

“Or Does it Explode?”:

The Harlem Racial Uprising of 1935 and the *Columbia Daily Spectator*

Emily Gao

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Professor Karl Jacoby

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You actually did something worse than cause the loss of life; you precipitated the flaming up of racial feeling. We live beside our colored brethren in harmony and it should be that way. I don't see how you are entitled to any consideration. You broke your promise and *set a spark to a powder machine*.¹

On March 19th, 1935, Lino Rivera, a 16-year-old Black Puerto Rican boy, walked into the S.H. Kress dime store at 256 West 125th Street and attempted to steal a 10-cent penknife.² When an employee caught and threatened him, Rivera bit his hand. Kress' manager eventually intervened and called the police to apprehend Rivera. A passing woman, Margaret Mitchell, had seen the store's employees apprehend Rivera and began to scream that he had been beaten.³ Curious about what had happened to the boy, who had gone into the store yet failed to come out, a crowd began to form.

The cops eventually allowed Rivera to leave through Kress' back entrance under the direction of the manager, who feared that the attention that the incident had drawn would deteriorate if Rivera was harmed. However, when an ambulance arrived to tend to the employee's hand, and the crowd noticed a hearse that was coincidentally parked nearby, rumors began to spread that the police had killed the boy.⁴ What ensued after would be forever cemented in New York City history.

During the Harlem Racial Uprising of 1935, from March 19-21, thousands of Harlemites mobilized against the purported police beating of Rivera. The uprising resulted in three deaths,⁵ 120 arrests, and twelve indictments.⁶ Local businessowners claimed over \$38,000 of private property damage (around \$851,000 in 2023). Moreover, the uprising marked the definitive end of

¹ Magistrate Bernard A. Kozicke to Lino Rivera at Brooklyn's Adolescents Court as reported in "POLICE STILL ON RIOT DUTY: HARLEM REMAINS QUIET BUT RESERVES ARE KEPT ON STREETS HEADS COMMITTEE." *The New York Amsterdam News*, Mar 30, 1935.

² Appiah, Anthony & Henry Louis Gates, *Africana: Civil Rights; An A-To-Z Reference of the Movement That Changed America*. Running Press, 2005. 202.

³ "POLICE STILL ON RIOT DUTY" (n 1)

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ "12 Indicted on Harlem Riot Charge: Grand Jury Investigates Prosecutor's Accusation that Reds were Responsible." *The Hartford Courant*, Mar 22, 1935.

the Harlem Renaissance and shattered a citywide illusion that Black New Yorkers lived in harmonious economic and social conditions.⁷ As Magistrate Bernard A. Kozicke told Rivera during his arraignment after the uprising, Rivera had “precipitated the flaming up of racial feeling” and “set spark to a powder machine.”⁸

Then-Mayor Fiorello La Guardia commissioned a committee of 14 members, both Black and white, to examine what had precipitated the three days of uprising.⁹ The report they compiled emphasized that the cause of the uprising was not just the isolated incident at the Kress store. Instead, the uprising was indeed incited by “pent-up feelings of resentment and insecurity,” “injustices of discrimination in employment, the aggressions of the police,” “racial segregation,” and other “intolerable conditions” that Black New Yorkers faced as the Great Depression disproportionately affected them.¹⁰ As New York City’s administration reckoned with “Harlem as it actually was,”¹¹ so, too, did the nearby students at Columbia University, whose campus was less than 10 blocks away.

Correspondence between Columbia’s then-president, Nicholas Murray Butler, and faculty member John J. Coss revealed that the university held resentment against Harlemites well before the 1935 uprising.¹² In a 1926 letter to Butler, Coss wrote that Harlem’s expanding Black population was encroaching on the university’s land and called upon Butler “to do something about the *negro problem*.”¹³ After the 1935 uprising, the discourse pushed forward by white Columbia students in the largest student newspaper, *Columbia Daily Spectator*, echoed Coss’

⁷ Davis, Arthur P. “COLUMBIA COLLEGE AND RENAISSANCE HARLEM AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY.” *Obsidian* (1975-1982) 4, no. 3 (1978): 90–113.

