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NEWS

Conversations about unionizing undergraduate workers begin amid nationwide wave of unionization



Workers and students rally over employees' lack of support from University

Calvin Grover / The Daily Princetonian

Christopher Bao and Sofia Arora

November 10, 2023 | 1:36am EST

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An anonymous student worker at Princeton told The Daily Princetonian that they were approached by a member of the Princeton chapter of Young Democratic Socialists of America (YDSA) about joining efforts to start an undergraduate student worker unionization.

In an email to the ‘Prince,’ Abby Leibowitz ’26, a co-chair of YDSA, wrote that “YDSA is not officially unionizing any undergraduates at the moment. If any individual member of YDSA asked someone about unionizing, this was likely out of personal curiosity.”

Leibowitz is a staff News writer for the ‘Prince’.

While there are no official undergraduate unionization efforts at Princeton, this news comes amid a nationwide wave of undergraduate unionizations after the pandemic, with more than a dozen undergraduate unions forming in the past several years.

Last week, Harvard University’s non-academic student workers voted to unionize in a 153–1 vote, though they are not yet an official union. That same day, student workers at the University of Oregon also voted in favor of unionization. This is a notable change from 21 years ago, when the University of Massachusetts at Amherst had the only recognized undergraduate union in the United States.

At Princeton, over 2,500 undergraduates work on campus each year, according to the Student Employment Office.

Over one-third of undergraduates have worked in University jobs so far, according to a statement to the ‘Prince’ by University spokesperson Michael Hotchkiss.

“The percentage of students working and the average hours worked per student in Fall 2023 is the same as or slightly higher than Fall 2022,” he added, further clarifying that “roughly half of the student body will be employed by the University at some point in the 2023–24 academic year.” The number of student workers has not been significantly impacted by the student contribution factor, which was eliminated in 2022 as part of the University’s efforts to expand its financial aid to students.

In a previous statement to the ‘Prince,’ Karen Richardson ’93, the dean of admission, wrote that one of the goals in eliminating student contribution is that University employment “should not be a barrier for students to participate in other activities.”

One of YDSA’s expressed goals is to “build labor union power as a step toward complete ownership and democratic control of production by workers, and more dignity for working-class people,” according to their website. In the past, members of the group have rallied around causes for worker’s rights.

An anonymous member of YDSA reaffirmed Princeton’s need for an undergraduate student union.

“I believe that a voice for the collective will of workers, which would take the form of an undergrad student union, could be a powerful and effective tool in helping them get their needs, as workers, met,” the YDSA member said.



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Hotchkiss wrote, “Since union membership is tied closely to a member’s particular job, we encourage students to be fully informed about how unionization might affect their position and their goals.”

The main unionization effort at Princeton so far has been the Princeton Graduate Students United (PGSU), which is currently in the process of building support for a possible graduate students union, according to PGSU organizer Gaby Nair GS. They plan to file an election “sometime in the near future,” Nair said in an interview

with the 'Prince.'

The anonymous member of YDSA added that the recent unionization efforts at other universities “[do] indicate that Princeton has a long way to go in securing rights for its workers.”

“The whole point of unions is that the [interests of the] administration, the people making these kinds of decisions about wages and working conditions, are not always aligned with the best interests of workers,” they said. “So workers need a voice to be able to negotiate and fight for their rights, better working conditions, and better wages.”

Nair further said that she would personally “be interested in working in solidarity with undergraduate students who are undergraduate workers who plan to organize at Princeton … solidarity is a beautiful thing. And Princeton’s campus could stand to have a little bit more of it.”

Chris Bao is a News contributor for the 'Prince.'

Sofia Arora is a News contributor for the 'Prince.'

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NEWS

Black alumni provide major endowment to Black Student Union to support campus affinity groups



2023 B(l)ack Together event, sponsored by the Office of the Dean of Undergraduate Students (ODUS).

Sameer A. Khan and Bernard DeLierre / ODUS

Eden Teshome and **Justus Wilhoit**

November 10, 2023 | 12:43am EST

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The Black Student Union (BSU) has received a historic endowment, sponsored by Black Princeton alumni, designed to give direct support to campus affinity groups.

Originally designated as the Class of 1972 Fund, the Princeton Black Alumni Fund will provide direct discretionary-spending funds, a minimum of \$100,000, to the BSU. The fund was created by Thurman White '72 and Chuck Brown '72 in hopes of connecting Black alumni with current undergraduates.

The concept of the fund originated during the pandemic in a weekly meeting held by Black alumni, colloquially known as "The Barbershop Chop." The group includes alumni who graduated in the late sixties and early seventies. As their fiftieth reunions approached, they wanted to give back to future generations of Black

Princetonians.

White told The Daily Princetonian the group was “reflecting on our Princeton experience and wanted to do something that was really targeted to our experience.”

He and his classmates were at the University at a particularly tumultuous moment. Right before White matriculated, in 1968, Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. The same year, the violent protests at Chicago’s Democratic National Convention that led to the arrest of the Chicago Seven took place. By the end of his first year, protests on campus demanding South African divestment and an end to the Vietnam War were in full swing.

White remembers just 46 Black students in his class, and their affinity group was crucial to securing a sense of belonging on campus.

“It was a culture shock, the ABC [Association of Black Collegians] was the one organization that helped a lot of us survive,” White noted.

The endowment was announced to the student body at B(l)ack Together, the BSUs annual start of the year event. Emmett Murphy ’73 spoke to undergraduates about how the make-up of the Black community has changed since his time at the University.

“We hope that the end goal will be unity and that that will be achieved. I know that there are 10, 15 Black groups … which is wonderful, to have specialization. But in the end, we need to all come together,” he told the ‘Prince’.

“[S]o when the endowment fund was created, it was for the behest of all Black students, but we gave it to the Black Student Union to manage,” Murphy added.

According to BSU President Jordan Johnson ’24, the BSU’s transformation into an umbrella group of different organizations is recent.

“As we’ve become an umbrella organization, it has given us the opportunity to look at the big picture with student groups outside of Black Princeton,” Johnson told the ‘Prince’.



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“Although our board is diverse, and covers most corners of the diaspora, we aren’t specialized. We encompass all of the Black diaspora,” Abiola Bolaji ’26, BSU’s Director of Outreach told the ‘Prince’.

Bolaji said that with increased funding, the BSU will give voices to other affinity groups, specifically mentioning Princeton African Students Association (PASA) and Princeton Caribbean Connection (PCC), which are not always in communication with University administration.

He noted that while the University’s administration supports the BSU, they also use the BSU “as a shield of ignorance to hide them from the other Black organizations.”

The University did not respond to a request for comment at the time of publication.

During COVID-19, a number of new affinity organizations catering to specific Black identities were revitalized, such as Princeton Ethiopian and Eritrean Students' Association (PEESA) and Princeton African Students Association (PASA). As a result, BSU has had to reconsider its position within the Black community.

"We aren't fully connected," BSU Secretary Kamaula Rowe '26 told the 'Prince.' "Sometimes it feels as if we're in competition with each other."

According to Bolaji, when the University looks to reach Black students, they always go to the BSU. But, he believes that leaders from other affinity groups should be looped in too.

"[The endowment] allows us to be more confident and also know that if we want to plan something big for the Black community, we have the means to do so," Rowe added.

Johnson believes that with the endowment, more all-inclusive events will be possible, such as larger social events, citing SZA's recent visit. He also floated the idea of a career program "that really sets up Black students for success outside of Princeton."

"There's not really a 'joining' the BSU, if you're a Black Student, you're already in it," Johnson said.

Eden Teshome is a senior News writer for the 'Prince' and the head Podcast editor.

Justus Wilhoit is an assistant News editor for the 'Prince.'

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NEWS

As web apps age, TigerJunction promises course selection with fewer glitches



Guanyi Cao / The Daily Princetonian

Ava Fons

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Students eagerly planning for next semester's courses now have a new app to craft their schedule.

TigerJunction, created by Joshua Lau '26, plans to integrate three different apps — ReCal+, CourseGenie, and ReqTree — into a single platform. Using the application, students will eventually be able to plan their semester schedules, map out prerequisites, and create four-year course plans. ReCal+, the semester course planning tool, is currently the only functional portion available for users.

TigerJunction comes as some of the most popular applications on [TigerApps](#) — a platform run by Undergraduate Student Government (USG) for student-built programs — continue to age. [PrincetonCourses](#), an app to view course reviews, and [TigerPath](#), an app to map out degree requirements, were COS 333 projects in the spring of 2017 and the spring of 2018, respectively, while TigerBook, a directory with student pictures, is currently being rebuilt. Lau is also a developer for TigerApps. Notably, Lau's app [began](#) as a COS 333: Advanced Programming Techniques project in the spring of 2014.

According to Lau, TigerJunction had about 400 users prior to the release of spring course offerings, and the application now has about 900 users.

