom were school presidents. They figure prominently in the student newspaper and so are a good source of information.

In their writings in the student newspaper, they tend to be optimistic about the future of Athens State College. They also assume an ethos of the liberal arts and the liberal arts college. They saw the college as a type of family.

Dr. Bartlett in one of his introductory messages to the students gave some hints about the direction that the school was going and seems unwittingly to have to have accepted the conditions under which a very arid business like student discourse is going to arise. In fact, one might argue that there really cannot be a meaningful student discourse in the type of ethos that develops during this time period.

In a 1997 issue of the student newspaper Dr. Bartlett provides some reasons for the basis of the environment in which a vocational discourse arose (Bartlett Introduction, *the Athenian*, 1997, May 1). Pragmatic reasons are going to finally be the only topics available which reaches all students. In the past, there had been foundations for common student cultural concerns, such as religion, clubs, fraternities, organizations, sports, and so forth. These things will fall by the wayside during this time period. Dr. Bartlett gives a very good reason why that might have been the case.

He noted that 100 years ago, there were great American companies such as American Steel, General Electric, and Tennessee Coal and Iron that exploited natural resources. At the time of his writing, in 1997, only one of those companies still existed in Birmingham. The lone

remaining steel producer in Birmingham got its iron ore from Venezuela and not from Alabama (Bartlett Introduction, *the Athenian*, 1997, May 1).

The American economy was changing in relation to the global economy. Times were different. Japan, for example, being at that time the largest oil producer in the world, had no natural resources but imported all of its raw material from abroad. Dr. Bartlett made his point in this way.

I submit today that we must adapt to the realities of a changing world economy.

In the next century companies will still relocate and invest in other areas. And just as in the past, they will move to where the most valuable resources are. However, in the 21st century, they will choose to move to areas rich in the human resources of skills and knowledge. Continuous learning is a foundation of knowledge, that will permit American society to compete globally. (Bartlett Introduction, *the Athenian*, 1997, May 1)

This created a mission for Athens State College in Dr. Bartlett's view. This meant investments in research and development of both the curriculum and the physical plant of the school. These would serve the needs of a population who needed to gain new skills for the new job market (Bartlett Introduction, *the Athenian*, 1997, May 1).

This contrasts with the way Dr. Sandridge and Dr. Chasteen saw the school in the late 1970s through the early 1990s. It was common during this era for the school presidents to write a welcome column at the beginning of the school year. In these columns, they both wrote to encourage students to get involved with the college as if it were still a four year liberal arts college. In this spirit they commend the social aspects of the college such as clubs, fraternities, and athletics (Sandridge welcomes students to Athens, *the Athenian*, 1979, August 1; Chasteen resigns, *the Athenian*, 1990, November 1).

The type of student discourse that can thrive during this era was limited by the purpose of the school and the type of students this attracted. Dr. Bartlett provides a hint at this with his remarks. While these do not contradict the writings of either Sandridge or Chasteen they do indicate the basis for such contradiction. This contradiction is evident in surveys found in the student newspapers of the era.

There is a telling 1979 student survey called the student preference survey (Student Preference Survey, *the Athenian*, 1979, August 1). This shows the straitjacket that student discourse is going to have to operate in. In this survey, the student personnel office was trying to find out what school programs and activities interested the students. The number and type of respondents indicates the direction the college had taken. There are a total of 64 resident students who responded to this survey; there were a total of 591 commuters. Commuter students were a majority (Student Preference Survey, *the Athenian*, 1979, August 1).

Of all the respondents, only 12 thought fraternities were very important, and 24 thought sororities were very important. On the other hand, 143 thought disco dancing was important. One hundred thirty-one thought movies were important. Eighty-seven thought holiday events at the student union were important (Student Preference Survey, *the Athenian*, 1979, August 1).

Some activities, such as intramural sports, got some pretty high marks. Yet the result overall is that the preferences of the nonresident commuter students held sway. Student services under this influence became less collegial in emphasis and more individual entertainment—fun. This should come as no surprise because these reflect the limits of the interests of students whose only real interest in the institution was as a place to get a degree. This might be the price that comes with a college like this in its attempts to fulfill Dr. Bartlett's goal of reacting to the changing world economy by the 1980s.

Another student service survey from 1984 is even more strikingly entertainment oriented. The types of activities of interest to those students were not the types of activities designed to create a coherent, collegial discourse with a goal such as to create the spirit of being a member of Athens College. The responses show that the interests of students who are passing through are what dominates (Student Survey, *the Athenian*, 1984, May 1).

For example, in response to questions about how to improve food services the students provided answers one would expect of people merely passing through. They wanted the snack bar to begin serving short orders and they wanted vending machines in all buildings. These students liked activities such as movies, games, and band parties. This is quite different from the salad days of collegial discourse in the late 1950s with active clubs, fraternities, sororities, and athletics (Student Survey, *the Athenian*, 1984, May 1).

Another revealing aspect of these surveys is a list of the things that students did not know. In the same survey from 1984 student ignorance of important programs is striking. Of the 140 students surveyed only 42 knew about counseling services, while 72 did not; 82 did not know that they could receive emergency information for students and faculty; 75 did not know that there was a service to communicate messages between faculty and students; 75 did not know how to file complaints; 74 did not know that there were services for assisting students with other problems concerning the college; and finally, only 54 knew they could vote in all student elections (Student Survey, *the Athenian*, 1984, May 1). This suggests students did not feel much need for such information.

Surveys in 1991 and 1995 indicate the essentially vocational class of students emerging during this era. The 1995 survey shows that the average age of full time students was 26 to 47 years old; part time students tended to be 25 years old or younger. The largest majors for full

time students was education while it was business for part time students. Full time students preferred daytime classes (60%), while part time students preferred evening classes (80%) (Student Survey, *the Athenian*, 1991, February 1; Survey Provides Valuable Information, *the Athenian*, 1995, November 1).

Students were satisfied with instruction by a large majority (91% full time, 90% part time). These students felt secure on campus (90% in 1995); felt that parking was somewhat problematic with only 56% believing daytime parking was adequate and 54% believing that nighttime parking was adequate. In 1995, 81% of students believed that campus security was adequate (Survey Provides Valuable Information, *the Athenian*, 1995, November 1).

These are developments which happen under the purposes advocated by Dr. Bartlett. There are consequences for student discourse because only a certain type of student discourse can survive. Compared to prior eras of student discourse the new student—the Bartlett student one may say, are not attending college to participate in student discourse—they wanted jobs. Thus, an arid de minimis student discourse comes to pass because the institution itself is no longer an adequate incubator for a vibrant student discourse.

Interestingly enough, this also shows up in the role of *the Athenian*, the school newspaper. By 1986, *the Athenian* was a quarterly newspaper, not a monthly or a bimonthly newspaper as it had been in the past. By 1998, it was a once per semester newspaper. This limited the purpose of the Athenian (Athenian a Quarterly Paper, *the Athenian*, 1986, May 1; Editorial, *the Athenian*, 1998, November 1). It became a newspaper for information almost exclusively. The rich editorials about past controversies die off.

Another change is in the Fiddler's Convention. This annual event had been a campus event since mid-1960s. During this era, it became a moneymaking event for the few student

organizations as continued to exist (Tennessee Valley Old Time Fiddler's Convention, *the Athenian*, 1999, October 1). They make a lot of money selling things during the Fiddlers Convention.

Perhaps the most poignant example of how the student discourse shifted to an arid, almost nonexistent entity can be found in the in the voice of Dr. Penne J. Laubenthal. She was a student during the 1960s and later a faculty member in the English department. She wrote two essays during this time period, one in 1990 and one in 1993. These show that her view of education was antithetical to the drift towards a vocational education (Dr. Penne Laubenthal Essay, *the Athenian*, 1990, February 1; An Open Letter to Athens Students, *the Athenian*, 1993, February 1).

The first essay appeared in 1990 in the student newspaper. Laubenthal took the reader down a romantic recollection of her time as a student in the college. She described classes with Dr. Lorraine Pabst with great admiration for the intellectual prowess of Dr. Pabst. She outlined some of the salient public events of the time. These included the Vietnam War, President Kennedy's assassination, Castro in Cuba, George C. Wallace as the Governor of Alabama, and the great Athens college basketball teams of that time (Dr. Penne Laubenthal Essay, *the Athenian*, 1990, February 1).

She went through a quite beautiful description of her time as a student. Then she took her essay farther and began to describe her experiences as a faculty member before the college changed to an upper division state college. Dr. Laubenthal loved Athens College; this is quite evident. Then change came.

The second essay was critical of students with vocational motivations for attending college. She began by calling out a type of student who had come to school as a result of

vocational concerns. She focused on the type of concerns associated with the primary goal of just getting a grade. Laubenthal asserted that such concerns were not consistent with an education that was after all a matter of experience and not grades (An Open Letter to Athens Students, *the Athenian*, 1993, February 1).

She laid out the background of the 1960s mentioning that some of the male students were there merely to avoid service in Vietnam. There were also a number of northern students who came in that had different views of what was right and wrong. These types of students created a negative environment during that time period (An Open Letter to Athens Students, *the Athenian*, 1993, February 1).

Yet when the school became upper division, a new breed of student appeared. This new breed, Laubenthal said, was nontraditional with a median age in the late 20s, married or single, with children, employed, highly motivated, and goal oriented. This is where Dr. Laubenthal had a problem (An Open Letter to Athens Students, *the Athenian*, 1993, February 1).

