

FROM PROTESTOR TO PROFESSOR:  
STUDENT ACTIVISTS FROM THE NEW LEFT MOVEMENT  
WHO BECAME COLLEGE PROFESSORS

By  
Tiffany Crews

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Thesis Committee:

Dr. Janice M. Leone

Dr. Susan Myers-Shirk

This is dedicated to my wonderful family and friends who have stuck with me through this whole process and encouraged me to finish. Thank you to my boys Aidan, Collin, and Simon who fill my life with so much laughter and love. And finally, a special thank you to my husband Daniel, without you this would not have been possible - all my gratitude and love.      Tiffany, 2013

## ABSTRACT

Members of the New Left Movement in the 1960s and 1970s actively sought to change society through political activism. Many young people felt the culture of consumerism in which they had grown up did not live up to its promises, leaving them unsatisfied and searching for something more authentic. With their liberal ideology and a wide array of protest tactics, the New Left focused on implementing societal changes necessary for a truly democratic system. College campuses provided the New Left with energetic participants as well as significant leverage to make systematic changes to society. The dramatic changes in higher education following World War II, coupled with the reforms accomplished by the New Left Movement allowed some student protestors, including Todd Gitlin, Sara Evens, and William Ayers, to become professors themselves. Their faculty positions in institutions of higher education enabled these former protestors not only to carry on their reform activities but also to inspire new generations of students to take action to effect change.

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## INTRODUCTION

The 1960s generation captured the imagination of the American populace like no other generation before it or since. It was a watershed in American history for both political and cultural change as evidenced by the numerous remnants from this decade that continue to be extremely popular, nearly fifty years later. With their radical politics and bohemian lifestyle, the members of the New Left Movement seemed to encapsulate all that the 1960s and early 1970s stood for. Raised in the comparatively affluent 1950s, in mainly industrial cities, in the shadow of the Cold War, and aided by an alliance with Civil Rights groups, the youth of the New Left Movement attempted to change their world through student action and political activism. Parents of these youth attempted to assure their children an abundance of both goods and freedom and hoped to provide them the material success and personal choices they themselves did not have access to in their own youth. Many of the young people of this generation came to see these assurances as merely empty promises, and their own personal experiences led many to challenge society's widely held faith in the culture of abundance.

By defining the New Left Movement, i.e., who they were and what they hoped to accomplish with their political activism, setting the movement in the context of the changing definitions of "liberal" and "conservative" that took place at the end of World War II, and examining the changes to the higher education system, I will examine whether the New Left's ideology influenced some of its members to become teachers

themselves. Specifically, why did they choose to become professors? Was teaching the best and most effective way to influence the next generation? And did their participation with the New Left Movement have any bearing on their teaching philosophies? A close examination of three different individuals who were not only prominent members in the Movement but who then also went on to work in academia best answers these questions. I contend that their activism and participation in the New Left Movement affected their decisions to become professors. In addition, the changes that took place in academia in the post war eras, both World War II and Vietnam, so influenced these particular individuals that they felt academia was the best setting for expressing their personal ideologies and ensuring their effect on future generations of America's youth.

The first case study focuses on Dr. Todd Gitlin, currently a professor of sociology and journalism at Columbia University. Gitlin holds degrees from Harvard University, the University of Michigan and the University of California, Berkeley. Gitlin was also a one-time president of the New Left group Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and helped to organize the first national march against the Vietnam War in the 1960s. The second case study examines the student and professorial life of Dr. Sara M. Evans, historian of the Women's Rights Movement and currently a professor at the University of Minnesota. Widely credited as one of the creators of the field of Women's History, and a longtime member of various Civil Rights groups and New Left organizations, Evans has written about the role of women in the early years of several New Left Movements. And, finally, Dr. William Ayers, now a retired professor from the University of Illinois,

Chicago, and an educational reformer is the third case study. Ayers was extremely active in SDS throughout the 1960s and 1970s and was later one of the founding members of the radical left group the Weather Underground Organization (WUO), for which he earned not only a criminal record but also a brief stint on the FBI's Most Wanted list.

These individuals, with their different backgrounds and experiences within the New Left Movement and the decision to become teachers, best answer the proposed questions of this study. In addition to their notoriety, they are also prolific writers who are still actively publishing. It is this link between the individuals who participated in the New Left Movement and their choice to become teachers in a higher education institution after the end of the Movement that is the focus of this study. The New Left's role and benefits from a surge in educational importance from the 1950s to the 1970s was vital to their success as a movement and provided them with the many student and college age youth which comprised the vast majority of the New Left's participants.

### **Historiography**

The lure and interest in student movements and counter culture groups of the 1960s is evident by the sheer number of works written on these topics. Each poses differing views on the validity of the Movement and even the success of it, but they agree that the New Left represents something significant in American history: the pervasive questioning of the values the majority of Americans supposedly held true. Several works are available detailing the rise and fall of the New Left, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), student

protestors, activism, or the 1960s in general, including several works on specific aspects of each organization. Many of these works are memoirs and detailed accounts by people who participated in these Movements. The majority of these accounts were written either in the 1960s or in the 1980s, as either 20 year anniversary accounts of 1968 or as attempts by former participants to explain why conservatism had become so popular in the 1980s. The latter works suggest resurgence in conservatism was society's natural response to the radicalism and liberalism of the 60s and 70s. It was difficult at first to know what was important and what was unnecessary for the purposes of this paper. Few authors attempted an in-depth evaluation of the New Left's experiment with a student activist-led participatory democracy. Instead, many tend to focus on the achievements and failures of the New Left by creating a sort of running tally of pros and cons. Most agree that the New Left was an experiment that ultimately failed but managed to accomplish some victories in its time.<sup>1</sup>

I began with overview memoirs such as Todd Gitlin's *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, James Miller's *Democracy Is in the Streets: From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago*, and Maurice Isserman's *If I Had a Hammer...The Death of the Old Left and*

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<sup>1</sup> Fred Siegel, "The Fabled Decade, A Review of: *Democracy Is in the Streets: From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* by Jim Miller and *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* by Todd Gitlin" *History of Education Quarterly*, vol. 29, no. 4 (Winter 1989), 627 – 633, available online at <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/369067>>, accessed 1 Sept 2009, 628. See also: Winifred Breines, "Whose New Left?" *The Journal of American History*, vol. 75, no. 2 (Sept 1988), 528 – 545, available online at <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1887869>>, accessed 28 Apr 2009; Peter Clecak, *Radical Paradoxes: Dilemmas of the American Left 1945 – 1970* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973); Robert Cohen, *When the Old Left was Young: Student Radicals and America's First Mass Student Movement, 1929 – 1941* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); John Patrick Diggins, *The Rise and Fall of the American Left* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992); Sara M. Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Random House Books, 1980); and Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope; Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1993).



*the Birth of the New Left*. Each provided not only historical context but also personal accounts of the early Movement and some much needed direction as to which sources would best help with this specific topic. All three works are biographical in methodology, especially Gitlin's work. He focuses heavily on the link between the counterculture of the era, beginning with the Beat poets and the new emerging form of politics that soon followed. His work is intensely personal and narrative but provides detailed information about the changing mindset of the young people of his time. Miller tends to focus on the people and events surrounding SDS's famous manifesto, the *Port Huron Statement*, which is reprinted in its entirety at the end of the book, and the notion of "participatory democracy" and its role as society's counter to the bureaucracy of the American culture of affluence of the 1950s. Miller claims participatory democracy was the "very best of the New Left's aspirations."<sup>2</sup> Memoirs of this type helped me narrow the broad definition of the New Left Movement to focus specifically on SDS and related groups and their participants.<sup>3</sup>

In narrowing my research further, I concentrated my efforts on SDS in particular because of its size, notoriety, and the involvement of the three professors highlighted in this study. Kirkpatrick Sale's work, *SDS*, is still widely held to be the most comprehensive work on the group. Although admittedly biased, as Sale himself was a

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<sup>2</sup> Siegel, "The Fabled Decade," 630.

<sup>3</sup> See Gitlin, *Days of Rage*; Maurice Isserman, *If I Had a Hammer...The Death of the Old Left and the Birth of the New Left* (New York: Basic Books, 1987); Clark Kerr, *The Gold and The Blue: A Personal Memoir of the University of California, 1949 – 1967* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003); James Miller "Democracy Is In the Streets": *From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), and Irwin Unger, *The Movement: A History of the American New Left, 1959 – 1972* (New York: Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers, 1998).

member of SDS at the time of its publishing, his sources and research are extremely detailed and thorough, and his writing is easy to follow.<sup>4</sup> Similar to Sale's work, Winifred Breines' account of the early New Left groups is well researched and written. Conversely, Breines does not claim the New Left failed due to lack of hierarchical organization and an overly utopian vision like many other authors of this subject. Rather, she focuses on the positive gains made by the New Left such as greater awareness of minority issues, the contributions the Movement made to end the Vietnam War, and the changes that occurred in higher education during the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>5</sup> James O'Brien's three part series on SDS, written in 1968 for the news magazine, *Radical America*, describes the early Movement's struggles to gain legitimacy and grow its memberships on college campuses across the country and the rise of SDS as one of the Movement's most influential groups. Although the series was written in 1968, O'Brien's research is thorough and his writing is detailed, providing a good source from the period when SDS was really coming into its own as a national organization.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS: The Rise and Development of the Students for a Democratic Society, The Organization that Became the Major Expression of the American Left in the Sixties – Its Passage From Student Protest to the Institutional Resistance to Revolutionary Activism and its Ultimate Impact on American Politics and Life* (New York: Random House, 1974).

<sup>5</sup> Winifred Breines, "Whose New Left?" (*The Journal of American History*, vol. 75, no. 2, Sept 1988, 528 – 545), available online at <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1887869>>, accessed 28 Apr 2009.

<sup>6</sup> James P. O'Brien, "The Early Days of the New Left" (*Radical America*, vol. 2, no. 3, May – June 1968), 1 – 25, available online at <<http://dl.lib.brown.edu/radicalamrica/about.html>>, accessed 29 June 2010; James P. O'Brien, "The New Left 1965 – 1967." (*Radical America*, vol. 2, no. 5, Sept – Oct 1968), 1 – 23, available online at <<http://dl.lib.brown.edu/radicalamrica/about.html>>, accessed 29 June 2010; and James P. O'Brien, "The New Left 1967 – 1968." (*Radical America*, vol. 2, no. 6 Nov – Dec 1968), 28 – 43, available online at <<http://dl.lib.brown.edu/radicalamrica/about.html>>, accessed 29 June 2010. Also see Harvey Pekar and Paul Buhle, eds., Art by Gary Dumm, *Students for a Democratic Society: A Graphic History* (New York: Hill and Wand, 2008) for a different version of the history of SDS. This book is written as a graphic novel in an attempt to appeal to a younger audience, yet the historical information is accurate and well researched.

Offering a better understanding of the role of women in the New Left Movement and the early stages of the Women's Liberation Movement, Sara Evans' work *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* deals directly with the motivation behind the Women's Movement and the often overlooked influence of women on the Civil Rights Movement and early New Left groups, specifically SNCC and SDS. Gitlin's work, *The Sixties*, was also helpful on this topic. His detailed accounts of SDS and student meetings along with his personal interactions with female members of the Movement, describes the limited options afforded to women, especially in the beginning stages. In addition, Doug Rossinow's work, *The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America*, provided much needed background on the roots of New Left groups in the South, especially the role of campus organizations and YWCA groups in the early years of the Movement. Rossinow's work includes a chapter describing the role of noted women organizers such as Casey Hayden and Mary Smith. Although most works on the New Left do not include any information on women's roles within the Movement, when they do discuss women, it is only in minor or support roles such as secretaries or volunteers, and only in their capacity to aid the men of the Movement in their important work.

In addition to the numerous works on the New Left, there are also several works available on the changing roles of education, especially higher education after World War II and the campus unrest that took place before and during the Vietnam War. The effects of World War II are evident in the two main reports that emerged at the war's end:

Harvard University's report entitled, "General Education in a Free Society," and President Harry Truman's Presidential Commission on Higher Education's report entitled, "Higher Education for Democracy." Both tout the need for more and better education in America to ensure its place as a future leader in the changing geopolitical landscape. In addition, both describe the need for a set of "General Education" classes- mandatory classes at all institutions of higher education required of all students to earn their degrees, no matter their discipline or field of study. In addition, both claim the need to "democratize education" making it more widely available to any and all wanting to go to college. Most importantly, both reports claim education as a right, not as a privilege. This sentiment led to a major expansion of junior and community colleges, federal college grants, and college enrollment.<sup>7</sup>

Another helpful work on the changes in education was Diane Ravitch's, *The Troubled Crusade: American Education 1945 – 1980*. Ravitch details the changes in education, including higher education, high school, and middle school that took place after World War II, claiming these changes led to several problems that the education system could not accommodate. The book provides a good general overview of these changes without being too overtly political. Other works such as those from educational

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<sup>7</sup> Martin Trow, "American Higher Education: Past, Present, and Future" (*Educational Researcher*, vol. 17, no. 3, Apr 1988), 13 – 23; For full text of the reports published after World War II, see Harvard University Report: *General Education in a Free Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1945), available online at <<http://www.archive.org/details/generaleducation032440mbp>>, accessed 28 July 2010; and "Higher Education for Democracy: A Report by the National Commission on Higher Education" (Dec 1947), Presidential Commission on Higher Education, available online at <<http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/courses/eol474/sp98/truman.html>>, accessed 30 Aug 2010; also see Kevin Mattson, *Intellectuals in Action: The Origins of the New Left and Radical Liberalism 1945 – 1970* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002) for an in-depth look at role of teachers in the foundation of the New Left Movement.

journals and national periodicals were not as successful at avoiding political attacks but provided some insight into the problems higher education has faced over the past fifty years. Many claim the liberal education system established after WWII made way for a heavily multicultural approach that in turn led to over-specialization and fragmentation of many disciplines. Many educational historians and educators claim there is now “too much Pluribus and not enough Unum” taught in our schools.<sup>8</sup>

Several works deal with the campus unrest of the 1960s and 1970s. One that was especially good was Harvard president Nathan Pusey’s account of his tenure at Harvard during its most tumultuous years and the troubles he encountered during that time.

Although very negative about the protestors themselves, Pusey offers a detailed explanation of the campus atmosphere and the environment that he felt allowed these groups to thrive, including the accommodation of teachers and administration officials. Finally, there are several works by former student activists themselves, mostly written as memoirs, which provide some insight into the student’s motivations and mindset during their activism and protests.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> For examples of this see: Allan David Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today’s Students* (New York: Simon and Shuster Paperbacks, 1987); Carol Iannone, “What’s Happened to Liberal Education?” *Academic Questions*, (Winter 2003-2004, 54 – 66); Roger Kimball, *Tenured Radicals: How Politics Has Corrupted Our Higher Education* (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1998); Diane Ravitch, *The Troubled Crusade: American Education 1945 – 1980* (New York: Basic Books, 1985); and Martin Trow, “Reflections on the Transitions from Mass to Universal Education” (*Daedalus*, vol. 99, no. 1, Winter, 1970), 1 – 42, available online at <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20023810>>, accessed 25 June 2011.

<sup>9</sup> For examples of this see: William Ayers, *Fugitive Days: Memoirs of an Anti-War Activist* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001); Gitlin, *Days of Rage*; Isserman, *If I Had a Hammer*; Miller, *Democracy Is In the Streets*; and Debi and Irwin Unger, eds., *The Times They Were a Changin’: A Sixties Reader* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1998).

