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**Black Power, Black Beauty: Cheerleading and Racial
Pride on Campus**

When William Van Deburg published his groundbreaking examination of Black Power and American culture, New Day in Babylon, in 1992, he persuasively argued that the Black Power movement exceeded mere political boundaries and implied a broad and far-reaching movement to assert an empowered, autonomous black presence in every facet of American cultural, social, and intellectual life. Indeed, though Black Power initially emerged as an expression of opposition to political exclusion, its most articulate proponents always envisioned a far more expansive application. In their 1992 examination of Black Power, Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton declared that Black Power inherently sought out new forms and rejected externally imposed boundaries by its "bold readiness to be 'out of order.'" As such, it was important for Black Power to exhibit a willingness to assert itself across a broad spectrum of institutional authority. For Black Power to succeed and resonate with the people however, it did not have to limit itself to institutions of power per se, such as government, police, and social agencies. Indeed, Black Power could and did assert itself wherever exclusion or proscription occurred, whenever an establishment expected deferential behavior. Adherents to Black Power felt it was just as important to challenge these institutions not for what success would bring, but because of what failure to challenge them at all represented. Thus, Black Power was less about which institutions were challenged than in the process itself. In this context, the clues to deciphering

Black Power as a process are not found in the target or the dividends, but the rhetoric and the circumstances.

Historians generally agree that at its heart, Black Power implied control, particularly over institutions that affected and directed black life in America. Frequently, the realization of Black Power required the creation of new institutions, such as community empowerment centers or black studies curricula at the university level. Just as frequently, the assertion of Black Power required a direct challenge to existing white institutional control, a challenge often times resisted by white opponents whose opposition left them open to charges of racism. Carmichael explicitly stated that Black Power was "a call to reject the racist institutions and values of this society." On American college campuses through the early 1970s, few institutions could match the exclusiveness and racism of athletic support groups and the Greek system. Embedded in those two mainstays of American undergraduate life were generations of exclusion across racial lines, proscription across gender lines, and a white male expectation of deferential behavior that crossed lines of both race and gender.

In 1972, black students at UCLA, led by the Black Student Union, successfully pressured the administration into creating an all-black cheerleading squad when the original squad excluded black females, but overwhelmingly consisted of women from campus sororities. The resultant struggle over the issue demonstrates the varying manifestations of Black Power within campus institutions still negotiating racial inclusion and the limitations of the Black Power movement in challenging existing gender roles.