⁸ “POLICE STILL ON RIOT DUTY” (n 1)

⁹ The Mayor’s Commission on Conditions in Harlem, “THE NEGRO IN HARLEM: A report on social and economic conditions responsible for the outbreak of March, 19, 1935.” *Mayor’s Office Archive*, Mar 19, 1936.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Davis, Arthur P. “COLUMBIA COLLEGE AND RENAISSANCE HARLEM AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY.” (n 7): 113

¹² Nicholas Murray Butler Papers, Columbia University Archives. Special thanks to Kambi Gathesha.

¹³ Gathesha, Kambi. “Placing the Negro Mecca Under the Social Microscope.” Columbia University & Slavery, 2022.

resentment—culminating in three articles that dominated the campus narrative concerning the uprising.¹⁴ At the time, the *Columbia Daily Spectator* was not independent from the university administration.¹⁵ Therefore, *Spectator* was the foremost forum for campus thought, as long as it did not defy the agenda of the administration.

In this essay, I attempt to examine the bias in *Columbia Daily Spectator*'s imagining of the Harlem Racial Uprising of 1935 by examining it across three different contexts. First, how the pieces exist in their larger *Spectator* issues. *Did they dominate the headlines? What other stories ran alongside them?* Second, how the pieces compared to other publications' reporting on the uprising, including Black and white publications. *How did attention differ? What are the differences in language?* Finally, how the pieces compare to Black alumni reactions to the uprising, including Arthur P. Davis and Langston Hughes. *Why did these narratives dominate the school newspaper? How did the Black alumni's experience at Columbia inform their reaction to the uprising?* In examining *Columbia Daily Spectator*'s biased imagining of the Harlem Racial Uprising of 1935, I hope to illuminate a larger question: *how does Columbia University selectively legitimize activism?*

A note on language. The Harlem Racial Uprising of 1935 is more often called the "Harlem Race Riot of 1935" in both academic and journalistic sources. I opted to use the former, for it more wholly indicates the social unrest that induced protest in Harlem.

***Columbia Daily Spectator* and the Harlem Racial Uprising of 1935**

The *Columbia Daily Spectator*'s three-piece run covering the uprising was comprised of two pieces from the March 21, 1935, issue and one piece from the March 26 issue of the same year. The headlines were as followed:

¹⁴ Columbia Daily Spectator Archives.

¹⁵ "Student Group: Columbia Daily Spectator." *Columbia Undergraduate Admissions*.

- 1) March 21, 1935: "Frosh Walks Through Harlem During Riots, Returns With Battered Shoulder From Attack" by Andrew Khinoy ¹⁶
- 2) March 21, 1935: "3000 Negroes in Race Riot" by Raymond Bunin¹⁷
- 3) March 26, 1935: "The Harlem Riot" by Harold H. Black¹⁸

Out of the three pieces published, only "Frosh Walks Through" was written by a *Spectator* staff member, junior Andrew Khinoy. The latter two were published under the Student Forum section, an early iteration of today's Editorial and Opinion section, which publishes pieces from student voices that are not on *Spectator* staff. Black's piece was in explicit response to Bunin's.

Examining these three pieces exposes that Columbia students possessed some understanding of why the uprising had happened and, instead of extending empathy or critical thought, opted to ridicule it.

Nestled on the bottom third of the front page, Khinoy's "Frosh Walks Through" provided an off-color depiction of the uprising from the perspective of a freshman, Hector Donnelly.¹⁹ Khinoy wrote that Donnelly had walked through Harlem on the first night of the uprising and returned to campus "with a badly bruised shoulder and ripped clothing." When some "husky Negroes" came toward Donnelly, a policeman "took [him] in tow" and advised him to flee Harlem. Donnelly claimed that he "knew nothing of the rioting going on until after the incident," but when a reporter friend briefed him on the situation, he began to shout at the Harlemites. He believed they were just "having one hell of a good time." As Donnelly grew more curious and went deeper into the uprising, cops once again "broke [him out of] the trouble." He claimed that it "was lucky the way those cops were all over Harlem last night, just when I needed them most." As Donnelly described his experience, he revealed that he knew that "living conditions in

¹⁶ Khinoy, Andrew. "Frosh Walks Through Harlem During Riots, Returns With Battered Shoulder From Attack." *Columbia Daily Spectator*, Volume LVIII, Number 103, 21 March, 1935.

