“Unsightly Huts”: Shanties and the Divestment Movement of the 1980s

by Bradford Martin

This article analyzes students’ efforts to pressure American colleges and universities to divest their South African investments during the 1980s, focusing on the movement’s most visible feature, the shantytowns students built to express solidarity with black South Africans and to oppose their institutions’ investment policies. I argue that the shanties were constructed in spaces chosen to achieve maximum symbolic power and often succeeded in spatially transforming campuses into public forums that heightened students’ capacity to affect the institutional decision-making process. Not surprisingly, the shanties evoked fervent responses. Shantytown residents identified with the plight of black South Africans under apartheid, while opponents called them “eyesores,” and, as in the notorious case at Dartmouth, even forcibly destroyed them. When set against the conservative tenor of the Reagan/Bush 1980s, the varying responses to campus shantytowns, at both elite private institutions as well as large public ones, raise important questions about the cultural constructedness of “vision” and aesthetics and about the efficacy and the limits of using public space for symbolic oppositional politics.

INTRODUCTION: THE SHANTIES, PUBLIC SPACE, AND DIVESTMENT MOVEMENT CULTURE

In the early morning hours of January 21, 1986, unusual turbulence interrupted the wintry stillness of the Dartmouth College campus. Twelve members of an organization called Dartmouth Committee to Beautify the Green Before Winter Carnival (DCBGBWC), several of whom were affiliated with the college’s conservative newspaper, The Dartmouth Review, demolished four crudely constructed shanties that had stood on Dartmouth’s Green since November, when the Dartmouth Community for Divestment erected them as a protest against the college’s investment policies regarding corporations that conducted business in
South Africa. Although prodiveestment activism at Dartmouth dated back to the late 1970s, and divestment protests at other American college campuses had garnered media attention since the previous spring, the destruction of the Dartmouth shanties brought the divestment movement widespread national exposure.

At campuses across the country, from elite eastern institutions like Dartmouth, Columbia, and Cornell, to large public universities with a tradition of radicalism like the University of California, Berkeley, and the University of Wisconsin, to seemingly unlikely locales such as the University of Utah, Purdue University, and the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, students built shantytowns to symbolize the oppressive conditions faced by black South Africans under apartheid. The shanties became the defining feature of the divestment struggle’s movement culture. Ostensibly constructed to perform both the educational functions of raising students’ awareness about the evils of apartheid and exposing their institution’s financial connection to South Africa through its investments, and the political function of symbolically registering opposition to those policies, the shanties and the controversy that surrounded them came to represent much more. The struggles over the shanties developed into clashes over expression, autonomy, and, most profoundly, the kind of places the physical spaces of colleges and universities were supposed to be.

At their core, the shanties were a form of protest that involved the contestation of public space. Although many of the protracted struggles over the shanties took place at private institutions—and elite eastern private institutions at that—the construction of the shanties represented an appropriation of public space, in which student activists claimed a critical, centrally located spot within the campus and transformed it into the divestment movement’s headquarters, a focal point for meetings, organizing, educating, and disseminating information under student-run, rather than official, auspices. In doing so, these activists transformed campus space in ways that left them much closer to Habermas’s idealized version of public space as a maximally inclusive and accessible space for wide-ranging discourse. This story of the shanties and their transformation into public space highlights the insights of an emerging literature that argues that the distinctions “public” and “private,” when applied to space, far from being fixed and absolute, are permeable and socially constructed. Although some shanties were erected at public institutions, even at several of the private institutions, such as Yale and Dartmouth, activists positioned the shanties so that at least one side bordered public streets or areas of
the municipality in which the institution was located, consciously blurring strict notions of public and private and inviting the participation of the larger community.

The transformation of campus space into public space involves understanding space as a continuum that ranges from one pole at which campus space is the most private and exclusive in terms of its level of political discourse to another pole that approaches Habermas’s ideal, wherein the space is accessible for expression and symbolic action. This conceptualization of public space obviously moves beyond and reaches a more nuanced level than the zero-sum game of regarding physical spaces merely according to their legally constructed status as emphatically “public” or “private.” Ultimately, I will argue that the divestment protests, with the shanties as their focal point, involved public space in the sense that activists claimed an outdoor area of the campus that represented both a symbolic and actual center of campus life common to all members of the college or university and transformed it into a more public place than it was before, moving it further toward the public pole of the public/private continuum, and making it more open for political discourse and symbolic representation.

Although many campuses, even private ones, have public elements, for instance, allowing outsiders to traverse their spaces unfettered, shanty culture sometimes facilitated in new ways the participation of activists and sympathizers who were not members of the university community. At Yale University colorful local figures such as an ex-Black Panther and a “free-spirited, flute-playing, chess-playing, pot smoker” lived in the shanties, sharing the movement culture with student activists in an intense and immediate fashion. In one case, the Yale shanties facilitated heightened interaction with the community to such an extent that one prominent student activist managed to parley this relationship into a postgraduate career, first becoming an alderman, then Associate Vice President of Yale’s Office of New Haven and State Affairs, overseeing the mobilization of the university’s resources to strengthen its local community. At Cornell, opinion was mixed over whether the shanties made the campus more public. One professor recalled that the most interested “outsiders” were alumni and prospective students, which accounts for the administration’s interest in removing the shanties. Yet, as a student activist remembered, “A lot of the people who participated in the demonstrations had been active in the 1960s, especially community people from Ithaca, a pretty Left community that had a direct impact.” The divestment movement was typically open to sympathizers whether
or not they were enrolled in the institution in question, and several such sympathetic locals had ties to activism from previous eras, most notably 1960s-era protest movements.

Such was the case at Dartmouth, where movement activists and conservative students alike noted that the shanties tended to blur the boundaries between the college and the surrounding community, and thus between public and private. Dartmouth Community for Divestment activist Rajiv Menon argued that the fact that the movement shrank when the shanties came down testifies to their efficacy at enlisting the support of locals unaffiliated with the institution. At the University of Illinois, the shanties attracted considerable attention from the Chicago-based news media, which in turn attracted many “Townie” high school and community college students to “hang out” at the shanties and in many cases become involved with the movement. This coverage motivated several local progressive trade unionists to take an interest in divestment. The success of these shanties in building the movement positions the University of Illinois at one pole of increased outsider involvement, which varied from institution to institution, with some institutions exhibiting little evidence that the shanties expanded the appeal of the movement beyond the campus. That some institutions demonstrated relatively low levels of outsider involvement is perhaps not surprising, given that the specific protest issue at hand involved college and university investments in South Africa. Ultimately, this makes the outsider involvement that did arise all the more impressive. To some extent this issue resonated with outside groups and community interests, as at Columbia, for instance, even before the shanties were established as a tactic. But the shanties, through creating a dramatic, high visibility link to oppression in South Africa, displayed a capability to broaden the issue beyond its immediate campus context, encouraging the participation of outsiders in the process.

