

A President's Influence on Student Activism

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### A President's Influence on Student Activism

Following President Nixon's announcement of the US military's incursion into Cambodia, an eruption of innumerable student protests occurred all throughout colleges and universities across the United States in May 1970. Students were united against this horrific expansion of the Vietnam War. The measure of violence displayed at these demonstrations, however, undoubtedly varied due to disparate surroundings and events specific to the atmosphere of these colleges.

Evaluating the many contrasting occurrences that took place at different universities validates how the combined extensive preparation of the university's president and administration have a beneficial effect on the level of violence shown at a protest on a college campus. With much preparation and steps taken towards preventative measures, President Robert E. Kennedy of California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo "through foresight and planning insured that no one's right of free speech was abridged and that no one overstepped the bounds of proper conduct in a free society."<sup>1</sup> On the contrary, the events at Kent State in Kent, Ohio proceeded otherwise. Under the presidency of Robert White, Kent State experienced four days of intense protest—resulting in the shooting of four students in addition to leaving nine students brutally injured on May 4, 1970. Through research and analysis, it is crucial to

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<sup>1</sup>"Cool at Poly," San Luis Obispo *Telegram-Tribune*, 7 February 1968: 20.

recognize and consider the vital role that the president of a university upholds—essentially a position that reflects the conclusive results of protest or demonstration.

This paper will thoroughly compare Cal Poly's administration to the administration of Kent State—predominantly focusing in on each staffs' intentions regarding preparation for protests taking place during a critical moment. Taking a deeper glimpse into Robert E. Kennedy as a president and leader of Cal Poly's campus, this paper will allow us to understand his capability of managing a protest that, as he put it in a memorandum to campus staff, "could easily have ignited into an unruly mob with violent action resulting in injury to people and damage to property."<sup>2</sup> Recognizing that this protest could have undeniably resulted in a similar outcome to that of Kent State, this paper will investigate the specific precautions and approaches that were taken to assure its peaceful conclusion. Additionally, this research will focus on the administrations and the presidencies of both Kent State and Cal Poly—exploring their similarities and differences. The intentions are to gain a better understanding of what was successfully accomplished at Cal Poly, how different conduct gave way to negative results at Kent State, and how the combination of both ultimately influenced the general outcome of two very contrasting campus protests. Kennedy is often commended for his magnificent leadership skills, while president Robert White of Kent State University was known to have had "leadership abilities amid the rising protests that have been roundly criticized as largely absent"<sup>3</sup>—a comparison that will argue the imperative influence that the university president, accompanied by the faculty, has on the wellbeing and security of a college campus in its response to protest.

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<sup>2</sup> Robert E. Kennedy, Memorandum to Staff, 2 February 1968, Box #35 Folder #6, Student Unrest 1960s and 1970s, Special Collections and Archives, California Polytechnic State University.

<sup>3</sup> Craig S. Simpson and Gregory S. Wilson, *Above the Shots: An Oral History of the Kent State Shootings* (Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 2016), 38.

## Historiography

Historians and scholars have thoroughly researched and documented the many responses from college campuses nationwide to the events that took place at Kent State—most campuses retaliating in destructive manners, but not all. Christopher J. Broadhurst titles his 2010 article “We Didn’t Fire a Shot, We Didn’t Burn a Building” to reflect the stance that North Carolina State took in response to the tragedy in Ohio. Broadhurst aims a portion of his focus on his comparison of North Carolina State to Kent State by stating that North Carolina State’s students “were simply apolitical...more concerned with the ordinary aspects of campus life, such as athletics or social organizations.”<sup>4</sup> Additionally, he emphasizes essential qualities that the university’s president obtained. President John Caldwell was unapologetically open about his opinions of the war, and by creating this receptive environment, this could have likely allowed him to avoid unnecessary violence on his campus.

In a similar way, Craig S. Simpson and Gregory S. Wilson discuss the actions of Kent State’s president Robert White in a 2016 book titled *Above the Shots: An Oral History of the Kent State Shootings*. Gaining credible insight through interviews of witnesses, these authors compile their research in a way that exposes the imbalance and miscommunication of the president and the faculty—a sequence of events that conclusively resulted in the death of four students. In his article titled “A Crack in Time: The Response of Students at the University of Kentucky to the Tragedy at Kent State, May 1970,” Mitchell K. Hall focuses primarily on the student body of the University of Kentucky and their response to the shootings at Kent State.