The initial inspiration to create TigerJunction came from deficiencies that Lau noticed in [ReCal](#), one of the most popular course selection tools among students. For example, many students have experienced difficulties loading ReCal in their browsers leading up to the course enrollment deadline. TigerJunction, however, intends to resolve these issues by using a serverless hosting style.

“The way ReCal is currently hosted is it has its own dedicated virtual machine, which means that once the resources of that machine fill up, it stops working and someone has to manually increase the size of the machine to make it work again,” Lau said in an interview with The Daily Princetonian. “When nobody is using TigerJunction, the server essentially does not exist, but when a thousand people are using TigerJunction at once, the server scales up to meet the requirements of all of those users.”

Beyond resolving technical issues, Lau also incorporated additional features into ReCal+, such as searching by classes without schedule conflicts.

“The reason I started using the app was because it was very inconvenient for me to transition between multiple different sites while selecting my courses. TigerJunction provides a central location for the different sites I use like Princeton Courses, the registrar, and ReCal all combined into one,” said David Wang ’27, a user of the ReCal+ portion of TigerJunction.

Other users enjoy the ability to customize the interface of TigerJunction by switching to ‘dark mode’ and making their own theme.

“I love how you can turn on night mode and make the screen background dark,” Helena Richardson ’26 told the ‘Prince.’ “I also really enjoy the filters, and it’s less glitchy than ReCal.”

Besides ReCal+, TigerJunction is also based on features from the existing TigerApps of TigerSnatch, TigerMap, TigerPath, and Princeton Courses. Lau saw an opportunity to consolidate all their features in one app to make the student experience of selecting courses easier.

CourseGenie, the portion of TigerJunction that will allow students to create four-year plans based on their intended majors, minors, and certificates once it is released, was primarily inspired by TigerPath. While the first phase of CourseGenie will be similar to TigerPath, Lau said that the final version will allow students to filter out classes that students don’t have the prerequisites for and “recommend students courses they might enjoy based on courses they’ve taken before. According to Lau, an “AI-driven course suggestion” will also be incorporated into CourseGenie within the next few years.

“I think the CourseGenie part could be useful so that I don’t accidentally not graduate,” Alex Picoult ’26 said.



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"By collecting data over the years about which courses students liked and which courses students didn't like, as well as things like course ratings and evaluations, I want to create a system that essentially acts like an academic advisor," he said. "It could ask students questions, and with that provide them with courses that not only match their potential plans but also match what they might enjoy in a class."

ReqTree, the third portion of TigerJunction, will help students visualize relationships between class prerequisites. ReqTree is also planned for release in January.

"Let's say you want to take a certain certificate, but this certificate has a requirement that you need a bunch of prerequisites for. Right now, it's hard to envision all of the prerequisites," Lau said. "ReqTree is going to visualize what your prerequisites are, so if you have your path, it will show what prerequisites you need to get to that path."

Since TigerJunction's launch, Lau has been working to incorporate feedback from users.

"Something I added very recently was integrated professors, so you can now see professors in the advanced search settings," he said. "That was something one of my friends requested. I always want to be adding new features."

Ava Fonss is a News contributor for the 'Prince.'

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NEWS

At Whig event, Cornel West GS '80 avoids topic of presidential run at University request



A Conversation with Cornel West hosted by the Whig caucus.

Justice Wilhoit / The Daily Princetonian

Sofia Arora and **Justus Wilhoit**

November 10, 2023 | 12:02am EST

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The Whig Caucus, the left-leaning side of the Whig-Clio debate society, initially advertised a “Presidential Town Hall with Cornel West.” It was one of an impressive line-up of speakers by the Whig-Clio society this semester including Gen. Mark Milley ’80 and Chinese dissident Chen Guangcheng. These high-profile speaker events are part of an effort to bring in more speakers that “challenge the current dialogue and status quo,” according to Whig Deputy Chair Emily Hove ’26.

The event was renamed to a “Conversation with Cornel West” after the University raised concerns, said Hove. Whig-Clio officials confirmed that the University expressed that if the event was a presidential town hall, more candidates should have been invited. As a result, the event, mediated by the Whig Chair Samuel Kligman ’26, avoided the topic of West’s presidential run altogether.

Professor emeritus and progressive activist Cornel West GS ’80 initially entered the presidential race as a People’s Party candidate, then switched to a Green Party candidate before ultimately deciding to run as an independent on Oct. 5. Most of his work centers around political philosophy in America, including his book “Race Matters.”

The University did not respond to a request for comment in time for publication.

“Dr. West is here in his position as an academic. He is not here on behalf of any presidential campaign or any presidential candidacy,” said Kligman, following a question asked by Young Democratic Socialists of America Co-Chair Abraham Jacobs ’26 on how West’s campaign could destigmatize socialism.

Instead, a key point of discussion was on West’s repeated calls for the U.S. to cease their involvement in the war in Ukraine and clashes with Harvard’s former president over his pro-Palestine politics. On Thursday, West explained that he believed ceasefires were necessary immediately in both conflicts, but a diplomatic process must follow to ensure that lasting peace is possible.

“Ceasefires are ways in which you stop the present suffering and then recount by means of diplomatic process, those who have been treated unjustly and viciously, have voice in that process so that their peace can be connected to justice,” West said.

West called for attention to be extended beyond Europe and the Middle East. “If there were cameras in parts of Africa and Asia and Latin America and a whole host of other places that were zeroing in on barbarity, we would see that over and over and over again,” West stated.

Kligman then brought West’s domestic politics to the forefront of the discussion, asking about West’s past statements characterizing America as a “racist, patriarchal” institution. West emphasized that America is a complex and diverse country: “[America] is variety, it is diversity, not just in terms of skin pigmentation, but in a whole host of other ways.”

West recounted how during his own time at Princeton 50 years ago, he was “one of the few chocolate folks among the white crowd” when he started as a graduate student in 1973.

“I got that thug in me, just like Tupac,” West said, as he explained how his family and his time at Princeton influenced his intellectual and moral values through virtues of courage and resilience.

Whig specifically urged students to break the mold.



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“We don’t have enough courageous voices to speak for themselves and cut against all kinds of grains and lines and labels. Why? Because we want to be successful,” West stated.

When asked whether students should focus on making change now or focus on academics to make change through future careers, West said, “Both. Raise your voice. Then go back to Firestone and go do your work.”

Makenzie Hymes '26 said that hearing West speak during what she describes as a “troubling time globally” was like a “breath of fresh air.”

“Dr. West’s messages invoking African American cultural and historical moments struck a chord and validated many of my interests, which are sometimes glazed over in the other academic setting,” Hymes said.

In a message to the ‘Prince,’ Kligman said this event was Whig-Clio’s largest turnout for a speaker event since 2018.

Justus Wilhoit is an assistant News editor, a contributor to The Prospect, and an assistant Audience editor for the Prince.

Sofia Arora is a News contributor for the ‘Prince’

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OPINION

Princeton should give a day off for Veterans Day



Karen Ku / The Daily Princetonian

Prince Takano

November 9, 2023 | 10:37pm EST

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Veterans Day is an essential American holiday — it is a time for us to reflect on the honor and sacrifices made by the heroic men and women who served in our armed forces throughout history. Unfortunately, Veterans Day is also one of the federal holidays that the University does not observe by providing a day off. While Princeton is under no legal obligation to provide time off for students and faculty, it should certainly consider doing so.

When I first arrived at Princeton, I was taken aback by the apparent lack of attention given to Veterans Day. It was truly surprising to learn that students wouldn't have the day off and that we would carry on with our regular routines as if Veterans Day held no significance. Having attended public school all my life, taking time off for Veterans Day was the norm. Even if students did not actually attend any celebration or formal remembrance ceremony, the customary annual day off on Nov. 11 reminded us that it is important to honor the sacrifices of those who served in the armed forces.

A day off for Veterans Day is more than just a moment of rest; it is a collective acknowledgment of the immeasurable contributions and sacrifices of our veterans. It provides us with an opportunity for reflection, gratitude, and remembrance. It instills in us a sense of responsibility to honor their legacy and to carry forward their commitment to a better, safer world.

Princeton University **officially** provides eight holidays annually: Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas, New Year's, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Memorial Day, and Juneteenth. Besides Christmas and Thanksgiving, Labor Day is the only holiday where students have a day off from scheduled classes. While the University does **organize** Veterans Day observance services at the Chapel, its reluctance to grant a day off for all students and faculty suggests a shortfall in its dedication to honoring veterans.

Unfortunately, many veterans struggle with high **poverty** and **mental health** concerns. Ideally, the University should use Veterans Day to give back to veterans in need by partnering with local groups and community initiatives for veterans. Through these initiatives, the University can play a pivotal role in alleviating the hardships faced by veterans. This proactive stance would not only honor their sacrifices but also demonstrate the University's profound dedication to producing engaged and socially responsible members of the broader national community.

