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Fight! Fight! Rah, Team Fight!

*A Brief History of Rebellion and
Resistance at MSU: a disorientation guide*



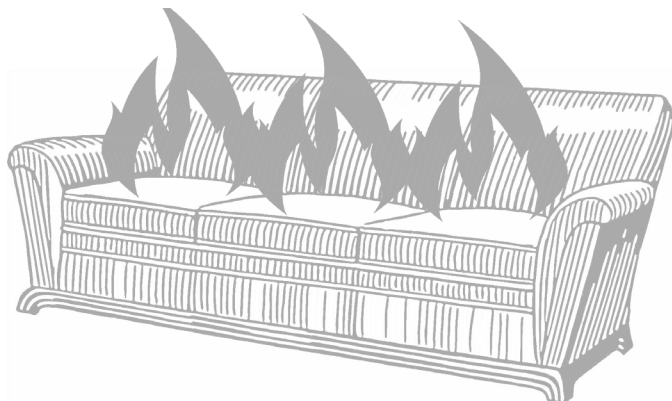
Welcome to Michigan State University, a school known for its sports, its mascot Sparty, the leading rare isotope research facility in the country, and one of the biggest child sexual abuse scandals in history; the home of prominent scholars as well as a hotbed for young fascist organizing; presidents praised for their anti-racist liberalism while they helped funnel university funds into murderous dictatorships; the “Pioneer Land Grant University” founded on land that was stolen; a “public” university that is funded by less and less public funds.

Yet oppression breeds resistance: students and youth have fought back every step of the way, with protests, sit-ins, marches, graffiti, even riots. Whenever the ugly face of racism has reared its face there has been resistance. Each sexual assault cover-up has been met with a righteous feminist anger. Every attack on the freedom and safety of students meant that the students took the question of their freedom into their own hands.

So this is a brief history of those rebellions. It is our hope that learning about these past histories of autonomous organizing and spontaneous uprisings will help give context to, and maybe even light the spark for, the uprisings to come.

The administration wants you to be oriented: uncritical, obedient, peaceful.

This is our counter-offer: *disorientation*.



Towards the uprisings to come...

From the very beginning, Michigan State University has been a site of harassment, discrimination, and violence: from appropriating the land it sits on, to systemic cover ups of sexual violence, to the perpetual tuition hikes that turn the school into a playground for the elites.

Yet at each of these moments, people have fought back. As we read these stories of battles won and lost, we are reminded that what exists today does not have to exist tomorrow.

We can imagine a university free of exploitation and domination, where decision making is democratized and access to learning is free and available to all. A space where all of our different knowledges and skills can be shared.

For now, MSU is a place of corruption and lies financed by the debt of students where only the few have access.

But confrontation breeds change. When we fight for what we want, we get it.

We can imagine a new university.

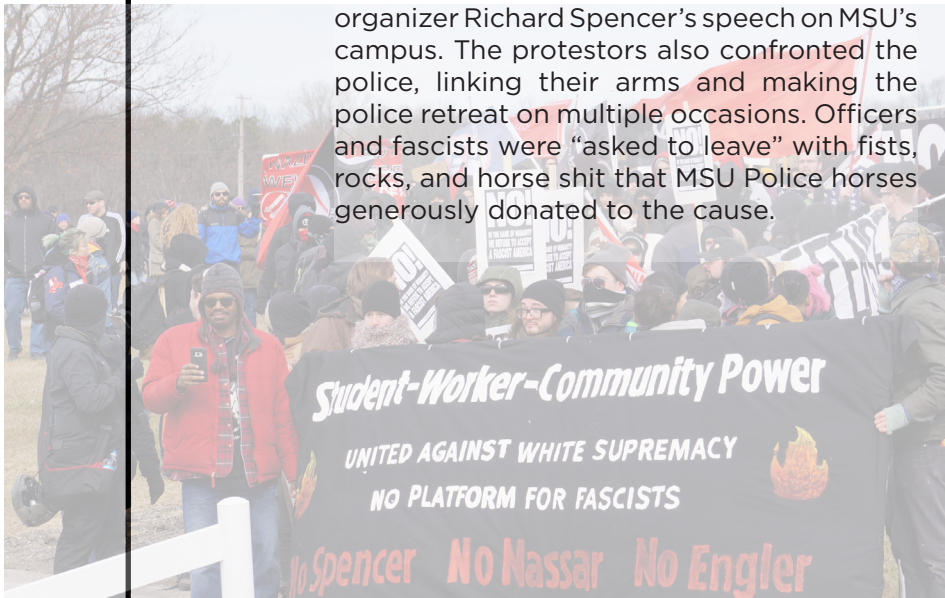
Can you?

2018 February

Former Michigan Governor John Engler was appointed as interim MSU president. While Governor, Engler was a notorious right-winger who slashed social spending and fought to cover up a massive prison sex abuse and rape scandal that involved 500 female inmates.