¹⁷ Bunin, Raymond. "3000 Negroes in Race Riot." *Columbia Daily Spectator*, Volume LVIII, Number 103, 21 March, 1935.

¹⁸ Black, Harold H. "The Harlem Riot." *Columbia Daily Spectator*, Volume LVIII, Number 106, 26 March 1935.

¹⁹ Khinoy, Andrew. "Frosh Walks Through Harlem During Riots, Returns With Battered Shoulder From Attack." (n 17)

Harlem [were] pretty terrible,” telling Khinoy that he had heard that “over half of Harlem [was] unemployed.” Yet, he also exclaimed that “all this stuff in the papers about race riots [was] so much nonsense.” Additionally, Khinoy lazily reported inaccurate details about the uprising, despite information about the inciting incident already being confirmed by other major news outlets. Khinoy, the president of a pre-journalism society that upheld journalistic integrity, had claimed that the uprising broke out after the “alleged beating [of] a 15-year-old boy who had pilfered some candy from a chain department store”—a mere shadow of what had truly happened.²⁰

On the next page where the Student Forum was published, Bunin’s letter to the editor entitled “3000 Negroes in Race Riot” proved the most progressive piece out of the three. Although he did not have a full image of the economic conditions transpiring in Harlem, he called on his peers to think more critically about how the uprising was caused by aggressive over-policing.²¹ Bunin, a Columbia junior who “regularly [went] through Harlem,” wrote about the growing tension he had observed between Harlem and the police in the weeks leading up to the uprising, recalling three incidents. In the first two incidents, he recounted policemen imposing tight surveillance on any crowd formed in Harlem—riding a bucking police horse through even if they were gathering to watch a movie at the Apollo. In the third, Bunin recalled a cop chasing a Black man out of the 72 St. subway station on the 1 line. The cop yelled “get back to where you belong, you damn [n-word]. Get back to Harlem where you belong and don’t come back.” Bunin ended his piece with descriptions of “half-cowering, half defiant” Harlem men, women, and children sullenly ducking cops stationed at every street. Drawing on the Harlemites’ growing mistrust of the police’s animosity, Bunin muses, “who caused the race riot?”

²⁰ “Pre-Journalists Name Khinoy Head.” *Columbia Daily Spectator*, Volume LVIII, Number 96, 13 March, 1395.

²¹ Bunin, Raymond. “3000 Negroes in Race Riot.” (n 18)

Five days later, sophomore Harold H. Black responded to Bunin, concluding the three-piece sequence on the uprising published in *Spectator*. The sole piece published in the March 26 issue's Student Forum, Black's "The Harlem Riot" called Bunin's piece "amusing."²² Furthermore, he claimed that Bunin had "allowed his imagination too free rein" and that the incidents that Bunin had observed had little significance to any intelligent individual. Black picked apart every incident contended by Bunin, defending police processes, and pushing the blame on the Harlemites. When justifying why police could heavily monitor Harlem, he stated that Harlem was a hotbed of gambling and "the root of this evil" and deserved to bear the brunt of the police.²³

The preliminary analysis of this three-piece reveals that *Spectator* did not illustrate a full picture in its coverage of the 1935 uprising. The only piece written by a staff writer was riddled with inaccuracies and a mocking perspective, and the conversation between the two letters, despite Bunin's effort, ended with the conclusion that Harlemites were at fault. Contextualizing these pieces further reveal the intentionality behind *Spectator*'s bias toward the police and against Harlem.