This study is divided into three chapters centered on the changing ideologies of the New Left Movement and the three individuals chosen for the case studies. Chapter one contains background information and context for the budding New Left Movement including the changing meanings of the terms conservative and liberal at the beginning of the century, the cultural and economic shifts of the 1950s and 1960s, the radical changes that had begun to take place in institutions of higher education, and the establishment of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) that quickly became the most prominent student organization of the Movement. This overview of the early Movement includes the case study of Dr. Todd Gitlin, a founding member, and one-time president of SDS. Because Gitlin was prominent throughout the beginning of the Movement, he is the most logical choice to feature first and provides a way to detail the Movement's beginnings through his firsthand accounts.

Chapter two explores SDS, gender specific approach to organizing, and its changing ideology. As time passed and the Movement grew ever larger, the New Left began to shift its focus toward institutions of higher education as not only places for change but also as sources for readily available participants and activists. This chapter also begins the case study of Dr. Sara M. Evans. As an early member of the New Left Movement and now professor at the University of Minnesota and prolific writer, her story is told in this chapter as a way to highlight the role of women and their changing attitudes towards the male-dominated groups for which they worked. The inclusion of a female and a feminist historian provides a picture of women's roles in the early Movement

because many historians, including Evans herself, claim that the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left helped form the basis of what became the Women's Movement in the 1970s.

The final chapter examines the end of the New Left Movement and its increasing radicalization, specifically the formation of the Weather Underground Organization (WUO) and its violent interpretation of Marxist philosophy. The focus is on what many historians view as the downfall of the New Left, its effects on student participants, and what many view as the failure of the Movement. This chapter concludes with a case study of Dr. William Ayers, a leader in the WUO and now a retired professor of education from the University of Chicago who spent many years in hiding for his strong beliefs, radical ideology, and actions conducted in the name of the WUO and the student revolution in which he participated.

Participation in the New Left Movement led to these activists becoming academics due in part to the nature of the higher education setting. Here they could research and teach classes based on their own areas of interest while also relaying the importance of past events to a new generation of students. Todd Gitlin, Sara Evans, and William Ayers all participated in the New Left, each in various facets of the Movement. Gitlin was instrumental in the beginning of SDS, moving the organization toward an anti-war stance while Evans was more active in the area of Women's Rights and the groups that formed as off-shoots from the larger New Left Movement. Finally, Ayers held a much more radical stance on student activism and embraced violence as a means to

engender change. Although their specific areas of protest were different, each of these subjects chose to join the protest Movement of the 1960s and 1970s and then went on to work in academia. Their activism and strong belief in the need for social change led them to careers in higher education.



## CHAPTER I

THE BEGININGS OF THE STUDENT MOVEMENT  
TODD GITLIN

“The thing the sixties did was to show us the possibilities and the responsibility that we all had. It wasn't the answer. It just gave us a glimpse of the possibility.” ~ John Lennon<sup>1</sup>

Come gather 'round people  
Wherever you roam  
And admit that the waters  
Around you have grown  
And accept it that soon  
You'll be drenched to the bone  
If your time to you  
Is worth savin'  
Then you better start swimmin'  
Or you'll sink like a stone  
For the times they are a-changin'.  
~“The Times They Are A-Changin'”<sup>2</sup> Bob Dylan

As a college student in the 1960s, Todd Gitlin played a major role in one of the best-known student activist groups, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). In that role, he helped develop the groups' ideology and policies while protesting against the Vietnam War and other issues of the day. Yet Gitlin went on to a successful academic career as a college professor. This chapter explores the link between his days as a student

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<sup>1</sup> John Wiener, “Lennon’s Last Interview: ‘The Sixties Showed Us the Possibility,’” *The Nation* (8 Dec 2010), available online at <<http://www.thenation.com/blog/156903/lennons-last-interview-sixties-showed-us-possibility#.html>>, accessed 25 Oct 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Bob Dylan, “The Times They Are A-Changin'” on the album *The Times They Are A-Changin'*. Words and Music by Bob Dylan, Released January 1964 by Columbia Records.

activist and his decision to remain within the very institution he found so objectionable in his student days. Studying those who participated in the movement and who then went on to teach in academia provides a better understanding of the changes in higher education that took place after the end of World War II and, more specifically, the influence of the New Left on higher education.

When discussing the New Left, it is hard to define the movement in precise terms. The name “New Left” has come to refer to a group of young and politically motivated ideological organizations. But, depending on the author, it can also include other groups such as the counterculture and hippies, groups that did not necessarily take part in any political activism but shared in the feelings of powerlessness and the search for an “authentic self” and a utopian version of society that was pervasive throughout the decades of the 1960s and 1970s. For this study, the term “New Left” refers specifically to the politically active young people searching for a way to change the society in which they found themselves. Hippies are not included in this definition because, although they were a major component of the counterculture and certainly the group with which many people are most familiar, they were not especially politically dynamic. Hippies tended to withdraw from society and create a unique culture of their own in contrast to student activists who attempted to change governmental policy and the larger society.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Richard E. Peterson, “The Student Left in Higher Education” (*Daedalus: The MIT Press*, vol. 97, no. 1 Students and Politics, Winter 1968), 293 – 295.

## Definition of Terms

The New Left heading also encompasses many different organizations but this study focuses on one group in particular, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) or the “Student Left” since they were the most prominent, politically active group on college campuses throughout the 1960s and 1970s and were responsible for most on-campus protests. SDS embodied the political side of the wide-range of youth movements across the United States.<sup>4</sup> This study would also be nearly impossible without using the terms “conservative,” “liberal,” and “radical.” Defining these terms and providing a brief history of their changing meanings allow for a more complete understanding of the context in which the New Left Movement took place.

The three terms have come to mean something different in recent years, and there are several types of conservatism and liberalism, such as social, economic, and political. Although it would be nearly impossible to dismiss completely the economic aspects from the social implications or the political connotations from the economic features and so on, this work focuses specifically on the political aspects of these ideologies, and how they have changed over time.

Noted cognitive linguist George Lakoff, who specializes in the study of how we as humans conceptualize our everyday lives and how we think and talk about life, claims in his book, *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think*, that contemporary American politics is about one’s personal worldview. According to Lakoff,

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<sup>4</sup> Douglass C. Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America* (New York: Columbia University Press), 7.

“Conservatives simply see the world differently than do liberals and both often have a difficult time understanding accurately what the other’s worldview is.”<sup>5</sup> It certainly seems that modern political analysts cannot agree on a definition, with many conservative media pundits commonly using “liberal” as a derogatory term and vice-versa. The term liberal, however, originally applied to the political philosophy that individuals should be free and autonomous rational actors, each pursuing their own self interests.<sup>6</sup> Stemming from the late nineteenth-century ideas of philosopher John Stuart Mills, traditional liberalism asserted the rights of individuals, maintained an anti-statist ideology, and more importantly retained economic autonomy. This definition changed and grew over the years with the changes of society, but Mills’ influence on the New Left’s definition of liberalism is most evident in the writings of SDS. For example, in their manifesto the *Port Huron Statement*, SDS members referred to the “experiment in living,” an idea directly derived from Mill’s work.<sup>7</sup>

The New Deal policies of Franklin Roosevelt also dramatically changed the definition of liberalism. No historian has written more prolifically on this subject than Allan Brinkley who has published several books and held positions at some of the most prestigious schools in the United States, including Harvard, Princeton, and M.I.T., and he currently holds a position at Columbia University. His 1998 book entitled, *Liberalism*

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<sup>5</sup> George Lakoff, *Moral Politics: How Conservatives and Liberals Think* (University of Chicago Press, 2002), 3.

<sup>6</sup> For more on the definition of liberalism and its meanings at the turn of the century, see Nancy Cohen, *Reconstruction of American Liberalism 1886 – 1914* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); and James T. Kloppenberg *The Virtues of Liberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>7</sup> This concept is described in the third section of John Stuart Mill’s work, *On Liberty*. For more on this see <http://www.bartleby.com/130/>.

*and Its Discontents*, not only provides an extensive background on the changing meanings of conservatism and liberalism but also provides a detailed history of modern liberalism's New Deal roots. Brinkley argues that President Roosevelt's New Deal policies and programs formed a set of specific ideas about the role of government regarding its economic and social responsibilities to the American public, specifically that the government did have an important role to play in the lives of the people. Roosevelt's New Deal expansion of social and economic programs and the reinterpretation of the government's social responsibilities were a direct result of his understanding of the role of government and provided for a major change in the definition of political liberalism. Brinkley claims it was this reinterpretation that provided the crucial link between civil rights and liberalism and afforded liberals both a moral claim and a political justification for many of the government's liberal policies at the end of World Wars I and II.

World War II had a profound effect on many political ideologies, especially liberalism. Brinkley claims that the war prompted two opposing views of the United States and its role in a newly internationally focused world.<sup>8</sup> On the one hand, the war and the communist ideology associated with it showed humans' great capacity for evil and caused a new fear of state power under the guidance of a singular person, especially when that leader has complete control of the political system. On the other hand, some saw the United States as a "chosen nation" with a moral force and a "unique mission of

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<sup>8</sup> Alan Brinkley, *Liberalism and Its Discontents* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 105.

righteousness.” Along this same line, many felt an unmitigated commitment to freedom and justice and believed the United States could serve as a model to which other nations could aspire.<sup>9</sup> Although this was not a new sentiment, the war helped to reinforce this belief in many Americans.

In the 1960s and 1970s, with the major influences of the Civil Rights Movement and new focus on the expanding multicultural society, liberalism again changed to include providing both a voice and power to “the least of us” in society who were left out of the political process or did not have an opportunity even to participate. While there are numerous definitions of the liberal ideology used by the New Left, historian Richard Peterson’s definition is the most comprehensive. He defined the liberalism of the Student Left as a “shared rejection of many prevailing American institutions, a vaguely democratic-socialist political ideology, a faith in participatory democracy, and a commitment to social actions. Its ultimate goal was the radical reform of American society and the characteristic nature of human roles and relationships on which it rests.”<sup>10</sup> The liberal ideology of the New Left in the post-war era focused on the changes to society many young people felt were necessary in order to have a truly democratic system.

With its spotlight on social issues, the New Left of the post-war era focused its attention on the idea of “little d democracy” or “participatory democracy” in which the people played a central and important role in the shaping and defining of national

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>10</sup> Peterson, “The Student Left in Higher Education,” 293.

political policy. Participatory democracy sought to emphasize the contributions of constituents in both the direction and operation of the political system. It also strove to create opportunities for all members of the political group by allowing them to make meaningful contributions to the decision making process. Additionally, it attempted to broaden the range of people who have access to these opportunities.<sup>11</sup>

This shift in the definition of liberal also caused the term “radical” to become a more common name for a member of the Student Left. In his book, *Radical Paradoxes*, sociologist Peter Clecak defines radical as any reference to “individuals and groups who espouse critical analysis and alternate visions of social organization.” He goes on to claim the term radical also “designates styles of personal and social action that may include, but are not confined to, protests, demonstrations, confrontations, and long range programs of public education” that conflict with the established societal norms.<sup>12</sup> This definition embodied the practices and ideology held by the student left and therefore became a synonym for any member of the New Left.

The terms “liberal” and “radical” also took on a distinctly Communist and Marxist connotation in the 1960s, due in part, to their association with the Old Left of the 1930s. The Old Left was an amalgamation of several intellectual, cultural, and politically radical groups both in the United States and in England. Collected under the heading of Socialist or Communist ideology, many members were social activists, radical clergy, or members of the socialist group “Industrial Workers of the World” better known as

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<sup>11</sup> Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity*, see also Gitlin, *The Sixties* for more on this topic.

<sup>12</sup> Peter Clecak, *Radical Paradoxes: Dilemmas of the American Left 1945 – 1970* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), xiii.

“Wobblies.” All worked for social and political change in the wake of the Great Depression and impending World War. Thus, when the student movement of the 1960s began to call themselves the New Left, they were immediately associated with the Old Left of the former generation. In modern vernacular, the term liberal has come to mean something different, with conservative criticisms mostly centered on the idea that liberals want all the power in the hands of the government and a few elites at the expense of personal liberties.<sup>13</sup> Modern liberalism does still focus on the connection between the government and the populace, but clearly, its meaning has undergone dramatic changes in the past century.

Similar to liberal, the definition of the term conservative has undergone several revisions over the past hundred years. By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, modern conservatism has come to be loosely defined as a collection of religious groups or religious individuals who maintain an anti-large government philosophy and believe in the preservation of private wealth, the “elevation of individual liberty above all other values, and an insistence that personal freedom is inseparable from economic freedom.”<sup>14</sup> Unlike liberalism, however, finding a clear definition of pre-1970s conservatism is difficult, mainly due to the academic dismissal of conservative ideology as a fringe aspect of social thought, rather than a serious intellectual movement.<sup>15</sup> For most of the first half

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<sup>13</sup> Brinkley, *Liberalism*, x.

<sup>14</sup> Alan Brinkley, “The Problem of American Conservatism” (*American Historical Review*, vol. 99, Apr 1994), 409 – 429, available online at <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2167281>>, accessed 3 Mar 2011, 410.

<sup>15</sup> David Farber, *The Rise and Fall of American Conservatism: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010). Farber’s work provides a brief overview of conservatism at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and how the term has changed in the past 100 years.



of the century, many, if not most historians, viewed conservatism as a “pathology and irrational divergence from the established mainstream.”<sup>16</sup> For example, in his noted work, *The Liberal Imagination*, Lionel Trilling claimed,

In the United States at this time, liberalism is not only the dominant but even the sole intellectual tradition. For it is the plain fact that nowadays there are no conservative or reactionary ideas in general circulation. This does not mean, of course, that there is no impulse to conservatism or to reaction. Such impulses are certainly very strong, perhaps even stronger than most of us know. But the conservative impulse and the reactionary impulse do not, with some isolated and some ecclesiastical exceptions, express themselves in ideas but only in action or in an irritable mental gesture which seem to resemble ideas.<sup>17</sup>

Both the terms have changed over the past century- maybe conservatism more than liberalism. If one looks at the original definition of liberalism set forth by Mills, it conforms more to the definition of modern conservatism and more specifically, libertarianism, than does the modern definition of liberalism.<sup>18</sup> With these changes in mind, this paper focuses on the liberal and radical views of the student activists who participated in the New Left Movement and those specific ideologies that led some activists to select academia as a career choice.

The youth of the 1960s generation maintained a liberal ideology and sought to change their society in a drastic way. Each group had a different view on how best to accomplish this change, and, as people do, many altered their opinions as time passed and the political situation changed. For example, the Civil Rights Movement and Vietnam War certainly affected the opinions of student activists not only about the New Left

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 412.

<sup>17</sup> Lionel Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination* (New York: New York Review of Books, 1950), xv.

<sup>18</sup> Lakoff, *Moral Politics*, 19.

Movement and society, but also about themselves. Irwin and Debbi Unger, historians of social movements, especially those of the post-war era, claimed the New Left Movement of the 1960s “de-legitimized all types of authority including governments, universities, parents, critics, experts, employers, the police, families, and the military. In this decade’s wake, all hierarchical structures became pliant, all judgments and critical evaluations and canons became less definitive and acceptable.”<sup>19</sup>

Perhaps nowhere was this more evident than in the higher education system due mostly to the politically active student population. Many factions within the New Left viewed institutions of higher education as a fundamental place to start the process of change. Since colleges and universities played such an important role in the creation and reinforcement of societal mores, many felt they had a particularly significant influence on the future workers and leaders of American society. According to Marvin Lazerson, a professor of Education Policy, college degrees “simultaneously embody both a public good- beneficial to the nation’s economy, protective of its national defense, opening up new avenues of knowledge, and able to realize equality of educational opportunity – and a private benefit, so that everyone who possessed it substantially improved their access to higher income, status, and security.”<sup>20</sup> Higher education in particular had changed from being an opportunity to a necessity for many young people in order to maintain society’s

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<sup>19</sup> Debi and Irwin Unger, eds., *The Times They Were a Changin’: A Sixties Reader* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1998), 1.