2018 March

500 Anti-fascist protesters block all but 12 attendees from attending fascist Alt-Right organizer Richard Spencer's speech on MSU's campus. The protestors also confronted the police, linking their arms and making the police retreat on multiple occasions. Officers and fascists were "asked to leave" with fists, rocks, and horse shit that MSU Police horses generously donated to the cause.



2018 May

The new group "Pissed Off MSU" dropped a banner during Brian Breslin's speech at Spring Convocation, stating, "NO corruption, NO abuse, NO business as usual".

1819

Treaty of Saginaw. The United States coerced the Ojibwe, Ottawa, and Potawatomi people (of the Three Fires Alliance) to sign this treaty, which laid claim to parts of so-called Michigan where Lansing and surrounding areas now lie. The treaty was signed under false promises made by the U.S. Government.

1862

The federal Morrill Land-Grant Act spurred the creation of the 'pioneer land grant college', now known as Michigan State University. This act could only be passed as a result of the U.S. government violating numerous treaties. This university sits on the stolen land of the 1816 Treaty of Saginaw. From its very founding MSU has been complicit with violence and deceit.

1870

MSU admitted women students 15 years after it was founded. The University provided no housing for women on campus for decades.

1885

MSU admitted African American students 30 years after it was founded.

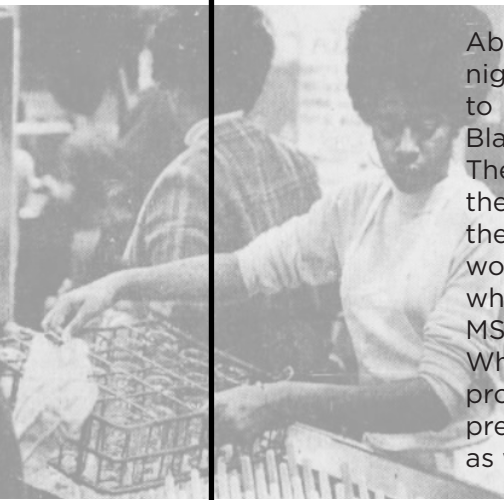
1930

In his autobiography, Malcolm X described East Lansing as a “sundown town”, meaning a combination of discriminatory laws, intimidation, and violence made it unsafe or illegal for African Americans to be in East Lansing after dark.

1965

Protesters led by the MSU chapter of the NAACP participated in a sit-in on Abbot Road to demand an open occupancy law in East Lansing. The law passed, finally making the pervasive housing discrimination against African Americans illegal.

1969



About 100 Black students held a two night sit-in at the Wilson Cafeteria to protest overt racism against three Black cafeteria employees at MSU. The students refused to leave until their demands were met, including the promotion of the Black cafeteria workers, the firing of the two employees who discriminated against them, and an MSU-wide survey of Black employees. While occupying the caf, student protesters took over its operation, preparing food and serving each other as well as cleaning.

1969

John Hannah left his position as president of MSU amid massive protests against his creation of the “Michigan State University Group”. The MSU Group facilitated CIA training of the South Vietnamese dictatorship during the lead-up to the Vietnam War. The anti-war movement in Michigan ousted President Hannah because of his involvement with the brutal violence that MSU helped facilitate in Vietnam.

2018

Larry Nassar plead guilty to child pornography charges, 7 counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct in Ingham county, and 3 counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct in Eaton county. Over 200 women and girls gave victim impact statements as part of sentencing hearings. Nassar was sentenced to 60 years in federal prison, 40-175 years (Ingham) and 40-125 years (Eaton) in state prison. At the time of this writing, over 300 women and girls have come forward accusing Nassar of sexual abuse.

2018

Total national student loan debt passed \$1.5 trillion dollars.

January

2018

Amid large and sustained protests, a national media outcry over the cover-up of Larry Nassar’s legacy of abuse, a vote of no confidence by the MSU Faculty, and a resolution to resign from the Michigan House of Reps, MSU’s president Lou Anna K Simon is forced to resign.



2016 November

After the election of proto-fascist Donald Trump, liberal groups tried to organize a peaceful “pro-unity” march. Over 1,000 people showed up. Militant anti-racists successfully led the march into the street and then to the MSU Student Union building where they attempted to occupy the building. They demanded a freestanding multicultural center and other anti-racist policy changes. The MSU police violently slammed and barricaded all the doors to the building and illegally shut down the Union, even while lying through their smiling teeth to the occupiers within the building upstairs.



2016 December

Anti-racists revealed that some fraternities at MSU had become a breeding ground for white nationalist Alt-Right organizing efforts. Some of the heads of the fascist group “Identity Evropa” were also leaders of the ΔKE (DKE) fraternity. Their names are Kilian Glish and Andrew Ferguson.