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<sup>4</sup> Christopher J. Broadhurst, “We Didn’t Fire A Shot, We Didn’t Burn A Building,” *The North Carolina Historical Review*, vol. 87, no. 3 (July 2010), 283-309.

Hall addresses the fact that although the University of Kentucky was known to be a quieter campus, the students took a firm stand against the acknowledgement of guns on campus and the Cambodia incursion.<sup>5</sup>

Although these sources as a whole unfold extensive information regarding campuses and their responses to the Kent State shootings, the details of how the administration reacted and handled these protests are not addressed definitively. As an extension to these sources, my paper will principally focus on and compare the administration of both Cal Poly and Kent State while observing the student response as a result to the actions taken by the faculty. The intent of this paper is to argue and demonstrate the crucial importance of a school's presidency and administration with regards to the safety and regulation of campus protest. The commendable outcome of California Polytechnic State University's Dow Chemical Company protest, in addition to the evident peaceful standpoint among the students, is largely due to the thorough preparation of the president and of the faculty.

### **Protest at California Polytechnic State University**

The Cambodia incursion of 1970 provoked undeniable animosity across the United States, specifically inflicting apparent pressure on the administrations of college campuses due to active protesting. Though many colleges were very engaged in demonstrations, the scale of their intensity varied. Generally amicable and quiet, California Polytechnic State University is an ideal example of a college campus that protested the war peacefully and respectfully. From around 1968 to 1972, as Jennifer Freilach explains, "for the first time, Cal Poly students adopted a

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<sup>5</sup>Mitchell K. Hall, "A Crack in Time," *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*, Vol. 83, No. 1 (Winter 1985), 36-63.

position against the federal government and protested for change in its policies.”<sup>6</sup> On February 1, 1968, the Dow Chemical Company sent out employment recruiters in an effort to interview students who were planning to graduate in the upcoming month of June. As the manufacturer of the napalm that was being used by the US military against Vietnam, the Dow Chemical recruiters experienced more violent protests at different college campuses.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Jennifer Freilach, *Cal Poly: Liberal, Not Radical*, La Vista, 2015: 17.

<sup>7</sup>Robert E. Kennedy, *Learn By Doing: Memoirs of a University President: A Personal Journey with the Seventh President of California Polytechnic State University*, (San Luis Obispo: California Polytechnic State University, 2001): 287.

Fortunately according to the *San Luis Obispo Telegram Tribune*, “at Cal Poly there was much laughter, heckling and curiosity, but not much heat.”<sup>8</sup> Also stated in the newspaper were the details of the proposed intentions of SNAP (Students for New Action Politics)—the campus organization who led the protest. The group clearly declared that the sole purpose behind the protest was certainly not to object the rights that the Dow Chemical Company had to recruit nor to prevent students from acquiring their interview with the Company.<sup>9</sup> Prior to the demonstration, President Robert E. Kennedy of Cal Poly made his expectations of his students very clear by requesting their respect and establishing his confidence in their behavior. Following the demonstration, Kennedy reported that “the SNAP leader handed paper sacks to a half-dozen of the organization’s members who scattered out over the lawn, picking up every

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<sup>8</sup> “Dow at Poly,” *Telegram Tribune* San Luis Obispo, CA, 1 February 1968: 1.

<sup>9</sup> “Dow at Poly,” *Telegram Tribune*, 1 February 1968: 1.



Figure 1. “David Brown speaks amid peace signs,” *Telegram Tribune*, 1 February 1968, <https://goo.gl/8oPXRv>. One of the first protests at Cal Poly against the Dow Chemical Company recruitment visit. Signs and posture of students display overall peace and respect of campus.

scrap of paper, including cigarette butts.”<sup>10</sup> Figure 1 successfully captures the equanimity and composure that the protest ultimately emanated—a protest that conclusively proved and defined Cal Poly’s generally peaceful environment during an age of fear and panic.