<sup>20</sup> Marvin Lazerson, “The Disappointments of Success: Higher Education After World War II” (*Annals of American Academy of Political Social Science*, vol. 559, Sept 1998), 65.

higher standard of living and social status in the aftermath of the affluent 1950s.<sup>21</sup> Thus, it was only logical that these social activists were drawn to these institutions.

The roles of institutions of higher education have changed throughout history, as society dictates but maybe never more so than in the post-war years. In the post-war era, Cold War competition with the Soviet Union made education especially necessary and important. There were two highly influential reports on higher education after the end of World War II. As United States officials and politicians searched for a way to understand the country's new place in the emerging geopolitical system, they looked to many different fields, including education. The goal of these two reports was to decide what type of education colleges should seek to provide at the end of the war and determine what classes should be included in the general education requirements in universities and other institutions of higher education. Many in academia felt general education was the equivalent to a traditional "liberal education" but many wondered if this type of education would be enough to help prepare the future leaders of America to maintain the country's global superiority.

The first report stemmed from a 28 member Presidential Commission to study the education system in the United States, both before and after the war. At the end of World War II President Harry Truman remarked, "It seems particularly important, therefore, that we should now re-examine our system of higher education in terms of its objectives, and

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

facilities; and in the light of the social role it has to play.”<sup>22</sup> Truman established a Presidential Commission in 1946. George F. Zook, a longtime advocate of education and the former Commissioner of Education under Franklin Roosevelt, headed the Commission. At the time of his appointment to the President’s Commission on Higher Education, Zook was the acting president of the American Council of Education. This Presidential Commission was unprecedented since education had previously been the purview of individual states. When published a few years later, the six-volume report, entitled “Higher Education for Democracy,” included sections on the goals of education, equalizing and expanding individual opportunity, and organizing, funding, and staffing higher education facilities.<sup>23</sup>

The report claimed that the increasing number of young people who sought a higher education related directly to the increasing industrialization of the nation and its growing number of resources. Many parents felt a post-secondary school education would be necessary for their children to have a productive and profitable future. In addition to this, Public Law 16 (The Veterans Rehabilitation Act) and Public Law 346 (The G.I. Bill of Rights) both provided benefits for returning soldiers to start or resume higher education after the war. Institutions of higher education could scarcely keep up. The number of individuals enrolling in colleges increased beyond what these facilities

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<sup>22</sup> Harry S. Truman, “A Letter Appointing Members to the National Commission on Higher Education,” (16 July 1946), Harry Truman Presidential Papers, available online at <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=12452>>, accessed 30 Aug 2010.

<sup>23</sup> “Higher Education for Democracy: A Report by the National Commission on Higher Education” (Dec 1947), Presidential Commission on Higher Education, full paper available online at <<http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/courses/eol474/sp98/truman.html>>, accessed 30 Aug 2010.

could accommodate. In 1940, only 15 percent of high school graduates attended any type of post-secondary education facility. By 1960, that number rose to approximately 40 percent.<sup>24</sup>

The report also claimed the need for drastic educational reform, stating “...education is the making of the future. Its role in a democratic society is that of critic and leader as well as servant; its task is not merely to meet the demands of the present but to alter those demands if necessary, so as to keep them always suited to democratic ideals.”<sup>25</sup> According to the report, the principle goals of higher education included a “fuller realization of democracy in every phase of living, better understanding, and cooperation with the international community, and application of creative imagination and trained intelligence to the solution of social problems and to the administration of public affairs.”<sup>26</sup> Education was an instrument of social maintenance or social change, as it needed to be. In other words, higher education’s first responsibility was to produce ethical and intelligent leaders and productive followers to help the leaders accomplish goals.<sup>27</sup>

Part of the solution put forth by the Commission was a set of core general education requirements for all college students. Rather than providing specialized training or education for various occupations, the report called for a “unified general

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<sup>24</sup> Nathan M. Pusey, *American Higher Education, 1945 – 1970: A Personal Report* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 168.

<sup>25</sup> “Higher Education Report,” 25.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>27</sup> Pusey, *American Higher Education*, 188.

education for all American youth.”<sup>28</sup> The term “general education” came to refer to the non-specialized and non-vocational learning undertaken by all college students.

According to the report,

General education should give to the student the values, attitudes, knowledge, and skills that will equip him to live rightly and well in a free society. It should enable him to identify, interpret, select, and build into his own life those components of his cultural heritage that contribute richly to understanding and appreciation of the world in which he lives. It should therefore embrace ethical values, scientific generalizations, and aesthetic conceptions, as well as an understanding of the purposes and character of the political, economic, and social institutions that men have devised. But the knowledge and understanding which general education aims to secure, whether drawn from the past or from a living present, are not to be regarded as ends in themselves. They are means to a more abundant personal life and a stronger, freer social order.<sup>29</sup>

Rather than just use higher education to imbue historical tradition and culture, according to the Commission, it was also the responsibility of colleges to act as instruments for social change. Additionally, Commission members called for universities to promote the “equality of American heritage,” which they claimed was due each citizen by law.<sup>30</sup> The report reinforced the importance of institutions of higher education as venues for social change, attractive to young social activists.

Harvard University faculty published the second report entitled “General Education in a Free Society.” Written and collected by a committee of faculty members appointed by Harvard president, James Bryant Conant, in 1950, the report details three main components of a traditional, undergraduate college degree: concentration or major,

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<sup>28</sup> “Presidential Commission Education Report,” 39.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

distribution or general education classes, and finally the extra-classroom activities such as outside reading, studying, and social activities. The faculty concluded that a well-rounded college student could expect to graduate having experienced all three of these components. The distribution section, argued the Harvard report, was special, and should be required of all college students. Accordingly, it created a “general education core requirement curricula” that included math, science, literature, and western thought better to understand democracy in order to maintain “America’s free society.” Harvard faculty claimed, “In school, general education in these areas should form a continuing core for all, taking up at least half a student’s time.”<sup>31</sup> The goal of such a curriculum was to teach students to “think effectively, communicate thought, to make relevant judgments, and to discriminate among values.”<sup>32</sup> It was the faculty’s notion that this set of core requirements would turn out not only well educated young men and women but also critical thinkers and productive citizens.

The influence on the report of the recently ended war is undeniable, especially in the rhetoric surrounding the theories of democracy and free societies. Harvard at this time viewed the primary role of a college as the “inculcation of common standards and culture” and further believed that “knowledge is dangerous and illiberal if it does not embrace as fully the mainsprings of our culture.”<sup>33</sup> The report concludes by claiming, “Education is by far the biggest and the most hopeful of the nation’s enterprises. Long

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<sup>31</sup> *General Education in a Free Society* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1945), available online at <<http://www.archive.org/details/generaleducation032440mbp>>, accessed 28 July 2010, 99.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 103, 106.

ago, our people recognized that education for all is not only democracy's obligation but also, its necessity." The report asserted that education is the foundation of our nation's democratic liberties by stating, "Without an educated citizenry alert to preserve and extend freedom, it would not long endure."<sup>34</sup> The war had made those in academia aware of the need for more and better education.

In his memoir on American higher education during the post-World War II years, Harvard president Nathan Pusey claimed that the years from 1945 to 1970 were a "notable and fantastic period in education" but lamented that the turmoil of the campus unrest of the 1960s overshadowed most of the accomplishments made at the time. Educated at Harvard himself, receiving a Ph.D. in English Literature and Ancient History, Pusey was Harvard's president during the college's most turbulent years. A vigorous opponent of McCarthyism and a major supporter of the Civil Rights Movement, Pusey was politically outspoken on some of the major issues of his time. He did not look favorably on the student protests of the 1960s. He felt they unnecessarily disrupted the entire educational process that was, after all, the sole purpose of the institution. The student strike on Harvard's campus in 1969, in which several students occupied the university's administration offices protesting the ROTC program on campus, drove Pusey to call in the state police who arrested several of the protesters. At the time Pusey angrily claimed, "Learning has almost ceased in many universities because of the violent, revolutionary activism of a small group of over eager young, who feel they have a special

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 247, 345.



calling to redeem society.”<sup>35</sup> While he disagreed with the methods of student activists at the time, clearly Pusey believed in the important and valuable role education played in a democratic society.

In his memoirs, Pusey detailed his firsthand experience with the New Left and the changes they helped usher in. He claimed that returning soldiers, in addition to the vast number of baby boomers reaching college age in the early 1960s, were first responsible for the expansion of colleges and universities. The baby boom generation (the approximately 70 million babies born from 1946 to 1964) began entering the school system in 1960. Add that to the already 3 million college age students in 1960 and colleges and universities were unequipped to handle that number of students. And the number of students continued to grow steadily over the next 15 years to 5 million in 1965, 8 million in 1970, and reached 10 million by 1973.<sup>36</sup> Referring to this dramatic increase in the number of students, historian James Miller claimed the affluence of the 1950s was not only economic but also demographic. “Babies were the measure and extension of the economic boom; good for the market, pride, and in some ways were the point of both. The ‘American Dream’ was based on the promise of opportunity and it was coming true in the 1950s.”<sup>37</sup> Other indicators of the affluence of the 1950s include the 49 percent rise in disposable income from 1950 to 1960, the increase in educational

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<sup>35</sup> “Nathan Pusey Dead at 94 – Harvard’s 24<sup>th</sup> President Passes Away.” *The Harvard Crimson*, 15 Nov 2001, available online at <<http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2001/11/15/nathan-pusey-dead-at-04-nathan.com>>, accessed 22 June 2010.

<sup>36</sup> Ungers, *A Sixties Reader*, 57.

<sup>37</sup> James Miller “*Democracy Is In the Streets*”: *From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 13.

spending from \$742 million in 1945 to \$6.9 billion in 1965, and, for the first time, in 1960 college students outnumbered farmers in America by three to one.<sup>38</sup>

Pusey's claim for the importance of this baby boom generation had support. With the baby boomer generation entering college age at the end of the 1950s and early 1960s, and the passage of the GI Bill, which offered approximately 16 million men and women money to return to college after the war, universities quickly needed to accommodate almost double the number of students as the previous generation.<sup>39</sup> For example, the University of Michigan had approximately 17,000 students registered in 1952 and by 1962 that number more than doubled to approximately 35,000 students.<sup>40</sup> The higher demand for college education is also evident if one compares the growing number of institutions themselves. In 1940, there were approximately 1,750 colleges and universities throughout the United States employing nearly 132,000 people, of which 110,000 were teachers. The number steadily increased over the next 30 years with a new total of approximately 2,850 universities and colleges in 1970 employing nearly 500,000 teachers. With the addition of so many new students and faculty and all the new courses offered in a variety of subject areas, the operating cost of running a college rose from \$600 million in 1940 to \$24 billion in 1970.<sup>41</sup>

Not only did the number of students and universities grow but the courses offered by colleges grew as well. Pusey claims there was a truly global focus for the first time in

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 19 – 20.

<sup>39</sup> Diane Ravitch, *The Troubled Crusade: American Education 1945 – 1980* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 14.

<sup>40</sup> Miller, *Democracy Is in the Streets*, 25.

<sup>41</sup> Pusey, *American Higher Education*, 6.

higher education with new course offerings such as European Diplomatic History, International Law, and International Trade. Pusey provides two reasons for this. First, the returning veterans had tales of being overseas and had experiences with new and different cultures. Second, the war brought new geopolitical concerns to the attention of many, especially the role of democracy abroad. To focus on these issues, the federal government began programs in universities such as the Fulbright Act Program (Public Law 584) that provided funds for several thousand American students to study in 20 different countries. In exchange, 50,000 students from these 20 countries came to study in the United States in the first 25 years of the project. In 1970 alone, 145,000 foreign students enrolled at several universities across the United States. In addition, the government also set up faculty exchanges between various universities in Europe and Asia.<sup>42</sup> Pusey claims these exchanges in conjunction with the increased amount of scientific and technological research and the quality of research and writings produced by faculty made the post war years among the most productive and vital years in higher education in the nation's history.

Of course, one cannot talk about these specific years without discussing the campus unrest that was so prevalent. Many in academia looked unfavorably on the protests and contended that the first attacks on universities actually came from outside academia, specifically from conservatives who felt as if the colleges had fallen prey to liberal or radical views and were therefore subverting the very society that allowed them to exist. Pusey dismisses these attacks as residual fear of Communism from the 1930s.

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 17 – 19.

These fears had subsided during the Second World War since Russia was an ally but soon resurfaced and became especially strong during the first few years of the Cold War.<sup>43</sup>

These suspicions began to spread into classrooms throughout the early 1950s with the censoring of textbooks and school curricula, culminating with the signing of a mandatory Loyalty Oath required by the federal government of all university or college faculty members. Various departments of the federal government, schools, and universities began to refute these Loyalty Oaths, originally instituted under President Truman. Faculty members had to take an oath confirming they were not members of the Communist Party and they would do nothing to subvert the American government. During the Cold War McCarthyism Era, most teachers and other faculty members signed the oaths to avoid suspicion but in the early 1960s, many began to refuse. Most were not opposed to the oath itself but rather the firing of anyone who refused to sign it – regardless of tenure and without due process.<sup>44</sup> The most noted example of this was at the University of California, Berkeley. Thirty-nine teachers who refused to sign the oath were quickly dismissed. The teachers claimed they were offended because the federal government was essentially implying that they could not make their own decisions based on their own understanding and research. The government, however, claimed that all the teachers needed to do was admit if they had any “Communist sympathy.” If they did, or

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>44</sup> Ravitch, *The Troubled Crusade*, 98 – 99.

if they would not definitively deny their sympathies, they were unfit to teach.<sup>45</sup> Many teachers felt unfairly targeted but signed the oath simply to keep their jobs.

In September 1958, the Congress, with support of President Dwight Eisenhower, passed the National Defense of Education Act that provided federal monies to all school levels and funded several scholarships and tuition programs. Because the number of college students had drastically risen, and especially since the Soviets had recently beaten the United States into space with the launch of Sputnik a year earlier, the government felt it necessary to provide more math and science education to children at every level of school.<sup>46</sup> The focused teaching of more math and science fulfilled two purposes. First, it provided personnel for military or defense oriented positions, specifically in the areas of mathematics, sciences, foreign languages, and engineering. Second, it provided federal assistance through the National Defense Student Loan Program to many young people who wanted to go to college but who could not afford to do so on their own. The National Defense Act also made higher education institutions essentially partners with the federal government. The program directly linked institutions of higher education with the government. The government provided grants and loans to colleges and provided jobs to graduates of math and science departments, especially engineers. Colleges began funneling graduates into government and military positions. As University of California, Berkeley President Clark Kerr stated, “Intellect has become . . .