Her problem was that students of this description had an attitude of just getting through. This meant jamming through as many classes as they could as quickly as they could, which created an educational situation that she thought was deadly to the students. She offered the high attrition rate in her classes as evidence. If a student just wanted a grade they could simply take an easier instructor. Why worry about quality when getting the degree was the point? (An Open Letter to Athens Students, *the Athenian*, 1993, February 1).

Laubenthal wrote that students came unprepared for class, fell asleep in class, and came in late, (which is an interesting contrast with past controversies about attendance). She then observed that these students would come to her asking for accommodations if they registered for too many classes. Their concern was for what they could do in order to make the grade not

whether or not they actually learned anything (An Open Letter to Athens Students, *the Athenian*, 1993, February 1).

Dr. Laubenthal was becoming out of place in an educational institution that was doing what Dr. Bartlett said it should do. This was to become something that catered to the vocational needs of the community. Dr. Laubenthal was defending an old liberal arts idea. Dr. Laubenthal wrote, “education is not a package; it is a process. It isn't something you pay for with money, but something you experience like life itself” (An Open Letter to Athens Students, *the Athenian*, 1993, February 1).

One of these students she had in mind replied to Laubenthal’s critique. This reply is a quite sad reflection on the state of student discourse. This student defended the grades oriented student as a natural reflection of the state of the world in the 1990s. She further asserted that vocational interests are as good an interest as any for attending college given the significant sacrifices such students had to make to attend college (Response to Dr. Laubenthal, *the Athenian*, 1993, July 1).

This must have been galling to Laubenthal as she had seen student discourse when it was vibrant. It was a force to be reckoned with when she had been a participant in it during a time of great controversy during the 1960s in the student discourse of emancipation. Now students were telling her, more or less, to mind her own business.

This student wrote “I'm one of those bleary eyed people who come to campus and I ask myself sometimes why I'm doing this, especially, you know, if having a family somehow is antithetical to getting an education” (Response to Dr. Laubenthal, *the Athenian*, 1993, July 1).

This is a strong response to Dr. Laubenthal’s critique. Her point is that if such students are

willing to pay the price to reach their goals who is Dr. Laubenthal or anyone else to question that?

This student is pushing back in favor of what Dr. Bartlett has already outlined—the college offered a commodity to the community. Such students viewed their efforts to get an education as just as legitimately educational as what Dr. Laubenthal had described in her own experience as a student. This is evidence of the drift of student discourse during a time of growing vocationalism.

These pieces of evidence begin to mount. The words of leaders such as Dr. Bartlett, Dr. Sanders, and Dr. Chasteen, the student surveys, changes in the school newspaper, to the continued monetization of the fiddler's convention, to Dr. Laubenthal's plea for a classical liberal arts education, are an overview of what has happened--this is like the smoke. The fire is in the dynamics of how these changes happened.

How it happened can best be discovered by examining some themes. The first is vocationalism and the changes it wrought. Following that is the conservative and romantic reaction to vocationalism. Finally, the two persistent themes of race and women's roles indicate significant change during this era.

Vocational refers to an era of student discourse in which vocational concerns become the primary reason for attending school. Athens College became Athens State College with an upper division only, primarily evening and commuter student body. This different environment creates an opportunity to examine a new student discourse associated with this body of students. Two considerations are of importance: Who came to Athens State College? What kind of school did they find when they arrived? From these considerations, the answer to another important question will arise: Why did they come to school?

Beginning in the 1970s, more and more students were working and going to school. Why? They worked because a third to a half of all student costs could be covered by work. It also gave some extra spending money and students began to report that it did not detract from their studies. It seemed to them to foster a sense of independence (Working Students, *the Athenian*, 1976, February 23).

In 1976, 496 new students came to campus, 25% of those were military vets, and 95% of those admitted followed through by enrolling. Of those who were accepted, 145 were full time, 351 were part time (39% of students from Madison Country, *the Athenian*, 1977, January 1). These were returning adults. People like Peggy Black, for example, who was written about in the student newspaper. She returned to college 11 years after she had stopped school to start a family (ASC a place to become, *the Athenian*, 1977, March 1).

One harbinger of the student discourse to come is in student newspaper articles and editorials about tension between dorm students and commuter students (Returning students, *the Athenian*, 1977, March 1; How to tell commuter from dorm students, *the Athenian*, 1984, May 1). Commuter students were older, they had a commitment primarily to studying so the college was merely the place to get an education. This meant by studying and going to class.

Because of these intellectual and academic activities commuter students are noteworthy by some of their common characteristics. They were regarded as punctual, prepared for class, and dressed in good taste. This contrasted the dormitory students who were regarded as unreliable, tardy, and sloppily dressed. They seemed to have a lackadaisical attitude when compared with commuter students (How to tell commuter from dorm students, *the Athenian*, 1984, May 1).

The college touted the fact that the student body included students from Redstone Arsenal, the federal military installation in nearby Madison County. These included both soldiers who were attending and civilian employees of Redstone Arsenal working to improve their skills. There were also students of all types who attended school at Athens exclusively by classes on Redstone Arsenal (Redstone Graduates, *the Athenian*, 1984, May 1).

Athens also had an interesting type of diversity born of the opportunity such as college provided. Students could come to Athens in pursuit of a particular degree, but they could also come to Athens because it allowed working students, and students with families to attend. This yielded a variety of different types of students.

For example, in one article, there was a student from Malaysia named Yoon K. Liaw who came to Athens specifically because it had a nondestructive testing major (Diversity at Athens State College, *the Athenian*, 1986, February 8). Then there was Sue Woods, a local Alabama girl, married, a junior college transfer, with two children (Diversity at Athens State College, *the Athenian*, 1986, February 8). There were also people like Angie Daniel, who went to high school, then went to junior college, then went to Athens and planned on continuing her education after Athens (Diversity at Athens State College, *the Athenian*, 1986, February 8).

Yet the typical student in the 1980s was around 32 years old, married, employed to some degree, had children, and they commuted. Most times, they were returning to school after some type of interruption. They did not consider themselves to be naive kids away from home for the first time, but mature, realistic, determined, and willing to travel (“typical’ students, the *Athenian*, 1988, February 1).

There was Diane Bell, 42 years old, a wife, a mother, who traveled 85 miles each way to class. She was taking 20 hours of courses (“typical’ students, *the Athenian*, 1988, February 1).

And there was Hank Allen, 28 years old, worked a 40 hour job on the graveyard shift and also had a 20 hour course load. His wife also attended Athens, and they had two small children (“typical’ students, *the Athenian*, 1988, February 1). Yet another young lady named Wanda was 35 years old. She was a single mother, worked part time, but attended school full time (“typical’ students, *the Athenian*, 1988, February 1). These are the types of people who were coming to Athens State College.

This contrasts very sharply with the typical population in the other eras of student discourse. There are articles in the student newspaper, which highlighted age and work patterns. These mature students were between 30 and 40 years old and had double majors. About 75% were mothers who worked at least part time. Eighty percent of them chose Athens for the location (“typical’ students, *the Athenian*, 1988, February 1).

Think about that in terms of the type of discourse this environment was going to inculcate. It stands to reason that it is going to reflect the values of the working class in the region. Eighty percent came to Athens because of the location, 10% came for the price and 10% came for the types of courses offered (“typical’ students, *the Athenian*, 1988, February 1).

By the 1990s, there are articles such as this one referring to there being no reason to associate with the main campus except for registration (Letter to the editor, *the Athenian*, 1992, May 1). This is so even though students became aware of activities on campus. The environment of the school seems to have been about classes and not social activities. This made it difficult for a largely commuter student body to participate in social activities.

In the 1990s, for example, clubs began to suffer some because the school eliminated lunch hour on the schedule during the school day. Many of the commuter students got involved with clubs during lunch hour (Letter to the editor, *the Athenian*, 1993, May 1). This is an

interesting dynamic since many of the commuter students might have been willing to participate in school activities. For practical reasons they wanted to participate only when they were already there because of the distances they had to travel and their other responsibilities.

The school did things like this for practical reasons that also facilitated the desuetude of the classical college discourse that had existed in the late 1950s, through the 1960s, until the college became a state institution. One student in the 1990s observed, “the life of the school depends on its students if student participation dies, the spirit of Athens State College, which so many of us admire, will also die” (Letter to the editor, *the Athenian*, 1993, May 1).

A new type of student was coming to college in Athens. They did not seem to accept the nexus between participation in various school activities and school spirit. These new students that were genuinely grateful for the opportunity to attend college and for the role that Athens played in providing that opportunity. Beyond that, they did not see the point of college.

There are a couple of stories illustrative of what must have been extreme cases in some respects but also encompassing a number of elements common to many of these new students. These are related to people who came to Athens from a junior college or were returning to Athens after a lengthy break in their studies.

These students tended to see Athens as opening a door they thought was closed due to earlier failures or mistakes in their lives. Athens was an opportunity to follow on their studies in a junior college. They came for knowledge.

This was a way to do two things--to get a good paying job and to reaffirm their self-esteem. Athens State College, even in this format of vocational emphasis was answering a real need in the lives of these students. They worked and they struggled. They were grateful for

Athens and in this gratitude they provided a wholly different type of material from which to build a student discourse.

This is a challenge to thinking, such as that encountered by Dr. Laubenthal in the introduction to this era of student discourse. These students had a type of spirit and they were proud of the school, however it was not within the framework of a traditional liberal arts college.

One of these stories is about Sandra Somerfield. She was divorced. She was a single mom. She had a serious accident. She had some additional severe health issues. She had started college in 1990 but dropped out. Yet, at Athens, she finished college in 1998 (Student back in college...again, *the Athenian*, 1998, May 1). Athens was there for her as a place to study. It was there for her as a place that accepted students of all ages.