### **President Robert E. Kennedy and the Administration of California Polytechnic State University**

Although the positive outcome of the Dow Chemical protest was largely due to the campus’s undeniably composed atmosphere, President Kennedy, and the administration played a constructive and an imperative role in the safety and success of the demonstration. As a response to the previously violent outcomes of the Dow Chemical recruitment visits to other colleges, Kennedy intentionally prepared for the arrival of the company by holding staff meetings a week

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<sup>10</sup> Robert E. Kennedy, *Learn By Doing*, p. 290.



in advance with “faculty members who have agreed to assist with crowd control procedure,”<sup>11</sup> strategically scattering the staff amongst the students, while additionally communicating directly to his students. As a result, The *Telegram-Tribune* of San Luis Obispo County proudly recalled the protest as an event that “speaks well for the measure of Poly President Robert E. Kennedy who through foresight and planning insured that no one’s right of free speech was abridged and that no one overstepped the bounds of proper conduct in a free society.”<sup>12</sup>

Aware of the preparation that needed to be implemented, Kennedy directed his focus towards a more psychological standpoint. From conversing with experts, Kennedy concluded that the most frequent motivation for an uncontrolled mob is the feeling of being anonymous. In his memoirs, the president uses an example of a student hypothetically throwing a rock at a window with confidence due to their assumption that “no one they know or care about will know what they have done.”<sup>13</sup> Accordingly, Kennedy made the executive decision to thus assign one faculty member to every 25 to 30 students in an effort to provide an apparent environment.

While ensuring a strategically safe environment for the protest, President Kennedy additionally called the *Mustang Daily* to publish an open letter to his students with the intent of communicating his behavioral expectations for the upcoming demonstration. What Kennedy decided well is portrayed through his initial acknowledgement of his respect for the student body—evident through his words stating that “I am convinced that our students at this campus are level-headed; I am hopeful that they will not permit themselves to be goaded into disorderly

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<sup>11</sup> Grace Arvidson, Secretary to President Kennedy, Memorandum to Staff, 29 January 1968, Box #35 Folder #6, Student Unrest 1960s and 1970s, Special Collections and Archives, California Polytechnic State University.

<sup>12</sup> “Cool at Poly,” San Luis Obispo *Telegram-Tribune*, 7 February 1968.

<sup>13</sup> Robert E. Kennedy, *Learn By Doing*: 289.

conduct by the actions of others.”<sup>14</sup> Jenny Freilach describes President Kennedy as a man who “kept close relations with students in order to eliminate disconnect and violence between students and faculty.”<sup>15</sup> Kennedy sought to pursue a mutual respect with his students by truly listening to their interests and their concerns<sup>16</sup>—an effort that most definitely contributed to the outcome of the Dow Chemical demonstration. Freilach argues that had Kennedy not taken utmost precaution in planning for the arrival of the Dow Chemical Company, the campus’s demonstration would have likely resulted in extreme violence mirroring the violence seen by other campuses throughout the nation at this time.<sup>17</sup> By establishing his confidence in the student body while announcing his expectations of positive student behavior, Kennedy ultimately instituted a respected and personable relationship with his students, thus contributing to the ultimate behavior of the students to the protest.

The overall power of Kennedy’s influence having a substantial effect on the outcome of Cal Poly’s peaceful protest can easily be argued to be insignificant. However, it is essential to observe and investigate the leadership of a university and address the certainty that the administration did, in fact, have an effect on the outcome of this protest. Kennedy confidently states that “probably the most effective preventative measure that we used would not have worked had we not had the cooperation of the faculty.”<sup>18</sup> Prior to the demonstration, the communication and organization between the university’s staff and the president was undoubtedly unequivocal. Displaying extensive preparation and foresight, the president called a meeting with the deans, faculty, and department heads a week prior to the protest to discuss the

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<sup>14</sup> Robert E. Kennedy, “President’s Plea,” *The Mustang Daily*, 31 January 1968: 1.

<sup>15</sup> Jennifer Freilach, “Cal Poly: Liberal, Not Radical,” *La Vista*, 2015: 25.

<sup>16</sup> Freilach, “Cal Poly: Liberal, Not Radical,” 17.

<sup>17</sup> Freilach, “Cal Poly: Liberal, Not Radical,” 25.