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<sup>45</sup> Pusey, *American Higher Education*, 131.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

an instrument of national purpose, a component part of the ‘military-industrial-complex.’”<sup>47</sup>

Before a student could receive any tuition aid or scholarship money, however, the student first had to sign a disclaimer similar to the loyalty oaths required of teachers. As Title X, Section 1001 (f), of the National Defense Education Act affidavit stated:

No part of any funds appropriated or otherwise made available for expenditure under authority of this Act shall be used to make payments or loans to any individual unless such individual (1) has executed and filed with the Commissioner an affidavit that he does not believe in, and is not a member of and does not support any organization that believes in or teaches, the overthrow of the United States Government by force or violence or by any illegal or unconstitutional methods, and (2) has taken and subscribed to an oath or affirmation in the following form: “I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the United States of America and will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States against all its enemies, foreign and domestic.” The provisions of section 1001 of title 18, United States Code, shall be applicable with respect to such affidavits.<sup>48</sup>

With this specific provision in addition to the loyalty oaths, the federal government attempted to regulate how institutions of higher education dispensed funds and to whom. Many faculty members and university board members attempted to have the affidavit portion removed from the Act, including Yale, Princeton, and Barnard College officials who all refused to sign the mandate and, in turn, refused any federal money. By 1962, 153 colleges had refused to sign the loyalty oath. Teachers were upset because it seemed the government was singling out members of the teaching profession and imposing

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<sup>47</sup> Gitlin, *Days of Rage*, 20 – 21.

<sup>48</sup> For full text of the National Defense Education Act, 1958 see “National Defense Education Act 1958,” available online at <<http://nysl.nysed.gov/uhtbin/cgisirsi/iuRpyIpOka/NYSL/199580022/523/79158>>, accessed 12 July 2010.

“thought control” thereby violating one of the most fundamental principles of a democratic society.<sup>49</sup> Schools were especially targeted, they felt, because they were, “centers of unfettered critical thinking, which naturally made them offensive to those who wanted to reign in unfettered critical thinking,” most notably the government.<sup>50</sup>

This tension between administration, faculty, and politics was not always present in higher education. As late as 1960 and 1961, most professors thought it was their responsibility to teach students while refraining from political or social commentary in their classrooms. It was not until the mid-60s that many of those in academia began to change their definition of what was in their purview to discuss in their classrooms. The changing social climate and the many prominent news-making occurrences of the Civil Rights Movement led many professors to feel it was no longer acceptable not to include politics or social theories in their lessons.<sup>51</sup> It seemed to most professors that students had quickly grown disenchanted with society and higher education. Yet, change was not happening fast enough for many students. The growing feelings of disenchantment and disappointment led to newer and extreme forms of activism from already existing politically active groups such as the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS).<sup>52</sup>

On most college campuses at this time there were two distinct groups, a “left,” and a “right.” The left consisted mainly of SDS and the Student Non-Violent

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<sup>49</sup> Pusey, *American Higher Education*, 137.

<sup>50</sup> Ravitch, *The Troubled Crusade*, 112.

<sup>51</sup> Pusey, *American Higher Education*, 144.

<sup>52</sup> For more on the changes that occurred in higher education after World War II, see Richard Peterson’s work, “The Student Left in American Higher Education.” Peterson provides various statistical data collected by his research team from over 200 Deans of universities and colleges across the country and numerous students.

Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and other smaller student groups. Most leftist groups felt there was a conspiracy throughout society by the “power elite,” whom they considered “the Right” or “the Establishment,” to control all the major institutions of their culture, including institutions of higher education. SDS was the largest and most active left-wing organization of the 1960s and 1970s. SDS originally advocated for a coalition of students, civil rights groups, peace groups, labor workers, and the poor. They also ruled out any type of violence.<sup>53</sup> SDS biographer Kirkpatrick Sale describes student activists and SDS members in particular as “the force, beginning in 1960 which shaped the politics of a generation and rekindled the fires of American radicalism for the first time in thirty years, the largest student organization ever known in this country, and a major expression of the American left in the sixties.”<sup>54</sup> Although only a part of the larger movement of political activism taking place across the country, SDS was the best organized group in the early years and the most active on college campuses from where most of the movement’s members came.<sup>55</sup>

In opposition to SDS and the New Left, members of the Right believed the Left consisted of various groups of radical communist factions bent on bringing down traditional American institutions. For example, the John Birch Society, most popular in

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<sup>53</sup> Clecak, *Radical Paradoxes*, 241.

<sup>54</sup> Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS: The Rise and Development of the Students for a Democratic Society, The Organization that Became the Major Expression of the American Left in the Sixties – Its Passage From Student Protest to the Institutional Resistance to Revolutionary Activism and its Ultimate Impact on American Politics and Life* (New York: Random House, 1974), 5.

<sup>55</sup> SDS was not the first group to organize student protestors. Students protested during the Great Depression and the pre-war and inter-war years. For more information on earlier student movements in the United States, see Robert Cohen, *When the Old Left Was Young: Student Radicals and America’s First Mass Student Movement, 1929 – 1941* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).



the early movement, was active on over half the college campuses in the country and maintained chapters in all fifty states. The John Birch Society was a right-wing, anti-communist group who strongly believed in limited government. The group, originally founded in 1958 by Robert Welch Jr., took its name from an American military officer and Baptist missionary killed in China by communist supporters. The group claimed John Birch as the first victim of the Cold War. Initially, the John Birch Society was against any type of organization holding communist, socialist, or totalitarian ideology but after its second annual meeting also expanded its opposition to include any type of civil rights legislation. Members believed civil rights' laws infringed upon the original intention of the Constitution and the Tenth Amendment that guarantees states the right to enact laws regarding civil rights within their own borders.<sup>56</sup>

The most influential right wing, on-campus student group was Young Americans for Freedom (YAF). They claimed a membership of approximately 30,000 students on nearly 200 college campuses across the United States by 1968. In September 1960, 90 young people gathered at "Sharon," the estate of noted and wealthy conservative William F. Buckley Jr., to draft their founding document, appropriately called the "Sharon Statement." The group went on to spearhead the Barry Goldwater Presidential campaign in 1964. After Goldwater's loss, YAF continued to organize various committees to counter SDS's campus-related activities throughout the 1960s. For example, even though they did not support the draft, YAF did openly support the war in Vietnam, organizing "Project Appreciation" where people could write, visit, or send supplies to returning

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<sup>56</sup> For more information on the John Birch Society, see <<http://www.jbs.org>>.

Vietnam veterans. They issued pamphlets claiming their support for ending Communism in Southeast Asia and in the classroom alike. YAF additionally participated in many POW/MIA rallies, and began advertisements targeting actress Jane Fonda, or “Hanoi Jane” as they most often called her, for her “treasonous actions” during the Vietnam War.<sup>57</sup>

Unlike the Student Left, which was popular on many different types of college campuses, especially bigger state schools, and had a very large following, the Student Right was popular mainly on smaller southern college campuses and in the business and law programs of Ivy League universities.<sup>58</sup> Because the Student Right protestors failed to gain a wide following on larger state campuses, they relied heavily on outside donations and community events to maintain funding. Many noted conservatives became members of YAF, including Ronald Reagan who joined the group in 1960. Reagan served as a member of the YAF National Advisory Board in 1962, and posthumously maintains an “honorary chairman” title. YAF still functions today as a prominent conservative group speaking out against immigration while fighting against Democratic presidential policies.

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<sup>57</sup> For more information on the YAF, see: <<http://www.yaf.com>>.

“Hanoi Jane” is a reference to actress Jane Fonda. Fonda received this nickname during a trip she took to North Vietnam during the Vietnam War in 1972. Fonda visited various North Vietnamese military posts and recorded interviews with various American media outlets. During these interviews, she referred to U.S. military personnel stationed in Vietnam as “war criminals” for their bombing of North Vietnamese sites. In addition, a photo was taken of Fonda seated on a Vietnamese anti-aircraft battery. The photo made it appear Fonda was targeting U.S. military planes. Although Fonda claims she was forced to sit there and her picture was taken without her knowledge, it circulated quickly and caused many in the United States military and the country to call her a traitor and earn her the nickname “Hanoi Jane.” For more detailed information about this event or about Jane Fonda and her protests of the Vietnam War, see Jane Fonda, *My Life So Far* (New York: Random House, 2005).

<sup>58</sup> Peterson, “Student Left in Higher Education,” 294.

Although both the Left and the Right were intensely opposed to one another, they both agreed on one thing-- colleges and universities needed to change. The Left protested the status-quo and perceived right-wing manipulation of social institutions whereas the Student Right protested the “rising tide of leftist influence and liberal orthodoxy on campuses and in the broader society.”<sup>59</sup> Studying protestors who participated in the New Left Movement who now work in the academic setting of higher education provides a better understanding of the changes that occurred because of their efforts after the end of World War II. One such social activist turned college professor is Todd Gitlin.

Gitlin’s memoir of the 1960s, considered a staple of New Left historiography, follows the rise and fall of the New Left Movement using both his own personal stories and examples from the culture at the time. Gitlin begins his study with the roots of student rebellion in the 1950s, the Beat Poets, and the changing attitudes of young people who were opposed to the consumerism of the affluent decade. Gitlin grew up in this environment as a “Red Diaper Baby,” the product of Old Left parents who, like most parents of the time, agreed that education was the path to a better life for their children. After graduating as valedictorian from The Bronx High School of Science, one of the top public high schools in New York in 1960, Gitlin went on to study at Harvard University.

Gitlin was extremely active in the founding of early campus protest groups. He began his student activism as a member of Tocsin, a student-based, anti-nuclear weapons group at Harvard. The group was affiliated with the Student Peace Union and took its

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 293.

name from the French word *tocsin* meaning an alarm bell or warning signal. Gitlin soon joined the Harvard chapter of SDS and quickly rose through the ranks. By 1963, Gitlin was elected the president of SDS nationwide. During his brief tenure as president, Gitlin organized the first anti-Vietnam War march in Washington, D.C. in April 1965 that drew approximately 25,000 participants. He continued to play a significant role in SDS's policy making throughout most of the 1960s.

During the same time, Gitlin earned his bachelor's degree from Harvard and his master's degree in political science from the University of Michigan. He then moved to California and attended the University of California, Berkeley, earning his Ph.D. in sociology in 1977. Gitlin joined the Berkeley faculty in 1978, teaching classes in communications, sociology, and culture. In his memoir of the 1960s, Gitlin claims his participation in student protest groups was his way to actively search for a way to "get real" in the 1960s. Gitlin explains that "getting real" was his generation's term for any action that helped them feel more authentic and purposeful. It was their attempt to escape from the mass consumerism and conformity of 1950s American culture.<sup>60</sup> "Authenticity" and "getting real" were the goals of most young people at the time, claims Gitlin.<sup>61</sup> Many found that political activism was the best way to overcome the perceived alienation and depersonalization of society. The quest for authenticity had become a social undertaking,

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 304.

<sup>61</sup> Gitlin, *Days of Rage*, 129.

with the New Left participants criticizing what they saw as a culture of artificiality and consumerism.<sup>62</sup>

Like most historians and participants alike, Gitlin agrees that the beginning of the student movement was unfocused and lacked coherence but many like him actively searched for a way to solve the social problems they faced as young people. This disjointedness within the New Left stemmed originally from their need to distance themselves from the Old Left. The Old Left, especially active in the 1930s and 1940s, had been distinctly and openly Communist. In contrast, in his piece for *The Nation*, author Jack Newfield called the New Left, “a new generation of dissenters, nourished not by Trotsky, Stalin, or Schachtman but by Camus, Paul Goodman, Bob Dylan, and SNCC.”<sup>63</sup> The participants of the earlier Left movement combated two distinct crises at the time, the Great Depression and a World War, leading them to support the anti-war and anti-poverty tenets of Communism.<sup>64</sup> However, the inability of the Old Left to find a unifying and coherent structure within their own organization was one of the reasons for its eventual dissolution. This, in turn, led to the unwillingness of their movement members to take advice from Old Left Movement leaders.

Some members who remained from the Old Left did become involved in the New Left Movement, specifically pacifists and Red-Diaper Babies. Yet, since New Left

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<sup>62</sup> Rossinow, *Politics of Authenticity*, 19.

<sup>63</sup> Jack Newfield, “Revolt Without Dogma: The Student Left” (*The Nation*, 10 May 1965, vol. 200, no. 19), 491.

<sup>64</sup> Kenneth E. Hendrickson, Jr. “Review of: *When the Old Left Was Young: Student Radicals and America’s First Mass Student Movement, 1929-1941* by Robert Cohen” (*The American Historical Review*, vol. 99, no. 5, Dec 1994), 1768-69.

members tried to distance themselves from the former group's staunchly Communist ideology, they failed to benefit from their predecessors' advice and experience. Many New Left members heeded and spread the advice "Don't trust anyone over thirty." The New Left felt as if the Old Left had given up on their original ideals and compromised their tactics, essentially turning themselves into "establishment liberals."<sup>65</sup>

Many in the New Left were unsure of the need for a specific kind of ideology or action. Were local political or social changes needed, or should the group instead focus on state or even federal changes? Also, without a coherent hierarchical structure, no one seemed to know their specific roles or purposes within the group.<sup>66</sup> SDS began in 1960 with only twenty campus chapters and roughly 575 members. SDS had no organizing material or speakers, no bibliography of suggested readings, no official staff or research staff. Founding President Al Haber claimed, "We must, in a phrase, start from scratch."<sup>67</sup>

At first, the New Left's identity revolved around insurgent nationalist movements and the goals of participatory democracy, complete rights for all citizens, and reform in American universities. SDS was committed to non-violence and protested against the "establishment" such as big businesses, universities, government, and the military with the goal of having students act as the main catalyst for change.<sup>68</sup> In his three part series on the New Left, James O'Brien claimed that to overestimate the importance and

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<sup>65</sup> John Patrick Diggins, *The Rise and Fall of the American Left* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992), 232.

<sup>66</sup> Brinkley, *Liberalism*, 226.

<sup>67</sup> Miller, *Democracy Is In The Streets*, 65.

<sup>68</sup> Richard Braungart, "Journey into All-or-Nothing Politics, A Review of: *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* by Todd Gitlin" (*Contemporary Sociology*, vol. 17, no. 6, Nov 1988), 735, available online at <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2073551>>, accessed 1 Sept 2009.

influence of the southern sit-in movement on the New Left would be difficult. This strategy worked for a short time for New Left members, but the rapid growth in the number of students and participants all across the country coupled with the group's unorganized structure led to a shift in SDS's policies.<sup>69</sup>

Gitlin claims that in 1962 and 1963, the New Left underwent its first set of major changes and re-organization, noting specifically the successes of the Civil Rights Movement, especially its accomplishment in gaining participation from both local citizens and students alike in many southern cities. For example, in 1963 alone, there were approximately 930 civil rights demonstrations in 115 cities with over 20,000 people arrested. Statistics like these were what the New Left attempted to duplicate. The Civil Rights Movement gained a lot of early momentum, using non-violent, direct-action protests. As a result, SDS adopted the phrase "local insurgency" not only as its new slogan but also as its new main objective.<sup>70</sup>

In addition to the new slogan, the group also had a new directive. In early 1962, in Port Huron, Michigan, a group of approximately fifty SDS activists gathered for a conference. The purpose of the conference was to draft a document to outline not only their intentions but also their goals for the future of American society. They called their new manifesto the *Port Huron Statement*.<sup>71</sup> The group appointed student Tom Hayden to write the statement. Hayden had been involved in political activism for a while and was

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<sup>69</sup> James P. O'Brien, "The Early Days of the New Left" (*Radical America*, vol. 2, no. 3, May – June 1968), 1, 4, 20, available online at <<http://dl.lib.brown.edu/radicalamerica/about.html>>, accessed 29 June 2010.

<sup>70</sup> Gitlin, *Days of Rage*, 129, 285.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

well known in the Student Left community. Born in Detroit, Hayden attended the University of Michigan and quickly became disenchanted with the views of on-campus student movement groups. After spending a year in Mississippi helping the student volunteers register African Americans to vote, Hayden returned to Michigan and joined SDS. Hayden soon became president of the University of Michigan's SDS chapter in 1962.