Consider Beverly Hogue, who was a high school dropout in 1982. She got her GED in 1984. She was a young, single mother, and was on welfare for a time so she could not continue college. She remarried started college again, and then dropped out of college. She had more children and then she got a divorce. Then she went back to college at Calhoun--a junior college and graduated in 1998. From there she attended Athens and was set to graduate Athens State University in 2001 (Measuring success, *the Athenian*, 1999, December 1).

The students attending Athens State College during this time were looking for opportunity later in life. These were working people, many of them had families, and often they were veterans. A number of them had made mistakes earlier in life, which precluded college attendance. Some of them had health problems. In all cases, though, they were primarily concerned with the school as a place to learn something, to get a job, to work, to better themselves.

What did they encounter at Athens State College? What kind of college was Athens State? Primarily, they found an institution with a fully developed sense of vocational mission. Athens came to understand its past struggles as part of the road they traveled in order to provide a vital service to the communities of the Tennessee Valley. In programs, activities, and identity, Athens was a vocational college, which shines through the student newspapers of the era.

A purpose statement from 1988 does much to reveal how Athens State College had come to understand itself. It came from a survey for current students, alumni, faculty and staff, local businesspeople, and educators. The idea was to articulate what distinguished Athens from other institutions of higher education in Alabama. The following result bears out the importance of the discussion, which follows as Athens sincerely attempted to transform this aspirational statement into a real institution.

FINAL MISSION STATEMENT Athens State College is a two-year, upper division institution operating under the authority of the State Board of Education. Located in north-central Alabama, Athens State College acknowledges a commitment to serve transfers of junior, community, and technical colleges as well as students from other institutions of higher education. The College prepares students for careers in business, education, and other professions, and for graduate school. The College offers nontraditional students many programs to fulfill their education and career goals. Continuing education and community services provide a variety of enrichment opportunities to the people of the region. Athens State College combines individual attention, quality teaching, and a strong liberal arts component to develop an informed individual who is prepared to function effectively in a changing society. (Purpose Statement, *the Athenian*, 1988, November 1)

Among the first experiences a new student would have had would be seeing a variety of relationships all aimed at vocational and technical educational concerns. These included several relationships with business and industry, particularly those located in the Tennessee Valley region. These experiences pervaded each decade from the 1970s until the early 2000s and comprise the only environment in which student discourse could grow.

A new student transferring from a community college might have encountered a program operated by Dr. Robert Young, associate professor of education. This was a technical interface program designed to assist community colleges and technical college graduates in finishing their degree at Athens. The program also provided continued training for teachers at technical and community colleges (Personnel Changes Announced, *the Athenian*, 1977, March 1).

There were other programs along these same vocational lines. For example, in 1975, there was a Personal Qualification Workshop where experts from Industry and government conducted presentations about their needs and employment prospects. Among these were, Aerojet Corporation, General Dynamics, Chicago, Iron and bridge, the Federal Aviation Administration, and the Marshall Space Flight Center (Workshop to be held at ASC, *the Athenian*, 1975, November 24). There were also events such as the 1998, North Alabama College Placement Employment Day, where a large number of local businesses conducted a job fair (Job Fair, *the Athenian*, 1998, February 1). These clear vocational interests became the main reason to attend Athens State College.

A survey reported on in the student newspaper indicated that by the early 1980s a large number of corporate and government organizations would be hiring. They needed graduates with degrees in business, engineering, marketing, and economics. The most needed skill sets were

mathematics and the physical sciences. The liberal arts were not in demand (Helpful hints for getting a job, *the Athenian*, 1980, March 1).

Throughout this period, articles about job related concerns are striking for the frequency with which they appear in the student newspapers. These include articles about how to find a job, job placement services, and practical approaches to job hunting. The 1980s was especially noteworthy for these types of articles. (Finding a job, *the Athenian*, 1980, October 1; Job placement news, *the Athenian*, 1981, September 1; Welcome to the real world, *the Athenian*, 1981, December 1).

Students would also encounter new organizations with a decidedly vocational and technical orientation. The Institute of Management, an international association of management accountants and financial managers was on campus by 1992 (IMA Chapter comes to Athens State College, *the Athenian*, 1992, May 1). The organization's purpose was to provide professional recognition, leadership, and development for people in these vocations. In 1988, the National Contract Management Association awarded some scholarships to Athens students. This organization served to help keep procurement contract management personnel current on federal regulations (Three get scholarships from contract professionals group, *the Athenian*, 1988, November 1).

Athens also became involved with organizations to assist in the development and delivery of vocational courses of study. Students with an interest in these areas would find good opportunities for real world work. For example, in 1987. Athens was part of a nine member institutional group, which created programs at the Upper Cumberland Biological Station, Aquatec. The station existed to provide opportunities to study in a variety of aquatic areas such as aquatic and terrestrial ecology, vertebrate and invertebrate zoology, and botany (Field Biology

at ASC: the Tech Aqua Connection, *the Athenian*, 1987, November 1). Of note here is that financial aid was made available for this program, especially for minority students, including white females.

Another good example of this trend toward vocational education was a 1995 project management course taught by Dr. Wayne McCain. The Suborbital Academic Research Group of North Alabama provided equipment for a group of students studying small rocket payloads. Another group, the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics, provided a wind tunnel to use in research about subsonic aerodynamic principles of flight. (“Hands on” with SOAR, *the Athenian*, 1995, July 1).

Students attending Athens in the 1990s would have found a school with a strong partnership with the federal government. Athens had begun a relationship with Redstone Arsenal in 1974, as soon as it became a state school. This began with the school of business teaching at the Army Education Center (Redstone Extension Celebrates 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, *the Athenian*, 1995, May 1).

This developed to include business programs in the bachelor’s degree for Soldiers (BDFS) program allowing active duty and retired military students to have a home institution for transfer credit. It also grew to include agreements with Alabama A&M University, and the University of Alabama in Huntsville, to offer programs to employees of the logistics command at Redstone. These eventually grew to also include the School of Education, which offered programs in vocational education for instructors at the missile command. The school of business also developed a concentration in procurement (Redstone Extension Celebrates 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, *the Athenian*, 1995, May 1).

Other vocationally oriented efforts included certificate programs. Students with a bachelor's degree could take additional coursework and receive an accounting certification. Tellingly the college imposed no resident requirements for this degree option. The college went so far as to broker an agreement with the Alabama Board of Accounting to allow this program to count as an equivalent to a degree in accounting—this included sitting for the CPA exam (Certificate program, *the Athenian*, 1984, May 1).

Athens State College, later to become Athens State University in 1998 was also an institution bearing the scars of the political battles, which resulted in state control in the 1970s. The school had shown resilience in the face of these battles because of the efforts of influential alumni and political allies in the Alabama House of Representatives. Even so, there were lingering fears throughout the 1990s that the school would either close or be consolidated with another institution.

The cumulative effect of all these vocational efforts translated into the values of students. They came to see their future as workers and professionals as tied up with the type of knowledge Athens could impart (Editorial, *the Athenian*, 1977, January 1). This extended to students attending from other parts of the country in search of programs specifically offered at Athens. This emphasis served to carve out a place for Athens' unique role as the provider of such education. Students came to see Athens as a type of knowledge factory—one for which they were grateful (Editorial, *the Athenian*, 1980, February 1).

Influential alumni include the Beasley family. This family had long multigenerational ties to Athens. Glynda Beasley, the subject of an article in the student newspaper made this clear. Her family had a number of students, graduates, and even trustees. They were involved in

fundraising and alumni activities. The Beasley family owned Sweet Sue Kitchens Incorporated (A family affair, *the Athenian* 1976, January 26).

In a 1990 interview for the school newspaper, state representative Tommy Carter recounted the fight to keep Athens alive during the 1970s battle to change to state control. Carter mentioned that every college president in the state opposed Athens being accepted into the state program (An interview with Representative Tommy Carter, *the Athenian*, 1990, February 1). Vocationalism thereby became essential to save the college.

This resulted in uncertainty for the college. By the late 1990s, proposals to either eliminate Athens or merge it with another school were active concerns of the student body. Another politician was invoked to calm tensions. This time it was from the Alabama House of Representatives Speaker Pro Tem Seth Hammet. He addressed these concerns in an article in a local newspaper, which was reprinted in *the Athenian*. He said that rumors of Athens being on a list of two year institutions slated to close were not true. Further, he noted, that ideas about consolidation of colleges within the state would not include closing Athens (House Speaker says ASC will stay, *the Athenian*, 1997, May 1).

In other respects, Athens was also positioned for growth. Renovations to Brown Hall McCandless Hall and building a new science building was planned. The cost was estimated at \$4.5 million. School leaders were hopeful to get funding from a \$355 million profit the state received from leasing offshore drilling rights to national oil companies (Renovations at ASC begin, *the Athenian*, 1984, August 30).

This growth also fueled aspirations for curricular growth. Budget increases due to grants and in the resolution of past budget problems, allowed the school to create new courses. These tended to be vocational in nature such as a criminal justice program for National Guard soldiers

and employees of the North Alabama Correctional Facility at Capshaw, Alabama (ASC offers course for prison employees, *the Athenian*, 1984, October 18).

Students attending Athens State College would have found an environment in which job related outcomes were paramount. They would have found some collegial life, but the environment would not foster these traditional activities—it would tolerate them. Clubs, sororities, athletics, and so forth would recede into the background until, in time, they either disappeared altogether, or became unnecessary to the actual activities of the college.