Conflicts over the shanties followed discernible patterns. College and university administrators sought to preserve “free and ordered spaces” of learning, scholarship, and higher education that remained aesthetically pleasing to alumni and prospective students. Student activists attempted to disrupt precisely the same spaces by introducing an unavoidable structure into their midst, a structure symbolically located in the heart of campus or in close proximity to the main administration building. Cultural geographer Don Mitchell argues for the dialectical nature of the production of public space, contending that what fundamentally makes a space public is not that it is “preordained” as public, but rather that some group acts out of a compelling need and
“takes” a space, making it public, though rarely under conditions of the
takers’ choosing. Applied to the divestment movement, this paradigm
suggests that student activists’ transformation of college and university
campuses via construction of the shanties, combined with the function
of the shanties as a public forum, remade campuses into public spaces,
even at the private eastern elite institutions where the divestment protests
received the most media attention. Furthermore, this spatial dialectic
between student activists and their sympathizers and university admin-
istrators recalls French social theorist Henri Lefebvre’s notion of the
modern city as an oeuvre, that is, a work in which all its citizens participate.
By transforming campus spaces, the construction of the shanties made
students into citizens in a body politic, often enhancing their influence
in the discourse that shaped college investment policies. The shanties’
locations in highly symbolic central areas of campus underscore the
extent to which the divestment movement became about not just college
investment policy or South African apartheid, but also about “the right
to a particular space.” With the divestment movement, what Don
Mitchell calls “the where of protest,” in terms of shanties’ specific
location with campus spaces, loomed large.11

Through this contestation of particular spaces and “the where of
protest,” American college campuses were transformed in ways distinctly
out-of-keeping with the image of the 1980s as a placid, conservative
era. By reputation, young people during the 1980s embraced the credo
of the protagonist in Oliver Stone’s Wall Street that “greed is good,”
with Time magazine running a cover story about the supposedly apolitical
nature of the decade’s young people. Yet the divestment movement
provides a window into an influential minority of young people who
dissented from the therapeutic, militaristic, consumerist ethos for which
the Reagan administration set the tone. Divestment student activists
harkened back in many ways, both conscious and unconscious, to activists
of a generation before. The shanties in particular, while a legitimately
innovative tactic,12 paralleled one iconic 1960s episode, the Berkeley
Free Speech Movement, in that each protest concerned both political
expression on campus and the right to a particular space. Sometimes
connections with the 1960s were less direct, as divestment activists
confessed to knowing about 1960s-era activism “around the edges,”
and spoke of “a sense of connectedness,” while at the same affirming
that “people were reading books about those times, but they were not
our main model.”13 While divestment activists recognized varying levels
of connection to 1960s oppositional politics, on one point the connection
was unequivocal: the issue of social responsibility in college and university investments appeared as part of 1960s era activism, and included criticism of the ethics of South African investments.

DIVESTMENT’S PRE-HISTORY

Opposition to South African apartheid surfaced in 1960s activism, most notably in the civil rights movement and the New Left. Civil rights activists frequently compared the segregated south to South Africa’s apartheid regime. Martin Luther King Jr. drew such parallels at the 1964 Democratic National Convention in his testimony on behalf of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party and later that year, on his European trip to accept the Nobel Peace Prize, called for international economic sanctions against South Africa. In 1965, Students for a Democratic Society sat-in at the headquarters of Chase Manhattan Bank to protest the bank’s role in providing loans that helped stabilize the Pretoria government’s international credit following the 1960 Sharpeville Massacre, in which South African police killed 69 protesters and after which the African National Congress was banned. By the beginning of the 1970s, students concerned with social responsibility in university investments representing Princeton, Cornell, Union Theological Seminary, and Wesleyan had initiated calls for divestment. At Cornell, the faculty joined the action, issuing a resolution for the university to avoid investments that supported South African apartheid.14

In the late 1970s, echoing a trend that recurred throughout the divestment struggle, movement activities stepped up as events in South Africa intensified. In 1976, the Soweto riots erupted as South African troops killed students protesting the compulsory teaching of Afrikaans. In 1977, the murder and torture of Black Consciousness leader Steven Biko while in police custody again focused international attention on South Africa and sparked a wave of antiapartheid activism on campuses in the United States. In 1977, 700 American students were arrested in antiapartheid protests, including 295 at a single protest at Stanford University. As a result, three institutions divested that year, and many more began reviewing their investment policies. The major corporations in which these institutions invested also felt the ripple effect of this movement, and many scurried to review their policies regarding employment practices in South Africa. The most notable results of this new corporate attention to South Africa were the Sullivan principles, a set of fair employment principles devised by Leon Sullivan,
a Philadelphia minister and General Motors board member. By 1979, most major U.S. corporations with large operations in South Africa had signed on to the Sullivan principles, and American colleges and universities embraced them as a tool both to influence corporations in which they invested toward more socially responsible behavior and to avoid the negative stigma associated with investment in corporations that exploited or were indifferent to the injustices of the apartheid system.\(^{15}\)

By developing a scale for judging the extent to which American corporations maintained a progressive stance in their South African business practices, the Sullivan principles offered colleges and universities flexibility between total divestment from all corporations operating in South Africa and appearing insensitive to the plight of black South Africans under apartheid. Institutions practiced selective and partial divestment from firms that failed to comply with the principles but retained their investments in companies whom they could plausibly claim constituted a positive force in the country by providing black South Africans with jobs at a fair wage. As a result of the pressure generated between the newly established Sullivan principles and the wave of antiapartheid and divestment protests in the late 1970s, approximately three dozen additional colleges and universities initiated divestment policies by the decade’s end.\(^{16}\) Following this success, divestment once again subsided as focus shifted to other activist issues, most notably Reagan administration policies in Central America.