Hayden immersed himself in the work of sociologist C. Wright Mills who wrote passionately about the alienation of the middle class and the trouble with the bureaucratic and undemocratic tendencies of American politics. He also wrote of the immorality of power and the powerlessness of intellectuals in American society.<sup>72</sup> In Mill's "Letter to the New Left," written in 1961, he argued that radicals could no longer count on the working class as a source of change in politics; instead, real change now relied on the "young intelligentsia" meaning college and university students.<sup>73</sup>

Fascinated by Mill's description of the politics of the time, Hayden focused much of the *Port Huron Statement* on the alienation of the middle and lower classes and the challenges of what many young people felt was society's indifference to it.<sup>74</sup> The *Port Huron Statement* spoke directly about the key role students played in the movement and the main ways the younger generation was America's last, best hope for positive social change. As Hayden wrote, "We are people of this generation, bred in at least modest

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<sup>72</sup> Miller, *Democracy Is In The Streets*, 79.

<sup>73</sup> C. Wright Mills, "A Letter to the New Left" (*The New Left Review*, no. 5, Sept – Oct 1960), available online at <<http://www.cwrightmills.org>>, accessed 19 July 2010.

<sup>74</sup> Brinkley, *Liberalism*, 228.



comfort, housed now in universities, looking uncomfortably to the world we inherit.”<sup>75</sup>

Referring specifically of the role of SDS in social change, Hayden continued, “Our work is guided by the sense that we may be the last generation in the experiment with living. But we are a minority – the vast majority of our people regard the temporary equilibriums of our society and the world as eternally functional parts.” Additionally, Hayden attempted to strike a balance between the group’s ideals while also recognizing social realities by saying, “This is perhaps the outstanding paradox: we ourselves are imbued with urgency, yet the message of our society is that there is no viable alternative to the present.”<sup>76</sup>

The roughly fifty pages of the *Port Huron Statement* covered a variety of issues that SDS stood for and its philosophy for the future of American politics. But, as Gitlin points out, before it focused on any political principles it first described the values of “human relationships.” According to Gitlin, the conference and the meeting that followed the writing of the *Port Huron Statement* led to the unraveling of some members’ staunchly held political ideologies. It brought people together into a community of believers and in his words, “for long stretches of time horizontal relations of trust replaced vertical relations of authority.”<sup>77</sup> In other words, the statement helped define SDS’s ideology on the relationship between the government and the people and the role

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<sup>75</sup> Tom Hayden, *The Port Huron Statement: A Visionary Call*, Electronic Book, available online at <[http://books.google.com/books?id=Qy57wrJoSngC&printsec=frontcover&dq=the+port+huron+statement&hl=en&ei=1R9HTJLsHoL78Ab3u4GpBQ&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCsQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=Qy57wrJoSngC&printsec=frontcover&dq=the+port+huron+statement&hl=en&ei=1R9HTJLsHoL78Ab3u4GpBQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCsQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false)>, accessed 29 July 2009.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>77</sup> Gitlin, *Days of Rage*, 106-107.

of participatory democracy in society, and the relationship between public life and private life, between work responsibilities and personal choices. Most importantly, it allowed the members of SDS to become a community of like-minded believers. Historian James Miller claims the *Port Huron Statement* was one of the most important documents of the post-war era. It not only catapulted SDS to some national prominence but also popularized the ideas of participatory democracy.<sup>78</sup>

In addition, the *Port Huron Statement* identified the university as a radical center for change. The last section of the document, “The University and Social Change,” speaks directly to the role of the university as a center for the formation of social attitudes and states, “Social Relevance, the accessibility to knowledge, and internal openness - these together make the university a potential base and agency in a movement of social change.” The Statement called for students to take action, since, “the university system cannot compete with a movement of ordinary people making demands for a better life. From its school and colleges across the nation, a militant left might awaken its allies, and by beginning the process towards peace, civil rights, and labor struggles, reinsert theory and idealism where too often reign confusion and political barter.”<sup>79</sup> The *Port Huron Statement* called on students to take notice of the bureaucracy within the university system and come together to take action against it. SDS felt the university system had become a cultivation of the same ideas and attitudes that contributed to the social status-quo they were protesting.

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<sup>78</sup> Miller, *Democracy Is In the Streets*, 13.

<sup>79</sup> Hayden, *The Port Huron Statement*.

SDS also started using the phrase “corporate liberalism” to describe the Kennedy administration’s aims at economic changes in order to maintain what SDS felt was a “corporate system.” SDS claimed that America was maintaining a policy of imperialism in its foreign policy, specifically in third world countries that could not defend themselves. No real decisions on this topic were made in the first years of SDS, but it was the hot button issue on which most meetings centered. As a result, Gitlin claims, two political styles emerged- one managerial and liberal, focusing on changing the system from within, while the other was more participatory and radical, focused on insurgency and direct action style protests.<sup>80</sup> Soon, however, it became evident that attempting to influence the political system was not as effective as many in SDS hoped it would be and as a result, many turned to protests. “What began as a strategy, became identity,” according to Gitlin.<sup>81</sup> “Resistance” became the official watchword of the movement. This was the next major change for SDS -the change from a community of believers to a community of active doers.

Direct action became the preferred form of political activity for SDS members, because it involved a personal affirmation of political commitment and provided many young people with the “real” experience with social change they were seeking.<sup>82</sup> So, the New Left began using the inter-dependent tactics of non-violence and direct action,

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<sup>80</sup> Gitlin, *Days of Rage*, 135.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>82</sup> Maurice Isserman, “The Not-So-Dark and Bloody Ground: New Works on the 1960s. A Review of: *The Year of the Barricades: A Journey through 1968* by David Caute, *Chicago '68* by David Farber, *1968: A Student Generation in Revolt* by Ronald Fraser, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* by Todd Gitlin and, *“Democracy Is in the Streets”: From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* by James Miller” (*The American Historical Review*, vol. 94, no. 4. Oct 1989), 990 – 1010, available online at <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1906592>>, accessed 1 Sept 2009, 999.

which had previously proven extremely effective in the Civil Rights Movement. They also depended on a stance of anti-intellectualism which seemed counterintuitive since they were college students themselves; they attempted, however, to disassociate themselves from the traditional university setting and mindset. The New Left consistently identified with the poor, illiterate, and uneducated members of society for whom they claimed they were fighting. They also believed that traditional colleges and universities were part of the “establishment” attempting to turn them into future workers for the military-industrial complex but could be an opportunistic location from which to draw activists.<sup>83</sup> The student movement was among the first and earliest critics of the post-war university system. The need for change in academia was one of the issues on which most, if not all members, seemed to agree. According to Peter Clecak, “Whatever SDS was to become, it played a serious part in nudging the complacent into an awareness of the profound conflicts that were to dominate colleges and universities throughout the sixties.”<sup>84</sup> SDS recognized the potential of student activists and their ability to cause change within the university system.

Gitlin realized the possibility of real change in student protesters, and he is a prime example of a protestor turned academic who continues to protest in his own way, specifically through his writing and teaching, because he still believes in the necessity of students to protest against what they see as injustice or indifference in their society.

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<sup>83</sup> Penina Migdal-Glazer, “The New Left: A Style of Protest” (*The Journal of Higher Education*, vol. 38, no. 3 Mar 1967), 119 – 130, available online at <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1979265>>, accessed 28 Apr 2009, 128.

<sup>84</sup> Clecak, *Radical Paradoxes*, 240.

Gitlin taught at the University of California, Berkeley from 1978 until 1994, at which time he spent a year in Paris, at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (The School for Advanced Studies in Social Sciences) as a guest lecturer. He then joined the Department of Social Sciences at New York University. In 2002, Gitlin took a professorship at Columbia University in New York as the Chair of the PhD program in Communications. He has been a guest lecturer at several top schools around the world and continues to teach both undergraduate and graduate level classes on a wide variety of issues including the effects of media on social movements and how politics are affected by media coverage.

In addition to his teaching, Gitlin also is a widely published author with fifteen books and countless articles that range in topic from politics to social movements of the past, technology in media, the state of American journalism, revolutions around the country and the world, and more recently the marketing of American politics to the American public. Because of his noted background in the counterculture and his involvement with SDS, Gitlin also contributes to various media outlets on the 1960s and that decade's influence on modern society. Most recently, Gitlin wrote, *Occupy Nation: The Roots, The Spirits, and the Promise of Occupy Wall Street*, in which he discusses the Occupy Wall Street Movement and compares it to the student-led protest of the 1960s demonstrating that his interest in political movements and the role students play in the shaping of democratic politics has not wavered from his own time as a student activist.

Gitlin is an excellent example of a student protestor who continued his protests. Yet instead of trying to overthrow the university system, he now works within it. By remaining in the university setting, Gitlin gained the freedom to openly research and teach the importance of the student protests of the 1960s, thus both informing and guiding future generations about the role students can play in a democracy. His prolific writing and lecture topics continue to demonstrate his views on both the politics of the past and current political subjects. Also by working in the university setting, Gitlin essentially ensured his ability to continue to protest although in a very different format. Rather than march and participate in sit-ins, he now writes, teaches, and lectures about the issues he feels are important. One need only view the topics of his many newspaper, journal, and magazine articles and the numerous op-ed pieces written throughout the past twenty years to note Gitlin's views on current social and cultural issues. Not one to shy away from controversial topics, Gitlin now researches, writes, and teaches on social movements, the relationship between the government and the media, and politics and its portrayal in various mass media platforms, topics that were important to the New Left and remain important to today's generation of student protestors.

Gitlin recognizes that many people look back at the 1960s as simply a time of over-indulgence and sexual revolution, and, while he does agree that there were many who did over-indulge at times, he argues that the 1960s and SDS specifically empowered "young people to take control of their own lives to pursue both happiness and virtue." He continues, "One may rue the overindulgences while still recognizing that the movements

of the time preludes to a necessary enlargement of democracy, freedom, and moral seriousness. The good of this immense effort outweighs the bad.”<sup>85</sup>

In its inception, the students and members of SDS tried to rely on group leadership and “little d-democracy” for organization. The roles and responsibilities of members were never quite static or clearly defined, which was, to say the least, problematic. This unorganized approach also applied to women’s roles in these student groups where women were not considered equal members or participants. To complicate further the dynamic between men and women members, traditional gender roles were applied to SDS, ironically a group determined to change the politics of their society. Although Todd Gitlin’s experiences and his subsequent academic career provide one perspective on student activism, historian Sara Evans and other female members of the Civil Rights and New Left Movements tell a different story. Her story provides key insights into the roles women played and the gender related issues that affected SDS and how this in turn affected the members’ efforts to achieve social change throughout their post-graduate careers.

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<sup>85</sup> Todd Gitlin, “How to Remember 1968: Tumult Ruled, Yet Memories of the Time are Often More Distortion than Reality” *LA Times*, 6 January 2006, available online at < <http://sixties-1.blogspot.com/2008/01/how-to-remember-1968-todd-gitlin.html>>, accessed 12 Aug 2012.

## CHAPTER II

WOMEN IN THE STUDENT MOVEMENT  
SARA M. EVANS

“The principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes – the legal subordination of one sex to the other – is wrong itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; that it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the role of one side, nor disability to the other.” ~John Stuart Mill, 1869<sup>1</sup>

“The truth will set you free. But first, it will piss you off.” ~Gloria Steinem<sup>2</sup>

Many histories of the New Left Movement do not specifically mention roles that women played. Gender as a category of analysis is all but absent in most of the studies of the New Left movement. When women’s contributions are included, they are described as various support or clerical positions or as separate women’s concerns, rather than as a collective issue that both men and women faced at the time. Most historians do agree that the Women’s Rights and Feminist Movements of the 1960s stemmed in part from the surge of activism that the New Left Movement brought. The experiences many women gained from student protests and political activism helped usher in a new wave of feminism and influenced them for the rest of their lives. Indeed, historian Sara Evans serves as a prime example of a student activist who followed a path through civil rights, student rights, and women’s rights to a career in academia where she continues her

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<sup>1</sup> John Stuart Mill, *The Subjugation of Women*, reprinted online by Forgotten Books, 2008, available online at <<http://forgottenbooks.com/jsmill/women.com>>. accessed 5 Jan 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Gloria Steinem, “Interview with Gloria Steinem: Steinem Still Waging Battle Against Discrimination” (*Worcester, Massachusetts Telegram and Gazette*, 15 Nov 2006).



efforts to foment social change. Even the title of her classic study on student activism, *The Personal is Political*, is a clear indication of how these early years in her life determined the decisions she has made in later years.<sup>3</sup>

Post World War II society had a difficult time determining and coming to terms with the changing roles of women. The number of women working outside of the home had dramatically increased, thanks in large part to “Rosie the Riveters,” women who worked factory jobs in the place of men who had gone to fight in World War II. At the war’s end, many women found they enjoyed working outside the home and sought to keep their jobs after the men came home. The years after World War II also saw a surge in the number of women attending colleges and universities. In 1950, women composed only around 30 percent of the college student population; however, by 1970, women comprised nearly 73 percent. Yet, rather than promote a more gender equal society, colleges in the early post-war years tended to push women into more traditionally “feminine” roles such as housewife and mother. So then, how did the second wave of feminism come about in the 1960s, just fifteen short years after the end of World War II?<sup>4</sup>

The Women’s Movement of the 1960s is referred to as the “second wave” of feminism with the “first wave” of feminism occurring many years before with the Woman’s Suffrage Movement. The first organized movement on behalf of women began

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<sup>3</sup> Sara M. Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women’s Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Random House Books, 1980).

<sup>4</sup> Sara M. Evans, “Sons, Daughters, and Patriarchy: Gender and the 1968 Generation,” *American Historical Review Forum*, *American Historical Review*, vol. 114, no. 2 (Apr 2009), 333.

in 1848 with the Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, New York. At the time, women pushed and fought for equality in their marriages, rights to their children, and money in the cases of death or divorce, and most notably, the right to vote.<sup>5</sup> After gaining suffrage with the addition of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution in 1920, many women believed their work to be finished since a constitutional amendment giving them the vote had been the main goal of feminist activism. In addition, the devastation of two world wars made many women turn their attention to other battles at home, focusing specifically on the war effort rather than other women's issues. So, when the world wars ended, women's rights issues arose once again and the second wave of feminism began.

The term "feminist," when used by historians, refers to a person participating in one of the collective groups or organizations that advocated for the equal treatment and rights of women in the 1960s and 1970s. The term is not usually used to refer to women of the earlier first wave. Most historians in the field of women's history call those earlier movements, such as the suffrage and abolitionist movements of the 1920s, "proto-feminist." The Suffrage Movement, however, is widely acknowledged as the first wave of feminism that swept through America paving the way for future feminists.