2017 Summer

Cameron Padgett requested a room at Michigan State University for an event where Richard Spencer, President of the neo-fascist National Policy Institute, could speak about his racist ideas. University leaders offered a room in the Michigan State Student Union in September for a fee of \$2,000. This led to a massive outcry and call-in campaign organized by student and community groups. This caused the Administration to change their initial plan and deny the attempt by Spencer to book a room. The NPI then sued the Board of Trustees and then-President of MSU Simon. In their lawsuit they argued that denying the request constituted a violation of the right to free speech. A few days before she resigned in disgrace, President Simon settled with the National Policy Institute’s legal team and agreed to allow Spencer to speak in the MSU Livestock Pavilion on March 5th, 2018.

1970

In early May, after the announcement of the U.S. invasion of Cambodia, students rose up across the country. At Michigan State University, protesters demanded an end to U.S. imperialism in Southeast Asia, the abolition of the ROTC, and freedom for Bobby Seale, co-founder of the Black Panther Party. After a riot at MSU on May 1st, an MSU spokesperson “very conservatively” estimated that protestors caused upwards of \$35,000 in damage to five buildings, including the administration building, and seven police cars. The ROTC building was firebombed and one student was arrested for attempted arson.



May 4th 1970

Four students at Kent State University were murdered by the National Guard. Students around the nation spontaneously broke out in a national student strike that crippled the U.S. higher education system. Over 4,350,000 students participated at 1,350 schools. One night at MSU almost 100 students were arrested in a police raid on an organizing meeting in the MSU Union. One of the students arrested at that time was John Royale. He went on to become president of the Michigan chapter of the National Lawyers Guild. He first learned about the Guild while sitting in the holding cell of the East Lansing Police Department.

1972

More than 100 Black students, led by the Black Coalition Council, stood on the court with fists raised before a basketball game. They protested racism against Black athletes at MSU and other universities.

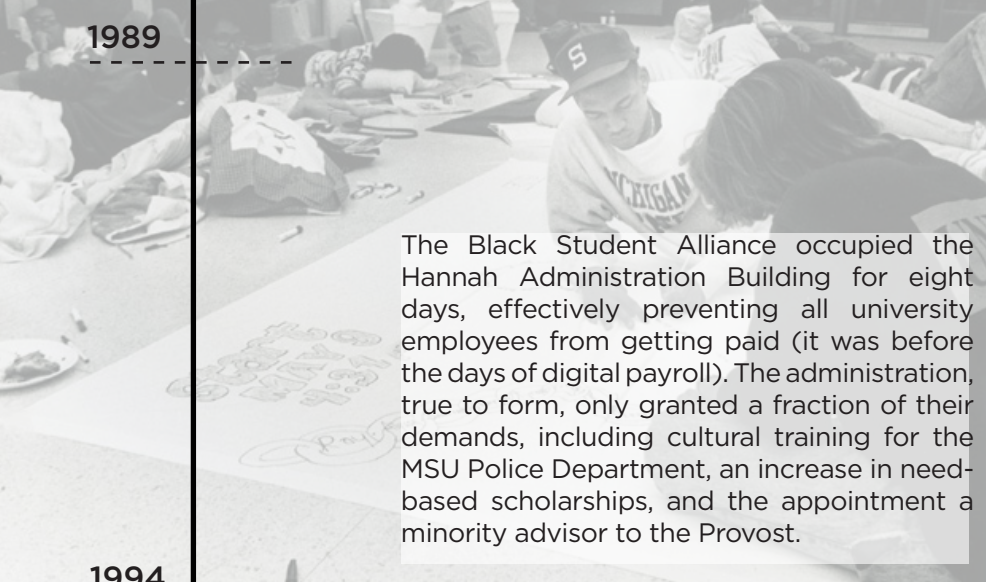
August 2015

A collective of indigenous MSU graduate students organized a protest against the University-hosted Boy Scouts of America conference for their continual use of racist images and cultural appropriation. This act reminds us that the University continues to fail to recognize its history of stealing land from indigenous people, while supporting and harboring groups that perpetuate cultural violence against native peoples.

1972

In response to President Nixon's announcement that the U.S. would blockade and plant bombs in North Vietnamese ports, hundreds of protesters took over Grand River Avenue. Protesters built barricades and blocked traffic for three days until riot cops dispersed them with chemical weapons.

1989



The Black Student Alliance occupied the Hannah Administration Building for eight days, effectively preventing all university employees from getting paid (it was before the days of digital payroll). The administration, true to form, only granted a fraction of their demands, including cultural training for the MSU Police Department, an increase in need-based scholarships, and the appointment a minority advisor to the Provost.