In 1984, events in South Africa once again catalyzed a wave of divestment. That year renewed uprisings of black South Africans in response to the country’s adoption of a new constitution creating a Parliamentary system that represented “coloreds” and “Asians” (mostly Indian)—but not blacks—caused the government to declare a state of emergency. This, coupled with Anglican Bishop Desmond Tutu’s winning the Nobel Prize, again turned the international media spotlight on South Africa and increased pressure on the Reagan administration to adopt economic sanctions against the apartheid regime. Students in the United States responded, as they had in the 1960s, by examining their institution’s ties to South Africa and found that American college and university endowments were invested in South Africa to the tune of approximately $400 million. This state of affairs quickly led to the renewal of calls for divestment that had emerged in the 1970s.
THE 1980S DIVESTMENT MOVEMENT

Perhaps not surprisingly, given its history of activism, Columbia University was at the forefront of this new divestment activity. The Columbia Coalition for a Free South Africa formed in 1982 to advocate for divestment and tried to get the academic senate to pass a resolution calling for the university to review its investment policies. Ultimately, however, prodivestment students at Columbia were frustrated at the university’s slow pace and sought more expedient progress, blockading the administration building, Hamilton Hall, an action that lasted three weeks before protesters desisted under threat of a court order. The protests at Columbia started on April 4, 1985, the anniversary of King’s assassination and the day of a National Day of Action. Three weeks later, on April 24, a “National Anti-Apartheid Day” organized by a coalition of student groups was marked by prodivestment activity on approximately sixty campuses across the United States. The Columbia protest, like several others, including protests at institutions as diverse as Cornell, Harvard, Tufts, the University of Massachusetts, Vassar, the State University of New York, Rutgers University, the University of Louisville, Oberlin College, the University of Iowa, the University of Wisconsin, UCLA, Berkeley, and UC Santa Cruz involved appropriations of campus space, mainly in building blockades and sit-ins. At Columbia, approximately 250 students wrapped a chain around Hamilton Hall’s main entrance, sat down on its steps, and refused to leave until the university divested its South African holdings. The creation of a physical obstacle to university business-as-usual, in the form of the blockade and sit-in on the Hamilton Hall steps, bore resemblance to 1960s student movement tactics, a fact the New York and national media seized on quickly. A week into the blockade, the New York Times commented that the Columbia students were “conducting the first real sit-in anyone can remember on the campus since the Vietnam War,” and noted that the demonstrators were prepared to be arrested “in the same peaceful fashion” as their 1960s counterparts. Todd Gitlin, a Students for a Democratic Society veteran turned Berkeley professor, hastened to note the 1960s influence, claiming that the era’s “entire repertory of tactics” had been “compressed” into the last month of heavy antiapartheid and prodivestment activism.17

What suddenly happened in the mid-1980s to recatalyze campus activism? Why did that activism cohere around this issue of divestment? And why did that activism take the form of claiming campus spaces?
First, contrary to the 1980s’ popular image as a conservative era characterized by pro-Reagan consensus, the divestment movement did not develop in a vacuum in terms of campus activism. Rather, it overlapped and connected with streams of activism on other issues such as opposition to Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) recruitment on campus, opposition to the Reagan administration’s policies in Central America, and issues of racial politics and identity on campus. The divestment movement at Yale was organized in the spring of 1985 by many of the same students who had played key roles in solidarity with a strike of unionized clerical and technical workers the previous fall. That said, divestment became the issue that most galvanized student activists in American colleges in the 1980s. One Dartmouth divestment leader remembered that there had been a protest in the wake of the 1983 U.S. invasion of Grenada, but that only “five people and a dog” participated. By contrast, the spring 1985 demonstrations at UCLA, Berkeley, Columbia, and Cornell alone each mobilized over 1,000 participants at single demonstrations, not to mention hundreds more at events at Yale and Harvard. As one activist recalled, the divestment issue “exploded.” Mark Lurie, a white South African prodivestment activist at Boston University, called divestment a “spark plug for getting young people in the United States motivated.”

Divestment activists cited apartheid’s moral clarity when explaining what drew them to the issue. “The sense of evil was so dramatic,” remembered Yale’s Nancy Fishman, explaining why students embraced the movement. Cornell activist Matthew Lyons concurred, describing apartheid as a “clear case of brutal injustice being done that only the most craven racists could deny.” Some movement activists went further than responding to injustice; they identified with oppressed black South Africans, citing their self-sacrifice as well as that of movement leaders when explaining what drew them to the movement. This explanation resonated with middle-class student activists’ identification with rural black southerners suffering under Jim Crow in the civil rights era, and, in its rejection of self-interest, contrasted with the mainstream 1980s emphasis on material gain.

Yet, the fact that injustice persisted in South Africa was not the most immediate issue; rather, what fueled the movement was students’ realization of U.S. economic ties to the apartheid regime. Rajiv Menon, a leader in the Dartmouth movement who grew up in Holland, argued that if the focus of the movement had just been antiapartheid, “it wouldn’t have taken off.” “It was a way for American students in
particular,” he continued, “to feel proximity to what American money was doing to prop up the evil system.” But if the students were motivated by an opposition to the United States’ role in supporting South Africa economically, they were animated to an even greater extent by the economic links between South Africa and their own institutions. Fishman cited her revelation that “this could go on and somehow our money was involved,” remarking that the divestment movement derived its power and appeal to students through its ability to engender an “understanding of the implications of one’s money being involved ... there was something directly compelling about that.”

The quality of this experience varied among students of differing racial and class backgrounds. Although the racial composition and leadership of prodvestment groups varied at different colleges and universities—the movement at Columbia, for instance, featured significant black leadership—because of overall student demographics, especially at the elite schools, a majority of student divestment advocates were white. Prexy Nesbitt, an Africa activist and former staff member of the American Committee on Africa who toured the country speaking of apartheid and divestment, observed that these issues offered a “way for white students to fight against racism” and to try to “seize control over governance questions” on their campuses. Lyons testified that this sometimes entailed problems, and cited

... important differences between white and black students....
Initially, some white students were oblivious and insensitive at times.
Black students had been addressing this issue for some time....
Unintended oppressive patterns played themselves out—White students’ assumptions about taking up space and being able to be in charge were sometimes alienating and divisive to black students ...

Although the alienation and divisiveness Lyons described undoubtedly permeated campus divestment movements across the country, a pattern also emerged whereby the divestment struggle opened up a wider range of discourse, and even activism, on issues of racism closer to home. Lyons added that “many realized that it was important to deal with racism here and now.... not just far away, and we did.” Dartmouth student activist Scott Nova pointed out that “ultimately the movement dovetailed with issues of race on campus,” and led to a greater institutional commitment to diversity. For their part, black students in the divestment movement, as in the general collegiate population, often
hailed from more modest socioeconomic circumstances than many of their white counterparts. Many were the first in their families to go to college and unable or unwilling to risk arrest in divestment protests. As Nesbitt put it: “It was a class issue. I don’t think black students were less concerned, but they had to consider the costs differently.” This also applied to the minority of white activists from backgrounds of lesser means, sometimes discouraging them from at least the most drastic or risky forms of direct action. Yet despite the movement’s racial and economic diversity, activists unified around bringing pressure on their institutions to divest, and, in the spring of 1985, they discovered in the shanties at Cornell their tactic of choice.