<sup>18</sup> Kennedy, *Learn By Doing*: 288.

preventative measures he had in mind—scattering the staff amongst the students. The day before the protest, President Kennedy issued a public plea requesting the students’ utmost respectful behavior—a strategy that showed appreciation and confidence towards his students. Then, following the protest, Kennedy openly commended the students and faculty by stating to the *Telegram-Tribune* on February 2, 1968 that “I appreciated the cooperation of all faculty, students and administrators who maintained the proper atmosphere during the entire activity.”<sup>19</sup>

Years later on March 7, 1972, President Kennedy displayed another act of respect for his students at the campus’s Founder’s Day celebration featuring Chancellor Glenn Dumke as the key speaker. The *Mustang Daily* published the following day reported that “the occasion was Founder’s Day and the topic was higher education in California.”<sup>20</sup> Closely observing the students Kennedy quickly noticed Pete Evans, one of the university’s active antiwar protestors, not standing for the Pledge of Allegiance. Kennedy described it as “the first inkling I had that trouble was brewing.”<sup>21</sup> Towards the end of Kennedy’s introduction of the main speaker, he noticed movement among a large group of 50 or 60 students from the MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán)—a Mexican American student organization who promotes Chicano unity and education through political action and thought.<sup>22</sup> The students were reaching under their chairs to pick up signs to protest the lack of improvement of the status of Hispanic students at the university. While the students were protesting, Kennedy describes the scene stating that “they were chanting ‘Viva Meccha!’ Students behind them began to boo and it was apparent to me that we had the makings of a confrontation between liberal and conservative

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<sup>19</sup> “Cal Poly Students Kept ‘Cool,’” *Telegram-Tribune* San Luis Obispo, CA, 2 February 1968: 20.

<sup>20</sup> ““Money not the answer,”” *Mustang Daily*, 8 March 1972: 1.

<sup>21</sup> Robert E. Kennedy, *Learn By Doing*: 303.

<sup>22</sup> *Movimiento Estudiantil Xicano De Aztlán*, last modified 2015, <http://mexa.calpoly.edu/>, accessed 10 March 2017.

students.”<sup>23</sup> Reacting quickly, Kennedy notably exhibited his respect for his students and their rights to free speech by asking them to turn their signs around so that everyone in the auditorium could see what they were protesting. In the days that followed, the *Mustang Daily* publications failed to mention any detail or information of this protest.

### **Robert E. Kennedy and Gay Student Union Controversy**

In many cases, Kennedy was known to be personable and approachable to his students. Those who knew Kennedy would confirm, as Frielach writes, that he “actively pursued close relations with students to maintain a relationship with mutual respect. He hoped that listening to students demands would help prevent campus violence.”<sup>24</sup> While Kennedy is often perceived as almost impeccable with regards to his decision making, not all might agree with this assumption.

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<sup>23</sup> Robert E. Kennedy, *Learn By Doing*: 303.

<sup>24</sup> Freilach, “Cal Poly: Liberal, Not Radical,”: 18.

On January 13, 1976, Cal Poly's Gay Student Organization was officially recognized as a legitimate club on campus—a process that was difficult to accomplish. Although Kennedy claimed that throughout the long process, he did not have the final say in many occasions<sup>25</sup>, he was commonly accused for delaying the finalization of the GSU. Recorded in the Cal Poly Report of January 13, 1976, is a statement that reads “a Gay Student Union organization has now been officially recognized at Cal Poly despite long opposition from President Dr. Robert E. Kennedy and other administrative officials.”<sup>26</sup> Figure 2 displays the October 10, 1975 edition of the *Mustang Daily* where President Kennedy is seen depicted in a cartoon titled “The Ancient Mariner.” The cartoon evidently portrays Kennedy as an overly traditional and disliked figure due to his delay in finalizing the GSU in addition to being blamed for allowing over-enrollment

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<sup>25</sup> “Two Views On Kennedy,” *Mustang Daily*, 22 October 1975: 3.

<sup>26</sup> “Gay Student Union Recognized,” *Cal Poly Report*, 13 January 1976: 6.



Figure 2. “The Ancient Mariner,” *Mustang Daily*, 10 October 1975. Image drawn by a Cal Poly student negatively portrays university’s president as “ancient” and traditional in his opinions regarding the Gay Student Union, over-enrollment, and alcohol on campus. These three concepts are illustrated wrapped around Kennedy’s neck as he is depicted carrying them.

on campus.