The Anti-War Committee and *Columbia Daily Spectator* Headlines in 1935

As what is now known as World War II began to brew overseas, students at U.S. colleges began to form "anti-war committees" to protest U.S. involvement in European affairs. Columbia was no exception. Since at least Fall 1932, anti-war murmurs had taken over conversations among students, and the Columbia anti-war committee was formed on December 13, 1932.²⁴ The movement culminated in a citywide coalition of postsecondary anti-war committees planning a

²² Black, Harold H. "The Harlem Riot." (n 19)

²³ Ibid

²⁴ "Will Set Up Anti-War Body." *Columbia Daily Spectator*, Volume LVI, Number 51, 13 December 1932.

national walkout in April 1935.²⁵ They staged numerous rallies on Columbia’s campus, showed films, and fostered intellectual debate about the nuances of war involvement.²⁶ Eventually, the Board of Directors of the Columbia Alumni Federation allowed President Butler to appoint one student of the anti-war committee as a “permanent delegate” to the alumni.²⁷ The anti-war committee was proudly listed on the advertised list of student groups on campus.²⁸ As efforts ramped up, the activity of the Columbia anti-war committee dominated *Spectator* headlines from March 4 to 27, and again from April 3 to 13 when the citywide walkout occurred.²⁹ Although President Butler eventually condemned the April 12 walkout as ineffective way to combat war and banned them from gathering at Low Steps, *Spectator* and faculty support of the students remain significant.³⁰ Moreover, the articles concerning the anti-war protests were written in a way that showcased the talents of *Spectator*’s writers and their capability to accurately report a long and difficult story. *Spectator*’s anti-war committee run of March 1935 completely enveloped and overshadowed the three-story sequence on the Harlem Racial Uprising of 1935.

What is intriguing is that the chairman of the Columbia anti-war committee in 1935 was Andrew Khinoy³¹—the same Khinoy that published the only *Spectator* staff narrative on the 1935 uprising, in which he allowed the publication of Donnelly’s testimony that mocked the Harlemites. Khinoy, while being lauded for his activist efforts, could not extend a similar empathy to those protesting outside the realm of the university.

Just like Harlemites in the 1935 uprising, Columbia students were protesting “unemployment and starvation”—poor economic and social conditions that would be caused by

²⁵ “STRIKE at 11 A.M. Today,” CCNY Archives & Special Collections, 1935.

²⁶ Columbia Daily Spectator Archives, 1932-1935.

²⁷ “1000 Graduates Celebrate Alumni Day,” Columbia Daily Spectator, Volume LVII, Number 76, 13 February 1934.

²⁸ “1933-1934 Student Board Lists Achievements,” Columbia Daily Spectator, Volume LVII, Number 84, 26 February 1934.

²⁹ Columbia Daily Spectator Archives, March-April 1935.

³⁰ “Butler Condemns Anti-War Strike,” *New York Times*, 3 April 1935.

³¹ “College Peace Body Will Meet Today,” Columbia Daily Spectator, Volume LVIII, Number 69, 18 January 1935.

U.S. involvement in Europe.³² Students even bore lit torches at the walkouts and disrupted nearby New York City streets.³³ *Spectator* tucked mocking narratives of Harlem around the folds of stories about Columbia students' own activism. How could Columbia students' rally against poor economic and social conditions while mocking their Harlem neighbors that did the same? Why did their voices deserve to be louder?

Columbia Daily Spectator and Other Publications

Considering Columbia's proximity to the 1935 uprising, it is intriguing that they only published three pieces on it. For other publications, including the predominantly white *New York Times* and the historically Black *New York Amsterdam News*, the Harlem Racial Uprising of 1935 warranted weeks of intense, detailed coverage. To attribute the discrepancy to the naivety of *Spectator's* young journalists would be misleading—while city, state, and national newsrooms worked to unearth what had exactly happened in Harlem, *Spectator* had the advantage of being less than 10 blocks away and still reported the uprising inaccurately, with no intention to allot it more attention beyond its three stories.