CORNELL: SHANTIES, FREE SPEECH, AND THE “WHERE OF PROTEST”

On April 22, 1985, Catherine Johnston of Cornell Community for Divestment applied for, and was granted by university authorities, permission to build a “symbolic permanent encampment” behind Day Hall, the main administration building, as part of her organization’s divestment protest. This encampment included several different structures. The largest, called the Hilton, housed fifteen people; there was also an “Inhumanities Library,” a Karl Marx/Nelson Mandela hut, an Amandla Awethu shanty, and several other smaller shanties. The request to construct a shantytown, less than a week into divestment protests, highlights the centrality of the shanties to movement strategy at Cornell. From the beginning, the shanties were designed to function as a physical intervention in campus space to pressure the university to reconsider its South African investments. When Johnston filled out the permit, she listed an event end date that appears to have initially read at the end of May of that year, however, she quickly crossed out that first date and wrote “until Cornell divests.” Tellingly, this initial end date would have fallen before university commencement and alumni reunions. Johnston’s quick revision left the shanties’ presence open ended, necessitating a response from the administration that acknowledged, if not capitulated to movement goals.

The shanties had everything to do with place, that is, with the “place of protest.” One veteran of the Cornell divestment movement underscored the significance of this location, “right at the heart of things.” “The location was terrific,” he continued, “it was unavoidable—the Administration could not avoid it. It was a radical transformation
of public space.” Anne Evens, also of the Cornell movement, bluntly characterized the intent behind the shanties: “We wanted to embarrass the Administration,” she commented, adding that the administration “wanted them down before alumni weekend,” and that student activists regarded this symbol of South African atrocities as a means of “leveraging” the movement’s goal of forcing the University to review its investments and divest itself of South African holdings (Figure 1). The activists’ choice of building materials enhanced this embarrassment. The cardboard, wood, and tar paper shantytown juxtaposed with the University’s collection of traditional and modern architectural styles jarred campus aesthetics. Given the shanties’ spatial and aesthetic assault on the accustomed order of campus space, the structures quickly developed into a flash point for conflict between student activists and the administration. But such an outcome was not inevitable. Indeed, Cornell might have followed an emerging pattern in the 1980s whereby college and university administrators proved increasingly savvy about co-opting dissent by appointing advisory committees, fostering dialogue with student groups, and adopting other such methods to deflect campus unrest and skillfully preserve institutional interests. The roots

Figure 1. Shantytown, Cornell University, June 1985. Photo by David Lyms 1985
of Cornell’s decision not to mobilize such techniques are evident in the university’s activist history of a short generation before.

In May 1969, against a backdrop of highly confrontational protests on American college campuses, some eighty members of the Cornell Afro-American Society occupied the student union, Willard Straight Hall, as a protest against prior disciplinary reprimands. When the Cornell administration brokered an agreement for the demonstrators to leave Straight Hall, the demonstrators famously responded by brandishing shotguns and raising their fists in Black Power salutes while exiting the building in a display of militancy that threatened the possibility of future violence. Cornell president James Perkins’s administration attempted to defuse the situation by urging faculty to appease the demonstrators by dropping the reprimands. Faculty initially rejected this course as a capitulation to force that invited further upheaval but eventually reversed themselves under extreme pressure from both campus demonstrators and from the administration. Many professors and students, not to mention alumni, chafed at this turn of events, believing Perkins had coddled the demonstrators and failed to maintain order on campus. Although, at the very least, Perkins managed to avoid bloodshed in Ithaca, he paid for his handling of the situation with his resignation by the end of the year. After an interval in which insider Dale Corson, who had served as Provost under Perkins, served as president, Cornell trustees selected Frank Rhodes, who listed breaking a union of teaching assistants at the University of Michigan among his major accomplishments.

Maintaining order and curbing campus turbulence were part of Rhodes’s mandate as he assumed Cornell’s presidency, and it was in this context that his administration faced the divestment protests and shanties in the spring of 1985. Yet, there were some sympathetic individual administrators, and this may account for the university’s granting of the initial permit for the shantytown in what one faculty member referred to as an “historical accident.” Vice President William Gurowitz, who signed the shantytown permit, may have done so because he viewed the space behind Day Hall as preferable to the highly disruptive sit-ins earlier that week inside Day Hall. That is, the granting of a permit at the point that it was granted may have actually represented an attempt by the university to control the “where of protest,” rather than a conscious attempt to tolerate dissent by allowing the shanties as a symbolic protest. What is clear is that the perceived impotence of the Cornell administration in the 1960s encouraged the Rhodes administration
of the 1980s to avoid the appearance of indulging student activists. From the outset, the university sought to manage the scope of the shanties’ protest by imposing limitations and conditions on their continued existence.

An opportunity came on May 10, 1985, when a fire broke out at the shanties. Although no one was hurt, university officials seized on the fire as an opportunity to eradicate the two-and-a-half-week-old shantytown. Later that day, after a hastily conducted investigation of the fire, the Ithaca Fire Chief ruled that all “combustible waste and refuse” must be removed from the vicinity of Day Hall but also pointed out that if those materials were dwellings, then they would come under the jurisdiction of the city’s Buildings Department. A memo later that day from David Drinkwater, Cornell Dean of Students, to the shantytown residents admitted to no such nuance, informing the residents that under orders from the Fire Department, “All materials will be removed,” and that the original permit for the shantytown had been revoked. Hoping to salvage the shanties by addressing the public safety rationale for their removal, the residents, on their own initiative, devised a detailed set of “Shantytown Fire Regulations,” complete with provisions for trash collection, fire extinguishers, outside storage of gas canisters for cooking stoves, and maintaining a supply of water inside the shanties. Yet what transpired early the next morning suggests that university officials were unimpressed, since at 7:00 a.m. on May 11, Drinkwater arrived with several public safety officers and a backhoe with front-loader to remove the shanties. Anticipating this action, students had tied themselves to the shanties with wires, but the officers used boltcutters to free the residents and remove them from the immediate area, apparently making the way clear for the bulldozers to raze the structures. In a classic maneuver of nonviolent civil disobedience, students intervened by forming a human chain to block the bulldozers’ activities. Ultimately, the residents’ physical intervention against Cornell authorities’ efforts to dismantle the shanties forced the university to relent—at least for that particular day.25