In the October 21, 1975 edition of the *Mustang Daily*, a journalist presented Kennedy with a series of questions regarding the establishment of the GSU. The interviewer boldly requested answers as to why “despite an urging from the student groups and despite the fact many other universities have such groups, you have dragged your feet, it seems, on the issue,

claiming legal grounds for not allowing the group.”<sup>27</sup> To further the depth of the questions posed, the interviewer proceeded to ask Kennedy “do you have moral reasons for not approving the group? Do you believe it is morally wrong to condone a group bound together under the flag of homosexuality?”<sup>28</sup> In response to the series of questions, Kennedy indistinctly replied by referencing the Appellate Court’s response to the issue. The Gay Student Union of Cal Polytechnic State University was willing to alter its laws to allow heterosexuals, in addition to homosexuals, to be a part of the Union “for the purpose of discussing homosexuality from an educational standpoint.”<sup>29</sup> However, in reaction to this proclamation, President Kennedy in addition to the Appellate Court saw this as “an attempt to secure constitutional protection for a restricted membership organization.”<sup>30</sup>

Kennedy publicly and openly discussed how he is convinced that the revision of the group’s by-laws were not made with the appropriate intentions—instituting his concern with a campus group’s by-laws failing to truly represent the direction and the intent of a group. Kennedy takes his argument further by questioning whether the Ku Klux Klan could be recognized if the by-laws of the group states that they will not discriminate and if the group claims to better education.<sup>31</sup> Still, President Kennedy clarified in the interview that “if the university has no choice but must recognize this organization, then that action will be taken.”<sup>32</sup> Kennedy’s hesitant actions nonetheless generated uneasy reactions—driving many to question his character and conduct as the president of a university. City Councilman Keith Gurnee at the

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<sup>27</sup> “The Kennedy Interview,” *Mustang Daily*, 21 October 1975: 6.

<sup>28</sup> “The Kennedy Interview,” *Mustang Daily*, 21 October 1975: 6.

<sup>29</sup> “The Kennedy Interview,” *Mustang Daily*, 21 October 1975: 6.

<sup>30</sup> “The Kennedy Interview,” *Mustang Daily*, 21 October 1975: 6.

<sup>31</sup> “The Kennedy Interview,” *Mustang Daily*, 21 October 1975: 6.

<sup>32</sup> “The Kennedy Interview,” *Mustang Daily*, 21 October 1975: 6.

time and former Cal Poly student recalled Kennedy as “a very sincere man—but chooses to impose his will. He’s just out of touch with the people he’s working with”<sup>33</sup> in an interview with the *Mustang Daily*. Gurnee confidently informs the *Mustang Daily* of his belief that tenured faculty would not react or respond to some of Kennedy’s propositions due to fear of retaliation.<sup>34</sup> He additionally claimed that “he will keep non-tenured faculty in line. Those that have spoken out in the past didn’t last too long. As for tenured faculty, they can’t be canned—but he can make life awful for them.”<sup>35</sup>

Primarily dependent on who is asked, President Robert E. Kennedy was either perceived as “a personal friend” or a “political foe.”<sup>36</sup> Regardless, the conclusive outcome of the Dow Chemical Company protest initiated by the students of Cal Poly is partially due to not only the preparation of the president, but also the personable and intentional side of Kennedy as an individual.

### **Kent State University Tragedy**

As a tragic representation of an experience contrary to that of Cal Poly’s, the outcome of the protest that took place on Kent State University’s campus in Ohio on May 4, 1970 will forever be remembered as one of the most horrific experiences that a college campus could ever endure. In the event of an ordinary college campus rally with the intent of protesting against the Vietnam war, no one would have ever guessed that the rally would have resulted in the shooting and killing of four Kent State Students.

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<sup>33</sup> “Two Views On Kennedy,” *Mustang Daily*, 22 October 1975: 5.

<sup>34</sup> “Two Views On Kennedy,” *Mustang Daily*, 22 October 1975: 5.

<sup>35</sup> “Two Views On Kennedy,” *Mustang Daily*, 22 October 1975: 5.

<sup>36</sup> “Two Views On Kennedy,” *Mustang Daily*, 22 October 1975: 5.



During the year of 1960, Kent State University was celebrating their semi-centennial and was predicted to be portrayed as “reflecting the general optimism in much of the nation—coverage of the festivities brimmed with self-assurance and hope.”<sup>37</sup> Kent State was experiencing a time of certainty and fearlessness with hope of a bright future for the university. This was a time of growth for the town of Kent, Ohio as the university expanded while progressively molding the city around it. The general image of Kent State University gave off “the sense of quiet conformity on campus and in the town.” As Simpson and Wilson explain, “it is safe to say that the university remained like much of the Midwest for so many—flyover country, a bland place referred to as the heartland.”<sup>38</sup> Similar to San Luis Obispo, Kent, Ohio was known to be more reserved. However, the extreme and contrasting results between the protesting of the two schools proves otherwise.

