

1987

Students stage two-day sit-in at Cox Building

Shoshanna Cohen

Review Associate News Editor
March 16, 1987

About 180 students took over the Cox administration building Thursday in a demonstration calling for divestment of Oberlin funds from corporations doing business in South Africa. Demonstrators stayed in the building through Saturday morning. Their number ranged from 100 on Thursday night to 250 during the day on Friday.

Overall, participants were pleased with the demonstration. "We've done what we said we would, keeping this peaceful civil disobedience. Everyone's taken real good care of everything but still made it their own," said steering committee member Naomi Galtz.

Students gathered in a lecture room in Bryant Kettering at about 3:00 p.m. Thursday where coordinators explained how the occupation took place. From there students ran quietly to Cox, entering by both doors and filling as many offices as possible. They hung an African National Congress flag and a banner reading "Oberlin for peace and justice" from the windows.

Both President Starr's and Secretary Robert Haslun's offices, as well as the conference rooms on the second floor, were locked before students arrived.

Over the course of the demonstration, students collected more than 300 IDs from participants and outside supporters as a precaution. They felt that this would prevent any small group of people from being singled out for punishment. People outside the building also showed support by bringing demonstrators food from co-ops and dining halls at mealtimes.

Less than an hour after entering the building, students broke into their pre-designated "cell groups" to discuss a request by College Dean Alfred MacKay that they vacate private offices belonging to Associate Deans William Scott and James Helm, and Vice President for Business and Finance Dayton Livingston. According to MacKay, the offices contained files with private information about faculty members.

The "cell groups" of about 10-15 members each were formed to allow all participants to have input in decision making. Each group had one representative who relayed the group's views to the steering committee.

While some demonstrators worried that they would alienate faculty members and lose their support by staying in these offices, the majority decided to offer MacKay an exchange of the offices for the promise of concrete negotiations with the Board of Trustees. This proposal was rejected by MacKay. "I don't think you're doing this based on any serious principle, just for power politics," he said.

MacKay, Helm and Dean of Students George Langelier remained in the building until after 9:00 p.m. waiting for the students to reach their decision. They left about half an hour later. Two security officers as well as three cadets remained in the building.

At about 1 a.m. when a security officer opened the door to the second floor conference rooms

(See STUDENTS STAGE, page 4)

1985

AIDS: The Facts and the Fear

Myths and misconceptions obscure reality of AIDS

Peter Baker
News Editor

December 6, 1985

Senior Stephen Main had seen story after story in the newspapers and on TV talking about the killer disease AIDS, but it wasn't until a slow summer day in Oberlin last July that it really hit home.

"At one point on a Friday afternoon I had read one too many 'in memoriam' columns about someone who had died from AIDS," he recalled. "I realized that I had thought about it, but I really hadn't ever confronted it. There are people who have died of AIDS who are just like me."

Main, a peer counselor for the Lesbian and Gay Union (LGU), said he spent the next three days wandering around, feeling incredibly alone, "becoming a walking AIDS victim without ever having the disease."

"It's difficult to deal with someone who leads the same sort of life I'm leading ... and all of a sudden he's dead and I'm not," said Main. "I wish I didn't have to confront this at my age, but I think it's really helped me grow."

Five months later, Main is trying to help others come to terms with the epidemic known as acquired immune deficiency syndrome. Two months of planning and organizing have come to fruition this weekend with the AIDS conference beginning tonight.

This is the first real sign of interest in the disease at Oberlin. While many students are concerned and follow news reports closely, for most of the people here, AIDS seems to be something that happens to somebody else. The disease, and the accompanying fear, hasn't had the sort of immediacy here as in New York or San Francisco, but then Oberlin hasn't had any reported cases so far.

"You know how Oberlin is," said Nick DeBaun, co-chair of the LGU. "It's sort of a bubble, and things in the rest of the nation don't really get through."

But the bubble has burst at large universities across the country. Two students and a staff member at the University of California in Berkeley have already died of AIDS, and the school has declared the disease to be the number one health issue on campus. At New York University, AIDS has killed three staffers and two students, and a stricken professor at Columbia University has died.

The American College Health Association has responded with a policy statement distributed to its 1,080 members — including Ober-

lin — proclaiming "there is no reason to exclude AIDS victims or carriers from campus academic, social or cultural activities."

Meanwhile the College has begun looking into ways of dealing with potential AIDS cases here.

"We won't have anything set in concrete," said Dean of Students George Langelier, member of the board that organized the AIDS conference. The College will remain flexible, he said. "We don't have a policy of what do you do when there's a murder on campus, or when a student tries to commit suicide. ... Right now we're feeling pretty comfortable that we're up-to-date — but that could change."

Dr. Judith Appleton, director of Student Health Services, agreed that a formal, rigid policy would be difficult here.

"What if you had one student who lived in a single who was very careful and you had another who was a lot more carefree and reckless?" she asked. "There's a whole difference in the way people behave. You don't kick somebody out of school because he had a positive AIDS test."

The College would be plagued with several complex, sensitive questions if a student were to contract AIDS. Does the College have a responsibility to inform the roommate? the parents? Should a victim's campus activities be restricted? How could housing be arranged? And to what extent is the school legally liable? Dean Langelier has already asked Oberlin's lawyers to investigate some of these questions, but said cases would be handled on an individual basis.