The University needs to remember that without the sacrifice of veterans, our privileged and peaceful living would not even be possible — we wouldn't even be able to celebrate other holidays like Labor Day or Thanksgiving. From the early battles of the American Revolution to the liberation of Europe in World War II, American troops have been at the forefront of servicing their nation and humanity. Indeed, veterans throughout history have embodied Princeton's informal motto of serving both the nation and humanity, perhaps in greater ways than many Princeton students have. The least we can do to commemorate their service is to set aside a day in our lives and acknowledge all that they have sacrificed for us.

Prince Takano is a senior majoring in Politics. He can be reached via email at takano@princeton.edu.

OPINION

Letter to the Editor: How we remember campus activism matters



Bright gold leaves blanket the lawn in front of Nassau Hall.

Guanyi Cao / The Daily Princetonian

David Chmielewski

November 9, 2023 | 9:41pm EST

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To the Editor:

Although the recent article from The Daily Princetonian titled "Incidents in political speech at Princeton, throughout the 20th century" is an interesting dive into the archives of campus debates, it must be critiqued for its glaring omissions of racial justice activism and for failing to discuss the tradition of radical activism on

campus. How we remember campus activism matters, and the current piece's narrow focus on free speech is reflective of a campus collective memory that needs to reconnect with more concrete histories of protest and contestation.

Focusing solely on free speech prevents us from truly reflecting on Princeton's political and activist history. How can we talk about the history of politics on campus without discussing radical acts like the **occupation** of Nassau Hall to advocate for divestment from South Africa, a **boycott** of classes by the Association of Black Collegians to hold a memorial for Malcolm X, and the **takeover** of Nassau Hall by Asian-American and Latinx students that led to the creation of ethnic studies departments? Any history of campus activism is utterly incomplete without addressing questions of race, colonialism, and how students have grappled with these issues through visions for the future that exceed the status quo of the University (and the world).

Ignoring these vital histories, and discussing the legacy of campus politics through the myopic lens of the present obsession with abstract debates over free speech exposes just how limited political imagination has become since past activism: why does the collective memory of campus now seem to take the gains earned by these protests for granted and forget that they had to be won through advocacy? These questions of how we remember Princeton's past are not mere questions of historical or journalistic method; they are themselves political questions that impact how we understand our relationship to the University and the University's relationship to the world. We must think critically about what and how we choose to remember.

Remembering these activist histories is essential to our present, as they remind us of a more radical history of student activism that stands in stark contrast to Princeton's current reputation as "non-political," captured in phrases like "the Orange Bubble." They remind us that Princeton has always been implicated in the world, and debates on campus relate to very tangible consequences and situations. If we allow them, perhaps remembering these pasts can inspire us to imagine better futures.

David Chmielewski is a senior at Princeton University concentrating in English. He can be reached at dc70@princeton.edu.

SPORTS

In the face of white-dominated tradition, Black student-athletes foster community



Quincy Monday at the 2023 NCAA Wrestling Championships in Tulsa, Okla.

Courtesy of [@quincymonday/Instagram](#).**Ethan Caldwell**

November 10, 2023 | 1:13am EST

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"It's hard to instill in yourself the tradition that alumni can instill in other athletes," football player Jim Anderson '86 told The Daily Princetonian in 1985. "[Alumni] say, 'Look, the tradition of Princeton football is this, and the tradition of Princeton football is that, and we have got to do it for the tradition of Princeton football.'"

"But the tradition has been white, and as a Black athlete you try to say, 'Yeah, I'll try to make that my tradition.' But that's not our tradition. We're just getting into Princeton football and establishing ourselves," he said.

Butch Climmons '86, another Black football player who was a part of the team, agreed with Anderson's sentiment.

"It's difficult to get into the tradition of Princeton," he told the 'Prince.'

At the time, only eight Black students were a part of Princeton athletics. Forty years later, organizations like the Black Student-Athlete Collective (BSAC) are working to establish that community by providing a safe space for these student-athletes to meet others in their shoes and voice their needs and concerns to coaches.

Quincy Monday '23, a [three-time](#) All-American wrestler, helped found BSAC in the summer of 2020 following the [killings](#) of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd.

"Many Princeton students, regardless of their background, will experience imposter syndrome," Monday wrote in an email to the 'Prince.' "This can be exacerbated if you are one of the only Black students in a classroom or participate in a predominantly white sport."

Mark-Anthony Prescott '25 is the co-president of BSAC and a member of the football team. Prescott joined BSAC in the hope of "giv[ing] back to an Institution that has given me so much," he wrote, feeling that this was an opportunity to enhance the experiences of both himself and his fellow athletes.

Both Monday and Prescott found their antidote to imposter syndrome in their peers. "For me," Monday wrote, "some of these feelings were resolved just by having conversations with other Black student athletes, in validating how we felt." Prescott, too, put it simply: "If I could describe my answer [to addressing imposter syndrome] in two words, it would be organic relationships."

Beyond serving as a safe space for Black athletes, BSAC also aims to facilitate a connection between athletes and the athletic department.

"As long as BSAC has representation, it'll be successful in my eyes," Monday wrote.

However, such opportunities for community were not always available. In 1985, four Black student-athletes, some of them the only Black players on their teams, spoke to the 'Prince' about the University's predominantly white sports tradition.



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"There is no support system, and it's basically because blacks haven't been around Princeton long enough to have some of the support that some of the white athletes have," Climmons said at the time.

"I think the Black athletes that come here realize they have to go through a lot," Anderson said.

Recent BSAC events to foster community and support include its welcome cookout on Oct. 25. Prescott called it an opportunity for athletes to reflect on their student experience "while also being a student-athlete," he wrote. "[I]t's quite an experience that only we can relate to with each other."

"The beauty in our success is that this is only the beginning," Prescott wrote.

Ethan Caldwell is a News contributor for the 'Prince.'

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SPORTS

Staff Picks: Men's Football vs. Yale



The Tigers celebrate a touchdown during their Oct. 14 matchup with the Brown Bears.

Photo courtesy of [@PrincetonFTBL/Instagram](#)

[Hayk Yengibaryan](#), [JP Ohl](#), [Harrison Blank](#), [Diego Uribe](#), [Alex Beverton-Smith](#), and [Peter Wang](#)

November 10, 2023 | 12:23am EST

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A bonfire, a blood feud, and an Ivy League title on the line: Princeton's football team (4–4 overall, 3–2 Ivy League), could not have more to lose this Saturday as they take on the Yale Bulldogs (5–3 overall, 3–2 Ivy League) in what is the nation's oldest football rivalry, [dating](#) back to 1873.

Princeton juniors and seniors will remember the last time the football team beat both Harvard and Yale in the same season, a feat the Tigers have only ever accomplished [29 times](#). After a [homecoming win](#) over the first-place Harvard Crimson on Oct. 21, the Tigers have a chance to now engage their underclassmen in a time-honored Princeton tradition: the bonfire.

When the football team reigns supreme over the “Big Three” by defeating their two oldest rivals, Harvard and Yale, the Undergraduate Student Government sponsors a school-wide bonfire on Cannon Green to be held on the Friday before the final game of the season. It is an event meant to serve as both a celebration and a pep rally and was last held in 2021.

If the Tigers come away with a win on Saturday, their season finale against the Penn Quakers will determine whether or not they **earn** their 14th Ivy League championship.

There is currently a four-way tie between Princeton, Yale, Penn, and Dartmouth for second place in the league, while Harvard sits a win ahead, alone atop the standings. A loss for Princeton or Yale, paired with a Harvard win against Penn this Saturday, would eliminate either team from title contention.

While the Tigers don't control their own fate, a win keeps the dream alive.

Tiger fans will remember last year's heartbreaking close to the season. Back-to-back close losses to Yale and Penn on the final weekends of the season saw the Tigers squander what seemed like a certain championship year.

Returners on the team will undoubtedly be trying to ensure that history does not repeat itself on Saturday.

The Daily Princetonian Sports staff made their predictions for this weekend's contest.

Hayk Yengibaryan, Associate Sports Editor: Princeton 24, Yale 23

It's hard to pick this Princeton offense, which did nothing to help the amazing Princeton defense against the Big Green. The offense gave up a pick-six and allowed Dartmouth to get amazing field positions on multiple occasions. The Tiger special teams unit also gave up a fake punt on a fourth down to put Dartmouth in the red zone.

The Yale offense will be the best the Tigers have seen since they played the Crimson three weeks ago. The Bulldogs have **scored** an astounding 150 points in their past five games, good for an average of 30 per game. The Tigers will need to contain quarterback Nolan Grooms — the reigning Ivy League Offensive Player of the Year who has over 1500 passing yards with 19 touchdowns this season. His favorite receiver, Mason Tipton, has over 600 receiving yards with 10 touchdowns.



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However, there have been ways to limit Yale's offense. Last week, Brown forced Grooms to throw three interceptions with the Bears' secondary making life difficult for Yale. Penn, by applying pressure on Groom and sacking him on multiple occasions, forced the senior quarterback to make a decision quickly, something he does not excel at.