That the shantytown residents “immediately built a new shanty on the charred ruins” upon hearing of the administration’s plan to demolish the structures illustrates the notion that public space is forged only through struggle and contestation rather than preordained. While the prodvestment forces seized on the university’s action against the shanties as another opportunity to connect struggles on campus with struggle in South Africa—one “Emergency Memo From Shantytown” remarked of the university public safety crew “They entered with bolt
cutters drawn and cut and dragged the residents out of their homes, **JUST LIKE SOUTH AFRICA**—in general, the onset of confrontation with university officials over the shantytowns’ disruption of campus space marked a transition in the nature of the movement at institutions where this occurred. Numerous divestment movement participants recalled how the shanties on their campuses, initially intended to symbolize movement activists’ solidarity with black South Africans’ oppression, rapidly took on a life of their own that was more closely connected to local concerns. Nesbitt, who toured many of the shanties on campuses across the United States, observed that “constructing and protecting the shanties became more the issue on some campuses—it became about freedom of speech.” This was precisely the case at Cornell, where the shantytown promptly added to its global symbolism a central role in local movement culture. Evens claimed that the shanties “served a purpose as a center for movement activities, postering, flyers, information, etc.” Lyons concurred, remembering that “people would hang banners, staff literature tables, people would congregate and exert a cultural presence.” Very early in the Cornell shanties’ existence, residents cited the dual purposes of shantytown, both the symbolic one and as “a vital information center for our movement.” As the struggle at Cornell took on a new legal dimension, when the university sought and obtained a restraining order barring the shantytown residents from interfering with the dismantling of the shanties, a memo the residents sent to faculty and staff that claimed “The issue has now become one of freedom of speech” underscored the changed nature of the struggle.26

In fact, in the case of Cornell University v. Loreellynn Adamson, et al., the prodvestment defendants adopted a freedom of speech defense to save the shanties, claiming that they constituted a form of speech, and that the university’s intervention against them therefore represented an abridgement of that freedom. Although the New York Supreme Court ultimately ruled against the demonstrators, it is significant that both sides were preoccupied with the “where of protest.” In laying out a rationale for the shanties’ removal after the residents’ successful initial resistance, Cornell’s Senior Vice President William Herbster referred to the shanties as “a dangerous and sprawling collection of scrap and waste in the center of campus.” While ostensibly opposing the shanties on public safety grounds, Herbster tellingly emphasized their central location, perhaps suggesting the university’s truer concerns, and that this particular form of free speech may have been freer had it been exercised in some less visible part of the campus. He also declared the
university’s intent to “restore the natural condition of the area,” a comment that posits the carefully manicured, maintained, and organized appearance of this Ivy League campus, with its design-conscious collection of buildings oriented toward academic purposes as “natural,” while implying that the crudely constructed shanties represent a more “unnatural” intervention on the place of the Ithaca campus. This distinction illustrates the tension between public spaces as “spaces for representation,” where a variety of views may be expressed in democratic fashion without privileging the access of particular groups, in this case illustrated by the shantytown residents’ mobilization of campus space for symbolic politics, versus “representations of space,” that are characterized by planned, carefully ordered, and particular uses of space, such as those envisioned by the Cornell administration.27

While Cornell administrators fretted over the shanties’ location, communication from the administration also revealed a concern for the structures’ aesthetics. After the university’s early failed attempt to dismantle the shantytown, negotiations ensued with the residents for an “alternative means of expression” that would preserve free speech “without perpetuating a dangerous and unsightly collection of scrap and waste in the center of campus.” This sentiment, voiced in a public statement by the university, restates both the public safety argument about the shanties and a concern about the “where of protest,” namely, the shanties’ central location. But it also includes an additional subjective element reflected in the word “unsightly.” This word, and others like it, that commented on the presumably deficient aesthetics of the shanties recurred in the criticisms of administrators, faculty, and students who opposed the shanties at Cornell and in institutions across the country. One faculty member recalled how during the initial effort to dismantle the Cornell shanties, Drinkwater asserted that although prodvestment students saw shantytown as symbolic protest, “there were many other students and faculty who did not see it that way and were offended by its presence.”28

If this observation was true, it seems far more likely that those offended were offended not by how the shantytown residents expressed themselves politically but by the “unsightly” aesthetics of their chosen mode of expression. After all, Cornell’s legal complaint against the residents noted that the ten structures that comprised shantytown were made of “cardboard sticks, twigs, wood products, pressed wood, pine boards, wood shingles, canvas and other fabrics, plastic, and other scraps including wooden doors and posts, concrete blocks and metal
products.” Such materials distinguished the shanties considerably from standard Ivy League architecture, creating jarring visual dissonance with Cornell’s other buildings. The shanties’ aesthetics of poverty that prodivestment students claimed linked them to South Africa, and that dismayed university officials and some students outside the movement, represented a part of the movement’s fundamental strategy: to erect a structure or structures on a central part of campus space that clashed with campus aesthetics in order to force action on college and university investment policy. Prodivestment students envisioned criticism of the shanties’ aesthetics and crafted their responses to bring the discussion back to the moral dimensions of the issues. “We realize that some members of the community may be offended by what they see, and we are sorry if that is so,” wrote Cornell shantytown residents, “But, as one of our signs points out, ‘Apartheid Isn’t Pretty Either.’” Although this statement underscored the social and cultural construction of aesthetic reactions to shantytown, at Cornell, aesthetics took on only a minor role when compared with public safety, free speech, and the “where of protest” in the Cornell shanty controversy. At Cornell’s fellow Ivy institution Dartmouth, the shanties’ visual elements emerged front and center in an emotional campus debate.

**SHANTY AESTHETICS: “UNSIGHTLY HUTS” AND “REALLY BIG EYESORES”**

By the time Dartmouth students constructed shanties in November 1985, the structures had solidified themselves as the visible symbol of the divestment movement and as its most potent strategy. One sociological study accounted for the shanties’ diffusion as a protest tactic by citing the concept of modularity, whereby “activists in disparate locations with minimal organization and without direct linkages are able to unite in national social movements.” The study argues that burgeoning collective identity played a role in the spread of the shanties since higher rates of “shantytown events” occurred at northeastern, relatively high prestige liberal arts institutions as students looked to developments on similar campuses for cues to movement tactics. The modularity argument captures a salient dynamic of divestment movement culture, but there were also more direct ties among prodivestment students on campuses across the country, who relayed news of movement developments through formal and informal networks. At Boston University, Lurie participated in a network of approximately 35 New
England institutions designed to disseminate information among students active in antiapartheid work. This informational network could even be mobilized at times for direct action purposes, as when Boston University awarded an honorary degree to Zulu chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, who opposed both economic sanctions and the African National Congress. Students from several Boston institutions, along with some from others in New Hampshire and Vermont, joined Boston University students in protests against this event. Antiapartheid and prodivestment speakers like Nesbitt, South African “poet-in-exile” Dennis Brutus, and Mphahlele Tutu, daughter of the Nobel laureate, criss-crossed the nation on the campus lecture circuit, educating and urging solidarity.