It is not surprising then to learn that students attended Athens for vocational reasons. What they found was practical education-useful education, in the sense of job preparation. The types of academic programs available reflected this, as did student services. They found an environment sensitive to changes in the job market. The college included the liberal arts tradition as part of its self-identity, yet it emphasized the practical and the useful—especially to employers. This emphasis conflicted with those who valued the liberal arts tradition of the college.

### **Conservative Romanticism**

As noted in the mission statement earlier the emphasis of the college became vocational. Even as the administration held to a liberal arts component. This squarely conflicted with the overweening emphasis on Athens as a type of knowledge factory designed to prepare students for work. Any pretense to the creation of a broadly educated citizen based on the liberal arts was abandoned. This aporia within the self-understanding of the college led to a sharp reaction.

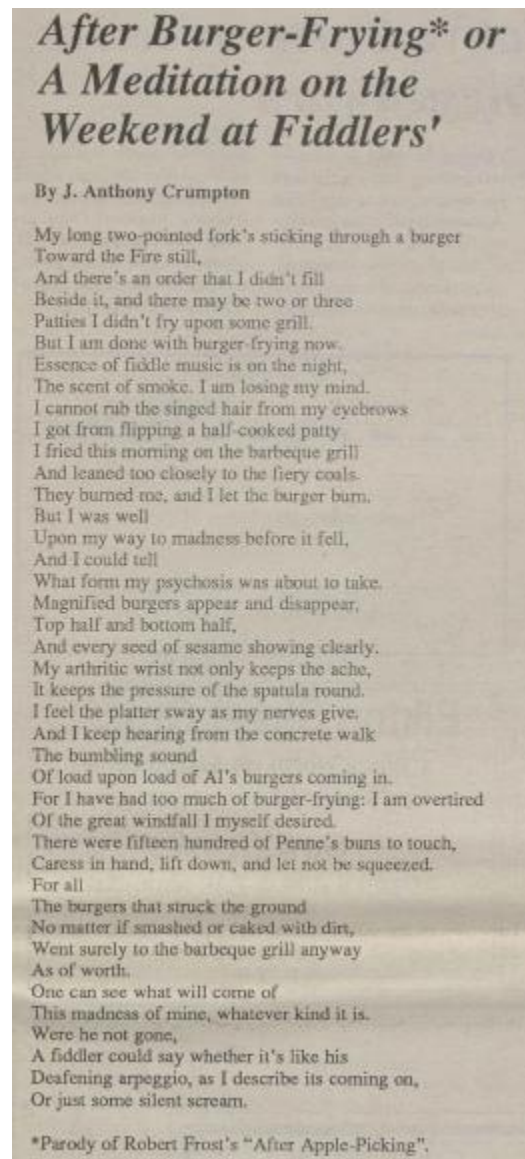
This reaction can be described as conservative romantic. There is a strong element of nostalgia in this reaction. It is a fusion of longing for the old collegiate value of broad liberal education and recounting old stories from the college history. It is conservative only in the sense

of being grounded in a desire to preserve something—the collegiate tradition. The old theme of apathy will surface as a type of surrender—an acknowledgment of the loss of the real meaning of the collegiate tradition and the emphasis on the liberal arts as a community of scholarship in which students grow.

Literary concerns are a salient expression of this nostalgia. There are a number of poems, essays, and book reviews, which stand in stark contrast to vocational concerns. These run the gamut from subjects such as the meaning of myth to this humorous take on Robert Frost’s poem “After Apple Picking,” which was written about working in a concession during the Old Time Fiddler’s Convention (The meaning of myth, *the Athenian*, 1990, May 1; After burger-frying, *the Athenian*, 1990, November 1).

## Figure 39

*After Burger-Frying, 1 November 1990, The Athenian*



Two quite lengthy stories appear in one issue of the student newspaper, which are reminiscent of the earliest issues of the Athenian from first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. One is a quite orthodox telling of some of the hero stories from the Bible; the other is about life in rural Alabama. This latter described so much of local and rural color that it really could have been in the 1909 edition of the student newspaper. There is a longing for the past in the language of these stories, which has nothing to do with vocational interest. Clearly, there is an emotional element

at work here, which exposes the inadequacy of vocational concerns to cement meaningful bonds between students.

That this arises in the environment of vocational dominance suggests something important about student discourse. Vocationalism stripped away the basis for a strong collegiate discourse. What was left for discourse was arid. Students looked to modes of discourse that were rooted in the oldest traditions of the region (Heroes in the Bible, *the Athenian*, 1988, November 1; All in the family, *the Athenian*, 1988, November 1).

Overall, there was an environment in which literary pieces came to consume significant space in *the Athenian*--there are lengthy student writings of the literary types mentioned above. These continue the trend toward a wistful look backward toward a lovely heritage. An instructive observation comes from M.D. Taylor, where he notes that the English department was going to discontinue use of a book by Robert Penn Warren and Cleath Brooks called *Understanding Poetry*.

This 1938 book was a significant contribution to teaching poetry. Taylor observed that while he had some problems with the book he viewed its use in the Athens State College English department as an important tie to the past. This nostalgia seems out of place in a college that is drifting steadily toward a vocational purpose. What is left of liberal arts? In this case, there is a sentimentality for the past (Irony in their passing, *the Athenian*, 1989, November 1).

This spirit of nostalgia surfaces quite clearly when the new library was opened in 1996. An article by Donna Holt is a perfect expression of the nostalgia that is left in the wake of change. She notes that the library represents inevitable change, as is the case in every facet of life. Yet she records a longing for the past, for past relationships, past reality, which carried with it a soul—a richness born of the college experience in those days gone by. Her elegy for the past

collegiate, personal, and intimate basis for friendship is almost palpable in her words. This quote could serve as a manifesto for the conservative-romantic reaction to the new arid discourse of vocationalism (A mourning for what is gone, *the Athenian*, 1996, November 1).

A long awaited dream is fulfilled, and I suppose it is a good thing, this new Athens State library, for I am but one voice. A voice caught up in longing for the old. in this model world but not of it. And I, like the ghosts of old, will remain there in my mind, my memories intact, my emotions linked forevermore to the old Founders' library. Change, then, is inevitable, but even with all its splendor, beauty, and wondrous resources, what has been lost, what is so terribly amiss in the new campus library is soul. Perhaps, though, in time, the old ghosts will adapt, lose their reluctance to tag along. For now, though, they, too, are restless, have been disturbed and invaded like some old grave of long, long ago. (A mourning for what is gone, *the Athenian*, 1996, November 1)

The references to ghosts is an important one. Athens College had a rich history of ghost stories. These are mentioned a number of times over the years with rich details. In fact, the ghost stories of Athens are a good touchstone for the rift between vocational discourse and earlier forms of student discourse. The Athens College ghost stories are varied in nature, but each emphasizes nostalgia for a past era. The era of vocationalism features an effort to debunk these stories thereby missing their importance as emotional ties to the past.

The ghost stories are backward looking. They emphasize an older collegiate ethos coupled with regional attitudes. These stories include: a young woman in McCandless Hall who appears dressed in white holding a bunch of roses; the sound of footsteps falling in Founder's Hall followed by the jingling of keys, and a knock on the door of whomever hears these things. Upon opening the door, nothing but the empty hallway is seen; footsteps in Naylor Hall,

sometimes a mist; a poltergeist in Brown Hall which moves objects; lights in the chapel in Founder's Hall which turn on and off of their own accord; a young woman ghost in Sanders Hall; and mournful sobbing in McCandless Hall (The unexplained, *the Athenian*, 1981, October 1).

These stories are often associated with a traumatic event—the accidental death of a person normally. In the 1980s, Dr. Joe Slate of the psychology department led student efforts to investigate these paranormal occurrences. One such incident involved an attempt to use psychokinesis (The unexplained, *the Athenian*, 1981, October 1). Slate quite seriously entertained the idea that these phenomena could be empirically real (“Residents” of Athens State, *the Athenian*, 1984, December 17).

Finally, by the 1990s Dr. Mark Durm and a group of students debunked the legendary ghost of ASC McCandless Hall, Miss Abigail Burns. He and his students investigated the "ghost story" and discovered Abigail Burns never existed but was invented by a group of parapsychology students (ASC Professor debunks ghosts, *the Athenian*, 1993, November 1). These efforts by both Dr. Slate and Dr. Durm both miss the point of such stories, especially during the era of vocationalism.

As an historical phenomenon, this resurgence of ghost stories was a contemplation of the past. They accentuated the old collegiate atmosphere. In this era, the range of topics to talk about had narrowed. The decline of clubs, sororities, fraternities, and other extracurricular activities left a void. It is likely then that efforts to debunk or prove them were not relevant to their meaning. They offered a wistful look at the past—the very point of the conservative romantic reaction.

In addition to these literary expressions of nostalgia there was also an overtly evangelical Christian religious voice that was quite strongly represented during this period. The

disappearance of a religious affiliation did not put an end to religious values. This religious voice got a hearing in the student newspaper. In this forum, it represented an attempt to anchor the school discourse in a religious tradition. This is a part of the conservative romantic reaction insofar as it represents an aspirational value system. Vocation offered no basis for shared values outside of academic values—religion did.

Examples of this abound and include students as well as faculty members. Dr. Susan Parker, the Director of Development wrote an article for the student newspaper in 1989. This article was an overtly Christian account of family arrangements under the conditions of double digit inflation during this time period. She observed that women who were wives and mothers often worked these days because of the economy. Her idea was that the Christian approach meant getting the whole family involved in doing domestic chores (Housekeeping a family affair, *the Athenian*, 1989, February 1).

