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SUBVERSIVE COMMUNITIES AND THE “RHODESIAN SIXTIES”

An exploration of transnational protests, 1965–1973

Dan Hodgkinson

Introduction

The movement of ideas and behaviors from one context to another has been a rich area of study in the scholarship of the “Global Sixties.”\(^1\) The emergence and passage throughout the West of new types of youth-led protest movements, utopian socialist ideas, and alternative lifestyles that celebrated sexual liberation, drug use, and pop music has been conceived by some scholars as a new “international counter-culture.”\(^2\) Yet these “culturalist” explanations obscure much of the complexity of how Sixties experiences were shared, or adopted, or rejected, or ignored. Building on a new wave of studies that unearth the exact processes of ideational and behavioral exchange, this chapter explores the significance of the Global Sixties to student politics and life in Rhodesia.\(^3\)

Student protests became the most public form of dissent in Rhodesia after the settler government announced its Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) from Britain in November 1965, which began a new era of authoritarian and segregationist rule. This period of protest ended in September 1973, nine months after the rurally fought war of liberation began, when the government arrested 150 students and clamped down on university activism after a wave of dramatic campus unrest.\(^4\) In exploring the experiences on the racially mixed campus during this time, I argue that a “Rhodesian Sixties” did take place. Against the background of an increasingly repressive regime that imagined a heroic, hardworking white Rhodesian nation, a group of white students used models from the West to subvert socially accepted behaviors through new, alternative lifestyles that took informal attitudes towards sex, drug use, and fashion. But while Western-inspired bell-bottomed trousers and rock and roll did hit Rhodesia’s black urban communities, I argue that the political expressions associated with the “Global Sixties” made little impression on black students or their understandings of political liberation, and if anything served to reproduce racial demarcation.\(^5\) In opposing the regime’s systematic exclusion of black people from political representation and economic opportunities, black students and a few conscientious white supporters used not imported utopian socialist ideas from Europe but rather the older, more contextually grounded political modalities of multiracialism and African
nationalism. Through the experiences of two prominent student leaders, Michael Holman and Arthur Chadzingwa, I explore these two political modalities and show how generative historiography of the Global Sixties can be when set next to older political traditions that have important transnational histories of their own.

**Background: UCRN and students in Rhodesia**

For the first fifteen years after its founding in 1954, the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (UCRN) was deeply embedded in a global Anglophone academic world as a college of the University of London and with an academic staff made up of over 40 percent expatriates.6 UCRN was established in 1954 and was typical of the British-designed, late-colonial development projects pursued under the Central African Federation during the 1950s.7 During this period a new urban, black middle class emerged in Southern Rhodesia whose members initially believed in the promise of late-colonial reform and took advantage of the social and political opportunities opened up by the Federation’s policy of multiracialism. Small numbers of this class found new jobs, claimed new political rights, advanced through new educational pathways, and adopted some of the tastes and lifestyles of white communities.8 At UCRN, the small numbers of black and white students lived relatively staid, “respectable” social lives on the plush, secluded campus, committing their time outside their studies to university sports, Student Union dances, or the many student societies of the college.9 Male students were typically clean-shaven and wore collared shirts and ties around campus. Women’s fashions were of a modest hew: pastel-colored blouses and knee-length skirts. In the first years of the college, black arts students underwent speech training in received pronunciation; as one English tutor recorded in his diary, “[I explain to the student] that her diphthongs are being continued too far into the second vowel.”10 Students did become more active in national politics following the radicalization of Rhodesian politics after the protests against the arrests of three black nationalist leaders in 1960. These political activities did not seriously shift social behaviors and aesthetics on campus. According to one black student who arrived in 1962, there were only “minor incidents of racism which rocked peace and stability at the campus from time to time.”11 The emergence of urban-based black professionals during the Federation threatened the interests and ideological white dominance of many white landowners, artisans, and members of the working and lower-middle classes. Fearful of the decolonization occurring across the continent, in particular of the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya and the civil war in Congo, these white communities increasingly turned to a segregationist white nationalism that took political form in the Rhodesian Front (RF) party that won the general election in 1962.12 The RF began legislating according to their new imagination of Rhodesian nationhood, reversing the modest political and social gains that black people had made under the Federation. In 1964, African nationalist parties were banned and their leaders were either imprisoned or fled into exile. The next year, UDI was announced. Systematic changes to the legal system were enacted. As George Karekwaivanane has argued, the discursive reposition of “Africans as cultural ‘others’ was used to justify denying them full citizenship and treating them as ethnic subjects bound by ‘customary’ obligation.”13 Many politically active academics and students fled the college to universities in Britain and across the Commonwealth—taking ideas and behaviors with them.14 For the minority of political dissenters that stayed, the institution’s special status as a college of the University of London and its principles of academic freedom and multiracialism provided cover for them to conduct subversive campaigns. Academics such as John Reed, John Conradie, and Giovanni Arrighi used their position to smuggle arms into the country for nationalists.15 Students, as I show below, used their status to launch a series of
public protests against the regime and their nation-building project that ended nine months after the outbreak of the guerrilla war in late 1972.\textsuperscript{16}