On May 1, 1970, talk of protest spread across the town following a mildly violent events that happened downtown that began at the bars. In protest of the war, there were many who ran down the streets of Kent throwing rocks at windows. However on May 2, 1970, the burning of the ROTC building served as the initial spark to the protest at Kent State. At 7:30 PM, there were no police present at the ROTC building. After 8:00 PM, students were reported throwing rocks and lighted railroad flares and eventually “after several failed attempts, a small corner of the building began to burn somewhere between 8:30 PM and 8:45 PM.”<sup>39</sup> The fire department didn’t arrive at the scene until 9:00 PM as students continued to throw rocks at the building while some attempted to cut or grab their fire hoses. The next day was Sunday, May 3, 1970. According to

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<sup>37</sup> Simpson and Wilson, *Above the Shots*: 29.

<sup>38</sup> Simpson and Wilson, *Above the Shots*: 31.

<sup>39</sup> Simpson and Wilson, *Above the Shots*: 71.

Simpson and Wilson, “unlike the previous evening, Sunday morning was deceptively calm.”<sup>40</sup>

However it wasn’t until May 4, 1970 when 96 men and 7 officers assembled to form a line surrounding the ROTC building as a response to a protest executed by the students—an event that resulted in the firing of 67 rounds in 13 seconds and the subsequent death of four students.<sup>41</sup>

Preceding the events of May 4, President Robert White of Kent State University was commonly referred to as a man who was fair to the students—generally a man who was respected by all who encountered him. However, some agreed that “White’s leadership abilities amid the rising protests have been roundly criticized as being largely absent”<sup>42</sup>—a single quality that has evidently been proven to be of most importance. According to John Peach, a man who was interviewed by Craig Simpson on August 6, 2009, “White had a difficult time being a very visible point person with all those things, relying heavily on his staff; and his staff had mixed emotions and different backgrounds. They had an ‘us versus them’ mentality, and that’s always ripe for disaster.”<sup>43</sup> Following the student destruction of the ROTC building, White addressed the students and faculty expressing his determination that Kent State had more to offer than the results of the more recent events. White thanked his staff, students, and campus security for ultimately moderating the events, while concluding his statement by informing the students and staff that the National Guard would remain on campus and classes would remain in session. However, White additionally assigned a curfew from 1:00 AM to 6:00 AM and “stated that the Guard had assumed control of campus; and declared that all rallies, peaceful or otherwise, were

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<sup>40</sup> Simpson and Wilson, *Above the Shots*: 75.

<sup>41</sup> Simpson and Wilson, *Above the Shots*: 75.

<sup>42</sup> Simpson and Wilson, *Above the Shots*: 38.

<sup>43</sup> John Peach, Interviewed by Craig Simpson, 6 August 2009, *Above the Shots*: 38.

banned”<sup>44</sup>—a declaration that poses questions on whether this was the proper way to address the situation.

Following the speech, there was a group of 23 faculty members who denounced the National Guard being on campus while additionally calling attention to the rock throwing that took place over the previous couple days. In response to their consensus, the faculty members called for a meeting that President White refused to hold. What proves to be of more concern was the overall fact that White claimed that he was unaware of any rally that was going to be taking place on May 4, 1970. The confusion between the president and the staff was unquestionable portraying a factor that undeniably contributed to the conclusive events that occurred at Kent State University. Although President Robert E. Kennedy of California Polytechnic State University had many flaws, miscommunication with his administration and lack of preparation and awareness were not among them.

## **Conclusion**

The comparison between Kent State University’s President Robert White and Cal Polytechnic State University’s President Robert E. Kennedy is evidently crucial with regards to the fallout of the protests of Kent State. While Kennedy took weeks to prepare for the upcoming protest that he was fully aware of, White claimed that he was not fully unaware of the rally that took place on May 4, 1970. Although both men were perceived as friendly and personable, it was the intentional action of President Robert E. Kennedy that lead to a peaceful protest at California Polytechnic State University. On the contrary, the lack of preparedness by Robert White must be considered as a negative factor that may have contributed to the tragic results at Kent State

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<sup>44</sup> Craig S. Simpson and Gregory S. Wilson, *Above the Shots*: 78

University—arguing the crucial importance behind the involvement of a president and the administration in a university's protest.

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