The key for Princeton in this game will be limiting mistakes. There is no recipe for success if the offense has another abysmal performance this week. As good as the Tiger defense is, Grooms and Tipton will find success. Offensive Coordinator Mike Willis has rightfully been facing backlash this entire season. With the share of the Ivy League title on the line, it is his time to step up and help this offense succeed.

I'm not confident in the Tigers, but I believe the defense will save them once again. Expect the Tigers to come out motivated to get back in the win column and keep their title hopes alive on national television. Whatever the result is, questions need to be asked about this Princeton offense moving forward to ensure long-term success for this program.

Diego Uribe, Associate Sports Editor: Princeton 13, Yale 14

The story has been the same for the Tigers all season: a defense that looks like it could compete with Power 5 teams, and an offense that is frankly tough to watch.

Expect more of the same in a low-scoring bout. The All-Ivy linebacker duo of Ozzie Nicholas and Liam Johnson will do their best to contain the Bulldogs' dual-threat quarterback Nolan Groom, but he'll get free for some big runs and get into the endzone early.

Offensively, the Tigers will start slowly. They'll try to throw the ball too much on the first couple drives without establishing the run. The Bulldog defense will sell out to the pass and shut down the Tiger's passing attack.

Senior quarterback Blake Stenstrom will produce some scoring drives that end in field goals, but the Tigers will trail at the half.

In the second half, the Tigers will look to their running backs to get big first downs and carry them down the field. They'll score a late touchdown, but it'll be too little, too late. The Tigers will lose a close one, and Yale will go on to win the Ivy League.

JP Ohl, Sports Contributor: Princeton 23, Yale 20

In the last four out of five games, the Yale Bulldogs have scored over 30 points against their foes. The Bulldogs' high tempo and systematically paced offense will be a challenge for the Tiger defense to contain. The Tiger defense has been the keystone to Princeton's success this year. After a lackluster loss to Dartmouth last weekend, Princeton will remain eager and tenacious to firstly, keep their Ivy Championship chances alive, and secondly, gift the Princeton community a bonfire.

Princeton's Defensive Coordinator Steve Verbit and his defense will be ready for the challenge and prevent the lightning-fast Yale offense. Ultimately, Offensive Coordinator Mike Willis and the Princeton offense will decide the outcome of the game. The Princeton offense needs to set the tone early and demonstrate offensive poise. Everything is on the line for the Tigers this Saturday. I am confident they will capitalize on their fate. Expect a classic and close football game, with a large fan turnout that will propel the Tigers to victory.

Harrison Blank, Staff Sports Writer: Princeton 17, Yale 13

With a bonfire on the line, the Tigers will come out of an absolute slugfest against the Yale Bulldogs with a season-preserving win. Expect early scoring from both sides, as turnovers provide scoring opportunities. However, the nationally first-ranked Tiger defense (by FCS) will stuff the recently high-scoring Bulldog offense for the entirety of the second half.

Bulldog quarterback Nolan Grooms will challenge the Tigers with his dual-threat ability. He is coming off of a 220 passing yard and over 100 rushing yard performance last week against Brown. The Bulldogs will use his legs to place Tiger linebackers and safeties in conflict during run-pass options play, or RPOs. Lucky for the home team, they have the best linebacking tandem at the FCS level, Liam Johnson and Ozzie Nicholas.

Princeton will rely on a three-headed running back monster of John Volker, Jiggle Carr, and Dareion Murphy, to slow down the tempo of the game and control the line of scrimmage. The Tigers will get a touchdown from Volker and Carr as the running game secures a Princeton victory and a bonfire on Cannon Green.

Alex Bevertton-Smith, Sports Contributor: Princeton 14, Yale 13

This game is crucial for defining Princeton's success this season. The Tigers, having come close last season, will be desperate to give themselves a fighting chance for the Ivy League title this year and for a Princeton bonfire. I believe Princeton will find the ability somehow, and just edge out Yale in an undoubtedly close contest coming

down to the final minutes.

Princeton will once again be reliant on their strong defense who were powerless to stop offensive errors that cost the Tigers plenty of points in [the loss to Dartmouth 23–21](#). This defense will again be commanded and led by senior linebackers Ozzie Nicholas and Liam Johnson.

Expect there to be long periods of tense waiting in the game with both defenses not letting up against strong offensive players, and the game coming down to one or two plays which will define each team's season.

Princeton should come out on top, however, as senior quarterback Blake Stenstrom will succeed in getting his team the desired points for a bonfire in what will be his last season with Princeton.

Peter Wang, Sports Contributor: Princeton 27, Yale 24

It's bonfire season in Princeton. Coming off a disappointing loss at Dartmouth, the Tigers look to bounce back at home in a tough matchup against Yale. The Bulldogs are coming off of a two-game win streak with victories over Columbia and Brown, scoring 35 points or more in each matchup and generating 410 yards of offense last week. However, Princeton's vaunted defense should be able to contain Bulldog quarterback Nolan Grooms.

Though the Tigers struggled to stop Dartmouth from generating points last week, they only let up one offensive touchdown, with the other touchdown being a defensive pick-six in the first quarter. The Tigers' biggest challenge will be containing Grooms' dual-threat ability, as he has [over 500 yards rushing this season](#), good for best in the conference among quarterbacks. In its favor, Princeton was able to limit Harvard's quarterback Charles DePrima to just 10 rushing yards on 17 carries three weeks ago, so the team certainly has the tools to replicate such a performance.

On the offense, look for quarterback Blake Stenstrom to continue relying on junior receivers Luke Colella and AJ Barber to create plays down the field. Princeton will come away with the win after a late, game-winning drive by Stenstrom.

Diego Uribe is an associate editor for the Sports section at the 'Prince.'

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JP Ohl is a contributor to the Sports section of the 'Prince.'

Alex Beverton-Smith is a contributor to the Sports section of the 'Prince.'

Peter Wang is a contributor to the Sports section of the 'Prince.'

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FEATURES

'The first student movement to call for divestiture': protests against apartheid South Africa

Looking back on three generations of student advocacy for complete divestment from apartheid South Africa.



From The Daily Princetonian archives

Paige Cromley

November 9, 2023 | 11:50pm EST

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Students camped in the bushes around New South, waiting for the janitor to open the doors. As the janitor opened them, the students approached him, told him they were taking over the building and that he should take the day off. By 7 a.m., the 11-hour occupation of New South had begun.

It was March 11, 1969, not yet a year since Martin Luther King, Jr. had been assassinated and just five since the passing of the landmark Civil Rights Act. Thousands of miles away, apartheid laws reigned in South Africa, imposing an institutionalized structure of racial segregation through which a minority white population wielded the bulk of economic and political power.

By hosting a peaceful sit-in within the walls of New South, student activists demanded for the University to take a stance against apartheid by pulling all holdings from corporations involved with South Africa. It would be an unprecedented line in the sand — the University had never divested before on moral grounds.

More than 11 hours after they entered, the 51 students, all of whom were Black and members of the Association of Black Collegians (ABC), emerged from the building into the cold March air. W. Roderick Hamilton '69 was the last to leave.

The New South sit-in, Hamilton said, "became a touchstone for subsequent generations." It was the first of three waves of student protests calling on the University to divest completely from apartheid South Africa. Over 16 years, the movement waxed and waned as students graduated and political climates shifted, flying under a variety of organizations' flags over the years and often spiking in tandem with similar protests at colleges across the nation.

The University never divested from all corporations with business in apartheid South Africa, but it did adopt a policy of selective divestment in 1978, under which shares might be withdrawn if companies did not meet certain business standards or employment practices within the apartheid regime. Ten years later, the University pulled five million dollars in investments from two companies that didn't reach this bar. After the adoption of a new South African constitution and repeal of apartheid laws, the Board of Trustees **rescinded** the selective divestment policy.

In 2022, the University **announced** plans to divest from segments of the fossil fuel industry following years of student protests. The Daily Princetonian looked back on the 16-year-long predecessor of this campus movement: the push for divestment from apartheid South Africa that began in 1969.

'Damn near a fad': first building takeover, 1969

"We must have had some kind of action every other week," Hamilton said about the spring of 1969. He became the leader of the ABC, for which he said divestment from South Africa was a "unifying focus."

"An increase in Black enrollment challenged a lot of the traditions at Princeton," he said. "It was a time of great activism."

It followed on the heels of the Civil Rights and anti-war movements, years in which college campuses across the nation were rife with protests and demonstrations.

"It was a tumultuous time in America," said Joseph Dehner '70, a white student involved in the divestment movement. "Riots in the cities, Nixon in the White House."



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Given the continued racism at home and abroad, he added, "We thought that divestment from firms with any significant presence in South Africa was a darn good idea."

Early in the semester, the ABC joined forces with other campus organizations, including the Committee for Black Awareness, the Pan-African Students Organization, and a group of students representing "Concerned Whites" to form the United Front of South Africa. They **submitted** a letter to President Robert F. Goheen on Feb. 17, 1969 listing demands.