**Alternative lifestyles: drugs and sex in the “Rhodesian Sixties”**

In remembering life on campus after 1965, many black students told stories of a racially divided student body. One student, Dzingai Mutumbuka, who arrived at the university in 1965 said of the majority of the white student population, “there was really not much mixing . . . white students who associated with blacks were outliers.”\textsuperscript{17} Militarized identities, particularly among men, became more common after UDI owing to the extension of conscription among young white men.\textsuperscript{18} Notions of Christianity, imagined histories of pioneership, and anti-Communism bound such state-encouraged Rhodesian masculinities.\textsuperscript{19} A collegiate, sportsman-like respect would often manifest between such RF-supporting men and their African nationalist-oriented black colleagues, such as Arthur Chadzingwa. As Chadzingwa said:

[One of the RF supporters] said, “Arthur, I know but of course we are ruling and we shall be fighting.” . . . Amos Chinyara, he said, “Yah, yah, yah, we shall fight.” Then he said, “Amos, I am not talking to you, I’m talking to Arthur because I know his commitment. With you, Amos, when I hear that it’s you in the bush with the terrorists, I’ll not waste my bullets. I’ll simply raise a bottle of whisky and say, ‘Amos, come out!’” Anyway, that’s how we would joke about those situations. We got to understand each other.\textsuperscript{20}

For many white men and women students that were not RF supporters but who, unlike their black colleagues, had secure citizenship, everyday meaning was derived from and excitement found in the alternative lifestyles that had emerged across the West. These people began publicly testing traditional social boundaries. In October 1967, the publication of a student survey claimed that 94 percent of students were against laws prohibiting pre-marital sexual intercourse and 40 percent of students were in favor of legalization of abortion.\textsuperscript{21} Over the next few years, drugs such as speed, LSD, methamphetamines, barbiturates, and, most popularly, marijuana—commonly known as \textit{dagga}—also became much more widely used on campus. In 1973, the editor of the student newspaper \textit{Grope}, Tim Wild, wrote an article, “Marijuana . . . The Need for a New Perspective,” in which he argued that “Dagga is a ‘peaceful’ drug: it utilises the power of non-violence . . . aggressiveness is completely and wilfully abandoned and substituted by tolerance.”\textsuperscript{22}

The relationship between these socially subversive acts and a specific alternative student identity was constantly drawn in the press. For example, in one report of a student, Nigel Hall, who appeared in Salisbury Magistrates Court for possession of \textit{dagga}, the reporter took particular note that he was “wearing an open-neck green shirt, blue trousers, and white tennis shoes.” Beards and long hair became commonplace for these white men, in line with fashions across the West and at odds with the clean-shaven and buzz-cut hairstyle required in military training.\textsuperscript{23}

These shifts in attitudes towards drugs and sex caused panic among administrative and political authorities. In December 1967, conscious of the public backlash against a series of sex scandals at the college, the vice-principal, Professor Robert Craig, introduced a ban on men and women entering each other’s bedrooms in order “to defeat any immorality.”\textsuperscript{24} This caused consternation among students when they returned in March and eventually led to the relaxing of the rules in June. Nevertheless, the sex lives of students remained of constant interest to conservative RF supporters, who routinely called out promiscuity on campus. In July 1971, for instance, an RF MP, William Irvine, in parliament claimed that “some students at the
University want to give ‘free access’ to prostitutes to their bedrooms.” Similarly, newspapers and lawmakers were highly sensitive to the drug use on campus. On March 26, 1971, Minister of Education Philip Smith announced his intention to pursue legislation to clamp down on these alternative student lifestyles by taking steps to “deter the use of drugs” as well as what he called the “Five Ps”—pop, pot, promiscuity, permissiveness, and pornography. This statement and others similar to it were moral declarations that positioned socially subversive students as deviants requiring a moral response by the authorities. Indeed, during the parliamentary debate, MPs called for “a hardline on ‘indiscipline’ among youth, including canings, the banning of pop festivals, a higher driving age, curbs on drugs and liquor, and punishment of the parents of some offenders.” Throughout May and June 1971, police raided campus eight times, arresting eight people for possession of drugs, typically small amounts of dagga.