There are several differences between the earlier movement and the feminist movement of the 1960s. The first wave of women activists tended to be either educated at home or at a specifically "women's only" institution, whereas second wave feminists were typically well educated, holding either four-year degrees or some advanced

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<sup>5</sup> Miriam Schneir, *Feminism in Our Time: The Essential Writings, World War II to the Present* (New York, Vintage Books, 1994), x.

university degree. It was also common for many men to speak for women in the early years. For example, authors and philosophers John Stuart Mill and Friedrich Engels often gave speeches on behalf of women at the turn of the century since many people at that time did not believe women could or should speak for themselves. In addition, African Americans and other minorities rarely spoke publicly about women's rights causes with the exception of noted abolitionists Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth; however, the second wave of feminists greatly involved not only African Americans but also Asian Americans, Native Americans, and Latinos in their causes. Finally, early women's rights groups did not focus heavily on women's reproductive rights, childbirth issues, homosexuality, or rape. With the occurrence of the sexual revolution of the 1960s, however, second wave feminists could not only speak about such topics more openly, but they also focused specifically on these topics when protesting.<sup>6</sup>

Under the umbrella of the term "feminism," there are four main types: radical, militant, social, and domestic. Radical feminists believe a reordering of society and gender relationships would be necessary for true equality. Militant feminists, like radical feminists, also believe reorganization is necessary but are also openly hostile towards organizations or institutions that discriminate against women. Social feminists are those who work for reform of especially women's issues such as suffrage, birth control, or the Equal Rights Amendment. Finally, domestic feminists argue that the true solution to change is in raising the status of traditional women's work such as homemaking and raising children. They argue for more appreciation of domestic jobs. No matter the

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, xii – viv.

category or time period, feminists have all attempted to answer the questions, “How are women different from men?” and “What is a woman’s true nature, her attributes, and her abilities?”<sup>7</sup>

It was clear that social changes were occurring in the 1950s, but many did not understand how to define these changes or their causes. During World War II, psychologists and social scientists alike attempted to define the changing roles of women, focusing on middle-class white women in society. They differed widely on the role women should play and the responsibilities they had to their families. Two main competing theories were offered on “modern women.” The first, put forth by Phillip Wylie in his book *Generation of Vipers*, accused women of being overbearing tyrants who controlled men to the point of emasculation. In opposition, psychologist Marynia Farnham and historian Ferdinand Lundberg claimed in their work, *Modern Women: The Lost Sex*, that many social problems were caused by women leaving home and abandoning their husbands and sons.<sup>8</sup> Either way, it seemed that women were to blame in some way for the negative changes to social mores that had begun to occur at war’s end.

By the 1950s, the term feminist tended to refer to an “unfulfilled, neurotic, and grasping women.”<sup>9</sup> Many psychologists and specialists felt that women needed to find a sense of personal fulfillment, and so they encouraged women to find it in the domestic

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<sup>7</sup> Lois Banner, *Women in Modern America: A Brief History* (Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace, 1974), vii.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 217.

<sup>9</sup> Evans, *Personal Politics*, 3.

roles of marriage and child bearing. By the mid-1950s, women married at younger and younger ages and had more children than the previous generation. And, although they were attending colleges and gaining employment outside of the home at a higher percentage as well, they did so with the premise of using their education to be better wives and mothers.<sup>10</sup>

Under the surface, however, many women felt frustrated and suffocated and unfulfilled. Slowly this became more and more evident. No one captured this feeling of unfulfillment quite so well as Betty Friedan in her 1963 work, *The Feminine Mystique*. Friedan had been a freelance writer for various national magazines while also maintaining a suburban household and rearing three children. She circulated a survey among her fellow Smith College graduates for their fifteen-year reunion asking questions about their lives and if they were happy with their lives. She discovered that most of them responded that they had “personal problems” they could not quite name. After more extensive research, Friedan discovered what she called “a concerted campaign waged since the end of World War II to convince American women they could achieve happiness in life only through marriage and motherhood.”<sup>11</sup> This ideology she termed, “The Feminine Mystique.” She claimed that woman’s magazines, educators, and advertising experts were, “all in on it,” since it served several social needs. For example, it placed women back in the home rather than in jobs that were needed for returning soldiers. It also instilled the desire for more consumer goods such as washing machines,

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>11</sup> Schneir, *Feminism in Our Time*, 48.

kitchen appliances like ovens and toasters, and new goods for babies such as strollers and clothing, all of which helped boost the new peacetime economy.<sup>12</sup>

According to Friedan, “Millions of women lived their lives in the image of those pretty pictures of an American suburban housewife, kissing their husbands goodbye in front of the picture window, depositing their station-wagons-full of children at school, and smiling as they ran their new electric waxer over the spotless kitchen floor. Their only dream was to be perfect wives and mothers; their highest ambition to have five children, and a beautiful house, their only fight to get and keep their husbands. They had no thought for the un-feminine problems of the world outside of the home.”<sup>13</sup> The feeling of unfulfillment was pervasive among stay-at-home women across the country.

The *Feminine Mystique* became an instant topic of conversation. Speaking to Friedan about a speech he delivered at a Smith College graduation, Adlai Steven remarked that many young women “feel frustrated and far apart from the great issues and stirring debate for which their education has given them understanding and relish. Once they wrote poetry. Now it’s the laundry list.”<sup>14</sup> Most women were expected to maintain a very clean and tidy home, raise the children, entertain numerous guests, and volunteer with their children’s schools and scout troops; all while maintaining her own and the rest of the family’s happiness. For those women who did not have maids, this became an increasingly daunting task. If they failed to meet social expectations, many women often felt guilty or ashamed.

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>13</sup> Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1963), 61.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

Friedan referred to the feminine mystique as “the problem that has no name.” In the opening paragraph to her work, she described the problem as, “a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning that women suffered in the middle of the twentieth century in the United States.” She went on to write, “Each suburban wife struggled with it alone. As she made the beds, shopped for groceries, matched slipcover material, ate peanut butter sandwiches with her children, chauffeured Cub Scouts and Brownies, lay beside her husband at night – she was afraid to ask even herself the silent question, ‘Is this all?’”<sup>15</sup>

Yet it was clear that the traditional roles of women were being challenged. In 1960, President John F. Kennedy spoke at a meeting of the National Council of Women of the United States. At the time, the Council consisted of approximately 4 million members nationwide. The topic of the meeting was, “American Women: The Nation’s Greatest Untapped Resource.” Instead of addressing the topic, however, President Kennedy instead discussed the country’s foreign policy towards Africa in the upcoming years. After his speech, the moderator of the event claimed she would provide the next President a list of names of highly qualified women so that he could speak to the issue. Not surprising then, Kennedy made some 240 appointments after taking office, only nine of whom were women. Upset by this, former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt then sent him a three page list of names of women qualified for appointments.

In part to address the growing dismay of women, Kennedy established the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women and appointed Eleanor Roosevelt its

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

executive chairman and Assistant Secretary of Labor, Esther Peterson, its executive vice chairman. Kennedy claimed he formed the commission because, “prejudices and outmoded customs act as barriers to the full realization of women’s basic rights.”<sup>16</sup> When the commission’s report, *The Presidential Report on American Women*, was published in 1963, it pointed to some areas of inequality between men and women including discrimination in the workplace and unequal pay, and stated the need for more child-care centers that would enable women with small children to work during the daytime. The Commission was careful to point out some areas that needed addressing while simultaneously maintaining the importance of women remaining in the home. It made recommendations as to how women could “continue their roles as wives and mothers while making a maximum contribution to the world around them.”<sup>17</sup> In addition, the report also praised traditional women’s roles and touted the importance of the nuclear family as a deterrent to communism. It claimed, it was everybody’s job to fight against communism in free society, especially mothers who had influence over their children’s values.<sup>18</sup>

Although many women did stay home and raise children, many women also worked outside the home in increasing numbers. By 1960, nearly 3 million women with children under the age of six worked a full time job outside the home. By 1962, an

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<sup>16</sup> Schneir, *Feminism in Our Time*, 40.

<sup>17</sup> “American Women,” Report by the President’s Commission the Status of Women (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 14 Dec 1963).

<sup>18</sup> Passages from this report can be found in Schneir, *Feminism in Our Time*. For more information on the President’s Commission on the Status of Women see also Banner, *Women in Modern America*; or for the full report see “Executive Order 10980,” 14 Dec 1961, “American Women” (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1963), available online at <<http://research.archives.gov/description/300011>>, accessed 15 May 2012.



estimated 23 million women worked a full time job. Seven million of these working women were employed clerical workers such as secretaries or book keepers. Others worked as service workers such as waitresses, beauticians, and hospital workers (3 million); factory workers (3 million); and technical employees such as teachers, nurses, and librarians (3.5 million). While many women worked outside the home, they earned less money for similar work performed by their male counterparts. A study of 1900 companies in 1961 discovered that over 80 percent of them had dual pay scales for men and women, and on average women made only 60 percent of a man's salary for a similar job.<sup>19</sup> When asked about the dual pay scales, most companies claimed that women were unreliable workers, needing to take more time off than men, or were in and out of the workforce to get married or have children. In addition, many claimed that in a lot of cases, men refused to work for a woman. As a result, companies passed women over for promotions or management positions all together.

The increase in the number of female college students and the rise in working women contributed to the changes in societal preconceptions of "a woman's place." The contradictions between the traditional wife and mother roles of women and the growing number of college educated working women, in addition to the sexual revolution and introduction of the sexual freedom of easily available birth control, set the stage for the second wave of feminism. Another major factor in this change was the Civil Rights Movement. It not only affected the way society viewed African Americans but it also changed the way it viewed other groups, women included.

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<sup>19</sup> Schneir, *Feminism in Our Time*, 43.

Women played key roles in the Civil Rights Movement. They learned not only organizing and protest skills that benefited the Civil Rights Movement but also skills that helped the efforts of the New Left Movement as well. Women across the South in particular began participating in the desegregation movement through their local churches and YWCAs. Although churches in the South were segregated, they “also nourished elements of egalitarian idealism, especially among college-educated young people.”<sup>20</sup> Many churches, specifically Presbyterian and Episcopal, also established special facilities for young people to meet and worship, complete with ordained ministers, on several college campuses to encourage young people not only to become involved with the burgeoning civil rights movements but also to join the church. It was the link between the liberal politics of the time and the churches’ history of political activism based on the ideology of Christian Existentialism and community that drew many young people into these facilities.<sup>21</sup>

Young activists organized civil rights campaigns through their local chapters of the YWCA or their campus Christian facilities. Southern women especially, came to civil rights activism through their church groups or YWCA associations. In his work on this subject, Doug Rossinow claims, “This determination that liberal politics was insufficient to make a broken world whole, to achieve both authenticity and social justice, opened the way for the emergence of the New Left.”<sup>22</sup> For example, noted civil rights

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<sup>20</sup> Evans, *Personal Politics*, 29.

<sup>21</sup> Douglass C. Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 86.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

worker and future women's rights leader Casey Hayden worked for the YWCA right after she graduated from college. She then became a leading member of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) that worked for the rights of African Americans in the South. It was here that Hayden and many other women learned valuable organization skills and gained experiences that helped them later with other New Left groups such as SDS.

Basic skills such as organization, inter-personal relations, and administrative abilities – mostly skills associated with women – were needed to maintain the group's efforts. And, although most women learned and indeed mastered these skills during their time campaigning for civil rights, many men still viewed women in a traditional way. Historian Sara Evans interviewed a number of women who were politically active in both the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left Movement and most claimed that at the time, many men were known to brag about their sexual conquests and frequency of sexual encounters with female members of the group, were verbally condescending toward women, and displayed “braggadocio” during demonstrations.<sup>23</sup> Men dominated the formal leadership of most New Left groups, SDS included. In addition, men also dominated the decision making processes of both the direction and meaning of the group. Although women participated in large numbers, they remained in the background; the men embodied the movement and became the spokespeople in the public eye. This soon changed thanks to a few determined movement workers like Casey Hayden and Mary King.

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<sup>23</sup> Evans, *Personal Politics*, 46.

In 1963, a young woman named Mary King joined SNCC and stayed on through the 1964 Freedom Summer that brought approximately 800 student volunteers to the South in an attempt to register African Americans to vote. At the end of the summer, SNCC called a meeting in Waveland, Mississippi. King, with the help of her former roommate and fellow activist, Casey Hayden (wife of SDS founder and *Port Huron Statement* author Tom Hayden), wrote a position paper for the meeting questioning, “How her perception of herself as a woman might affect the structure and program of SNCC.” They limited the scope of the paper to just “the behavior in the movement, rather than the second-class status of women.”<sup>24</sup> The paper called into question the traditional activities women were relegated to such as typing and cooking, even though they were experienced and competent at other jobs. It also asked why women were not allowed to join in the decision making process for the group. When presented, the paper received “crushing criticism.”<sup>25</sup>

Although there was a rising tide of feminism, men still dominated SDS leadership and men wrote most of the literature put out by the group in expressly male language. For example, SDS’s most famous manifesto the *Port Huron Statement*, written by Tom Hayden in 1962, stated in its opening pages, “We regard men as infinitely precious and possessed of unfulfilled capacities for reason, freedom, and love.” It continued, “...we see little reason why men cannot meet with increasing skill the complexities and responsibilities of their situation, if society is organized not for minority, but for majority

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<sup>24</sup> Schneir, *Feminism in Our Time*, 90.

<sup>25</sup> Evans, *Personal Politics*, 30.

participation in decision making.”<sup>26</sup> When Sara Evans interviewed women in the movement, all of them confirmed that the intellectual side of the movement was reserved strictly for men. As one woman stated, “we were always there and were respected but it was always the guys who did the writing and position formulating.”<sup>27</sup> Additionally, a number of women were involved in drafting sections of the *Port Huron Statement* but when men were later interviewed about the role women played in its formulation and writing, the only female they could recall was Casey Hayden. By her own admission she was “extremely vocal” about certain topics, but claimed she never helped write any section of the *Statement* itself.<sup>28</sup>

SDS faced other changes in the mid-1960s. Rather than just educational protesting, with its commitment to non-violent action and intellectual-centered policies, SDS shifted to a more “resistance” style of politics in 1963. For example, the new goal was to make trouble and act disorderly in the public sphere. Todd Gitlin realized the shift when he heard Tom Hayden claim at a meeting, “Having recognized that the establishment does not listen to public opinion, it does not care about the New Left – the New Left is moving toward confrontation.” According to Gitlin, “...the turning point, in my opinion, was when ‘resistance’ became the official watchword of the movement.”<sup>29</sup> Obviously, SDS was moving in a new direction.

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<sup>26</sup> Tom Hayden, *The Port Huron Statement: A Visionary Call*, Electronic Book, available online at <[http://books.google.com/books?id=Qy57wrJoSngC&printsec=frontcover&dq=the+port+huron+statement&hl=en&ei=1R9HTJLsHoL78Ab3u4GpBQ&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCsQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=Qy57wrJoSngC&printsec=frontcover&dq=the+port+huron+statement&hl=en&ei=1R9HTJLsHoL78Ab3u4GpBQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCsQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false)>, accessed 29 July 2009, 2.

<sup>27</sup> Evans, *Personal Politics*, 109.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>29</sup> Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1993), 285.

The escalation of troops sent to fight in the Vietnam War had a major impact on the country and especially the shift in SDS's policies. Hayden visited Hanoi, Vietnam, in 1965 and returned claiming, "Our task is now an all-out siege against the war machine." That same year, 190,000 troops deployed to Vietnam. In 1967, that number jumped to 525,000 troops and a year later rose again to 540,000 young men sent to fight in Vietnam.<sup>30</sup> SDS scheduled a march on Washington in April 1965 to protest the war, not expecting a large turnout; however, nearly 15,000 people showed up, most of them students. This march catapulted SDS into the spotlight as the country's leading and largest student movement. The number of SDS chapters grew from 35 to over 100 in the few months that followed, and reached 227 chapters by the end of the following year.<sup>31</sup> Membership also grew into the thousands on campuses across the country.<sup>32</sup> In the second part of his three part series on SDS, author James O'Brien confirmed Gitlin's assertion that in 1965 the New Left underwent a number of changes, "both in its conception of society and its strategic thinking." He further claimed, "Draft resistance, underground newspapers, Guerilla Theater, and above all Black Power, are terms that would have evoked few signs of recognition three short years before. But none of them should be surprising in the light of what the New Left became by 1965."<sup>33</sup> SDS members

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<sup>30</sup> Richard Braungart, "Journey into All-or-Nothing Politics, A Review of: *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* by Todd Gitlin" (*Contemporary Sociology*, vol. 17, no. 6, Nov 1988), 735, available online at <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2073551>>, accessed 1 Sept 2009, 735.