The University quickly made concessions. In an unprecedented move on March 5, Goheen declared "Princeton's intention to avoid investing University funds in companies doing a primary amount of their business in South Africa." However, he refrained from total divestment, arguing that it would not have much of an impact to divest from companies who derive only a small percentage of income from South Africa.

The United Front was unsatisfied. They met that night to decide what to do next.

"Many of those in attendance thought we should do something like take over a building," Hamilton said. "It was a very au courant thing to do back then, damn near a fad."

The tactic was not especially popular on Princeton's snowy campus, according to a poll of undergraduates, the majority of whom said that such building occupation would not be a legitimate means of protest.

Whispers of an imminent action reverberated through campus. On March 10, about 30 ABC members filed into the University Chapel during worship service; three gave impassioned speeches on divestment to the congregation.

The takeover occurred the next day. Non-Black students were requested by organizers to show support from outside the building. Crowds gathered, but nearly everyone was gone by the time Hamilton left, taking with him the chains they had used to lock the doors. No damage was done to the building; the 'Prince' quoted Assistant Director of Security James Kopliner as saying that "they did a better job of cleaning up the place than the janitors."

ABC published a letter in the 'Prince' a week later stating that the occupation of New South was "deemed necessary to make clear the seriousness of this issue and our firm commitment to end the University's complicity." Participants did not face any disciplinary action.

The United Front's demonstrations in 1969 led to the creation of the Resources Committee, composed of faculty and students who review questions related to the endowment and resources of the University and make recommendations to the Board of Trustees.

Advocacy related to divestment would not pick up again in such force until nearly a decade later. But, as Hamilton noted, "the seed was planted."

'In the lap of luxury': the second wave, 1978

Daily picketing began on Feb. 1, 1978, a date chosen to commemorate the beginning of the 1960 Greensboro sit-in movement. Every day from noon to 1 p.m., about a dozen students gathered behind Nassau Hall for a demonstration.

According to Marsha Bonner '78, one of the leaders of the movement, the resurgence of advocacy on campus related to divestment from apartheid South Africa was sparked by police brutality against child demonstrators during the Soweto Uprising two years prior.

"That was the big impetus for those of us on campus to try to align some of our political work with what was happening in South Africa," Bonner said. "These young people had been killed, and here we were in the lap of luxury at Princeton. What could we do to help support their movement?"

With fellow activists, Bonner formed the People's Front for the Liberation of South Africa to advocate for the University's total divestment from any corporations doing business in South Africa, investments totaling \$190 million. They were inspired by similar student protests across the nation.

The People's Front held movie showings, attended demonstrations in New York, and hosted speakers from the African National Congress. They also organized the daily pickets, which most students ignored on their way to class.

Participation hovered around a dozen until the day of a big snowstorm in early March. Despite the weather, a crowd of about 100 turned out in support. According to a 'Prince' [article](#), "noise from the march, generated by beating on steel garbage cans, tambourines and wood blocks, was heard as far away as the post office."

"I think a whole lot of people thought, 'Oh, the snow storm is going to end the daily picket' — and they came to our rescue," Lawrence Hamm '78 said.

From then on, demonstrations grew in size. The New York Times [reported](#) on a divestment protest held on the anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination, "the largest demonstration on the Princeton University campus since the Vietnam era."

After weeks of protests, the students decided to go bigger. "The plan, in essence," Hamm said, "was that we were going to take Nassau Hall."

They mapped it out in detail, organizing students into groups of three and communicating with the head of each cell directly out of fear of information being leaked to the 'Prince.'

On the morning of April 14, 210 students [streamed](#) into Nassau Hall through the front and side doors.

According to Bonner, leaders made it very clear to other students that there might be disciplinary consequences.

"Everybody knew ahead of time that those were possibilities," she said. "And they all signed on and said yes, we want to do this in solidarity with the people of South Africa."

Supporters outside cooked pots of spaghetti, which they passed through windows. According to one 'Prince' [article](#), the demonstrators inside "for the most part sat quietly, playing cards, reading books, or speaking quietly among themselves during the sit-in," though another [article](#) noted some dancing throughout the night.

After 27 hours, the sit-in [ended](#) at 11:20 a.m. the next day. Students left through the front door with fists raised to join a rally of hundreds outside. 205 of them later received disciplinary [warnings](#).

Looking back, Hamm sees the movement as a victory. "We were able to build this movement, raise consciousness all over the campus about South Africa, win majority support of the campus, take over Nassau Hall, and nobody got thrown out of school," he said.

The "majority support" was slim. A 'Prince' [poll](#) taken the next year found that just 51 percent of students supported divestment, but the demonstrations did result in some University concessions.

Though the trustees [declined](#) to meet all of the People's Front's demands, they did adopt a policy of selective divestment, holding open the possibility of future divestment from individual corporations that fell below certain standards regarding their operations in South Africa.

'You're going to have to drag me away': Nassau Hall blockade, 1985

Participation in Front demonstrations [decreased](#) in the years following the first Nassau Hall sit-in, but momentum would again pick up in the mid-80s.

"These things have a life cycle, with students graduating," Joel Westheimer '86 said. "The last mass action was in 1981. That was ancient history nobody remembered."

But a national movement was sweeping across college campuses, with students organizing apartheid divestment protests for April 4, the anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination. Princeton students like Westheimer wanted it to rock the quiet New Jersey suburb. Joel Sipress '86 remembers thinking, "We really got to do something to be part of this nationwide movement at Princeton."

But on April 4, as hundreds gathered at [Columbia University](#) and blockaded Hamilton Hall, turnout by Nassau Hall was low.

"At Princeton, almost no one showed up," Sipress said. "It was a total bust."

But over the next few weeks, rallies at Princeton grew in size. The newly-formed Coalition for Divestment organized vigils and teach-ins. On April 19, 400 students [encircled](#) Nassau Hall in a human chain; some camped out overnight. They were calling again for total divestment from companies conducting business in South Africa, as well as divestment of the \$50 million invested in banks that floated loans to the South African government.

On April 23, about [2,500 people gathered](#) on Cannon Green to hear Reverend Jesse Jackson denounce apartheid and call for divestment.

Still, Twanna LaTrice Hill '86 notes most students weren't involved. "That's what happens at the Ivies," she said. "Priorities are education or parties."

She remembers feeling a bit nervous that protesting would impact her own future prospects. Looking back, she wishes she had pushed more for divestment.

"My future is important, my education is important, and I didn't want to jeopardize any of those things," she said. "But my values are also important."

The Coalition for Divestment was fairly diverse given campus demographics, according to Hill.

The group's most noted action of the semester occurred on May 23, when 88 students [blockaded](#) Nassau Hall. The Princeton police arrived to arrest them. Andrew Meyers '86, a white student protestor, remembers a polite interaction with law enforcement.

"The police said, 'Look, I'm afraid we're going to have to take you away,' and I said, 'I'm really sorry, but you're going to have to drag me away.'"

They dragged him and his fellow activists through the gate at Nassau Hall to the local courthouse. The University dropped all charges.

Ultimately, the University never fully met student demands to divest its endowment from apartheid South Africa. Though William Bowen GS '58, the president at the time, publicly condemned the South African government, he never supported total divestment as a wise tactic.

"Those of us who have participated in this debate within the board and on the campus are, I believe, unanimous in our condemnation of apartheid," he said at a [forum](#) on University policy.

However, in the [Princeton Alumni Weekly](#), he argued that it would not improve the situation in South Africa and that those in charge of the hefty endowment should not allow personal convictions to sway decisions regarding investments.

Two years later, the trustees did **vote** to divest five million dollars from two firms doing business in South Africa that they had determined were not doing enough in the interest of people of color there. In 1994, they **ended** the selective divestment policy after the South African government adopted a new constitution and repealed apartheid laws.

Following student protests in the 60s, 70s, and 80s, various other movements have sprung up on campus over the decades calling for the divestment from certain sectors or industries. The University has adopted divestment policies twice since — from **companies** complicit in genocide in Darfur, Sudan in 2006 and from 90 **companies** involved in certain segments of the fossil fuel industry in 2022.

The roots of current divestment movements can easily be traced back to the advocacy of Hamilton, Bonner, Hill, and all the other students who took over buildings, hung up posters, and circulated petitions starting in the late 60s.

"I have a feeling that ours was the first student movement to call for divestiture from anything," Hamilton said, "though we all think history starts with ourselves."