In explaining the emergence of these new forms of “deviant” youth among the white student body, public commentators drew upon analyses of contemporaneous Western student protests. One university academic at a public seminar in Bulawayo explained the behavior of Rhodesian student protests by borrowing popular explanations of the ’68 protests in Europe and North America:

The State, the organisation, the machine has taken over and personal relevance and involvement has been lost . . . Students can either escape into the unreal world of pop music, drugs and sexual licence. But that is the negative approach. The positive approach is to revolt, protest and resist.

These descriptions of students’ political ideas were based upon the ideas of the New Left that were put forward by thinkers such as Theodore Adorno, Jürgen Habermas, E. P. Thompson, Stuart Hall, C. Wright Mills, and Herbert Marcuse, the author of the highly influential One-Dimensional Man. All of these thinkers, initially at least, saw student revolt as a constructive challenge to the technocratic domination of late-capitalist society. These circumstances were starkly different from those of the overwhelmingly agricultural Rhodesian economy, politically dominated by white settlers. In a simplistic application of these ideas, one academic cautioned the Rhodesian public to not be surprised if “people at UCR start telling you about Herbert Marcuse.”

Yet the socialist ideas of the New Left did not accompany the social upheavals among white students on campus. In her study of the Czech student movement, Paulina Bress has argued that initial enthusiasm for German-style SDS student protest quickly gave way as their ideas “did not resonate among the majority of Czech students and, if anything, reminded them all too eerily of snapshots from their country’s recent Stalinist past.” In a similar vein, Western socialist political ideas held little purchase in the minds of the white students of the Rhodesian Sixties where the personal risks involved in political activism were high, particularly if it was considered in any way Communist-aligned. After 1966, participation in Student Union politics became “uncool,” which allowed the more politically active students to be consistently voted into the union’s leadership positions. According to Mutumbuka, “the majority of white students just saw us as a few crazy people.” For black students, as their position at university was particularly hard won, undermining the processes and trappings of established education in the name of personal freedom made little sense. Hence, this socially subversive current of the Global Sixties, rather than a political challenge to the RF’s own visions of a white nation, was a white escape from it. The strangest manifestation of this apolitical white Rhodesian Sixties came in August 1967, when a crowd of largely black and Indian students protested outside Rhodesia’s High Court in central Salisbury against the restriction of Michael Holman, the outspoken president of the
University of Rhodesia’s Students Representative Council (SRC). Across the street, a number of white students were holding flowers and wearing placards that read “MAKE LOVE NOT WAR” and “FREE SEX AND CHEAP BEER.” Rather than a New Left, this body of white students were much closer to what Christopher Dunn describes as “situational hippies” in his study on the “desbunde” in military-ruled 1960s Brazil: people who “chafed at social conventions, and consumed drugs, especially on weekends or during vacations, but also maintained steady employment and constructed middle-class lives.”

**Committed liberals: multiracialism as a political cause**

Not all white students responded to the RF’s nation-building project with a turn to apolitical socially alternative lifestyles. In the first few years after UDI, a group of white and black students used the liberal, multiracial language of the university as a form of dissent, attacking the RF as deviants from liberal, international norms. The most prominent of these liberal protestors was Michael Holman, a white student who arrived at what was then UCR in 1965. He was born in the UK to a British father and South African mother and grew up in Gwelo, a town southwest of the capital, Salisbury, where his father was a school master at Chaplin High School, where Holman did his secondary education. Sports, in particular his ability to play hockey, was the reason why Holman was acceptable to the white community despite his awkwardly egalitarian outlook. From 1965, Holman studied a BA in English and theology at UCR, but because of his activism while at university, he was unable to complete his degree. After being rusticated to his home in Gwelo, he managed to get a place on a master’s course in Edinburgh beginning in 1969 with the help of a post-graduate lecturer, Malcolm Rifkind.