The reporting in the *New York Times* surrounding the 1935 uprising was most like *Spectator's* reporting because the *Times* also deployed violent language against the Harlemites—however, there was a conspicuous commitment to uncovering the entire story surrounding the uprising. On March 21, the *Times* reported that over 500 policemen had been stationed to monitor the “hoodlum element” of “roving bands of Negroes” that “stoned windows, set fire to several stores and began looting.”³⁴ The *Times's* hostile description of the Harlemites mirrored that of Khinoy and Donnelly's “husky Negroes” and Black's claim that Harlem deserved to be

³² Simmons College, “Students: take a stand!” Activism@Simmons, 1935.

³³ “Strike Here Today Climaxes.” *Columbia Daily Spectator*, Volume LVII, Number 116, 13 April 1934.

³⁴ “Police End Harlem Riot; Mayor Starts Inquiry.” *New York Times*, March 21, 1935.

heavily policed.³⁵ However, the article went on to feature quotes from Dr. Powell, an assistant pastor of a church in Harlem, where he discussed the economic turmoil that Harlem was undergoing. Despite the *Times* publishing denigrating language against Black New Yorkers, they interviewed Harlemites and gathered their thoughts on the uprising. Spectator only interviewed Columbia students. The *Times* found that Harlemites were looking for some “assurance of economic adjustment to end the discrimination against them” and that the “continued exploitation of the Negro is at the bottom of all this trouble.”³⁶ Dr. Powell concluded that because Harlem buses and chain stores refused to hire Black people, that because white landlords raised rents on Black tenants, and that because Harlemites were exploited in all facets of their life, the provocation of Harlemites was bound to happen eventually.

Two days later, on March 23, the *New York Times* published Malcolm Aage Jacksen’s Letter to the Editor (though the letter was dated March 21).³⁷ Jacksen described the “plight of 350,000 Negroes segregated in one district” that had been too often ignored by the public. He wrote that “the Negro himself is law-abiding and respectful: law-abiding when given the chance to assert himself legally; respectful when decency and tolerance are shown to him.” Like Dr. Powell, Jacksen ended his letter stating that Harlemites just wanted a chance to earn a livelihood—to give them a chance is to give them a “spirit of contentment.”³⁸

And then on March 24, *New York Times* contributor Rose C. Feld reported that the “Harlem riot [was] attributed to many economic ills.”³⁹ In this lengthy investigative report, Feld examined the characteristics of Harlem, calling it a congested, “self-contained city” that is

³⁵ Columbia Daily Spectator Archives, March 1935 (n 17, 19)

³⁶ “Police End Harlem Riot; Mayor Starts inquiry.” (n 35)

³⁷ Jackson, Malcolm Aage, “The Harlem Riots.” *New York Times*, March 23, 1935.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Feld, Rose C. “Harlem Riot Attributed to Many Economic Ills.” *New York Times*, March 24, 1935.

“residential, rather than commercial or industrial.”⁴⁰ She reported that because most Harlem’s residents are relegated to “filling jobs in the lower-income brackets,” “vocationally and economically, the Negro has always been handicapped.”⁴¹ Feld then uncovered the growing economic ills that were symptomatic of the fact that the Depression hit Harlem fast and hard. She contended the housing problem (in which “Harlem’s residents pay more than do those of any other section in the city”) was inextricably tied to the economic problem, citing a housing study that discovered that Black Harlemites paid “from one-third to one-half of [their] income for rent.”⁴² Echoing Dr. Powell and Jacksen, Feld concluded her report by stating that the uprising witnessed that week were bound to happen. Most notably, Feld does not use any derogatory language like the March 21 *New York Times* article or the *Spectator* articles—she only referred to “Harlem Residents” as such.

The Black newspaper *New York Amsterdam News* published stories at the same caliber of the *New York Times*, though with a distinct lack of antagonistic language to describe Harlem residents. Intriguingly, stories focused on an intellectual recommendation of where New York City must go in the aftermath of the 1935 uprising. It seemed as if the writers of the *New York Amsterdam News* were waiting for their counterparts at predominantly white newspapers like the *New York Times* to catch up with what Black New Yorkers already knew about the poor economic and social conditions of Harlem.

