The purpose of this assignment is to analyze the contents of the 2015 film the *Ninth Floor*, directed by Mina Shum, produced by Selwyn Jacob. This documentary follows the events of the 1969 Sir George Williams University riots, sharing stories and anecdotes from student protestors, along with archival footage from that period.

The documentary begins with an old television displaying several Black students discussing the concept of racism, before transitioning to an interview with Rodney John, one of the student protestors from this time. In his interview, Rodney John recounts how he and other Black students were enrolled in a class with Professor Perry Anderson during the academic year of 1966-1967, a course intended to prepare them for medical school. He explains that Professor Anderson frequently missed lectures, often skipped labs, and referred to the black students using formal titles such as Mr., Mrs., or Miss, while referring to the white students by their first name. Eight to nine black students consistently failed Professor Anderson’s classes despite their best efforts, without any clear explanation. Rodeny John recalled how three other students would copy his work word for word, and receive perfect scores of 10, while he was graded only a 7. Following this class, in 1968, six students filed a formal complaint against Professor Anderson. It took 10 months for the complaint to be looked at by the University administration. The University formed a hearing committee composed of two Black professors, two White professors, and one East-Indian professor. The committee was tasked with gathering information from both the students and the Professor Anderson and then make a judgment. However, the University provided no clear guidelines for how the judgment should be made, leading to disagreements among the parties involved. Tensions escalated when some of the Black students approached the Black professors on the committee, challenging their position, which ultimately led them to resign from the committee altogether. As hostilities continued to escalate and the University took little action to resolve the issue, the students decided to take their demands directly to the Director of the University. This led to one of the leading student activists, Kennedy Fredericks, being charged with extortion and kidnapping.

Next, we hear from Robert Hubsher, a Jewish student activist from Sir George Williams University. He describes the schools incompetence in addressing the issue and reveals that after the resignation of the two black professors from the hearing committee, the afflicted students were not consulted on the formation of the new committee. When the hearing finally took place in 1969, it lasted four hours but ended without any formal conclusions. The University proved to be unhelpful and dismissive to the students concerns. Towards the end, Professor Anderson left at his lawyers insistence. Frustrated by the lack of progress, Kennedy Fredericks exploded and rallied the students to act. He, as well as other student activists, wanted the University to listen to their demands: that the administration declare the committee illegal, that they meet with the students, and that the criminal charges against students be dropped. Kennedy Fredericks’ call-to-action sparked riots within the student body, leading them to the computer center on the 9th floor of the University, which they occupied for nearly two weeks. Around 200 students, all feeling similarly frustrated, joined the protest in the computer lab, believing that direct action was the only path forward. Outside the University protest, a growing fear developed that the students might become violent. There was a constant presence of police officers lining the streets, while a mix of protestors and civilians gathered outside.

On February 10, 1969, after 11 days of occupation, the University appeared to extend an olive branch, leading the students to believe they would finally be heard and that the ordeal would be over. However, after students had cleaned up and left, the University defaulted on the agreement and further postponed negotiations for two days. The students shared a common sentiment: “We had no rights, and they had no responsibility”. In response to this betrayal by the University, some of the more radical students took matters into their own hands and reoccupied the computer center. They barricaded the 7th floor with chairs and tables, threw computer cards out of the windows onto the streets, shattered glass and destroyed the computers. It was no longer about Professor Anderson, but about being heard. As tensions mounted and with no resolution in sight, violence between outside protestors and the police escalated. The police were called to act and remove the students, but as they began their efforts, black smoke emerged from the computer center, someone had set it on fire. Outside, a mostly White mob gathered, chanting for the students inside to burn. The police had to axe the doors down to rescue the students, but once they were freed, they were beaten and arrested. After all the students were arrested, the white protesters were released, while the Black students were interrogated and charged. The documentary goes on to explore how the movement was reflected in other countries and places like Trinidad, Barbados and throughout the Caribbean via the Black Power movement. The film concludes by highlighting the lasting impact of the 1969 Sir George Williams University protests, while also shedding light on present day racial tensions through the perspective of Frederick Kennedy’s daughter and grandson. It also further explores the fates of the activist students involved, revealing that five out of the six original students who filed the complaint against Professor Anderson graduated and went on to pursue successful careers, involving law, politics and academia.