It was in this context that the shanties received their impetus at Dartmouth. One leader of the Dartmouth movement recalls that in the previous academic year “someone from the shanty protests at Berkeley” brought a video that illustrated the shanties’ role in the Berkeley protests. A feature in the campus daily newspaper The Dartmouth about the resurgence of activism around the Ivy League brought news of the Cornell shanties to Dartmouth within a week of their creation. That October, the newspaper reported on shanty construction on the green at the nearby University of Vermont. Two days before Dartmouth prodivestment forces hammered the first nail, The Dartmouth ran a feature on their plans for the shanties, complete with details on the previous spring’s struggles at Cornell, alerting the Dartmouth community to the structures’ impending construction. Two days later, the newspaper announced that construction was to begin that day, Friday, November 15, and quoted Dartmouth Community for Divestment’s (DCD) Joshua Stein on the rationale for the shanties. Stein cited the Dartmouth trustees’ inaction on the issue of South African investments, the strategy of presenting the College with the uncomfortable choice of either divesting or enduring the “unfavorable press,” and the high visibility the structures’ placement on the Dartmouth Green, the geographic center and the heart of campus life for “alarming” the Dartmouth community and raising awareness (Figure 2). Noting the shanties’ spatial strategy, the DCD’s Menon remarked, “It was an eyesore on an idyllic campus. You had to grapple with it. Within two days every student on campus would have walked by it.”

At Dartmouth, prodivestment students who constructed shanties faced the stiffest challenge not from the college’s administration—who, fearful of campus unrest and the potential for negative media attention, took some steps to accommodate the shanties—but rather from other
quarters within the Dartmouth community: alumni, parents, and especially conservative students. When two shanties first appeared on the Dartmouth Green in mid-November 1985, college administrators initially stated that they could remain standing for three days. After this grace period administrators stressed that the shanties needed to be taken down, or they would be dismantled. But on the third day, proddivestment students found that the Board of Trustees had taken no action on and would not formally respond to the initial set of demands they had presented to the administration upon construction of the shanties, which included the college’s total divestment from companies that conducted business with South Africa and the creation of a committee on ethical investment with direct control over the college’s investment policies. In a move that echoed the 1960s pattern of campus confrontation, DCD activists responded by escalation, building a third shanty on the Green adjacent to the other two. With this move, the administration, perhaps wanting to avoid radicalizing greater numbers of students through the forceful suppression of protest, appeared to change course,
not only allowing the shanties to stand, but also providing assurances that campus police would actively protect the demonstrators. As one administrator remarked: “Our primary concern right now is for the safety of the students who are expressing their right to protest. We are trying to be sensitive to the issue, but it is a difficult position for the College.” The college’s actions over the next several months reflected this difficulty, as the administration indecisively vacillated between trying to appear to facilitate means of acceptable free expression and protest and an underlying preference that the shanties would go away.\textsuperscript{33}

Other Dartmouth students, however, proved more vocal in opposing the shanties, with the criticism ranging from banal, to satirical, to menacing. At the core of sentiments expressed in the debate over the shanties was the structures’ spatial location on the Dartmouth Green, which has traditionally represented the “physical and emotional center of campus life.” A week after the shanties’ construction, \textit{The Dartmouth} polled 211 students on the question “Do you think the shanty-town is an effective means of protest?” While opinion was split fairly evenly on this question (46 percent answered “yes,” 42 percent “no,” and 13 percent “don’t know”), more telling still were the additional comments that some students scribbled on their ballots. Freshman Jim Sullivan claimed, “They [DCD] have erected an illegal structure on everybody’s Green, I’d like to play football there, and others should have a right to do that too.” On the one hand, Sullivan’s criticism reflects a privileged position, a defense of his right and that of others to exercise their leisure time prerogative playing football on the Green in the face of the moral questions that the shanties sought to dramatize. On the other hand, shantytown dwellers also operated from a position of privilege that allowed them to reside outside in the cold in the shanties—“it was a hard place to get a good night’s sleep,” as one remembered—potentially jeopardizing the academic benefits of an education that, at elite institutions like Cornell and Dartmouth, came with a substantial price tag.\textsuperscript{34}

More common still in \textit{The Dartmouth} poll was the complaint that the shanties were an “eyesore,” and needed to be removed. Another freshman who was uncommitted in his opinion on divestment concurred, stating “It’s great to make a point, but it makes the College unattractive to do it with this shanty-town.” In this statement, campus aesthetics occupy a place of greater value than political expression or moral statement, and to a large extent, this kind of comment emblematized the way the aesthetics dominated the discourse on the shanties at Dartmouth. One
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of the most striking illustrations of this sensitivity to aesthetics was the recurring appearance of satires of the structures’ aesthetic elements. One article adopted as its premise that the Mandela Hall shanty had been awarded the “Frank Lloyd Wright architecture and design award for 1985.” The author further detailed how the letter of award cited Mandela Hall’s “subtle, yet powerful juxtaposition of cardboard, tin, and plywood into a less than Baroque but more than post-modernist Bauhaus school shanty.” This satirical barb suggests that a week into the shanties’ existence, their visual elements had become the subject of widespread campus discussion and debate, since, as historian Lawrence Levine points out, “one cannot parody that which is not well known.” An editorial page column some three months later poked fun at the shanties in much the same vein. This piece used the fact that the Biko Hall shanty had been relocated to an area behind the Hood Museum of Art as a point of departure for a mock review of an artwork called Shanty. The author quipped, “How the artists were able to create such an aesthetically pleasing exterior synthesis of plywood, metal and spray paint I will never know,” and compared the structure’s use of color to the work of Willem de Kooning and Frank Stella. Another tongue-in-cheek letter to the editor speculated that the administration was allowing the structures to stand because they offered a solution to the college’s “housing woes.” While such satire represented both a humorous diversion and, at another level, also reflected deeper anxieties about the shanties’ intervention in campus space and aesthetics, conservative students led by the staff of The Dartmouth Review expressed their discontent with far less subtlety.

Within a month after the shanties’ construction, a Dartmouth Review column denounced the structures as “putrid little outhouses,” and criticized the administration’s policy that the shanties could remain standing as long as they fulfilled an “educational” purpose. The column concluded, “The time has come to end this farce,” and added what turned out to be a foreshadowing, “and demolish the shanties.” The Review’s Jerry Hughes highlighted the spatial nature of campus conservatives’ opposition to the shanties’ location on the Green: “...anywhere else on campus, I don’t think it would have been an issue.” Prodivestment and antidivestment letters to The Dartmouth both similarly indicated the Green’s emotional centrality to campus life, and were peppered with phrases such as “our beloved Green,” and “our once beautiful Green.” Such letters also often contended that the shanties’ “incongruous” aesthetics and abrupt spatial dissonance alienated
the potential support for divestment from moderates who could not embrace direct action protest tactics. Yet as two DCD activists responded to the often-asked question, “why put up the shanties which are ugly and ruin the beauty of the Green?”