This is something of a throwback to the era of conformity in its assertion of biblically sanctioned women's roles. It is also a rearguard action in the era of vocationalism because there is no longer an institutionally approved religious point of view. Yet, it surfaces during this era as one way of asserting common values—something vocationalism could not do.

There is some irony in that the overt attempt to be a religious college failed yet the religious spirit of the general community persisted—some of the students tried to make it a de facto Christian University. A piece in the student newspaper from 1998 featured a student praising a faculty member because of Christian values. In speaking of Dr. Gail Pettus this student wrote,

Gail Pettus is as much like Christ as any person I know. She is loving, kind, courteous and a great leader. She teaches not only by precept but by example. Dr. Pettus emulates

the Savior's strength of character and ability to forgive. (Letter to the editor, *the Athenian*, 1998, May 1)

These types of expressions of religious faith are not unusual in the student newspapers of the era of vocationalism. They are not as prevalent as the more overt expression in all previous eras of student discourse including emancipatory discourse. The college was after all a Methodist institution during those times. Religious references are a signifier of the past by this time in Athens' history. In this sense, it is a part of the conservative romantic reaction to the arid student discourse of the era of vocationalism.

## **Race**

The issue of race has been an important cultural touchstone throughout the history of Athens. This era is no different. Race was an important and developing aspect of life at Athens State College. The legacy of racism associated with slavery affected social relations between black and white people in immediate and deleterious terms for black Americans. This legacy was not monolithic. Instead, it was the ground of significant moral dissonance as Americans much less southerners confronted it in a number of institutions. Colleges and universities became one of the sites of this dissonance and confrontation. At Athens, during the era of vocationalism black students became such a strong presence on campus that their voice and physical appearance became normal aspects of college life.

The student newspapers bear witness to the amplification of the voice of black students. Black students became involved in student government, in clubs, sports (including cheerleading) and other extracurricular activities. They became normalized in direct terms such as winning beauty contests (females only) and asserting their voice regarding uniquely African American academic and social endeavors.

Of all groups in the school history, black students alone had to struggle as a class for their image as human beings to overcome the past denigration of black people generally. This denigration has been demonstrated by the incidents outlined in prior eras of student discourse in this history. It is of great significance then that their voice, their face, and their struggles came to active consciousness during this era. This was the result of their efforts and the receptive ground for such efforts in the academic and intellectual discourse of higher education. Their voices and their faces are two inroads into their becoming a part of the institution, which had cultural implications for students.

Their voice was heard in the things they wrote about. These tended to be two things—black consciousness and public awareness. To this end, they established clubs, observed ceremonies, and wrote independently about their own sense of black identity. Some of their representative types of writings illustrate this point.

Black consciousness consisted of the contemplation of and writing about the meaning of being black in American society. Public awareness consisted of efforts to make the experience of African Americans salient in the institutional thought of the college. Both of these efforts found expression in the pages of the student newspaper.

Themes about the meaning of being black vacillated between normative and distinctive aspects of the black experience. Institutional norms such as clubs formed specifically to address concerns of African American students are a significant development because of their centrality to student led activities. Historically, at Athens these types of activities have been indicators of change in the discourse. Recall that literary societies, a women's college activity, eventually yielded to a variety of clubs as the interests of the student body came to include men.

In the era of vocationalism black students made concerted efforts to honor their racial heritage. They did so primarily by the observance of ceremonial events such as Black History Month, and the creation of a Black History Association. These two activities became evident in student newspaper articles and pictures by the 1980s (Black Awareness Month, *the Athenian*, 1983, March 1; Black History Association, *the Athenian*, 1984, August 30). These clubs and observances are good examples of the normative form of black student expression of their understanding of the meaning and significance of the black experience in America.

The distinctive aspect of student understanding is found in a variety of writings in the student newspaper. These reveal a sharp feeling of both pride and dissonance. One example of this is in choices about what types of articles appeared in the student newspaper. For example, someone chose to use an article by the African American historian Lerone Bennet, Jr., which addressed the question of the importance of black history. This is a bold articulation of the power of history to determine self-image. The essential message was that their own history would give any people knowledge of their past, a sense of identity, and access to power through the efficacy of narratives, which informed public policy (Why black history is important to you, *the Athenian*, 1982, April 1).

This a good example of the type of thinking which became a part of student discourse. In the past, there had been very little serious discussion of the distinctive aspects of African American history. In this era, it comes to the forefront. In cultural terms, it is an example of a change in the discourse—now black students had a voice to say the heretofore unsayable—their race had been oppressed. The meaning of this is something both they and the school tried to address.

A particularly poignant example of this is from a 1995 article in the student newspaper. This article, written by Caroline Brackin is an extraordinary reflection on the meaning of being black. As she described the changes in how black people have been referred to such as negro, colored, black, and African American, she concluded:

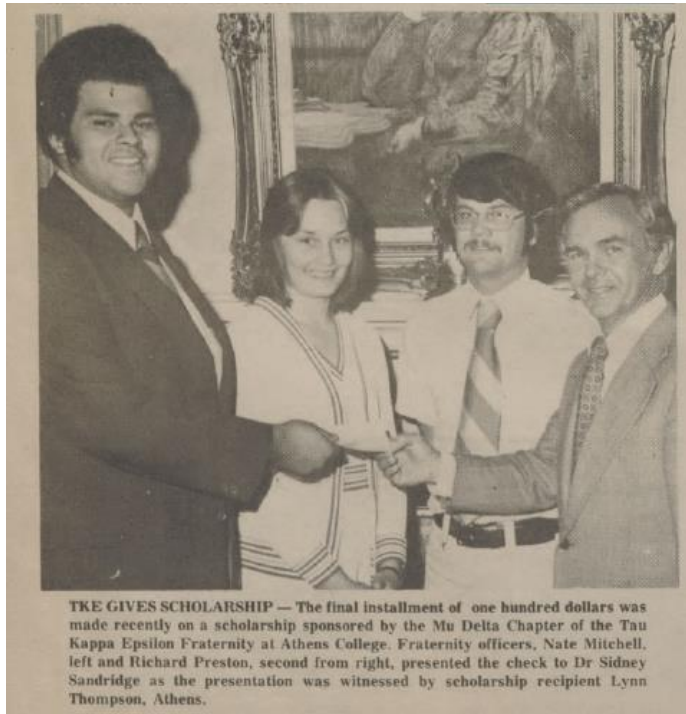
I am Carolyn; proud to be an American. I'm proud of my past as I know it...I am Carolyn, Alabama born and bred. Times have changed, and through the years, so has my classification, but through it all, I remain. Carolyn (Who am I? *the Athenian*, 1995, March 1)

The era of vocationalism saw the flourishing of black students. They gained a voice, enjoyed regular ceremonial and organizational expression, and became a part of the mainstream of student life. The institution had changed to the extent that these types of expressions could surface. Another indicator of this change was in the presence of African American students in activities such as the SGA, a variety of student social activities (Mr. and Ms. Athens State, Spring Beauties, Cheerleading and so forth). Pictures from the student newspaper illustrate this quite powerfully.

The trend toward normalization of African American students in all aspects of college life began during the era of emancipation. This continues, grows, and becomes more evident in the student newspapers. By 1975 pictures such as this scholarship award from the TKE fraternity is just a normal part of school activity.

**Figure 40**

*Continued Normalization of Mixed Race Environment, 10 November 1975, The Athenian*



Pictures are also powerful evidence of the expansion of student ideas of beauty and attractiveness in women students. African American women came to be included in a number of stereotypical expressions of notions of women's roles vis-à-vis their physical attributes. More on the question of women's roles as it relates to ideas about eroticism and beauty are discussed in the next section where women's issues are addressed more directly. In the present context, the emphasis is on the inclusion of black women in these expressions of female attractiveness through women's roles.

These pictures show how African American women came to be included in these expressions of student discourse. There is a picture of cheerleaders in 1977, which includes African American students. Many of the pictures of cheerleaders throughout this era have no African American participants, but it was possible for them to be included. As noted, by the year

2000, a mere three years before athletics were cancelled at Athens, about half the cheerleaders were African Americans as the picture from the 1 December 2000 issue of the student newspaper attests. There is also a picture from 1983. It is of the women chosen by the SGA to be the spring beauties. This normalization trend was becoming entrenched by the mid-1980s.

**Figure 41**

*Cheerleading Squad from 1977, 1 November 1977, The Athenian*



**Figure 42**

*Cheerleader Squad 2000, 1 December 2000, The Athenian*



**Figure 43**

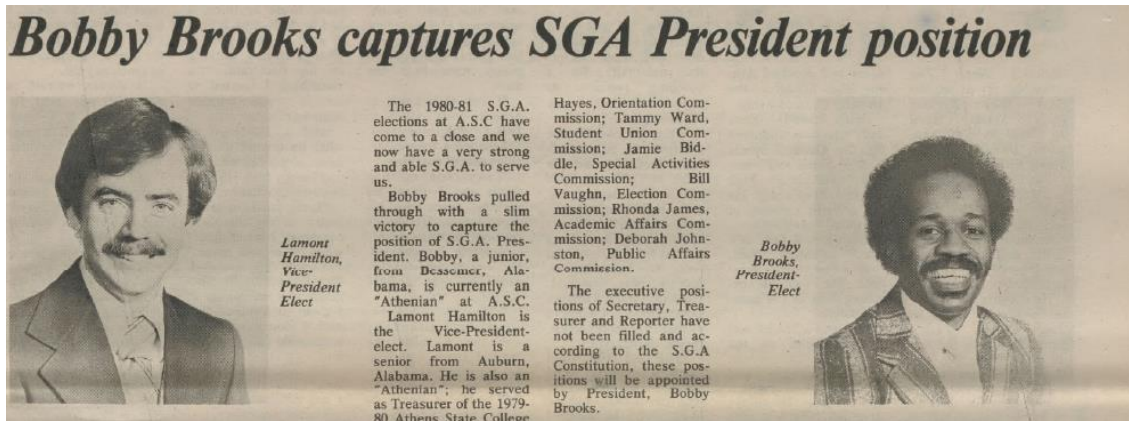
*Spring Beauties, 1 May 1985, The Athenian*



African Americans also appeared as members of the Student Government Association and as recipients of SGA honors such as the Mr. and Ms. ASC awards. These pictures are examples of this development. As with other trends regarding race this inclusivity grew in the 1980s. The first picture shows Bobby Brooks when he was elected president of the SGA in 1980. The second notes the hiring of Arnold Green as a faculty member. The third picture shows two African American students from 1985 who were chosen to be Mr. and Ms. ASC.