Holman’s version of his story emphasized his particular sense of morality and appetite for making trouble. He commented that he saw himself as a “bourgeois individualist” and
“unusual” for siding with black students, but had always held the moral position that “racism was abhorrent.” He was contemptuous of the apoliticization of the majority of white students and illustrated his point by telling of an encounter he had with a student who was fundraising for a charity that helped destitute white people but who refused to criticize the regime: “I told him to fuck off.”

In the year after UDI, the SRC leadership was perceived to be sympathetic to the RF regime. On campus, anti-RF students like Holman could neither organize bureaucratically around Student Union structures nor in the banned nationalist parties, unless they were clan-destinely involved. Holman and five other politically outraged students (Basker Vashee, Ishmael Malambo, Stan Mudenge, H. Magan, J. W. Murisi) therefore decided to establish themselves as the “Committee of Six.” This informal organization was understood by Holman to have been motivated by an essentially liberal agenda that furthered the established university principles of multiracialism and academic freedom. To him, the committee was about “taking the privileges of the university, which was really an isolated area of tolerance, and extending those principles to wider society . . . [We] decided that we would make life a bit more exciting.” These six students used political discourses to inflame black and liberal white student opinion, protesting against the state’s infringements on academic freedom, the police’s use of force, and the inertia of the university authorities in opposing UDI. In demonstrations in March 1966, for instance, this was a focus of student ire as black and liberal white students, including Holman, protested against both UDI and racism in the teaching of science. The story was picked up in several newspapers, including the Rhodesia Herald, which printed a photo of students protesting against Dr. A. Eve, lecturer in chemistry and assistant dean of the science faculty, holding a placard that read: “Science Dept. Seat of Blatant Racialism! How About It Mr. Adams PUT YOUR HOUSE IN ORDER.”

These protests, organized by the Committee of Six, ultimately precipitated a staff solidarity strike, the resignation of a fifth of the university’s staff, the temporary closure of the university, and the resignation of its principal, Walter Adams. Because these protests were easily visible to journalists eager for a story of resistance to UDI, they generated huge amounts of publicity around the Anglophone world. The resulting outcry meant that the issue was also brought up at Prime Minister’s Questions in the British Parliament, to which Harold Wilson responded that it was an example of the repressiveness of the Rhodesian regime. Despite this publicity, these forms of political action were ultimately futile in moving the British government into action.

In addition to demonstrations, writing and publication was a key means by which Holman and others from the Committee of Six registered their dissent. The most high-profile political student publication was Black and White, a small student newspaper that circulated around campus, which was edited by Holman. The magazine was intensely critical of the regime, as it wrote in an editorial, “because exploitation, racial supremacy, police brutality, treason and corruption are serious matters.” Written and published at the university, the magazine was intentionally not submitted to the censors as an act of protest. The editors of the paper were sure of their academic authority and the entitlement that education gave them to speak truth to power. Liberal discourses of rights and the government’s infringement of these rights also valorized the “modern” belief in the social role of the “educated.” As an editorial argued:

One of these rights concerns freedom of speech. The loss of this rights [sic] is felt most, by educated men and women who have the knowledge and ability to critique and offer guidance on the future of the country. “Black & White” came into being just because through censorship, legitimate comment is suppressed, and all opposition silenced.
Satire, for the students who contributed to *Black and White*, was an important means of living out a political liberalism, functioning through absurd exaggeration that fractured the severity of the moral claims RF supporters attempted to make. One recurrent instance of this was a column entitled *Mrs. Smith’s Diary*, written as if a diary entry by Ian Smith’s wife. In the excerpt below, the author imagines how Smith and the minister for law and order, Desmond Lardner-Burke, decide upon the process of detentions.

Des came to dinner the other evening. After a delicious meal of Rhodesian canned food, Ian and he sat down to play their favourite parlour game. They call it “Preventative Detention.” The game is usually started by Ian shouting “Emergency” in a high, shrill voice. Then he and Des start scribbling on bits of paper. Soon they have two lists of names. They compare names, and anyone who is on both lists is immediately detained for an indefinite period. It really is enormous fun, and they both get quite excited. Men are just children really. But they do seem to be getting a little bored with this game lately, as they told me that they are thinking of changing the rules.45

Rhodesian legislators were not known to see the funny side of such caricature. In 1967, Lardner-Burke banned the magazine and, failing to get a guilty verdict within the courts, used the Emergency Powers legislation to restrict Holman to his hometown of Gwelo for a year.

