Before 1968, California colleges were pretty much all white. A conscious group of young Black people decided that this was unacceptable, and they were going to change it. They organized, created dialogues, shared stories with administrators and made demands. When none of this worked, they decided they weren't going to protect the institution. They were going to try. The college was going to serve Black people as well as others or it wasn't going to function.

And so, the San Francisco State Strike began. It support the college from operating. In the end, it won Black Studies and Ethnic Studies, formed financial aid, and provided the admission of thousands of students of color.

This remarkable story is told in a new book by BSU leader Bernard Stronger and activist professor Kenny Kelly Epstein.

"Changing Academia Forever: Black Student Leaders Analyze the Movement They Led" includes interviews with major participants - Danny Glover who became a renowned actor and director; Jenny Garrett who became a professor; Jerry Varnado who became an attorney; Toy Collins who helped to found KQED in 1968; Jenny Stewart, who was the chair of the BSU and others.

In telling their life stories, explain the demands, discuss their strategies and tactics, and police repression. The book answers some questions that contemporary historians have raised. Why did the longest and most successful strike occur at a little-known California college? How was it possible to win most of the 15 demands made by the BSU and at the Third World Student in a campus where only 4 percent of the students were Black. How were recent white students engaged in a campaign which had Black empowerment at core? Why were the strong alliances with Latinx, Asian and indigenous organizers crucial? How did the faculty react? What was the significance for the modern-day movement?

Among the book's intriguing conclusions is the idea that many of today's movements could use more of the disciplined approach adopted by the BSU leaders. They studied the resolutions of the period and adopted a centralized leadership which engaged in a form of debate concluding with unified action at the end of the debate.

Although the movement involved thousands of students, it was not fundamentally radical in movement. The people who led the strike were working-class people, many of them, originate from the Jim Crow South and they lived in the communities that came out to support them. The book quotes an early college administrator as saying, "We couldn't find a single student leader that didn't have a family history of being owned by the plantation."

"Changing Academia Forever" explains how the BSU leaders were able to fundamentally change universities in America. This is the kind of organizing we must have now to serve humanity and the planet. The book is available from the publisher More Education Press (mepress.org) and from Amazon (www.amazon.com).