In Theophilus Lewis’ “Harlem Sketchbook: Riot and Aftermath,” published on March 30, 1935, Lewis gave a holistic anatomy of the 1935 uprising.⁴³ He wrote that “most riots are started by people who are usually law-abiding” that are enraged by some unjust act. As disorder

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Lewis, Theophilus. “Harlem Sketchbook: Riot and Aftermath.” *The New York Amsterdam News (1922-1938)*, Mar 30, 1935.

increases, “thieves come out of their rat-holes looking for loot while professional agitators capitalize the tumult for political purposes.”⁴⁴ He claimed that the mechanisms of the 1935 uprising were no different, but that the “background of social unrest” caused a unique uproar that could be traced to the “activities of Negro chauvinists.”⁴⁵ Lewis warned of propagating a doctrine that pitted white people against Black people—that a “constantly growing reservoir of smoldering hatred toward white people” was present.⁴⁶ He concluded his reflection by calling New York City leaders to adopt a “more realistic attitude toward the complexities of race relations” or to expect more events like the 1935 uprising to befall them in the future.⁴⁷

The *New York Times* covered the 1935 uprising closely, with varied voices and opinions on what events had transpired. However, it is evident that contributors reported with some sort of talent and dedication to the truth. The *New York Amsterdam News* reported on the uprising with incredible nuance—identifying not just the cause of the uprising, but state of Harlem in its aftermath. *Spectator* demonstrated that its reporters had a similar journalistic talent—when covering the complicated story of the anti-war committee. However, *Spectator* did not lend a similar talent to the 1935 uprising. Instead, their reporting was unusually inaccurate, pejorative, and devoid of nuance.

The Harlem Racial Uprising of 1935 and Black Alumni

Decades after, two of Columbia University’s Black alumni, Arthur P. Davis and Langston Hughes, published recollections of the 1935 uprising. Analyzing each alumnus’ relationship to Harlem during their time at Columbia, as well as Hughes’ relationship to

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Spectator, reveals a possible explanation for the lack of nuance published by *Spectator* concerning the uprising.

In the Winter 1978 edition of *Obsidian*, an African diaspora literature and arts magazine, Davis published his autobiographical essay “Columbia College and Renaissance Harlem.”⁴⁸ Davis transferred to Columbia from Howard University in 1923 and eventually graduated the college *Phi Beta Kappa* in 1927. He then received his M.A. in English and Comparative literature in 1929 from Columbia’s Graduate School of Arts and Sciences.⁴⁹ Despite his intellectual prowess, Davis described his time in Morningside Heights as incredibly lonely. Columbia was the first integrated school he had ever attended and he was one of very few Black students on campus. Davis’ isolation stemmed from his feeling that “the whole ‘race’ rode on [his] poor weak shoulder” and that he would be letting down all Black people if he failed.⁵⁰ He decided to forgo a social life at Columbia, where activities and peers were exclusionary, and instead, spent all his free time in Harlem. Originally from Virginia, Davis described Harlem as “something of a haven” in the face of the coldness and bigness of New York City.⁵¹ He found immense excitement in the height of the Harlem Renaissance as he continued his Columbia career. He frequented casinos on 138th, dances at the International House on Riverside, and clubs like the Cosmos.

Reflecting on his time in Harlem during his years at Columbia, Davis claimed that by 1935, the “social conditions in the Black Mecca had worsened, bringing on the riot.”⁵² He wrote that the “seeds of poverty, job discrimination, and frustration which were latent in [Harlem] were

⁴⁸ Davis, Arthur P. “COLUMBIA COLLEGE AND RENAISSANCE HARLEM AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY.” (n 7)

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

to mature into rotten and diseased fruit.”⁵³ Davis also reveals that his white peers had little awareness about Harlem unless they wanted to slum—in fact, the segregation between his lifestyle in Harlem and his education at Columbia was so grand that when he was elected *Phi Beta Kappa*, he did not know a single person in Columbia’s chapter.⁵⁴ Davis’ closeness with Harlem during his college career caused him to grieve the neighborhood in the aftermath of the uprising—something that his white peers could have never been aware enough to do.