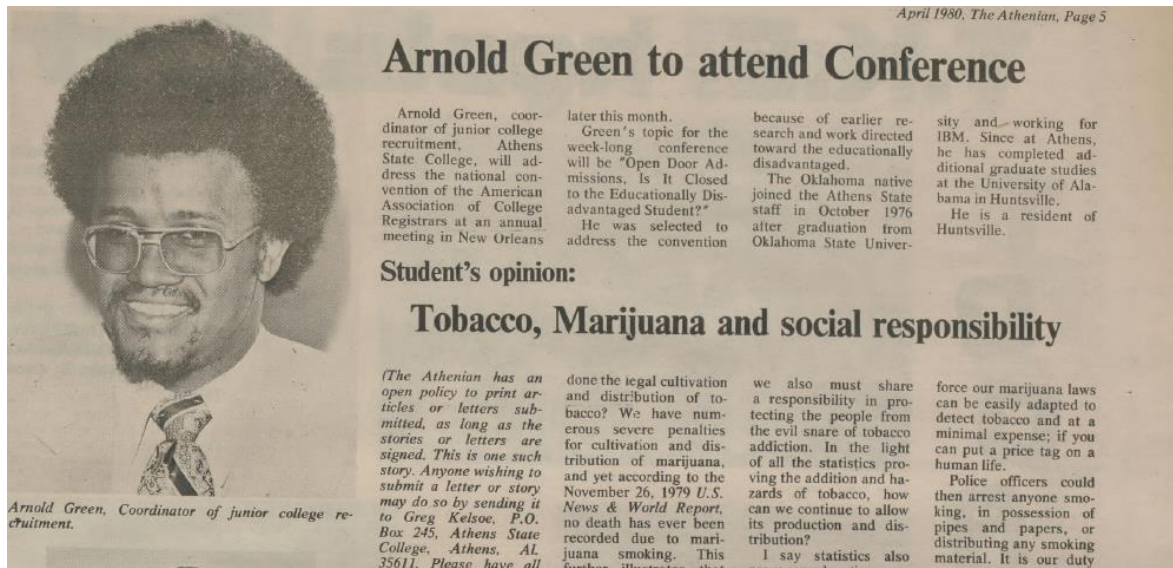
**Figure 44**

*First African American SGA President, 1 April 1980, The Athenian*



**Figure 45**

*Arnold Green, among the First African American Administrators, 1 April 1980, The Athenian*



**Figure 46**

*Continued Normalization of African Americans on Campus, 1 May 1985, The Athenian*



Athens continued to have African Americans in sports, especially basketball but the expansion of black participation in a fuller range of student experiences continued apace. This represents an important institutional step forward in the advancement of African Americans especially in their ability to participate in what had been an exclusive institution in the not too distant past. The pictures here are only a few of the many that appear in student newspapers from the era of vocationalism. Another group of students affecting student discourse was women. Women's roles continued to be a factor in how they were able to participate in the life of the school.

### **Women's Roles**

In the era of vocationalism, women were presented in the student newspapers in terms of popular stereotypes, collegial roles, and intellect. These three considerations may be viewed as a continuum of dignity with stereotypes being the lowest, collegial roles occupying a middle ground, and intellect being the highest expression of dignity. As the school became more of a place to get job related skills or credentials the stereotypes and collegial roles became stale while the intellectual roles became absorbed in the pragmatic goal of job skills acquisition. Once again, the vocational purpose left no ground to cultivate a shared collegiate discourse.

The stereotypes are evident in some of the student writings and in advertisements. The regular column entitled Shakin' my head and talking to myself is a good example of this stereotyping. The author, Jim Cavendar, was an older student, and a source of curmudgeonly humor, anecdotes, and life advice. Among his targets was the relationship between the sexes as understood during his time. The following excerpts are representative of how he commented on these topics.

Tactless: A man, after having been blind for years, opened his eyes after surgery, saw his wife and said, "Boy, you sure have got fat in four years." (Shakin' my head and talking to myself, *the Athenian*, 1982, December 1) The practice of having more than one husband or wife is called polygamy. The practice of having only one husband or wife is called monotomy." (Shakin' my head and talking to myself, *the Athenian*, 1983, January 1)

This column reflects a view of women in terms of their roles as spouses. Jim always assumes that what he thinks is humorous is widely shared by his readers. In this way, the denigration of women becomes a part of the student discourse. This type of discourse has nothing to do with women as students or scholars.

Further, there is writing such as a 1982 article entitled, *The perfect female needs*. This is frankly a sexist piece of writing. It names particular women students and comments on their particular attributes. These are all sexualized using language such as "something to run my hands through...really sexy,...get any man's attention, soft and sweet...small and innocent...wrap her arms around me...long and beautiful" (*The perfect female needs, the Athenian*, 1982, April 1). These stereotypical expressions in such a public forum is indicative of a debased view of women generally. It is further evidence of the denigration of women.

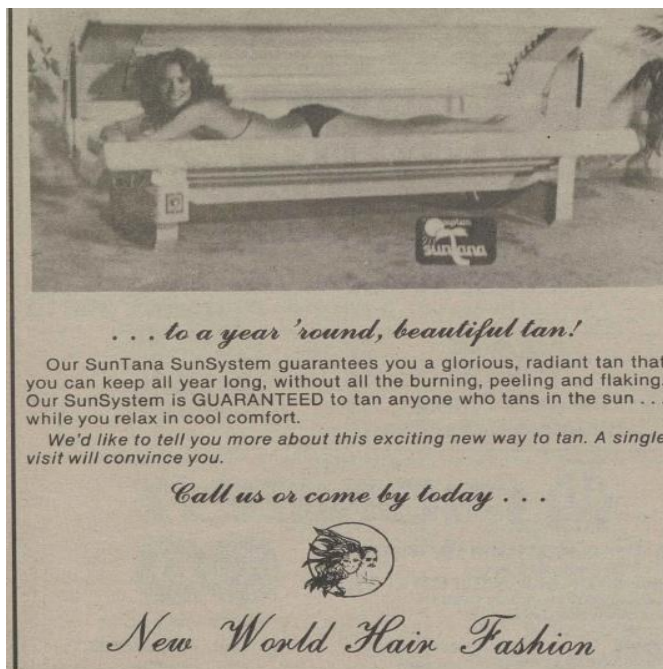
Finally, there are advertisements which are blatantly sexual. This may have been unavoidable given the nature of advertisements during this time period. Even so, the presence of such advertisements is indicative of attitudes toward women. They were sexualized in ways and proportions greater than men. The example at Figure 27 is from 1983, it should suffice to illustrate the general nature of such advertisements.

Taken together these three examples are evidence of one strain of thinking about women—they were stereotyped in terms of traditional female roles and appreciated largely for

their sexual and erotic attributes. The student discourse of vocationalism however was not a vibrant discourse as has been seen. It lacked a strong central ethos having lost that when the collegial discourse disintegrated slowly after the school became a state and upper division only institution.

**Figure 47**

*Continued Sexualization of Women in Advertisements, 1 October 1983, The Athenian*



Another strain was the collegial strain, which was a hangover from the days of the old collegial discourse. Athens limped along in attempts to maintain a collegial discourse and did so until the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century. As fiscal realities began to require administrative officials to protect the core mission of vocational instruction these extracurricular activities began to fall away.