The satirical parodies and confrontational demonstrations that Holman and the Committee of Six led were serious forms of self-creation by young students outraged by the Rhodesian nation-building project but cut off from the political organizing structures of nationalism. This liberal mode of political criticism against the regime continued but with much less enthusiasm after the outbreak of the guerrilla war proper in late 1972.
After a serious cause: black student nationalists

So why did black students not take part in the Rhodesian Sixties? Understanding the limits on access to Sixties “countercultural” experiences in the West has been a rich subject of scholarship, much of which has stressed the middle-class nature of student protest and emphasized the structural conditions of the post–Second World War economic boom that gave rise to this class as well as the “consumer society” that emerged around it. At university in Rhodesia, the social and economic realities of life for black students were starkly different from those of their white counterparts. Unlike their fellow white students, black students came from much more economically precarious rural backgrounds and from families who held deep expectations about the material and social benefits that a university education would bring. These moral considerations shaped black students’ spending habits and attitudes to their studies. Grants were often an important source of familial income, which would be sent to their parents and used to help pay school fees for their young siblings and healthcare costs.

The fears of upsetting familial expectations were consolidated by the RF’s project to reverse the gains made by black people towards political representation. From 1964, the regime began exerting pressure on college authorities and students, particularly black students, to stay out of politics. In August 1965, in the run–up to UDI, ministers attempted to introduce a stay–out–of–politics pledge and threatened to remove the government grants of protesting students. Media stories about black student protests were often written in terms of the security threat they posed as well as their links with Communism and the Soviet Union. Against these threats and economic expectations, many black students felt in a particularly vulnerable position and kept a low profile on campus, focusing on their studies. For many of these students, spending money and risking expulsion by smoking pot or being caught in some sexual scandal on campus did not make sense. According to Arthur Chadzingwa, these heavy social expectations on black university students were also the reason that they did not take part in more radical protests:

By the time he gets to the university, he thinks he’s the elite, having struggled and so on. When he gets to the university, he’s still compliant with the system all he wants is to get his degree, get a job as a teacher and not rock the boat . . . They usually didn’t demonstrate, those students.

For the black students who were brave enough to transgress rules and confront the Rhodesian nation–building project, they made sense of their politics not through abstracted ideas about utopian socialism but either the established liberal discourses illustrated above or the more contextually relevant, confrontational ideas of African nationalism.

One black student who had become a nationalist at school prior to the banning of the parties was Arthur Chadzingwa, who was both a high–profile student activist and also a member of the Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU) underground while he was at UCR studying economics between 1967 and 1969. After university, he worked at Cold Comfort Farm, a socialist agricultural co–operative run by the nationalists, where he organized against RF policies, for which he was detained in WhaWha prison in 1973. After his release, as part of an internationally mediated series of negotiations between nationalist leaders and the Smith regime, he became a ZAPU official based in London until independence in 1980 when he was appointed ambassador to Algeria.

Like many other students his age, Chadzingwa had become a nationalist at school in the early 1960s. His schooling was distinct from that of most other black students because of his experience at St. Faith’s Mission, a non–racial collective community set up in partnership
with the socialist Welsh farm manager Guy Clutton-Brock. St. Faith’s developed collectivized agricultural practices and had a primary school whose teachers were highly involved in African nationalist politics. As Chadzingwa recounted:

St. Faith’s got people politically conscious. When they banned the African National Congress, they arrested some of our teachers and the brother of Didymus Mutasa, John Mutasa. He was the farm manager of this co-operative. He and Guy were always effective members of the [African National Congress]. They were not party officials but they allowed many to come . . . Taking away the leaders, we thought, we must carry on the struggle. So we started being active.52

His self-representation of this form of early 1960s nationalism is wonderfully depicted in a picture he shared with me, taken while he was at Chikore Secondary School in 1964. He stands with fists clenched in front of a green thick bush “without a tie,” wearing his nationalist fur hat and Chikore blazer. While at Chikore Secondary School, as a ZAPU member he traveled around “the villages, doing political activities, organising, attending meetings when leaders come.”