<sup>31</sup> James P. O'Brien, "The New Left 1965 – 1967," *Radical America* (vol. 2, no. 5, Sept – Oct 1968), available online at <<http://dl.lib.brown.edu/radicalamerica/about.html>>, accessed 29 June 2010, 2.

<sup>32</sup> Richard E. Peterson, "The Student Left in Higher Education" (*Daedalus: The MIT Press*, vol. 97, no. 1 Students and Politics, Winter 1968), 293 – 295, 297.

<sup>33</sup> James P. O'Brien, "The Early Days of the New Left" (*Radical America*, vol. 2, no. 3, May – June 1968), 25.

felt that their position papers and meetings were not working. These tactics had produced little effect on the nature and direction of national political policy. Something more dramatic needed to be done.<sup>34</sup>

Changes in the country's political climate and new SDS leaders from the mid-western universities, so called "prairie people," affected the group. These new leaders were younger, less intellectual, and came from more working-class and blue-collar backgrounds. Many of the "Old Guard" or original members of the New Left and SDS spent much of the previous year organizing poor people in the ghettos of northern cities. In their place, the newer SDS group relied on more extreme on-campus protests such as "teach-ins" and draft resistance campaigns to help reshape the student movement into a more radical organization.

One of these groups was the Free Speech Movement, or FSM. FSM organized in the fall of 1964 when classes resumed at the University of California, Berkeley after summer vacation. Students returned to new regulations regarding on-campus political activity. No students were allowed to protest on campus grounds any off-campus issue, including political issues. The Dean of Students, well known liberal educator Clark Kerr, posited that the university was for learning, not protesting. A few years before, he had boasted that the California University System was a "knowledge factory" and its main function was to serve the governmental, industrial, and military needs of the country.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Peter Clecak, *Radical Paradoxes: Dilemmas of the American Left 1945 – 1970* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 243.

<sup>35</sup> Carl Davidson, *New Radicals in the Multiversity and Other SDS Writings on Student Syndicalism* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 1990), preface.

He also notably claimed that the school was not merely a university but rather a “multiversity” -a center of learning of infinite variety and the “prime instrument of national purpose.”<sup>36</sup> In response to these new regulations, many student activists protested anyway and were arrested by local or state police, drawing sympathy from fellow activists and students.<sup>37</sup> The 800 members of FSM fought to have the ban on on-campus protests lifted because they felt the university was the key to the New Left movement. In the words of Mario Salvo, “The university is the place where people begin seriously to question conditions of their existence and raise the issue of whether they can be committed to the society they have been born into. This is part of a growing understanding among many people in America that history has not ended, that a better society is possible, and that it is worth dying for.”<sup>38</sup> SDS attempted to highlight their belief in a strong pluralistic, non-dogmatic, and decentralized society and to demonstrate the disparity between the “American dream” and the reality of “American life.” By

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<sup>36</sup> Diane Ravitch, *The Troubled Crusade: American Education 1945 – 1980* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 184.

<sup>37</sup> In 1965, Kerr decided not to expel those students arrested during various protests on campus, including the student protest that occupied many of the college’s administration buildings but the California University system eventually pressured him to do so. He was criticized by students for not meeting their demands and by the University Board of Regents for being too lenient on the student activists. FBI director J. Edgar Hoover provided conservative politician Ronald Reagan information on Kerr during Reagan’s campaign. Reagan painted Kerr as a danger to the education system, calling him “too dangerous to lead.” When he became governor of California, Reagan had him fired from his position as University of California’s President. For more on Kerr see: Clark Kerr, *The Gold and the Blue: A Personal Memoir of the University of California, 1949 – 1967, Volume Two: Political Turmoil* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003).

<sup>38</sup> The full speech, “An End to History” by Mario Salvo is available in Irwin Unger and Debi Unger, eds., *The Times They Were a Changin’: A Sixties Reader*, (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1998), 75 – 80.



doing so, they hoped many would become inspired to fight for radical social change in order to bring the dream and real life closer together.<sup>39</sup>

In addition to the FSM, many colleges held “teach-ins.” Teach-ins were a take on the Civil Rights Movement practice of sit-ins and were aimed both at educating students on a specific topic and at getting them involved in the protests. Teach-ins were not limited to a specific topic or period and were open to the public along with the student body. SDS held one of the first major teach-ins at the University of Michigan in 1965 on ways to end the war in Vietnam. Attended by approximately 2,500 students and faculty, the teach-in consisted of debates, movies, and lectures. The practice was then repeated on numerous campuses across the country. The largest and most noted teach-in took place at UC, Berkeley in May of 1965. The 36 hour event took place on a large field on campus. Nearly 30,000 people, mostly students and faculty, attended. Again, the topic was the war in Vietnam but teach-ins covered a wide array of topics. The overall goal was student education and participation.

Teach-ins were just one method SDS used to collaborate and spread their message. In June of 1965 SDS elected a new president and no one was surprised that the new leader was a “prairie person,” a noted critic of the war in Vietnam, and one of the originators of the teach-in movement, Carl Ogelsby. Led by Ogelsby, the new group of SDS leaders sought to bring about the rise of “student power” and revolution in a wide array of areas they felt were not “authentic.” In his piece on the Student Left, Jack Newfield claimed that these students were revolting against not only capitalism but also

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<sup>39</sup> Peterson, “The Student Left in American Higher Education,” 297.

against “middle-class American values: hypocrisy called Brotherhood Week, assembly lines called colleges, conformity called status, bad taste called Camp, and quiet desperation called success.”<sup>40</sup> In a similar article, also written for *The Nation* in June of 1965, Mervin Freedman claimed that the heart of the student power movement was the fact that “students are being educated to fit into a society they reject.” He went on to claim that, “students are restless and dissatisfied because they recognize that the education they are receiving is not functional to the world they will inhabit in ten or twenty years. Young people, thus, feel cheated by their elders and their teachers.”<sup>41</sup> These feelings of dissatisfaction with institutions of higher education only added to the students’ drive to find authenticity for both themselves and the society they would enter after their college years.

When protesting against the university system, some specific topics arose. First, many students resented the practice of *in loco parentis* by most colleges. Latin for, “in the place of a parent,” the policy of *in loco parentis* allowed the university to act as a guardian or parent to all the students on campus. This meant female students usually had a strict 10:00 pm curfew and were not allowed to be in a boy’s dormitory at any time of day. If a student violated a rule or was found “morally inept,” the school could use *in loco parentis* to expel the student, without any type of due process. In the 1960s when

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<sup>40</sup> Jack Newfield, “Revolt Without Dogma: The Student Left” (*The Nation*, vol. 200, no. 19, 10 May 1965), 491.

<sup>41</sup> Mervin B. Freedman, “The Post-Industrial Generation: Roots of Student Discontent” (*The Nation*, vol. 200, issue 24, 14 June 1965), 639.

students began organizing and protesting on college campuses across the country, many universities used this policy to restrict or even forbid on-campus protests.<sup>42</sup>

In addition to protesting against *in loco parentis*, many students protested what they considered “value free social sciences, excessive specialization, and compartmentalization of knowledge,” and above all, “the cumbersome academic bureaucracy.”<sup>43</sup> Students claimed the education system treated them as merely numbers, rather than as individuals. Instead, it focused on merely teaching a set of specific instructions to fit neatly into society at the end of their schooling. Students petitioned for smaller class sizes, more choice in the course offerings, and more personal freedom on campus. In addition, many schools experienced protests against living conditions on campuses, the suspension of student protestors, and the firing of popular teachers. Most students protested against what they felt were the “impersonal and purposeless routines of academic life.”<sup>44</sup> The number of protests on college campuses across the country steadily grew until many people asked if any learning was taking place or were students only interested in protesting.

During this time of campus protests, SDS failed to capitalize on the popular teach-in movement, off-campus protests, and especially the Free Speech Movement. James O’Brien stated in his second piece for *Radical America*, FSM had “laid bare the relationship of the modern American university to maintenance of discrimination and

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<sup>42</sup> For more on the policy and practice of *in loco parentis*, see Terry Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties: From Greensboro to Wounded Knee* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 97 – 132.

<sup>43</sup> Clecak, *Radical Paradoxes*, 239.

<sup>44</sup> O’Brien, “The New Left, 1965 – 1967,” 6.

privilege in society.”<sup>45</sup> Some historians argue that the reason SDS failed to respond adequately to the growing support for their cause was the sheer number of people joining the organization. With so many new members and the new ideological direction of SDS, the organization simply could not keep up. So many new chapters of SDS opened across the country in the summer of 1965 that SDS headquarters could not handle all the mail, literature orders, membership requests, and new chapter registrations.<sup>46</sup> SDS planned a meeting in December of that year as an attempt to create a “second Port Huron.” They hoped everyone assembled would present their new ideas and create a new vision for the future of SDS. This new vision, however, never came to fruition. By this time, SDS focused on “male” issues such as the draft and the war in Vietnam which only pushed any type of women’s issues to the background and made it more difficult for women to put forth any new female centered ideas or issues

“Women’s issues” were topics of discussion only among the female members of the group. This lack of concern about women’s issues was evidenced when SDS leaders called for papers and discussion topics for their “rethinking conference” in December of 1965. Males contributed nearly all the papers and discussion topics. James Weinstein, an Old Guard member noted that the lack of female participation never seemed to be a topic at SDS meetings. “Women made peanut butter sandwiches, waited on tables, cleaned up, got laid. That was their role.”<sup>47</sup> Sara Evans agreed with that sentiment when she claimed in her book *Personal Politics*, “The new male recruits were too busy

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 – 6.

<sup>46</sup> Evans, *Personal Politics*, 161.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

asserting themselves; the old male leadership was too busy defending itself; and female partisans on both sides were too wrapped up in the issues at hand to join together as women.”<sup>48</sup> Not until Mary King and Casey Hayden presented a paper, detailing the problem women faced within the movement did the issue surface at the conference. Similar to their 1963 position paper questioning the role of women in SDS, they asserted that the discrimination they faced created a kind of “caste system” of institutionalized inequality.<sup>49</sup> Prior to the meeting, King and Hayden sent the paper to forty women involved in various politically active groups asking for their input and opinions on the topic. In the paper, they argued that women, like African Americans, “seem to be caught up in a common-law system that operates, sometimes subtly, forcing them to work around or outside hierarchical structures of power which may exclude them.” They went on to claim, “It is a caste system which, at its worst, uses and exploits women.”<sup>50</sup>

King and Hayden pointed out the inconsistent ideologies of the egalitarianism of the movement and the segregation of gender roles within it. They expressed what many women working with SDS felt at the time. Although women were still viewed as unequals among the group leadership, Hayden and King exposed the growing sense of self-worth and feminine consciousness among the female workers.<sup>51</sup> They pointed out the difficulty that many women faced when trying to discuss this topic with men in the organization, noting that the usual response to a “woman’s issue” was derision. They

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>49</sup> Schneir, *Feminism in Our Time*, 90.

<sup>50</sup> Casey Hayden and Mary King. “Sex and Caste: A Kind of Memo” (*Liberation*, vol. 10, Apr 1966), 35.

<sup>51</sup> Evans, *Personal Politics*, 100.

pointed to the example of a previous attempt at bringing up women's issues at an SDS meeting only to be told, "You just need a good screw!" from a man in the audience.<sup>52</sup>

Undeterred, the two maintained their fight to point out the practice of unequal treatment within the movement. King and Hayden also noted that this particular area was one where they could apply the lessons and ideas they had learned through their participation with the Civil Rights Movement. Their time in the movement prepared them well for this new struggle. Their paper prompted the SDS National Council to call for a resolution recognizing "women's issues" and "sexism" as legitimate issues within the organization.<sup>53</sup> This was the first time SDS leadership officially addressed women's rights issues. Although this was a small victory for women's concerns, it seemed to come too late to result in real change anywhere in SDS. And indeed, the conference failed to live up to the new leadership's expectations. The only official change to come out of the meeting was to change the name of the SDS bulletin to *New Left Notes*.<sup>54</sup> SDS had become too large to recreate the close group and community first fostered by the earlier organization, making change difficult.

Yet women and their rights became heated topics of debate among SDS members and others across the country. The *New York Times* ran articles questioning the traditional notion of college educated women staying home to raise children, with one article titled, "A Huge Waste: Educated Womanpower" and another called "Tapping a U.S. National Resource: Let's Draft Our Girls." On the other end of the spectrum, at a

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<sup>52</sup> Schneir, *Feminism in Our Time*, 95.

<sup>53</sup> Rossinow, *Politics of Authenticity*, 304.

<sup>54</sup> O'Brien, "The New Left 1965 – 1967," 7.

symposium at Vassar College in 1965 entitled, “the College Woman in Today’s World,” the consensus was, “If the performance of college women from 1920 through World War II has been somewhat disappointing, the mental attitudes of young women since World War II are alarming. Not only do girls drop out or break down; those who stay in college often wonder why they are there.” Women received a conflicted message – it was beneficial to get a college education and women should attend college, not to improve their career opportunities, but instead to benefit their children and family as a stay-at-home wife and mother.

These comments were indicative that many women had begun to question what their roles were, not only within their own homes but also in the larger society. Also, women working with SDS and other student activist groups began to question whether staying active with an organization such as SDS would help their cause or if they should establish their own separate organization focused on “women’s issues.” When asked about this topic, activist Cathy Wilkerson recalled, “The whole fight about whether women should stay in the Left or form a separatist women’s movement erupted there full blown and with total passion – all within our little women’s group.”<sup>55</sup>

Historian Sara Evans also grappled with these questions as a female member of the New Left and as a student protestor at the time. Born into a well-educated family where both her grandmothers and parents had college degrees, Evans was expected to attend college. Both parents were also anti-segregationists who taught Evans that the

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<sup>55</sup> “The Women’s Movement and Women in SDS: Cathy Wilkerson Recalls the Tensions” (New York: Columbia University Oral History Collection, Interviewed by Ron Grele, 2 Jan 1985), available online at <<http://library.columbia.edu/indiv/ccoh.html>>, accessed 10 Nov 2011.

racial divide had no place in American society. Evans' father was a Methodist minister and the head of a large church in their hometown in South Carolina. In 1942, he gave a sermon based on the Bible verse, "God hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation."<sup>56</sup> For this, he and his family were relocated to a tiny town in Georgia. Not long after this, Mr. Evans moved his family to Dallas where he had taken a position as a professor of Divinity at Southern Methodist University. Evans recalls her father's fondness for this job, noting that, "He absolutely loved the academic atmosphere. He basically sat around discussing theological theory all day."<sup>57</sup> In addition to his teaching duties, the new job provided Mr. Evans a place to continue his political activism on behalf of Civil Rights.

After graduating high school, Evans applied to Duke University, the school where her father earned his divinity degree. Very shortly after arriving at Duke, Evans became active in the Methodist Student Center. Although she had grown up in a politically active family, this was Evans' first involvement with the organization and activism herself. In addition to the Methodist Center, Evans also joined the local chapter of the YWCA, tutoring African American youth. This led to her increased involvement with the local African American community and her first official act of protest. Along with a group of her fellow students, she participated in a "kneel-in" at an all-white church that previously

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<sup>56</sup> Acts 17:26, King James Version Holy Bible.