... for us the shanties are beautiful. They symbolize a unity with people we will never meet, but whose oppression is as real as the shanties themselves, and infinitely more ugly. The shanties have served a purpose; it is only since their construction that a dialogue had opened between the trustees and the DCD and that divestment has become a daily debated issue. For us the issue of apartheid is much more important than the issue of the beauty of the green. The issue of the shanties is trivial compared to apartheid itself.36

On one hand, this comment has a disingenuous ring, since the shanties were constructed precisely to be ugly, and to symbolize the real poverty and oppression of places like Soweto. The DCD activists’ claim that the shanties were beautiful sprang from their sense of identification and solidarity with black South Africans, a sense that was certainly not “beautiful” or compelling enough for them to want to live under the conditions the shanties represented. On the other hand, this justification of the shanties highlights the cultural and political construction of aesthetics, suggesting that not only is “beauty in the eye of the beholder,” but that it also depends on the politics of the individual in question. The DCD students made the case for the shanties’ value and “beauty,” in educating and fostering dialogue, arguing that apartheid as a global moral issue trumps campus aesthetics as a local concern, a judgment the DCD and shanty supporters did not blush at making on behalf of the rest of the community. Strikingly, with the exact opposite reason—that local aesthetics trumps global moral concerns—twelve students affiliated with the Review did not hesitate to take upon themselves the task of ridding the Dartmouth community of the “unsightly huts” (Figure 3).

Describing what motivated himself and his colleagues, Hughes explained that the shanties were a “violation of our sense of the place, and it went too far and created a burden on the entire community without their consent.” This description hints at the depth of feeling with which Dartmouth students who opposed the shanties viewed the Green, as epitomized by the name the twelve students who demolished the shanties chose for their group, the “Dartmouth Committee to Beautify the Green Before Winter Carnival.” Calling the shanties “unsightly”
and “an eyesore,” a brief letter from the DCBGBWC to President David McLaughlin explaining the rationale for removing the shanties stressed both aesthetic issues and an objection to the structures’ intervention in campus space. The DCBGBWC’s message underscored the committee’s commitment to principles of free speech, and affirmed its notion of the Green as a unique place, whose pleasing appearance was not to be marred by protest: “We are merely picking up trash off the Green, and restoring pride and sparkle to the College we love so much.” This brief letter laid out another rationale for the shanties’ demolition, one which arguably reflected the DCBGBWC’s deeper concerns. The shanties “exacerbate the bad national press Dartmouth is already receiving,” the DCBGBWC wrote, “they confuse the student body, they create skepticism among devoted alumni, and they discourage prospectives when they visit the College.”  

These comments hint that what may have really been on the minds of the committee members were institutional prestige, alumni donations, and the future caliber of the student body, items of closer direct self-interest than mere aesthetics. Of course, these items also bear some relation to an institution of higher education’s
economic well-being, as each might ultimately exert an effect on its endowment, which is precisely what prodivestment students hoped might motivate their institutions to divest. This suggests that the aesthetic and spatial objections to the shanties functioned as a surrogate for a deeper, more fundamentally political, opposition to the content of the protest.

This insight was not lost on the major television and print media outlets that covered the events at Dartmouth, and in the divestment movement nationally. The Nation compared South Africa activism in the 1980s to that in Mississippi in the 1960s, and wondered aloud whether it was “asking too much” to link the divestment movement to domestic racial issues, while Newsweek observed that at Dartmouth the shanties had accomplished precisely that. Fortune mocked both the shanties and administrators’ attempts to have them removed on technicalities such as fire code violations, arguing instead for constructive engagement, and warning of the dangers of a potential turnover of South Africa to “the Communist-dominated” African National Congress. The National Review, which featured an extensive selection of opinion pieces about Dartmouth in particular, objected to the relatively stern disciplinary suspensions meted out to the shanty dismantlers as compared with the prodivestment activists, concluding that the moral was “that you could do anything you damn well pleased as long as you validated it with a leftist cause.” The Review also demonstrated insight into the political significance of the “shanty movement”: “It has to do with power within academic institutions, that is, just who runs them ... it concerns imperialism, racism, sexism, you name it.” The Review’s analysis, by acknowledging the power of the shanties rather than dismissing them, mocking them, or trivializing them, testifies to the extent to which the shanties had become a focal point of campus political activity and whose fortunes had meshed with those of the movement as a whole.

The shanties’ efficacy in leveraging power was not confined to elite institutions such as Cornell and Dartmouth, but enjoyed widespread success in divestment struggles at nonelite and public colleges and universities, such as the University of Hawaii and the University of Utah, where the shanties were the subject of numerous attacks by vandals, and where prodivestment forces ultimately prevailed upon a federal judge to maintain the shanties on free speech grounds against the administration’s efforts to remove them. The University of Illinois was the site of a contentious divestment struggle, intensifying in the spring of 1986, as university authorities, after threatening students with arrests and disciplinary action, either pressured students to dismantle or dismantled...
themselves two different shantytowns that were built without authorization in the middle of the main Quad. Student activists, led by the Divest Now Coalition, ultimately prevailed upon the university to negotiate acceptable conditions for rebuilding the shanties, which resulted in an agreement to move the structures to a less central location on a side of the Quad. The demonstrators promptly erected six more shanties. As Tom Burke, one of the main figures involved in the construction, put it: “We decided to make it a real big eyesore.” Burke cited the shanties’ role in transforming the culture of the University of Illinois campus, claiming that they “solidified and promoted that there was a left-wing student culture,” and recalled “people hanging out around the shanties playing music, reciting rap poetry, and it was a safe space for gays and lesbians.” Burke’s description of the shanties as an inclusive public forum evokes the ideal of public spaces as “spaces for representation,” where a diverse public can come together to create a vibrant venue for a variety of discourse and activity, political and otherwise. The shanties became a campus focal point for divestment activities at University of Illinois, where demonstrators ultimately gathered support at rallies from members of the football team—a considerable coup at a Big Ten institution—and by January 1987, the board of trustees voted to divest the university’s holdings in businesses with operations in South Africa.39 This decision occurred only after the trustees followed the common tactic, also used at Dartmouth, for instance, of allowing a reasonable period of time to elapse before divesting, so as to avoid the impression that the decision was linked to protest or to the shanties.