September 2016

The first crimes of serial child-molestor and MSU sports doctor Larry Nassar were published in an Indiana newspaper. Following this, MSU fired him and opened an investigation into his conduct.

October 2016

After pressure from Native MSU, North American Indigenous Student Organization (NAISO), and Native American Law Students Association (NALSA), East Lansing formally recognized "Indigenous People's Day" and dumped the racist and colonial "holiday" Columbus Day.

1994

Dolores Huerta, co-founder of the United Farm Workers of America, visited MSU. During her visit, about 100 protesters demanded entrance to MSU President McPherson's office to protest against MSU serving grapes farmed under extremely exploitative conditions. The protesters gave McPherson boxes of grapes with statements such as "these grapes were watered with the blood of migrant workers". Some students also threw grapes at McPherson, which is hilarious.

1999

2014 December

Huge protests were organized against conservative and rape-apologist George Will because of his invitation to speak at commencement and his award of an honorary degree from MSU.



The Chicano-Latino student group MEChA, CRU, and the Brown Berets organized a book protest to demand the establishment of a full degree Chicano Studies program. Students checked out over 5,000 books from the MSU Library and loaded them into a U-haul, stating, "if we can't read about our history, you can't read about yours".

WE DEMAND:
Full Funding of
Chicano Studies

ACRU ROOM IN
EVERY COMPLEX
MORE TENURED,
OR TENURED
TRACK PROFESSORS

That the Student
Services Bldg. be
renamed Cesar
Chavez Building

In terms of institutional
support, MSU lacks sufficient
means & outreach to
thoroughly ATTRACT, RECRUIT
AND RETAIN Chicano
undergrad. & GRAD students

2015

The height of the U.S. Office of Civil Rights investigation into MSU's handling of sexual assault. The investigation was opened after numerous Title IX complaints were filed by MSU students and employees. After widespread controversy over MSU's inaction in curbing gender-based violence, they finally agree to change their sexual assault policy. The new policy included strong "no means no" wording. But it still remained a mere bandaid over a much more systemic problem.

January

2000

Environmentalists bombed and set fire to the research of a MSU professor who was working for transnational corporation Monsanto. The flames did extensive damage to the 4th floor of Agriculture Hall and the action was claimed by the Earth Liberation Front (ELF). Marius Mason was arrested for the action 12 years later in Detroit after his then-husband, Frank Ambrose, snitched on him (Don't be like Frank).

2015

Graduate workers, organized with the Graduate Employees Union, shut down Grand River Avenue during contract negotiations in response to the administration's unwillingness to offer a contribution for dependent health care. The action helped to win significant coverage for their members.

2001

Anti-capitalist activists with the group Students for Economic Justice discovered an undercover police officer, sent by MSU, had been attending their meetings under an assumed identity for a year in order to collect information and disrupt their organizing activities.

2001

Graduate Employees at MSU gained the right to collectively bargain for employee benefits and protections like health care (formerly grossly inadequate), pay raises, working hours and conditions, and union representation through the Graduate Employees Union.

2011

Massive militant protests broke out against the non-punishment of two MSU football players who raped a woman. Students painted graffiti on campus and dropped a banner at graduation.

2011

Seven students from MSU Greenpeace organized a sit-in inside MSU President Simon's office to demand the university create a comprehensive plan for moving the university away from using coal mined by mountaintop removal in Eastern Kentucky that had resulted in severe pollution/disease in the extraction communities. Three were arrested for refusing to leave when the building closed.

2012

MSU Greenpeace dropped a 20'x 20' banner reading "Spartan Green, I wish!" off the Bessey parking garage to launch a national week of action for 100% renewable energy. This spurred a week of national action including 1200 phone calls to the board of trustees demanding a switch to clean energy. On April 13th the board passed a shell of an energy transition plan without a path toward 100% renewable energy. MSU Greenpeace interrupted the board to disrupt the meeting.

The total national student loan debt passed \$1 trillion dollars.

2012

Spring 2014

After activist group MSU Students United delivered 4,000 handwritten signatures to the board of trustees demanding an end to tuition hikes, Trustee Joel Ferguson literally laughed at the effort. Activists responded by clogging up the fax machines of the administration building with the handwritten petitions.

Fall 2014

MSU Students United challenged the university to include a definition of consent into the sexual misconduct and relationship violence policy. The group made "consent banners" to give to cooperative housing groups, student groups, and local bars. In the face of administration inaction, militant feminists spray painted anti-sexual assault messages on university sidewalks.

November 2014

March on the police station after killer kkkop Darren Wilson is not indicted in Ferguson, MO. 300 students and community members took over Grand River with anti-racist chants and banners. They took over the East Lansing police station lobby and demanded a meeting with the chief of police. They had demands related to transparency and ending police violence. She was forced to meet with the protesters and enacted some of their demands. Before the march, three massive banners were dropped around campus.