For the time being, College officials are hoping to get the facts out partially through the conference and to avoid any cases altogether.

So far the campus has sidestepped the paranoid panic that has swept other parts of the country. Most of the concern here has been in the gay community, even though the disease seems to be spreading out to heterosexuals now too.

"The hysteria about AIDS is really crazy," said Main. "It's sort of like people are clinging to any sort of guarantee against getting AIDS. ... People are almost superstitious about it."

Main points out that AIDS is not particularly contagious. A recent statement from the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta stressed that casual contact with AIDS victims or carriers is not risky, and that the primary way the virus is spread through sexual intercourse.

But at Oberlin, Main said too many people — gay and straight — are too relaxed about it.

"One thing the college atmosphere really fosters is the feeling of immortality. We're always going to be reading books, taking tests, writing papers. None of this stuff will affect us," he said. "I've heard too many Oberlin students talking about how they're going to have a great time in New York or San Francisco this weekend. That concerns me."

But even if students aren't getting caught up in the hysteria so prevalent elsewhere, many are letting AIDS influence the way they think about sex. They're being more careful about choosing sexual partners, and they're using condoms not so much for birth control as for protection from "exchange of bodily fluids."

"I've talked to some friends of mine and it has changed some attitudes and lifestyles," said Jennifer Hay, co-coordinator and counselor at the Sexual Information Center. "I think people are much more careful about how many partners they have."

One of the factors that has kept AIDS from being a big concern here, she said, is the close-knit community.

"This is a closed, trusting society," she said. "I think that we sort of trust each other — 'you don't have it, do you?'"

"I don't think a lot of people are really promiscuous so that gives you some protection here," said Dr. Appleton. She noted how panicked people used to get about herpes. "They hardly worry about it anymore. It used to be a major crisis two years ago when they came in with herpes, but today they don't view it as that threatening."

In comparison to AIDS, very little is that threatening. But while there have been more than 14,000 AIDS cases reported nationally, Ohio has produced only 117 as of Sept. 2, according to the state Department of Health. AIDS outbreaks have concentrated in the larger metropolitan areas, particularly New York City and San Francisco which make up almost 50 percent of the cases alone.

However, since the number of victims nationwide is expected to mushroom to 100,000 by 1990, it seems likely someone at Oberlin could come down with the disease. Should that happen, the College hopes to be prepared, and if educational programs like this weekend's conference are successful, perhaps the community will be prepared as well.



April 13, 2024
Special Edition
(ISSN 297-256)

Editors-in-Chief
Delaney Fox
Nikki Keating

Winter Term Staff
Eloise Rich
Adrian Wadzinski
Travis O'Daniel
Spencer Elkind
Dorothy Knutson
Ofek Levy
Lyric Anderson
Isaac Imas

Layout Editor
Erin Koo

Published by the students of Oberlin College every Friday during the fall and spring semesters, except holidays and examination periods.

For advertising rates, please contact edsinchief@oberlinreview.org. Second-class postage paid at Oberlin, Ohio. Entered as second-class matter at the Oberlin, Ohio post office April 2, 1911.

Office of Publication: Burton Basement, Oberlin, Ohio 44074. Phone: (440) 775-8123

POSTMASTER SEND CHANGES TO:
Wilder Box 90, Oberlin, Ohio 44074-1081.

To submit a correction, email managingeditor@oberlinreview.org

Students Transition Off Campus Due To COVID-19

Continued from page 1

confirmed cases in Ohio might be due to limited testing capacity; however, the Ohio Department of Health announced on Thursday its estimates that approximately one percent of Ohio's population, or 100,000 people, is currently infected with COVID-19.

On Monday, after the first three cases were discovered in Cuyahoga County, Governor Mike DeWine declared a statewide state of emergency. The following day, he recommended that Ohio colleges and universities consider moving their classes online. By Thursday, schools across the state — including The Ohio State University and The University of Dayton — had an-

nounced that they would move to remote classes.

As of publication, more than 128,000 cases of COVID-19 have been reported globally, resulting in more than 4,700 deaths. Within the United States, more than 1,600 cases have been confirmed, including 40 deaths. The World Health Organization officially declared the crisis a pandemic on Wednesday.

Student Response

Some students have expressed concerns over the potential financial and logistical implications of the College's rapid dismissal strategy, which occurred on a much shorter timeline than was initially announced Tuesday. Students quickly organized ways

to help each other in the face of mounting uncertainty.

On Tuesday, students began circulating a mutual aid spreadsheet with separate tabs for food, housing, storage, and transportation needs, among other asks and offers.

Students created an additional spreadsheet to organize ride-shares to the Lorain County Board of Elections in advance of the Ohio primary election on Tuesday, March 17 — one day after the majority of students will need to leave campus. In order to vote early, students must present either identification issued by the state of Ohio or provide the last four digits of their Social Security number. It is not necessary to present the utility bill issued by

the College to vote early.

Many graduating students feel particularly disheartened about the situation, and have expressed disappointment over the abrupt end to their time on campus on social media. President Ambar said she is mindful of the impact that the transition to a remote campus will have on students.

"I want students to know that I really understand why they're sad, because — particularly for the seniors — it's just disrupting what is a really special time," she said.

President Ambar added that senior administration has not made any final decisions concerning whether and in what form Oberlin will move forward with commencement ceremonies.