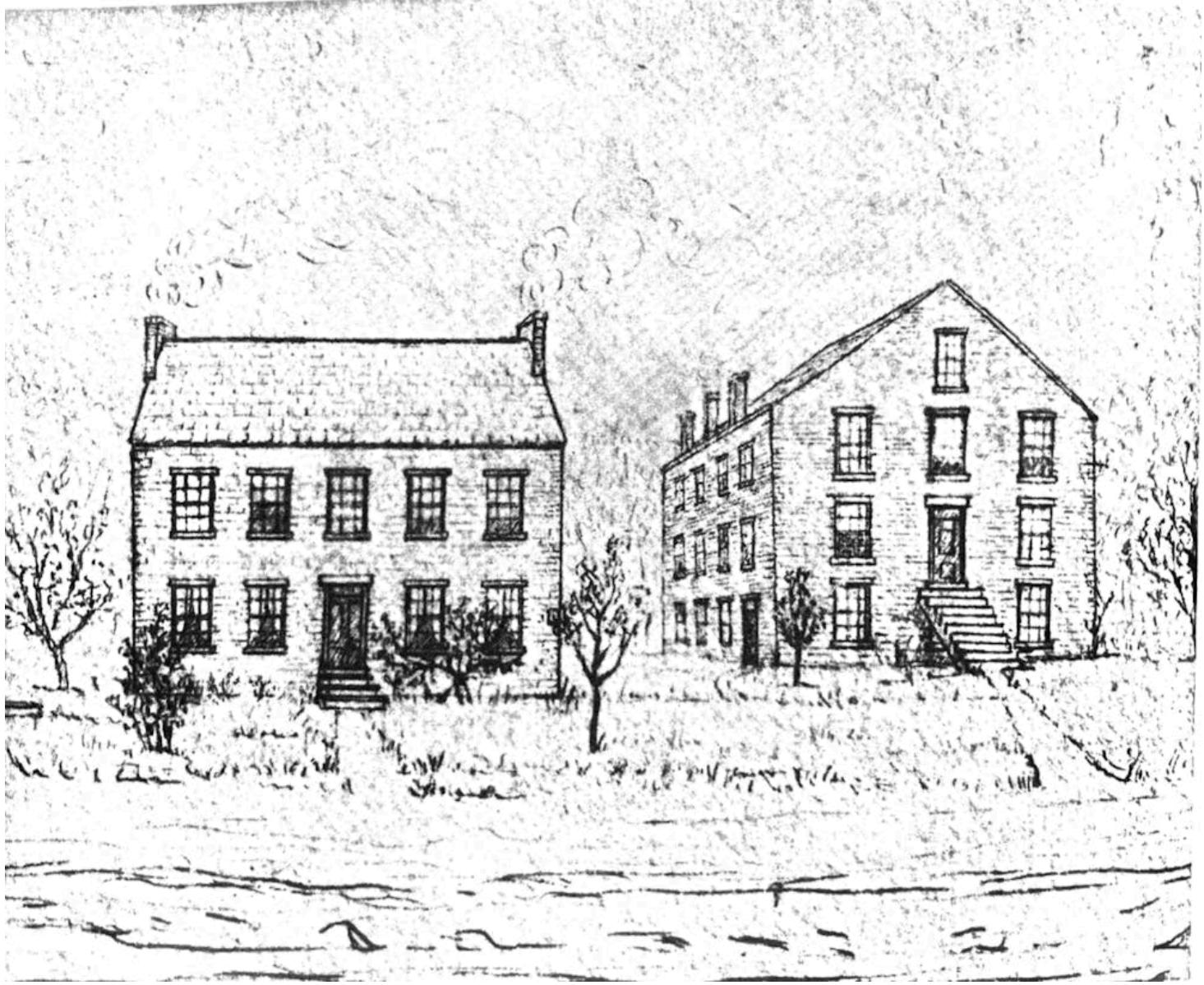
Paige Cromley is a head Features editor for the 'Prince.'

Former Contributing Features Writer Ben Angarone '21 contributed reporting.

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FEATURES

Revisiting Princeton's ties to Lincoln University, one of the nation's early HBCUs



A sketch of the President's house and dormitory

Molly Taylor

November 10, 2023 | 12:00am EST

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On commencement day — June 29, 1866, one year after the Civil War — William D. Johnson addressed his classmates, the newest graduates of Lincoln University.

“The labors of the past year have made this institution like a shining sun,” Johnson said, “whose light cheers the dark minds of hundreds just liberated from slavery.”

Lincoln University of Chester County, Pennsylvania was the first American college to grant degrees to Black men, enrolling its first class of four students in 1857.

At commencement, the university's president Isaac Rendall watched Johnson from the audience. The six-foot minister had attended Princeton University, and so would his successors. Over the next eighty years — between 1865 and 1945 — Lincoln's four consecutive presidents were all Princeton graduates.

In that time, the school established itself as one of the most influential Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), graduating civil rights leaders like Thurgood Marshall and Langston Hughes. Lincoln came to be known as "the Black Princeton."

The historical tie between Princeton and Lincoln reaches back to 1854, when Reverend John Miller Dickey founded the Ashmun Institute. Dickey belonged to the American Colonization Society (ACS), which led the movement to send former slaves to Liberia. Princeton University — then the College of New Jersey — and the Princeton Theological Seminary — Dickey's alma mater — were at the [epicenter](#) of ACS activity.

The colonization movement took hold in Princeton, in part, due to its conservative climate — many students were from the slaveholding south, according to R. Isabela Morales, editor of the [Princeton & Slavery Project](#).

"Anti-slavery folks at Princeton weren't going to be radical abolitionists who promoted the immediate end of slavery in the state or in the country," Morales said. Instead, faculty supported colonization as a means to gradually end slavery while maintaining a free white society.

Dickey studied at the Princeton Theological Seminary in the 1820s [under leading colonizationists](#) Archibald Alexander and Samuel Miller. Three decades later, the Ashmun Institute was an outgrowth of the colonization ideology in Princeton. Dickey aimed to train Black missionaries who, upon graduation, would emigrate to Liberia and spread Christianity.

"Providence is declaring that the Black and white races cannot advantageously live together as equals in this country," Reverend Cortlandt Van Rensselaer wrote in his address for the campus dedication. Ashmun, he continued, would actualize "the wonderful plan of colonization, whose pathway is across the ocean, and whose end is the elevation of the African race on its renovated and expectant continent."

But the Civil War forced the Ashmun Institute to rethink its ideology. Emancipation, wrote historian Andrew Murray, "made the African colonization scheme obsolete." African Americans could now imagine a future in the United States — missionary work abroad was no longer the aim of education. "This change would involve a shift in emphasis," Murray wrote, "from training Negroes for service in Africa to training them for life in America."

The Ashmun Institute then became Lincoln University in 1866.



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As African Americans sought an education after the Civil War, HBCUs proliferated. Lincoln led the way.

"No institution was more important with regard to Black people's education in that period," said current Lincoln University Professor Chieke Ihejirika, who conducted research on the university's history ten years ago. "Black doctors and lawyers of the 19th century were predominantly Lincoln graduates."

As Lincoln's student body grew, so did its faculty. And many professors came from Princeton, strengthening ties between the two universities. At Lincoln, these professors replicated the classical Princeton curriculum, teaching classes like Latin, geography, and arithmetic. Princeton President James McCosh, at an 1879 forum on African American education, called Lincoln "Princeton's little sister."

Princeton donors also took an interest in Lincoln. For one, Susan Brown — wife of Albert Dod and sister of David Brown, the namesakes of two Princeton dormitories — endowed Lincoln's red-brick Mary Dod Brown Chapel, named after her daughter.

Over his four-decade tenure, President Isaac Rendall embraced the Princeton influence over Lincoln. Rendall believed every student required a Bible, an English dictionary, and spectacles. A patriarchal figure, he set high academic and disciplinary standards that aligned with his expectations for students. "He taught his students to respect themselves," wrote one of his successors, "and these were students in a culture where few were willing to give them unqualified respect, as thinking, reflective human beings."

However, Black students and alumni challenged the president on his refusal to hire Black faculty. Rendall argued that white professors made the best instructors, as African Americans had long been denied academic training. Students argued the lack of representation undermined Lincoln's mission.

"The purpose for which the University was founded, the elevation of the negro race, by means of Christian and liberal education, will be defeated," alumni wrote to the Board of Trustees, "and instead of accomplishing this desirable end, each year is adding to the number of those students who are educated, consciously or unconsciously, in the dangerous fallacy of their incapacity."

Rendall's term ended in 1906. His nephew, John Ballard Rendall, served as Lincoln's president until 1924. It wasn't until the administration of William Hallock Johnson, a former professor of Greek, that Lincoln hired its first African-American professor in 1933.

Twelve years after that, Lincoln would inaugurate its first Black president, Horace Mann Bond.

Bond's presidency ended the tradition of Princeton leadership and began one of Black leadership at Lincoln. It also testified to the university's achievement: Bond was a Lincoln graduate, class of 1923.

"Dr. Horace Mann Bond was able to show, by his ascendancy, that he had benefited from the stellar education that Lincoln had to offer," Ihejirika said. "It showed that Black people educated at Lincoln had come of age."

During Bond's tenure, several Lincoln graduates emerged as leaders in the American Civil Rights Movement. Others became important figures in Africa — just not as Lincoln's founders had envisioned. Kwame Nkrumah became the first prime minister of independent Ghana in 1957, and Nnamdi Azikiwe became the first president of independent Nigeria in 1963. They had graduated in 1939 and 1930, respectively.