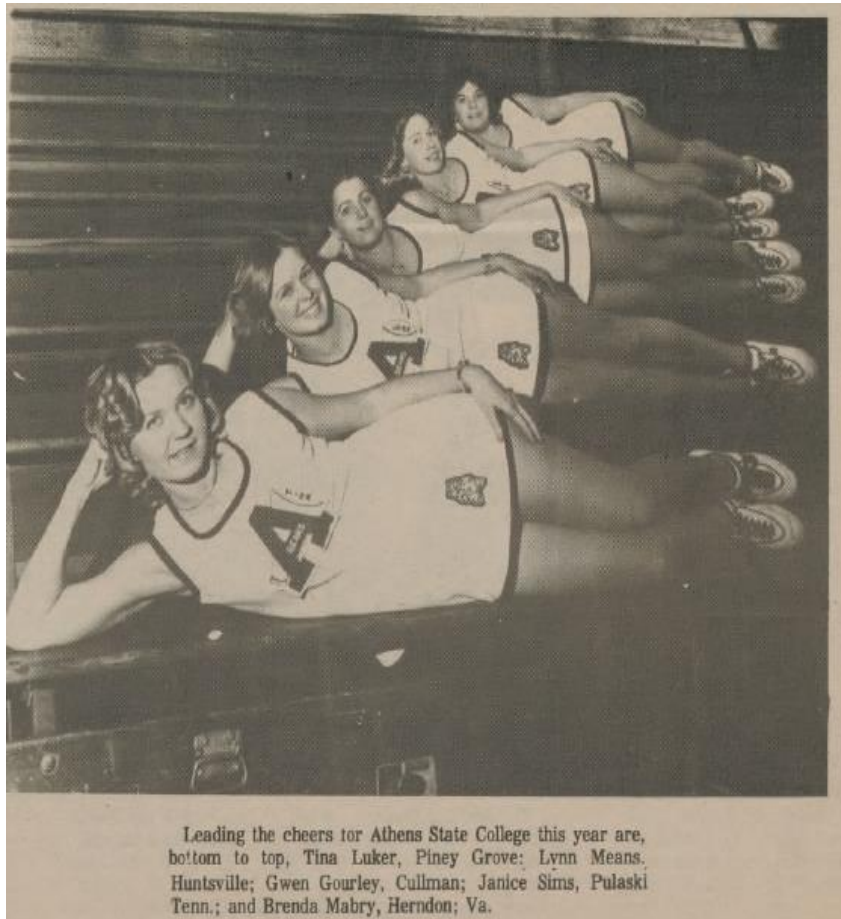
While they persisted, they provided one outlet for attitudes and values regarding women students. Activities such as cheerleading, beauty contests, the Founder's Queen and court, homecoming queen, and women's sports provided outlets for a collegial oriented expression of

women's roles. This attempt to dignify the stereotypically feminine characteristics lacked the crudity of the previous attempts but they were stereotypes.

This series of pictures shows these types of activities. It is important to note that they lend an institutional type of dignity to traditional women's roles. They enforced a view that socialized women as normal in these roles. There was a sense of carrying on traditions, which was deeply rooted in Athens' collective memory. It is like a watermark throughout the era of vocationalism. Women's roles was an important part of this tradition.

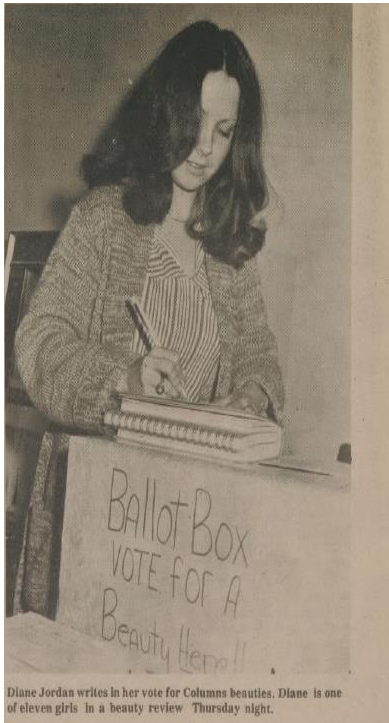
**Figure 48**

*Women's Role, 1 February 1977, The Athenian*



**Figure 49**

*An Expectation of Women, 1 March 1977, The Athenian*



Diane Jordan writes in her vote for Columns beauties. Diane is one of eleven girls in a beauty review Thursday night.

**Figure 50**

*Women As Beautiful, Transcended Race, 1 October 1981, The Athenian*



SGA September Sweetheart, Miss Stephanie Leopard.

SGA October Sweetheart is Miss Kelly Williams. Kelly is a junior from Athens, Alabama, and is majoring in Criminal Justice.

**Figure 51**

*Sweetheart of the Month, 1 November 1982, The Athenian*



**Figure 52**

*Old Traditions, New Faces, 1 February 1989, The Athenian*



**Figure 53**

*Ingrained into the Institutional Culture, 1 December 1999, The Athenian*



There is also unsurprisingly a growing interest in women as intellectuals during this era. This is a concomitant of the institution as a place of scholarship and learning. There are a variety of poems, articles, and other intellectual expressions from women students and faculty. These stand in contrast to the first two expressions which focused on physical and role related attributes of women. These intellectual expressions focus on their work as scholars.

Two articles about Dr. Penne J. Laubenthal illustrate this point. There are other women faculty who were featured in the student newspaper for their academic work; Dr. Laubenthal is just a good example. The first was recognition for her work in writing and performing. She was a faculty member in the English department. Dr. Laubenthal wrote and performed a monologue about Sylvia Plath. Dr. Laubenthal spoke about the new consciousness regarding women's issues at the time as a reason why this work was so well received (Dr. Laubenthal presents program in Florence, *the Athenian*, 1979, October 1).

Another article is about poetry awards Dr. Laubenthal received. She was a first prizewinner for a Scribner's contest for poetry about American cities. She also won third prize in the Alabama state poetry contest for her poem "Dirge in Ragtime" (Laubenthal receives poetry awards, *the Athenian*, 1979, December 1).

There are a number of examples of student writing in the student newspapers. The work of women students takes its place alongside men's work with no particular fanfare. One example is a poem by Kristie Casey, which was accepted for publication by Nagaraja publishing (The lover, *the Athenian*, 1996, February 1). This intellectual and artistic aspect of women was a normal feature in student newspapers during this era.

Taken together this strain of discourse about women does not focus on their sexuality per se. This is true even in a case like Kristie Casey, who wrote about troubled relationships including overtly sexual relationships. She was not thereby taken as a sexualized object; instead, she was taken as a person struggling with relationships similar to many other people.

Women were the most invisible group of marginalized people during this era. While it is true that they did come to be recognized for intellectual and artistic contributions in their own right it is nevertheless true that they were regarded as sexualized objects as well. Perhaps this reflects the persistent nature of such views of women. Whatever the case they were faced with a perceptual expectation not applied to men. The strong inclination to see women as attractive may have been too difficult or too presumptive to overcome.

### **Conclusion—The Discourse of Vocationalism**

The discourse of vocationalism was a necessary result of the turn by the college toward job related concerns. The change to a commuter heavy student body necessarily altered the collegial environment such that it was no longer operative. Students and administrators were

slow to realize this and so continued to try to prop up the old collegial model. The spirit of such an organization dissipated upon assumption of state control and the inexorable vocational logic of an upper division only institution.

Along with the decline of the collegial model came the decline in the vitriolic and rebellious discourse of emancipation. What came to dominate student discourse was an arid, self-interested rationale for attending—this is the logic of vocationalism. Even so, vigorous and highly effective programs of study were developed and became the basis for the survival of Athens as first a state college and later a state university.

## CHAPTER 6

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The case has been made for the existence of four distinct student discourses at Athens State University. It conceived of these discourses as types of words, tones, and expressions centering on the general tenor of student reaction to the experience of being a student at Athens. These discourses overlap in some respects in that they are present in multiple eras. The distinguishing feature however is that one type of discourse will dominate for a time until it is displaced by another type of discourse.

The first era is the discourse of conformity it holds sway from 1902 until about 1934 or so, after the school changes from Athens Female College to Athens College—a co-educational college. The evidence presented in this section include considerations of race, women's roles, and religion. Also, the era was framed in terms of the leadership of Mary Norman Moore.

Taken together what emerged was a moment in the school's history as reflected in the student newspapers. Athens Female College had the ideological commitments and habits of thought of white women of sufficient means to attend college. This put them in an environment that emphasized obligations to the regimen of classes and extracurricular activities outlined by college officials.

In this isolated environment women learned to adopt women's roles characterized by service to community, submissions to the authority of parents, and the aspiration for the supportive roles of wife and mother. In an early sign of the aporias inherent in such an

environment there is some evidence of women's insistence on autonomy in making major choices about their lives direction.

Faith was the bedrock of the school's overall ethos, which underscored the expectation of conformity to the demands of the college administration. This was a Methodist affiliated women's college. As such, it required attendance at two chapel services daily, weekly prayer meetings, mandatory church attendance on Sundays, and participation in the missionary society. Religious themes dominate the student newspapers of this era.

Athens Female College was an overtly racist institution. Of course, it existed in service to a society which was itself racist. Black people are presented as inferior, unserious, separate, and subservient to white people. There are some quite disturbing articles illustrating this, not least of which is the celebration of the disenfranchisement of black men in the very first extant student newspaper.

This section has an extended consideration of the educational ideas and philosophy of Mary Norman Moore. Moore was both a child of her times and a change agent. Her ideal of a rigorous education for women permeates her writings and speeches. Moore showed what a serious educational effort for women could accomplish. Her progressive ideals extended the benefits of intellectual development to all women—white women first, and eventually to black women.

These are the facts upon which the case for the student discourse of conformity depends. Taken together they create the impression of a school, which fulfilled its aims. From Mary Norman Moore's efforts to hire excellent faculty, to the participation of the women in the many activities of the school. Athens Female College is a good example of a small, private, religiously

oriented women's college in the American south. Racism, is of course, a stain to contemporary thinking, but reflected the nature of the times.

The next era is the discourse of collegiality. This discourse held sway from 1934 when the school became coeducational and lasted until the era of emancipation. This is an important distinction as it shows how discourses overlapped even as the dominant mode of discourse for each either expanded or receded. Collegiality was a part of each student discourse until the discourse of vocationalism. One might consider the era of collegiality as the high water mark of the liberal arts college at Athens.

The student discourse of collegiality refers to the broadly traditional liberal arts college environment, which arose at Athens between 1934 and 1960. This is the timeframe during which the dominant discourse was collegial in nature. This expressed itself in the types of activities the students' engaged in such as clubs, sororities, fraternities, and other quotidian pursuits. The atmosphere was framed as a residential liberal arts college. This created a type of discourse, which was regnant until about 1960 when it was displaced by the discourse of emancipation.