In 1951, Hughes published his seminal poem, “Harlem,”⁵⁵ in his book, *Montage of a Dream Deferred*. In the last line of the poem, Hughes asks if a dream deferred explodes—undoubtedly, he had the Harlem Racial Uprising of 1935 in his mind while writing.

Originally from the Midwest, Hughes began attending Columbia in 1921 and dropped out in 1922—just missing Davis’ tenure at the school.⁵⁶ Hughes’ white peers were racist, and he found an eventual haven in Harlem.⁵⁷ Since he began at Columbia, Hughes prolifically wrote poetry, publishing “The Negro Speaks of Rivers” in a 1921 issue of *The Crisis*, the official magazine of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.⁵⁸ However, when attempting to join campus literary ventures, he faced exclusion. He could only publish poetry under an alias, and when he tried to join *Spectator*, the staff intentionally gave an assignment that would be impossible for him to accomplish as Black person excluded from campus life: to cover fraternity news.⁵⁹ Despite Hughes’ genuine excitement for the publication and his undeniable talent, *Spectator* deliberately disallowed a Black voice to join.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Hughes, Langston, 1902-1967, *Montage of a Dream Deferred*. New York, Holt, 1951.

⁵⁶ Wallace, Maurice Orlando. *Langston Hughes: The Harlem Renaissance*. 2008.

⁵⁷ Sandoval, Citalli Contreras. “Open and Closed Doors at the University: Two Giants of the Harlem Renaissance.” Columbia University and Slavery Seminar, 2019.

⁵⁸ Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopedia. “The Negro Speaks of Rivers.” Encyclopedia Britannica, August 16, 2017.

⁵⁹ Sandoval, Citalli Contreras. “Open and Closed Doors at the University: Two Giants of the Harlem Renaissance.” (n 58)

Davis and Hughes both found a home in Harlem when white Columbia peers pushed them out—moreover, their accounts of their experience demonstrated that white students completely rejected both Black students and Harlem as sources of legitimate talent. This racism resulted in *Spectator* blatantly discriminating against Hughes in their recruitment process. It is then not coincidental that *Spectator*'s three-piece run on the 1935 uprising contained such little nuance—such little respect for Black life in Harlem. Bunin, the only author of a *Spectator* letter that gave Harlem any respect, only was of his opinion because frequented the neighborhood. *Spectator*'s demonstrated exclusion of Black voices made sure that only white voices were reporting—white voices that did not believe they owed Harlem any nuance to begin with.

Or Does it Explode?—

If Hughes and other Black Columbians had been able to write for the *Columbia Daily Spectator*, perhaps the archives would boast better pieces concerning the Harlem Racial Uprising of 1935. But then again, the potential of “perhaps” can be eerie for history. It is most intriguing that Hughes' last line in “Harlem”—*or does it explode?*⁶⁰—powerfully echoed the words of Magistrate Kozicke to Lino Rivera during his arraignment—*set a spark to a powder machine*.⁶¹ Perhaps it was Hughes getting the final word.

As I have shown, *Spectator*'s biased three-piece run concerning the 1935 uprising paled in comparison to its own quality of reporting, as well as other publication's quality of reporting on what had transpired. I have shown that resentment harbored by the university administration seeped its way into the school's white population. I have contended that a possible explanation is found in what voices were platformed at *Spectator*, and how those voices related to Harlem

⁶⁰ Hughes, Langston, 1902-1967, *Montage of a Dream Deferred*. (n 56)

⁶¹ Magistrate Bernard A. Kozicke to Lino Rivera at Brooklyn's Adolescents Court as reported in "POLICE STILL ON RIOT DUTY: HARLEM REMAINS QUIET BUT RESERVES ARE KEPT ON STREETS HEADS COMMITTEE." (n 1)

during their Columbia experience. Then, we are left with two questions: *Why did Columbia delegitimize activism when it was just Black bodies asking to live? And how can we make sure we never let this happen again?*