The documentary incorporates a variety of visual and auditory elements to enhance the impact of the message it is trying to convey. The use of old typewriters, vintage cars and old newspaper clippings evoke a sense of history, transporting the audience back to the time of 1969. The different camera angles and close-up stills of the elderly student activists faces adds an intimate and captivating visual style, focusing on the emotions of the personal experiences involved in the protests. These shots highlight the humanity behind the movement, making the audience feel more connected to the story and struggle. The imagery of snow and scenes of people walking, sets the mood of isolated reflection throughout the movie. As well, the music from Frederick Kennedy’s daughter adds an emotional layer and connection to the film. Her music connects the past and present struggle for justice as she tells us her modern-day story and fight for equality. The music also complements the visual elements and gives a sense of poetic justices, tying the story together. Together these creative elements create a visually compelling and immersive documentary that brings the story of 1969 protests to life.

The purpose of this documentary is to document and analyze the 1969 Sir George Williams University protests, exploring the events leading up to the uprising and the lasting impact it had on the students involved. The film highlights the struggles faced by the Black students involved and how the University mishandled their complaints. It also examines the broader social and political significance of the protests, showing how the event resonated with the rise of the Black Power Movement and the Caribbean’s fight for liberation from imperialism. By presenting the experiences of key figures such as Rodney John and Robert Hubsher, the documentary reveals the long-lasting consequences of this moment in history, serving as a reminder of the importance of standing up against inequality and discrimination.

The point of view of the film is largely focused on the experiences and perspectives of the student activists. Through interviews and accounts from student activists like Rodeny John, Robert Hubsher, Anne Cools, Clarence Bayne and more, the film emphasizes the racial injustices they faced and their struggle for equality in the eyes of the University administration. It offers a broader socio-political context as well by linking the protests to larger movements at the time such as the Black Power movement. The film’s main point of view is one that centers on the importance of activism, resistance and standing up against discrimination.

The documentary was produced in 2015, over 40 years after the events took place. This effects the tone of the documentary because it reshapes the message being portrayed. If this film were made at the time of 1969, the tone may have come off as angry and as a call to action, whereas in 2015 the tone of the film is calm, and gives us a complete overview of the event. We can see the events leading up to the riot as well as the consequences of it. By revisiting this moment of history 40 years later we get both a sense of historical reflection and urgency. The film emphasizes that racial discrimination is not a thing of the past but an ongoing struggle, suggesting that the lessons from 1969 remain highly relevant to this day. The 2015 production date contributes to a tone of continued activism and highlights the importance of understanding history to inform present-day action.

The value of the *Ninth Floor* documentary is in its exploration of racial discrimination and student activism as well as the lasting impact of historical events on society and the people involved. This film explores the events of the 1969 Sir George Williams University protests, shedding light on the students involved and their experiences with racial discrimination at university. Through firsthand accounts, archival footage and creative storytelling the film not only documents the events leading up to the riot but also explores the long-lasting social and political consequences today. Some of the more profound impacts being how one year after the incident the Ombudsman was created to deal with huma rights complaints in Canadian Universities. This was a precursor to the Canadian Multinationalism Policy later down the road, showing just how wide reaching the impacts of this protest spread.

Ultimately, the *Ninth Floor* documentary honors the courage and resilience of the students who stood up for their rights but also challenges the viewer to reflect on the current state of racial justice and activism. The documentary’s explorations of themes such as race, activism and resilience make this film a critical piece for understanding the complexities of racial injustice both in 1969 and today.