"That's the beautiful thing about Lincoln," said Jordan Denson, who graduated from Lincoln in 2009 and is an assistant professor of Pan-Africana studies there now. "Although its foundings were problematic, it still was able to produce graduates who fought against colonization."

Looking back on the era of Princeton leadership, Ihejirika noted that respect for institutional history persists at Lincoln.

"We still commemorate those presidents with some kind of affection," Ihejirika said, "because, although they were white, they managed to keep the legacy of a black institution."

Today, though, it is uncommon to hear the nickname "the Black Princeton," according to Denson.

"I don't even know if it's something that should continue," Denson said. "It can be a limiting thing for a Black institution to constantly make comparisons to something that is European."

"For me," he added, "Lincoln should just be Lincoln."

Molly Taylor is an assistant Features editor for the 'Prince.'

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DATA

'Our community has become a commodity': How Princeton's historically Black community is fading



Mt. Pisgah AME church, constructed in 1860 for the oldest African American congregation in Princeton.

Louisa Gheorghita / The Daily Princetonian

Charlie Roth

November 10, 2023 | 12:37am EST

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Silas "Bud" Massey, Jr. doesn't have much time to relax or chat on the phone. At 80 years old, after two brief retirements, Massey is back at work part-time as a driver at the Institute for Advanced Study. He says he can't afford to retire.

Massey didn't hesitate to say what forced him to go back to work: the [Princeton-wide](#) tax revaluation.

"I wasn't getting that much from social security and my pension ... I wasn't making that kind of money," Massey said in an interview with The Daily Princetonian.

Massey has lived in the Witherspoon-Jackson neighborhood, Princeton's historically Black neighborhood, for his entire life. When Princeton conducted a tax revaluation in 2010, he wasn't expecting much change — however, his property taxes nearly doubled.

The Witherspoon-Jackson neighborhood has a long and important history for Princeton's Black residents as an eight-block island segregated from the rest of the town. Black people settled in what is now the neighborhood in the 1700s and the area expanded throughout the 1800s and early 1900s. The community had its own YM/YWCA and library. Many of the buildings are still standing, including Mt. Pisgah AME Church built in 1860.

The neighborhood has been the affordable centerpiece for the Black community in Princeton for over a century, according to an interview with Princeton Councilmember Leighton Newlin. At the neighborhood's height in the 1950s, it had four churches, a hospital, and their own newspaper (the Citizen). But in the **past few decades**, residents say that the once tight-knit community has faded, along with the neighborhood's affordability.

"[Black people] don't represent anywhere near the percentage of homeowners in this neighborhood now [than as we used to]," Newlin said. "The tax implications of that [2010] revaluation, I would say, seriously accelerated the gentrification of the neighborhood."

After combing through hundreds of pages of tax records for the Witherspoon-Jackson neighborhood from 2007 to 2010, a 'Prince' investigation found that after the 2010 revaluation, property taxes in the Witherspoon-Jackson neighborhood increased by over \$1,700 on average, nearly a 25 percent increase from the previous year. This came after taxes increased by \$80 between 2007 and 2008 and \$445 between 2008 and 2009.

"Black people can't live in Princeton no more," Massey told the 'Prince.' "Taxes too high. I don't care what kind of job they get. Taxes too high for them."

Because the tax records were not digitized, the 'Prince' manually entered tax values for the 393 properties in the neighborhood. Together, this totals nearly 2,000 manually entered individual data points.

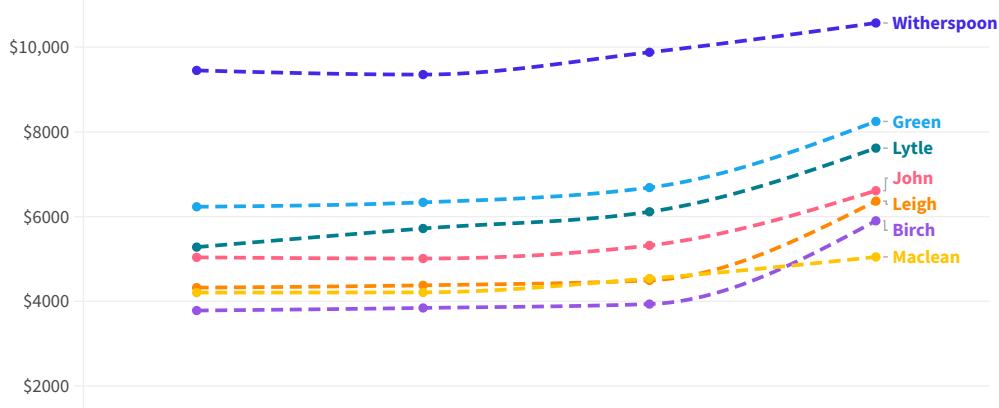
For 12 of the cases, property taxes doubled from 2009 to 2010. One of those homeowners was Richard Jackson, who still remembers seeing what he owed in property taxes for 2010, more than a decade later.

"I was shocked," Jackson told the 'Prince' in an interview. "But I'm trying to deal with it the best way that I can."



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Average property taxes on streets in the Witherspoon-Jackson neighborhood pre- and post-evaluation



 A Flourish chart

The increases were concentrated on the streets with the most properties. On Birch Avenue and Leigh Avenue, where half of the residents in the neighborhood live, property taxes increased by nearly 50 percent on average.

According to Neal Snyder, Princeton's Tax Assessor, residents' property taxes increased dramatically because the assessed value of their land increased significantly in the 2010 revaluation. Multiple factors contribute to a property's value, but Snyder says that the most important is the market value of a property.

"We're reviewing the accuracy of their property valuation," Snyder told the 'Prince' in an interview. "Not the tax dollars that they're paying for their property."

Snyder said that the jump in property taxes was high because the properties were undervalued before the 2010 revaluation.

After the revaluation, property values in the Witherspoon-Jackson neighborhood more than doubled on average, from nearly \$150,000 to nearly \$375,000. Still, residents had no way of knowing their properties were being under-assessed, and the tax increases in 2010 came as a surprise to many residents.

"We didn't know why [the evaluators] increased it so much, and they said it's because they hadn't done an evaluation in such a long period of time, and it was needed, and that's why it increased by so much. That shouldn't be our fault," Jackson said.

Jackson's home, which used to belong to his grandmother, increased in value from \$62,900 before the evaluation to \$232,000 after the evaluation. His property taxes more than doubled from \$2,282 in 2009 to \$5,435 in 2010. He says he hasn't made any changes to the home since the previous revaluation in 1996 and noted his frustration and confusion with the evaluation process itself.

Massey also expressed his displeasure with the revaluation process.

"They didn't assess anything. That was just a bunch of bull," he said.

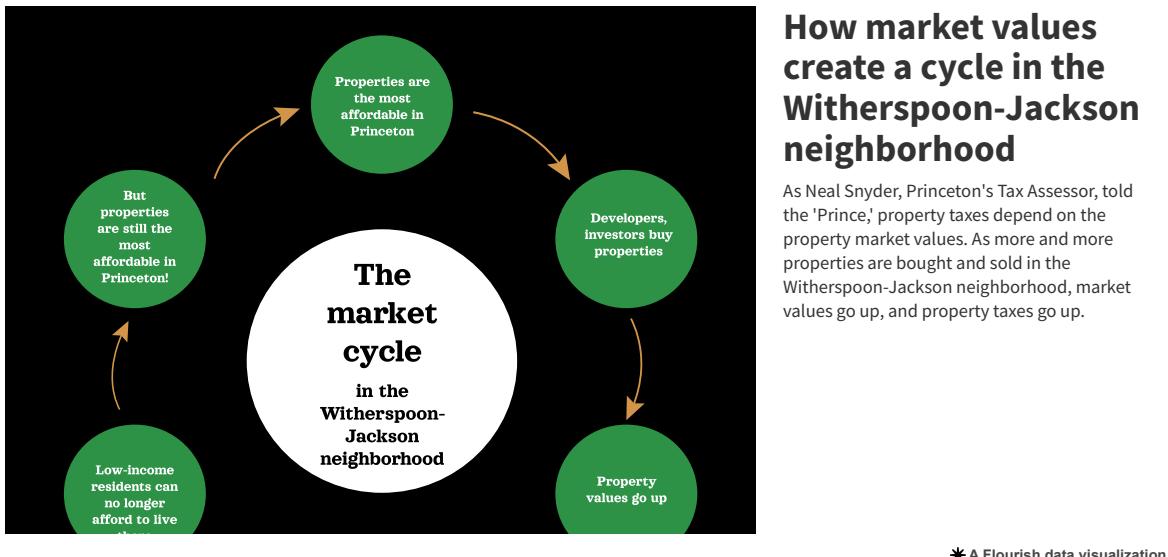
Snyder said that the market for homes in Witherspoon-Jackson had increased considerably before the revaluation.

"[Homeowners] didn't have to do anything [to their homes]," Snyder said. "It's just that the land value, the whole package compared to the last revaluation, went up considerably."

One of the contributing factors to increasing market values is the increased interest in the Witherspoon-Jackson neighborhood because of its affordability, both from potential buyers and developers.