Figure 3.3  Arthur Chadzingwa posing in his Chikore blazer in 1964 (Chadzingwa personal papers)
As with many other African nationalist movements, the aesthetics associated with “being educated” were important in Zimbabwean nationalism. Aware of the colonial basis of these aesthetics, Chadzingwa explained that they nevertheless played an important ideological function. In discussing a picture of the 1968 UCR SRC, in which he stands, he explained:

Missionaries did their best to Westernize us. We didn’t have Zimbabwean dress. As I say [he points at Felix Muchemwa, the SRC president, wearing an “African” print shirt], Felix’s shirt came from Zambia. It was Zambian style from the north; otherwise there was no African dress. We were all Englishmen . . . We were thoroughly colonized . . . The dress in Zimbabwe had nothing to do with left or right. We were now Englishmen, this is what I’m trying to tell you, and Englishmen can be having a tie in their Communist party, a tie in their Conservative party—the dress is the same . . . The ties were much accepted. In fact the tie showed you are now educated, you had gone through these difficult stages of getting educated and people admired you.  

The established authority of university education and its associated behaviors and rituals were important for nationalist students like Arthur in claiming their political voice. Rather than attack lecturers’ pedagogies, as happened during British, American, and French student protests during the 1960s, black students such as Arthur celebrated their meritocracy and called out when lecturers’ racial biases affected the established meritocratic processes of teaching and examination.  

This respect of established educational traditions did not make Arthur and other student nationalists non-confrontational. Having found his political voice during his school days, Chadzingwa remained an outspoken critic of the regime at university, taking advantage of the constitutional protection of “academic freedom.” As with many student activists, Chadzingwa was aware of the newspaper coverage that his confrontational political performances could generate and sought to play a canny political game, reworking his nationalist ideas into narratives that would get past government censors. This was most obvious in an incident that contrasted his approach to activism to the then more cautious politics of the SRC president, Felix Muchemwa. In 1969, during the period leading up to the constitutional referendum, fifty black students including Chadzingwa pelted the car of the mayor of Salisbury, Alderman Florence Chisholm, with feces, orange peel, and eggs to stop her from attending a 1969 student ball. A few days earlier Chisholm had described black university students as “a mass of people with a primitive background” to a grouping of industry leaders and warned that high university admissions of black people “is wrong in principle and could be disastrous in consequence.”  

The pelting of her car caused a media storm: pro-government journalists and RF ministers castigated the black students’ actions as obscene and deserving of strict punishment, arguing that principles of academic freedom cannot be open to “hooliganism and vulgarity.” In response to the outcry, Professor Craig and SRC president Muchemwa apologized to the mayor for the incident. However, Chadzingwa said in a press interview with the *Rhodesia Herald*: “African students were insulted by Mrs. Chisholm and we retaliated. We had to defend ourselves, and I consider no apology for the demonstration is necessary.”  

Chadzingwa’s radical public activism was also evident in the run-up to a university-wide demonstration—the Week of Protest—against a proposed new constitution, when he and four other members of the protest organizing committee withdrew after they were told they would not be allowed to demonstrate in downtown Salisbury. He told journalists of their decision that:
The issues involved are national and should not be limited to the campus and students alone . . . I would like the people of Rhodesia, especially those in control today, to take a saner view of things. The stand the RF is taking doesn’t allow those who disagree with it to realise their ambitions and their aspirations within the constitutional framework. We believe that a black man can be Prime Minister.⁵⁹

These quotations of Chadzingwa’s were published in the country’s most popular daily newspaper, the Rhodesia Herald, right after the event took place. They reflect how he cleverly developed a set of political messages that would get past the censors. From his position as a student he stressed the reasonableness of his demands, the intolerance of the regime to criticism, the stifling of young people’s ambitions, and the suppression of black political aspiration.

The private calculations that informed Chadzingwa’s radical public student politics went along with a set of secret, underground nationalist activities that he also conducted. He had been a member of ZAPU since his school days and was the chairman of the ZAPU branch on campus during his time at UCR. Every month, together with a small group of university branch members, he would secretly go to townships for meetings with the leadership of other ZAPU branches. At these meetings, they would hear secret messages from nationalist leaders in detention centers and plan activities such as strikes, demonstrations, and recruitment drives. Unlike student politics on campus, nationalist politics after UDI operated on a need-to-know basis and was organized into cell structures: “when it was underground, we couldn’t discuss everything, you should not have known everything. That’s how we operated when we were at university.” The clandestine student activists would travel to rural schools to mobilize school students to support the nationalists in their guerrilla operations and discourage the widely held view that nationalists “were crazy people that were going to shoot the government.” Another function that Chadzingwa mentioned was that “the student movement was a movement for recruiting. They themselves joined the liberation struggle.”