CONCLUSION: ASSESSING DIVESTMENT AND THE SHANTIES

In evaluating the divestment movement’s record of accomplishment, the most obvious measure is whether the movement achieved its preeminent goal, that is, did American colleges and universities divest? The record indicates partial success. Over 150 institutions pursued some form of divestment, whether partial or total. At campuses where protest occurred, 60 percent of those institutions divested at least partially as compared to less than 3 percent at the schools where no protest occurred. In turn, these divestments were linked to a larger stream of antiapartheid momentum within the United States that included the divestment of $18.5 billion from state and local government pension and investment funds, Congress’s October 1986 override of President Reagan’s veto of an economic sanctions package, and the decisions of several major
corporations led by General Motors and IBM to pull out of South Africa. Finally, these antiapartheid actions in the United States fed into an international context that ultimately witnessed the end of South African apartheid and the election of Nelson Mandela as South Africa’s president.40

Considered by these standards, the divestment movement emerges as an impressive success story. But the shanties also allowed student activists to transform college and university campuses, if only temporarily in many cases, into public, democratic spaces, spaces of representation, open to a wider range of political, social, and cultural expression. That these transformations were often short lived and always contested does not, however, mean that they were without lasting effect. Writing of the response of the New Hollywood movement in American film to Reagan-era conservatism and the rise of the New Right, Andrew Schroeder has argued that film industry personnel with progressive tendencies staged a Gramscian “war of position” in the 1980s, which prevented the industry’s complete capitulation to the forces of globalization and the “ruling elites.” The divestment movement, whose most visible symbol was the shanties, achieved a similar political and cultural defense on American college campuses in the 1980s, providing the locus for the expressions of student activists and their sympathizers that offered at least an alternative, if not direct opposition, to the decade’s more mainstream conservative politics and culture. Moreover, as the interviews conducted for this essay suggest, students’ lives were transformed in the process as the vast majority of interviewees remain engaged in activist causes oriented toward issues of social justice. Among others Dartmouth’s Scott Nova currently serves as Executive Director at the Worker Rights Consortium, an organization that monitors codes of conduct designed to eradicate sweatshop conditions in garment industry operations that manufacture college- and university-licensed apparel; the University of Illinois’ Burke is a long-time labor activist and member of the Service Employees International Union Local 73 Executive Board; Boston University’s Lurie is a physician whose research concerns epidemic infectious diseases in southern Africa; Yale’s Fishman is Senior Law and Policy Analyst at the New Jersey Institute of Social Justice, and summarized the role of 1980s divestment for those who participated: “the lessons learned from the divestment movement were applied to the next struggles.” Cornell’s Lyons, an archivist and historian of social movements and systems of oppression, concurred, adding, “the issue of racial oppression is central to my outlook on the world, and that’s
certainly an outgrowth of that time.” Clearly, the 1986 *Fortune* article that compared the shanties to panty raids as a force for potential for social good, and found the panty raids superior, did not benefit from this long-term view of the shanties as the central feature of divestment’s movement culture.41

In retrospect, the shanties illustrate the importance of considerations of space and place, the “where of protest,” to social and political protest movements. Through strategic placement to achieve maximum symbolic value and efficacy as an information center for the divestment movement, the shanties transformed 1980s American college campuses into spaces of representation, enhancing student participation in influencing the governance of their institutions. Moreover, the shanties demonstrate the permeability of public space and private space as categories that are legally constructed to be sure, but also socially constructed, and capable of being transformed through contestation. This is especially important to remember in an age of cogent, but nevertheless grim declension narratives and hand wringing over the loss of public space,42 and demonstrates the possibility of reclaiming and remaking public spaces in ways that run counter to the dominant trends. The divestment movement and the shanties, through their concern with achieving social justice abroad in the historic liberation of South Africa from apartheid, resound as a chapter of the “usable past” with implications for the ongoing struggle to democratize American society at home.

NOTES

1. In a sociological study of the shanties as a divestment movement tactic, Sarah A. Soule, “The Student Divestment Movement in the United States and Tactical Diffusion: The Shantytown Protest,” *Social Forces* 75/3 (March 1997): 855–883, the author concludes that media attention to early shantytown protests encouraged the tactic to spread especially among Northeastern colleges and universities with similarly high levels of prestige. Soule effectively conceives a model for the diffusion of the shanties as a tactic among the elite schools, yet, as I will argue, the shanties became a wider phenomenon that transcended their origins in elite institutions, ultimately appearing in nonelite institutions as well.


5. Interview with Michael Morand, May 18, 2005.


9. Eric L. Hirsch, “Sacrifice for the Cause: Group Processes, Recruitment, and Commitment in a Student Social Movement,” *American Sociological Review* 55/2 (April 1990): 243–254, is a study of the spring 1985 protest at Columbia that argues that divestment protests met the criteria for powerful collective empowerment in that they were highly visible, dramatic, and disrupted normal institutional routines, and he also points out the involvement of off-campus groups, such as Harlem community groups, churches, unions, the African National Congress, and the United Nations. Significantly, the Columbia protest that Hirsch examines occurred before the emergence of the shanties, which only tended to enhance the collective empowerment and outsider participation to which he alludes.


12. Although shanties were innovative in the sense that they were not used as a tactic in the student protests of the preceding 1960s generation, protest encampments did have some precedent in the United States, perhaps most notoriously in the Depression-era Bonus Army incident.

13. David M. Gross, “Proceeding with Caution,” *Time* (July 16, 1990): 56–62; and Mitchell, *The Right to the City*, 102–105, insightfully discuss the spatial aspects of the Berkeley Free Speech Movement; the first and the third quoted phrases are from the author’s interview with Mark Lurie, May 12,
2005. The second is from the author’s interview with Morand, May 18, 2005.


16. Ibid. 4.


23. Interview with Matthew Lyons, May 23, 2005; Interview with Evens, May 23, 2005; “Use of University Property Form,” *LDMC*.

handling of the black student activists represented “the dangers of not preserving the distinct intellectual integrity of the university as we pursue our thirst for justice.”

25. Matthew Lyons, in a May 23, 2005, interview with the author, offered an explanation for the fire that is missing from the documentary evidence: “It was caused by a kerosene heater,” he remarked, “It was stupid. Fortunately, nobody was hurt. Things were rebuilt quickly with strict rules”; “CU—Shantytown History”; Memo From P. K. Reaves, Deputy Fire Chief, to Gordon Maycumber, Director, Life Safety, Cornell University, LCDMC; “Shantytown Fire Regulations,” May 11, 1985, LCDMC.

26. “EMERGENCY EMERGENCY EMERGENCY MEMO FROM SHANTYTOWN,” LCDMC; Interviews with Nesbitt, May 19, 2005; Evens, May 23, 2005; and Matthew Lyons, May 23, 2005. Memo to Cornell Faculty and Staff from Students in Shantytown, June 24, 1985, LCDMC, Box 1, Shantytown Civil Litigation.


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