The same goes for home sales: if a nearby home is sold, its sale price affects the values of neighboring properties, according to Snyder. With each high-value sale, the value of other properties in the neighborhood increases, creating a seemingly endless loop of property value increases that eventually are reflected in revaluations and corresponding property tax assessments.

Snyder emphasized that this change in market value is what affects property taxes. Home sales affect the neighborhood "whether they tear them down, or they rehab them, or just move into them. It's whatever the market bears in that neighborhood," he said.



How market values create a cycle in the Witherspoon-Jackson neighborhood

As Neal Snyder, Princeton's Tax Assessor, told the 'Prince,' property taxes depend on the property market values. As more and more properties are bought and sold in the Witherspoon-Jackson neighborhood, market values go up, and property taxes go up.

* A Flourish data visualization

Sale prices for property in the Witherspoon-Jackson neighborhood have increased more dramatically than in the town of Princeton as a whole between 2000 and 2022. Over the 22 year period, the average sale price has steadily increased in the neighborhood to more than five times its value in 2000, according to a 'Prince' analysis. This increase is greater than the average over the full Princeton township, where sale prices tripled in that time, as did the average home cost in the United States.

Shirley Satterfield, the director of the Witherspoon-Jackson Historical and Cultural Society, told the 'Prince' that there has been pressure on residents from developers to sell their homes.

"I get calls from contractors calling me all the time [asking me] do you want to sell your house," Satterfield said.

The neighborhood also attracts investors looking to purchase a home, rent it, and later sell it for a profit, according to Eileen Logue, who invested in a home on Birch Avenue. Logue, who lives in San Diego, told the 'Prince' that the Witherspoon-Jackson neighborhood fit her investment criteria perfectly.

Logue wanted to invest in a property in a "smaller town that had a university" and noted that such locations would "have the culture that you wouldn't get in most American small towns." She said her family chose the Witherspoon-Jackson neighborhood because "it was the only smaller, more affordable part of Princeton ... we just thought 'oh, this could be up and coming.'"

Logue told the 'Prince' that she held the investment property for seven years. The value of the property increased by only \$26,500 over that period, and she attributes the small profit to the housing bubble.

Satterfield, on the other hand, is living in a house originally built by her uncle and says she's trying to keep her family's homes in her family as much as possible.

"It's really hard every time I pass these houses and see what's happened to the houses for people who used to live in them," Satterfield said. "Our community has become a commodity."

How properties were affected by the 2010 tax revaluation

Property taxes in the Witherspoon-Jackson increased after the 2010 revaluation, while property taxes in West Princeton decreased.

Neighborhood	2009 tax	2010 tax	\$ Change	% change
Witherspoon-Jackson	\$6,007.55	\$7,437.53	+\$1,429.98	+23.80%
West Princeton	\$40,536.77	\$38,916.37	-\$1,620.40	-4.00%

* A Flourish table

Bruce Afran, a Princeton lawyer and professor at Rutgers, told the 'Prince' that he had a different explanation for why taxes increased so much after the revaluation. He represented Princeton residents who [sued](#) the township and borough of Princeton in 2011 after, the suit argues, the homes of lower-income families saw a tax increase while the most valuable properties saw a tax decrease. The plaintiff's [complaint](#) argued that during the revaluation, the assessors "arbitrarily" grouped the wealthier homes with the low-income homes, forcing the assessment to average the values of the drastically different properties.

"There was absolutely no reason to put the two in the same district. They're completely different communities," Afran said.

A 'Prince' analysis found that property taxes increased in the Witherspoon-Jackson neighborhood, where properties were, on average, valued less than \$150,000. Taxes decreased by four percent in West Princeton, where homes had been valued in the multi-millions.

Though Afran and his clients originally wanted a new revaluation, the cost made it infeasible. Instead, they settled for new rules in future revolutions. According to the [settlement](#), the town council now must approve the revaluation committee, instead of it just being the tax assessor's decision, and the public can weigh in on tax districts and other decisions like contracts via public comments and meetings.

"If this happened again, where Witherspoon-Jackson was lumped in with the upper-class part of the community, people could immediately go to court to seek an injunction to stop this process. But nobody could do that before, because no one knew about it until it was over," Afran said. "This will empower people in the community."

Residents of the Witherspoon-Jackson neighborhood also attempted to curb market value increases by petitioning the town council to [designate](#) the neighborhood as an official historic district. The designation, which they [received](#) in 2016, restricted the types of modifications that could be made to the properties and imposed certain burdens on the upkeep and repair of the properties. Other [historic districts](#) include [Prospect Avenue](#).

Residents whose families have lived in the neighborhood for generations are leaving because they can't afford to pay the increased property taxes on the properties, according to Newlin.

In her 2017 [book](#) on the Witherspoon-Jackson neighborhood, "I Hear My People Singing," former Princeton professor Kathryn Watterson wrote that residents are finding their homes less affordable and the option of moving more tempting.

She wrote that the "[New Great Migration](#)" is affecting younger families in Witherspoon-Jackson who may move "back south" for a lower cost of living and economic opportunities. But it also affects older residents who have lived in the neighborhood for decades.

"Older Witherspoon residents on limited or fixed incomes keep watching their tax bills go up and become more difficult to pay. The offers, which come in regularly on their properties, can be tempting as they approach end-of-life decisions," Watterson wrote.

Those who do move may have a hard time coming back, Satterfield told the 'Prince.' She said that people who moved from their family homes have no way of returning if they want to.

"[They] can no longer come back and be in these homes because of the taxes," Satterfield said. "This used to be a redlining district ... now this is prime property."

Still, some older residents decide to stay — whether out of pride or to preserve their family history, among other reasons. Jackson and Massey both told the 'Prince' they take advantage of New Jersey's **senior freeze** on property taxes, which allows citizens over the age of 65 to "freeze" their taxes.

"This was my mother's house way back in the day," Massey said. "I didn't want anything to happen to it regardless, so I was gonna do whatever I could do to keep it. She did all she could do for nothing if we just settle out and move out."

"When I move, I'll be in that box. They'll carry me out of here. I won't be walking," he added.

"You know what they call that," Newlin, sitting next to Massey, laughed. "The upper room."

"That's right!" Massey responded. "This is where I'm gonna be buried at, right here."

The effects on the Witherspoon-Jackson community

Jackson said that the changes have affected the character of both the neighborhood and the relationships between neighbors.

"The community is not the same as it used to be," Jackson said. "The people who used to live here cared about their community. Now it's a little bit different, where you have a lot of renters and people who come and go."

Massey spoke brightly of his childhood in Witherspoon-Jackson and how close everyone there used to be, but his tone darkened when talking about the community now.

"I don't know nobody now," Massey said. "I've been here all my life. I don't know nobody in this town."

"Well," he laughed to Newlin sitting next to him. "I know Leighton."

Newlin, who was part of the team that petitioned to make Witherspoon-Jackson a historic neighborhood, said that the designation has been a huge help in preserving the neighborhood, but the requirements that come with it could be difficult for people with lower incomes.

"In some ways, it has become more challenging, especially for the people that live in a neighborhood who are still of low and modest means and just trying to hang on after they were hit with that huge tax increase 13 years ago now," Newlin said. "Many of us are just hanging on by the hairs of our chinny chin chin."

Newlin described the neighborhood as the center of the Black community.

"In the early fifties when I grew up here in Princeton, the Princeton that I knew ended at Jackson Street ... Everything that African Americans and Italian Americans needed in Princeton [was in the neighborhood]," Newlin said. "From butcher shops to the social clubs, to churches, to bodegas, to hair salons, to barber shops, to bakers, to candlestick makers, to the seamstress, and the domestic workers."

Jackson was born and raised in the neighborhood and reminisced about his childhood in Witherspoon-Jackson.

"Everything was fun. It was peaceful. Everybody knew each other, everyone took care of each other ... It was a good place to grow up," he said.

Satterfield also grew up in the neighborhood, and likened it to a "Black Wall Street."

"Every house was a candy store or a beauty parlor," Satterfield said. "This was our community and we didn't worry about not being able to go to Nassau Street and shop. But we didn't need to. We had everything in our community. All of that is gone now."

"I'm not saying it's a bad change," she continued. "It's just different. It's just that we know how people with money can get what we can no longer afford."

Newlin hopes the historic designation will slow both the jumps in property taxes, as well as the construction and development that often cause them. As a town councilmember, he says he is working to help people struggling in both Witherspoon-Jackson and throughout Princeton.

"I'm hopeful that some types of programs like financial aid help through organizations like the Witherspoon-Jackson Development Corporation, working with the University, and other avenues can be explored and initiated to help people that really need help," Newlin said.

"Princeton is a gated community, and there are a lot of people who are struggling all the same to pay the exorbitant amount of taxes that are growing here all the time and need some kind of help to age in place, especially old people. And that's something we're working on," he added.

Charlie Roth is a head Data editor and a senior News writer for the 'Prince.'

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