Chadzingwa’s clandestine activities as well as his public activism illustrate the complex and multiple forms of political performances that black nationalist students undertook under the creaking institutional protection afforded to them as students of the college. With nationalism banned, there was no relevant model of public dissent that addressed the circumstances Chadzingwa faced, so using his nationalist history he developed both a public and private political life in response to the upheavals of late 1960s Rhodesia. The alternative lifestyles of the Rhodesian Sixties were not only of little relevance to these lives, but they undermined the traditions and aesthetics of university education that were centrally important in his public challenges against an unjust and racist state.

Conclusion

Rhodesia occupied an important place in the imagination of many Western protestors during the Sixties as a racist, colonial outpost of an exploitative capitalist world system. Seen from this perspective, there is a deep irony at the center of the Rhodesian Sixties: its participants drew from Western models of alternative lifestyles in order to subvert traditional social behaviors, but were devoid of political content and to a degree complicit with the regime’s racially delineated imagination of the nation. To black and white students who were politically active, such as Chadzingwa and Holman, the utopian socialist ideas promoted in the West made little sense in their circumstances. Instead, these men used the older established politics of liberal
multiracialism and African nationalism to condemn the deviance and racism of RF rule. Hence, through this chapter on Rhodesian student activism, we find that in the protests that rocked campuses and capitals throughout the world during the 1960s, the Global Sixties were one transnational story of protest among many.

Notes

1 During the review process of this chapter, one of its research “subjects,” Arthur Chadzingwa, passed away. He played an important if largely unacknowledged role in the struggle for black majority rule in Zimbabwe. My thanks to him for his time and stories, as well as to Michael Holman, Dzingai Mutumbuka, Ben Mutape, Jocelyn Alexander, the participants at NYU Abu Dhabi’s “Global Sixties” workshop, Ian Little, and Hannah Waddilove.


5 A short account of the aesthetics of black urban change in Rhodesia during the Sixties is given in Shimmer Chinodya’s Harvest of Thorns (London: Heinemann, 1989), 69–72.

6 The University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (UCRN) changed its name to the University College of Rhodesia (UCR) in 1965 and became the University of Rhodesia (UR) in 1972.

7 The Central African Federation was a late-colonial political union between Southern and Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland (what would become Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi, respectively), which lasted from 1953 to 1963.


9 UCRN housed a tiny number of students. Throughout the 1960s, the total number of students never reached over 1,000.


15 These figures are discussed in Terence Ranger’s memoir on the period. T. Ranger, Writing Revolt: An Engagement with African Nationalism, 1957–67 (Woodbridge, UK; James Currey, 2013).


17 D. Mutumbuka (December 10, 2014, Skype call).

18 Kenrick “Pioneers and Progress,” 33.
Subversive communities, “Rhodesian Sixties”


34. Dunn, “Desbunde and Its Discontents.”


36. Ibid.


40. See Gelfand, *A Non-Racial Island*.

41. The story was carried by the *Financial Times*, the *Guardian*, the *Telegraph*, the *Daily Worker*, the *Sun*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Scottish Daily Mail*, the *Scotsman*, the *Times*, the *Glasgow Herald*, the *Evening Standard*, the *Yorkshire Post*, the *Journal* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne), the *Eastern Daily Press* (Norwich), the *South China Morning Post* (Hong Kong), the *Rand Daily Mail*, the *Bournemouth Echo*, the *Huddersfield Examiner*, the *Royal Gazette* (Bermuda), and the *Bolton Evening News*. See the UZ Special Collections for copies of all these.

42. UK National Archives, Kew Gardens, FCO 36/935.

43. A full print run of *Black and White* is included in Walter Adams’s papers held in the London School of Economics’ Special Collections.


47. Makhuranare, *Phinias Makhuranare*.


51 There were two Zimbabwean liberation movements: ZAPU and its offshoot, the Zimbabwean African National Union (ZANU).
52 A. Chadzingwa (January 9, 2015, interview).
53 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
55 “UCR Staff to Discuss Incident,” *Rhodesia Herald*, April 14, 1969, Salisbury (UZ Special Collections).
59 “UCR Staff to Discuss Incident.”