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Occupy SLU Collection: Introduction and Overview

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Occupy SLU Collection: Introduction and Overview

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Jesuits are known for going out into the geographical and existential peripheries of the world. At 1:30 a.m., in the middle of a foggy October 2014 night, the table was turned at Saint Louis University (SLU). More than a thousand protestors associated with the Black Lives Matter movement streamed onto the SLU campus, bringing the voices and concerns of the periphery to the geographical and existential heart of a Jesuit university.



Photo by David Carson, St. Louis Post-Dispatch

A small group of those protestors occupied the SLU campus for a week, protesting the social injustice of marginalized and brutalized human beings and communities, lifting up especially black human beings, and engaging in the work of social justice education. While many members of the SLU community supported the protest, others objected to the protestors' presence and tactics, vehemently in some cases. The week of Occupy SLU was tense, chaotic, and difficult. The week was also transformative for many individuals. In due time, history may reveal whether it was transformative for SLU as an institution.

As Dr. Stefan Bradley writes in his contribution to the collection, "The actions of the community members and students [who protested, testified, and educated] required a courage not known to many. That is why they should always be at the center of the narrative of Occupy SLU."

Academics have begun to grapple with Occupy SLU in scholarly articles, book chapters, and case studies.¹ The goal of this collection is to extend this conversation in four ways:

- To document some of the experiences of the events of Occupy SLU
- To provide opportunities for reflection on the events of Occupy SLU
- To share some of the transformations that the events of Occupy SLU produced
- To draw on the resources of a range of academic disciplines to continue the



Occupy SLU Collection

[Beabout & Wilson, Introduction and Overview](#)

[White, In the Light of Michael Brown: Living the Mission of a Jesuit University](#)

[Hagerty, S.J., Veterans, the Flag, and Protest: Facilitating Dialogue at Jesuit Institutions](#)

[Pestello, The Letter and Spirit of the Clock Tower Accords](#)

[Beabout & Wilson, Occupy SLU: Exchange, Entrepreneurship, Virtue, Jesuit Charism](#)

[Lucas et al., The Impact of Flag Desecration on Social Justice Movements: The Case of Occupy SLU](#)


[Linsenmeyer & Lucas, Student Development During the Occupy SLU Movement Through the Lens of Perry](#)

[Bradley, For the Greater Glory of Whom?: A Perspective on Occupy SLU](#)

dialogue and work of education that the protestors initiated at SLU, so that their prophetic call to social justice might be further transformed into action

We view these goals as worthwhile in themselves and as helpful for encouraging further documentation, reflection, transformation, and action.

The story of how we came to be curators of this section is straightforward. During the week of the occupation, our encounter with the activists and the SLU response to them was fairly minor, similar perhaps to that of many SLU faculty: during the events of Occupy SLU, we spent time in conversation with the activists, we held discussions in our classes, and we participated in some of the formal events and conversations on campus, but neither of us played an active or central role. A year later, when Jim Joseph, Dean of the Madden Business School at Le Moyne College visited SLU to talk about the [Global Jesuit Case Series](#), we suggested that he should include in their series the case of Occupy SLU. In response, he asked us to write the case and present it at the 2016 meeting of the Colleagues in Jesuit Business Education. To do so, we interviewed many of the key players, including activists and students as well as SLU administrators, faculty, staff, and students who were on the inside of the key decisions made in the case. Dr. Jonathan Smith, who is now SLU's Vice President for Diversity and Community Engagement, suggested this collection. Linda Lange encouraged us to consider *JHE* as an outlet for the collection. We are grateful to Jonathan and to Linda for their inspiration and encouragement.

The collection includes three scholarly pieces, three reflections, and one perspective essay. 

¹ For a detailed case study, including a 27-minute video synopsis, see "Occupy SLU: The Case of the Clock Tower Accords," at the [Global Jesuit Case Series](#). For scholarly articles and book chapters, see Mariah Bender, "[Black Lives Matter: Reflections on Ferguson and Creating Safe Spaces for Black Students](#)," *Critical Education* 8, no. 2 (2017): 11-16; Stefan M. Bradley, Jonathan Pulphus, and Joshua Jones, "[Ferguson, USA: A Scholar's Unforeseen Connection and Collision with History](#)," *Western Journal of Black Studies* 39, no. 4 (2015): 273-280; Justin Hanford and Stefan Bradley, "On Movement Theory, Institutional Activism and Cultural Change," *Harvard Journal of African American Public Policy* (2016): 21-30; Amber Johnson, "[A Communication Approach to Social Justice: Midwest College Campus Protests](#)," *Howard Journal of Communications* (2017): 1-4; Tommy Lucas, Whitney Linsenmeyer, and K. O'Brien, "Crisis Management: An Assessment of College and University Executive Communications Prior to the Darren Wilson Grand Jury Decision," *Western Journal of Black Studies* 39, no. 4 (2015): 299-310; Jeff Chang, "Hands Up: On Ferguson," in *We Gon' Be Alright: Notes on Race and Resegregation* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 2016), 86-136; Julie Hanlon Rubio and Noelle Janak, "[Student Activism Matters: The Parable of Occupy SLU and Its Impact on Racial Justice](#)," *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education* 51 (2017): 12-15.