School leaders such as Dr. Perry James recognized that the college was becoming vocational in orientation. James saw the college mission in terms of providing the type of educated citizenry necessary for leadership in a democratic society. Moreover, he saw the need to rearrange the school structure to include men because of the growth in industry in the Tennessee Valley.

These two aspects of the school mission tended to clash. The more liberal arts oriented stance of those in residence, versus industrial plant, and commuter students. The rift created by the inclusion of these two disparate groups of students grew in time. Eventually, by the end of the next era of school discourse the vocational mission would subsume all other cultural

elements. The contradictions in the era of collegiality are evident in the way students wrote about a variety of topics in the student newspaper.

These included women's issues, chapel, and race to name a few. An element of questioning and resistance to authority began in nascent form to emerge. By and large the trends from the era of conformity are all still present, yet there are signs of disagreement. The school still presented black people as inferior, women as primarily desirable for physical beauty, and chapel as an unnecessary intrusion.

Student discourse during this era reflects the growing pains of an institution, which had radically changed. The inclusion of men in the student body set in motion a search for identity. This was found, for a time, in the collegial model of a liberal arts college of the time. The religious identity attenuated over time as evidenced by resistance to mandatory chapel attendance, and the shunting of overt religious requirements into a one-week period each year.

Overall, the student discourse of collegiality was an attempt to become a liberal arts college in an environment where this was unlikely to succeed. The vocational drift of the school as a service to the industrial and community needs of North Alabama dictated a practical approach. It is not inaccurate to portray this era as the failure of a small college to break out of that mold. The student discourse of the era reflects the mores of a small regional college with all the vices and virtues that entailed.

The next era of student discourse is the era of emancipation. This discourse was dominant from about 1960 until 1974. These years encompass the timeframe during which events gave rise to the characteristics of the discourse of emancipation through the attenuation of this discourse upon achieving state affiliation. The topics and tone of writing in the student newspapers

demonstrate this emancipatory discourse. There are a number of topics which became flashpoints for rebellious acts and the tone is combative, impatient, and judgmental.

During this era, students expressed an aggressive and often non rational anger toward college policies such as class attendance policy, mandatory chapel, and convocation policies. Students saw Athens as out of step with the norms in other institutions. They noted the antiquated attendance policy was unnecessary in an age of students as consumers. Also, mandatory chapel and convocation services were boring.

Two instances of extraordinary rebellion occurred during this era. The first was the food rebellion of 1965 where students purposefully waited outside the dining facility until a few minutes before closing time and then flooded the serving line. This was done to bog down the services and make a point to the administration—students were not satisfied with the food or the service.

The Student Government Association (SGA) was also a site of rebellion. In a shocking move, the SGA proposed to dissolve itself in 1970. This came on the heels of several efforts to rewrite the SGA constitution to give the SGA more control over issues such as open dormitories. The school administration would not agree to reduce their own control over such issues.

These types of disruptions gave rise to a conservative reaction. This surfaced in a number of articles in the student newspaper offering support and expressing gratitude for the administration. Interestingly, sports, especially basketball lent legitimacy to this reaction indirectly by being itself an organization, which represented the college as a good institution.

Race continued to be an issue at Athens but for the first time students noticed. The college did not comply with the requirements of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 until 1967. Students themselves noted the hypocrisy in a Methodist affiliated college acting on such racist

values. This student awareness took place in an environment in which students also acted in perpetuating racist imagery in the student newspaper in the form of displays of the confederate battle flag and other similar activities.

Yet once the school allowed black students to attend, they did attend. After 1967, black students were fully integrated into the life of the school. This included clubs and other social organizations. They also gained a voice as black students began to write in the student newspaper. This included meditations on their race as well as attempts to educate others about African American history.

Women and women's roles continued to be a part of the value system of student discourse. Women were still presented in highly sexualized ways in pictures. However, women began to speak out. They were especially concerned with autonomy. They wanted freedom to associate with whomever they wished at such times as they wished—even in the dormitories. Also, there was a quite visible support for ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment when it was wending its way toward ultimate defeat.

Finally, in a harbinger of things to come the night school grew during this period. It increased in numbers of students and numbers of course offerings available via night school. This group of students tended to be interested almost exclusively in getting a degree instead of extracurricular activities. The night school would eventually become the core of the school, but this process would take some time. The catalyst came when the school became part of the state system in 1975. This change brought the final student discourse—the discourse of vocationalism, to dominance.

This discourse is the result of the transfer of the college from Methodist affiliation and control to state control. In 1974, Athens College became Athens State College under the

direction of the state of Alabama. At the same time, it became an upper division only college. The students who would thereafter be attracted to Athens would already have the first two years of college completed at other institutions.

This change created an environment where education was considered a commodity. College was conceived of as a market where one went for job skills. This era continued and deepened college connections with industries located in the Tennessee valley. Because of this a new vision of the college's purpose and role was articulated and refined by key leaders such as presidents Sandridge, Chasteen, and Bartlett. These leaders completed the transition to a new type of institution.

The price for this was tension within the student body. This increasingly became an older group of mainly commuter students. The average age of students creeps up from 26 to 32 by the mid -1980s. The students got older as a result of the change in structure and mission of the college. The student discourse changed by becoming, over time, an arid and unessential part of student life.

One result was tension between the dwindling numbers of resident students and the overwhelming numbers of commuter students. Because the college became a place to transact business instead of a place to grow in character; the fuel for a vibrant student discourse was lacking. Student discourse became a shadowy reflection of the former halcyon days of the previous eras of student discourse. One by one, clubs and other extracurricular programs became less significant features of student life.

There was, for a time. A conservative/romantic reaction to this development. The student newspapers feature a number of articles, which look wistfully to the past as a time when the

college was like a family. There is nostalgia for the relationships of academic and intellectual development of the old Athens College.

One of the positive aspects of the era of vocationalism was in the area of race. The sense of moral dissonance, which surfaced during the discourse of emancipation, became amplified in this era. This resulted in the greatest flourishing of black students of any era of student discourse at Athens State University.

The aspirations of black students were evident in participation in clubs, fraternities, sororities, student government, and athletics. An overt black consciousness surfaces in the student newspapers. It was expressed in stories and articles which sought to inform about the struggles of black students. Black students also faithfully observed ceremonial events such as black history month and also created a black history association. This era also saw the first black SGA president as well as the first black faculty members.

Women were still the only group regularly presented as valuable because of physical beauty. This is not the only way they were presented but it is a distinguishing aspect of how they were presented. They were presented in sexualized roles, which included some crudely sexualized stereotypes.

They were also presented in collegial activities that were, at the time, the exclusive purview of women students. These collegial activities included cheerleading, beauty contests, the Founder's queen and court, the homecoming queen, as well as in women's sports such as gymnastics. The collegial role was not crudely sexualized but rather reflected an emphasis on distinctly female roles, which fit into the ethos of the college. This was a more normalized and dignified way of understanding women students.

They were also presented as intellectuals and scholars. Women were featured in articles about their academic work. They also wrote as experts in some articles. In this presentation, women were not referred to in sexual ways in any respect.

The student discourse of vocationalism reflected the attenuating collegial environment. The material from which a student discourse could be built was sparse. The resulting discourse was arid and minimal. This discourse was a natural result of the school becoming an upper division mostly commuter institution.

Athens State University has a past for which it should be grateful. While it is true that there has been racism and misogyny, these are not the most significant aspects of the collective past of Athens State University. Of primary significance are the themes of resilience and rationality. Over its many years and many permutations, Athens State University has fostered an educated citizenry equipped with the intellect and disposition to contribute to society in areas such as education, science, and the humanities.

Athens State University has a legacy of positive contribution to the public good of the society in which it is located. Students from Athens have been and are teachers, ministers, business owners, scientists, researchers, entertainers, and many other vocations and professions in the North Alabama region and beyond. This is so because of the vision and resilience of past leaders and students at Athens.

This penchant for vision and resilience has seen the school through tragedy such as the epidemic; the risk and failure in such efforts as the industrial unit of the 1930s; the shock of changing orientation entirely from a religiously affiliated college to a state college first and later to a state university. One cannot help but think the real ghost stories of Athens may be felt in the whispers of wind whipping around Founders Hall which has seen the efforts of Mary Norman

Moore, Eugene Naylor, Perry James, and Sidney Sandridge to name but a few. Their memory is realized all over the Tennessee Valley anywhere students and alumni live.

Athens State University is heir to an intellectual tradition, which affected changes for the better over time. As it produced graduates, so it spread tenets of reason developed under the academic disciplines. This has been the case since the earliest times for which historical evidence is available. While this has been influenced by vocationalism it has nevertheless remained a hallmark of what the university aims to do. This also set the conditions by which students felt compelled to speak out against administration abuses.

This study has shown student discourse in four types. The living reality of Athens State University is rooted in these voices from the past. It is good to remember that this has given the school a character. If Athens State University could be symbolized, perhaps the most apt is found in any number of photographs of Founder's Hall over the years. This would look much like a rolling film of people doing all kinds of things one would expect on a college campus.

There would be groups of women dressed in the styles of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century milling about in social activities. There would be young men with crew cuts horsing around. There would be tired students coming from arduous labor in the industrial units to attend classes. There would be students decorating floats for parades. As the school celebrated anniversaries there would be barbecues and festivities.

The Old Time Fiddler's Convention would add strains of bluegrass music to this mix. Also, there would be students with strange accents from the northern states as well as international students from Korea, Cuba, Iran, and Africa. Hairstyles, clothing styles, and speech patterns would vary. Finally, there would be older students commuting for classes. In the end

however, what would be constant is the intellectual development of students—this is the most beautiful elegy possible for a school, which has persevered

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