<sup>57</sup> Sara M. Evans, "Interview with Sara Margaret Evans," Interviewed by Roger Adelson, *Historian* (vol. 63, Issue 1, Fall 2000), 1 – 15, available online at <<http://web.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/ehost/delivery?sid=48579e12-e.com>>, accessed 24 Aug 2012.



refused to allow the integrated group to join a worship service. This became the first in a succession of protests Evans participated in throughout her time at Duke.

Like many of her fellow classmates, the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963 had a deep impact on Evans. Inspired by the Peace Corps and Kennedy's call for the young people to work actively for change, Evans spent the summer in Africa building schools. Before leaving for her trip, a professor gave her a copy of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*. "It taught me that I had choices, unlike my mother, I could have both a career and a family." Evans remained active with both the Student Center and the YWCA. She credits this time as her personal "feminist awakening." In 1965 she joined an Anti-Vietnam March and then rode a bus to Montgomery to join the final leg of the civil rights movement and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s march to Selma, Alabama. It was on this trip that she met her husband, Harry Boyte, who also came from a politically active family. His father was the only white member in leadership in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

Evans and Boyte soon married and moved to Chicago to attend graduate school. Her husband attended the University of Chicago, but Evans found she was tired of school and decided to get a job instead. Assuming she could get a research position or teach at a junior college, Evans quickly discovered the only jobs available to her were secretarial positions. So, she began work for the University of Chicago's Chapel House, a division of the school's Divinity Program that provided resources and an academic degree in church leadership. In the basement of the chapel, a New Left group printed its radical

newspaper. It was here that Evans met a group of women who were in the process of forming a “Women’s Liberation Group.” The idea fascinated her, and she claimed to have felt immediately as if she had found her place and her cause.

When her husband finished his degree at the University of Chicago, the couple moved to Durham, North Carolina. Evans enrolled and graduated from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill with her degree in American history in 1973 and formed the state’s first women’s liberation group. Motivated by the popular Women’s Liberation Movement happening around the nation, she tried to study women’s history at UNC; however, no particular professors were practicing or teaching specifically women’s history at the time. When asked about this, Evans claims, “I believe that you can’t make history if you don’t have a history. It was important for women to know about their past without romantically looking just at great women.”<sup>58</sup> This motivated Evans to begin a field of historical research devoted specifically to women and the roles they played in the shaping of society. In 1974, along with Professor Peter Filene, Evans helped create and teach the first women’s history course at the University of North Carolina.

Evans taught several courses related to women’s history while at the University of North Carolina completing her doctoral degree. In 1976 after graduating from UNC, Evans took a position at the University of Minnesota and has been a professor there ever since. She is widely credited as the creator of the field of Women’s Studies and is well known for her work in this field. She continues to teach classes on gender roles in

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

American history, comparative women's history, the social history of women and so-called "women's work," and classes on the feminist approach to the study of history. In addition to teaching, Evans is also the editor of *Feminist Studies* and a consulting editor for the *Journal of American History*. She has written seven books, including her dissertation, *Personal Politics: the Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left*, which is widely considered a seminal work in the field of women's history.

When asked about her teaching career and her choice to remain in academia, Evans claims she felt at home in the academic setting. In addition, she felt it was the best possible place to do the most good in a research field she felt was widely underserved. When she joined the women's movement in the early 1960s, she claimed, "I felt like I had found my calling. I had found my cause."<sup>59</sup> After having such a hard time finding a job when she graduated college, and then only finding work as a secretary reinforced her desire to work for women's rights. Evans experienced firsthand how difficult it was for women to be both accepted by men in the New Left movement as equal participants and how difficult it was to obtain a job other than a traditionally female oriented position. In addition to this, she claims, traditional gender roles were in question after Betty Freidan's *Feminine Mystique* was first published, and had confirmed for many women in society that the traditional domestic roles of women caused many to feel unfulfilled and to seek an alternative to their current situations. Many women were enrolling in higher education, working outside the home, and working for various political causes such as

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

civil rights. As a result, women made great gains in the 1960s, which saw, for example, the proposal and initial passage of the Equal Rights Amendment, the President's Commission on the status of Women, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, the formation of the National Organization for Women, Title IX of the Higher Education Act, and the Supreme Court's decision on reproductive rights of women in *Roe v. Wade*.

All of this momentum in the area of women's rights motivated Evans to stay in academia to continue these gains and help young people understand both the need and the importance of these accomplishments. Even now, more than thirty years later, Evans still feels the need for young people to study their history since, "Every issue in the present is discussed and debated through stories about the past." Staying in a higher education setting allowed Evans to research and write about women's issues and most importantly teach young people that the freedoms which they have now were gained through public debate and struggle. She also tries to impress upon her students how vital it is to find common ground among women across generations and backgrounds in order to renew the civic resources gained in earlier struggles in areas such as child care, education, and health. "We must renew these civic resources in order to train future leaders and provide an environment for public problem solving. This is absolutely critical to the survival of democracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century."<sup>60</sup>

Similar to Sara Evans and Todd Gitlin, William Ayers strongly believes in the need to educate young people to help them become successful future leaders. Also a teacher and educational reformer, Ayers has spent the last 30 years helping teach others

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

how to become more “democratic” in the classroom. Although his path to higher education was a very different one from both Todd Gitlin and Sara Evans, Ayers, like Gitlin and Evans, became a professor in part to pass on his belief in the importance of the past to a new generation of young people. Ayers’ time as a student protestor was much more radical than either Gitlin or Evans, but he ultimately decided that academia was the best place to impart his ideas and values to new generations of students.

## CHAPTER III

THE RADICALIZATION OF THE NEW LEFT  
WILLIAM AYERS

“Those who profess to favor freedom and yet depreciate agitation are people who want crops without ploughing the ground; they want rain without thunder and lightning; they want the ocean without the roar of its many waters. The struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, or it may be both. But it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.” ~Frederick Douglass<sup>1</sup>

Better stay away from those  
That carry around a fire hose  
Keep a clean nose  
Watch the plain clothes  
You don't need a weatherman  
To know which way the wind blows.  
~ Subterranean Homesick Blues, Bob Dylan<sup>2</sup>

Just as Todd Gitlin and Sara Evans found themselves returning to the institutions they had so adamantly criticized, so too did William Ayers, who spent his professional career at the University of Illinois, Chicago as a professor of education. Yet as a student activist, he had been a member of the most radical group to come out of Students for a Democratic Society, the Weathermen. His story reveals not only the actions that activists

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<sup>1</sup> Waldo E. Martin Jr., *The Mind of Frederick Douglass* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1974), 175.

<sup>2</sup> Bob Dylan, “Subterranean Homesick Blues,” Lyrics and Music by Bob Dylan, on the album “Bringing It All Back Home” Columbia Records, 1965.

took to implement radical solutions to the problems they saw, but also how he continued his activism throughout his academic career.

SDS underwent a series of changes throughout the last half of the 1960s. The fragmentation and splintering into smaller cells focused on specific issues, coupled with the changing shift in the country's attitude toward the ever escalating war in Vietnam, eroded the organization's ability to effect change. Although the group's membership numbers grew dramatically starting in 1965, it soon became apparent that the organization had grown too big to manage. The characteristics of the New Left participants that once united them- the feeling of alienation and their desire to provide more people the opportunity to participate in social change- now seemed like just a youthful, naïve vision. In 1965, SDS had already started to shift towards a more militant ideology, and by 1968, that militant vision became the main protest tactic of SDS. Sociologist Peter Clecak claims SDS became trapped between the "memory of reform and the desire for revolution." He argues further that by 1968, "the balance had already shifted towards militant revolution romanticism" and the university system was one of the most protested issues.<sup>3</sup>

SDS was among the first critics of the post-World War II university system. Through teach-ins, sit-ins, and marches, the organization created a wave of reforms that changed the way colleges operated including the grading systems, course offerings, the social atmosphere for students, and the make-up of the faculty all the way up to the

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<sup>3</sup> Peter Clecak, *Radical Paradoxes: Dilemmas of the American Left 1945 – 1970* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 234.

boards of trustees. Many if not most universities abandoned the policy of *in loco parentis* and discontinued separate curfews and regulations for male and female students. Additionally, most schools instituted curricula based on updated modes of teaching and learning while others began interdisciplinary studies programs.<sup>4</sup> Some liberal universities relaxed requirements for degrees and others dropped them all together. Student-led direct study programs replaced traditional structured classes. At a small number of universities, a simple pass/fail option replaced number and letter grades or students received no grades at all.<sup>5</sup> With these changes, the Student Left felt they had achieved some of what they set out to accomplish and now agreed that the direct action style of protest was the key to further reform.

The New Left introduced a new form of protest with the advent of campus confrontation, and it was effective at many universities across the nation.<sup>6</sup> In 1967, SDS vice-president Carl Davidson released a series of three papers entitled *New Radicals in the Multiversity and Other SDS Writings on Student Syndicalism* that became the basis for the idea of “student syndicalism” or “student power.” In his writings, Davidson claimed, “A specter is haunting our universities – the specter of a radical and militant nationally coordinated movement for student power.” Soon the theme spread across college campuses and students started using the term in the way African Americans at the time used “Black Power.” Davidson argued that a capitalist society needed a steady

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<sup>4</sup> Nathan M. Pusey, *American Higher Education, 1945 – 1970: A Personal Report* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 157.

<sup>5</sup> Clecak, *Radical Paradoxes*, 239.

<sup>6</sup> John Patrick Diggins, *The Rise and Fall of the American Left* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992), 248.



supply of manpower from colleges to carry out its plans such as the Vietnam War and used regulations such as *in loco parentis* to keep producing students who fit “uncritically into this system.” In response, he called on students to fight for power within the university system, essentially using the new SDS model of campus confrontation style protesting in order to gain control over their schools, an area that directly affected their lives.<sup>7</sup> The movement to reform universities became popular among the Student Left, but the events of 1968, more specifically President Lyndon Johnson’s escalation of the war in Vietnam, overshadowed the progress made on college campuses.

In the early years of SDS, most protests centered on campus conditions and the university system, but eventually escalation of the war in Vietnam became the most common and unifying topic of protest. SDS began making plans for a large scale anti-war demonstration for October 15 and 16 in 1968. SDS chapters responded with protests in 93 cities involving countless numbers of SDS members and the Student Left.<sup>8</sup> In the wake of the success of these demonstrations, SDS leadership tried to institute a national draft program aimed at clogging the Selective Service System with “Conscientious Objector” applications, but the proposal never became an official policy. The U.S. Attorney General, however, did hear of this plan and proceeded to have SDS investigated for treason. Rather than discourage participation or membership in SDS, 80 new chapters formed soon after the investigation became public knowledge, demonstrating the

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<sup>7</sup> Carl Davidson, *New Radicals in the Multiversity and Other SDS Writings on Student Syndicalism* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 1990), 6 – 7.

<sup>8</sup> James P. O’Brien, “The New Left 1965 – 1967 (*Radical America*, vol. 2, no. 5, Sept – Oct 1968), 7.

solidarity among the Student Left on the anti-war issue. With even more new members, SDS reached its organizational limitations and could no longer handle the number of applications and membership requests. As a result, SDS stayed in a constant state of disarray and disorganization until its eventual dissolution in the 1970s.

Many within SDS felt the draft resistance program was a bad idea. SDS leadership previously voted against the program at their national council meeting in September of 1965, citing fear of legal action as their reason since it was a federal offense to tamper with a draft card, so the issue was never officially settled. Left with no real plan of action and only a single issue to unite them, many in the leadership argued about their next step.<sup>9</sup> James O'Brien claimed, "With more members than ever before, and with greater prestige within the anti-war movement than any other group, SDS was nevertheless in a state of confusion about its identity."<sup>10</sup> With no vision for the future and no national organized protest scheduled, several campuses attempted to put the tenants of student power back into action; however, SDS did not provide any support or direction to their chapters so, again, this initiative failed to take hold on a large scale.

In 1967, at their national convention in Ann Arbor, Michigan, two opposing groups emerged with ideas for the future of SDS. The first consisted of members from the Progressive Labor Party or PLP. They held a traditionally Marxist point of view and felt the best hope for the future of SDS was to form an alliance with the workers in American society who they felt provided the best basis for the revolution. Counter to the

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

PLP, a group of SDS members, led by *Student Syndicalism* author Carl Davidson, felt that there was a “new working class” in American society. They argued that technology had transformed previously held notions of what a working class was or could be in significant ways. They argued that instead of laborers, SDS should focus on the new working class that consisted of engineers, teachers, and technical workers.<sup>11</sup> The two groups argued about splitting SDS into different factions. Each side felt they had a better vision for the future of the organization, and neither could agree on what the fundamental ideology should be. What they could agree on, however, was that the non-violent ideology of the past had not produced the results they had hoped for and a more militant style of protest was needed. In response to troop escalation in the mid-1960s, SDS leadership decided to make draft resistance and ending the war in a much more radical way their main objectives.<sup>12</sup>

As part of the anti-war protests, SDS chapters raised concerns about the growing connections between universities and the government. This, in turn led to protests and boycotts of certain companies, the federal draft board, and Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) programs on college campuses across the country. Sustained protests against ROTC units on university campuses caused ROTC enrollment to drop by nearly 56 percent from 1966 to 1970.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, SDS made a point to disrupt speeches or

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<sup>11</sup> James P. O’Brien, “The New Left 1967 – 68” (*Radical America*, vol. 2, no. 6, Nov – Dec 1968), 28.

<sup>12</sup> O’Brien, “The New Left 1965 – 67,” 15 – 17.

<sup>13</sup> Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS: The Rise and Development of the Students for a Democratic Society, The Organization that Became the Major Expression of the American Left in the Sixties – Its Passage From Student Protest to the Institutional Resistance to Revolutionary Activism and its Ultimate Impact on American Politics and Life* (New York: Random House, 1974), 9.

appearances by government officials and war contractors when they visited a university. There was no specific strategy or guide for these disruptions, only the goal to do what was necessary to end the war. Students set up anti-recruitment tables next to Army recruiters on campuses, heckled officials while they gave speeches, and once at Harvard University, students surrounded Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara's car preventing him from leaving until he answered questions about the Vietnam War.<sup>14</sup>

Tensions steadily grew on college campuses across the country with uprisings and revolts becoming more common. It was clear to many that the ideology of SDS had become much more conflict oriented and revolutionary in practice. In its case files on SDS, the FBI described the change in protest tactics by noting, "SDS has now changed from a praxis method; a method centered on education, politicization, and the use of propaganda and discussion to persuade others to your cause, to a policy of disruptive confrontation."<sup>15</sup> SDS chapters all over the country soon began using a more direct confrontation method of protest. For example, when the New York director of the Selective Service spoke to students at Columbia University in March 1968 about the new draft regulations, one protestor smashed a pie in his face during the question and answer portion of his presentation, several students staged a mock play making fun of the draft program, and several students protested with shouts and signs throughout his speech.

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<sup>14</sup> Robert J. Samuelson, "Mill Street: Chronicle of a Confrontation, McNamara Visit In Retrospect" (The Harvard Crimson, 15 Nov 1966), available online at <<http://www.thecrimson.com/article/1966/11/15/mill-street-chronicle-of-a-confrontation.com>>, accessed 23 Jan 2013.

<sup>15</sup> "Weather Underground Organization" (FBI Report, 21 June 1997, FBI Weatherman Files, E, no. 100-439048-3816, Washington, D.C.) available online at <<http://foia.fbi/foiaindex/weather.htm>>, accessed 29 June 2010.

Just one month later, in April of 1968, Columbia University experienced another protest when students learned that the school was releasing grades and class rankings to the military draft board, that the school had been involved in classified war research, and finally that the school wanted to build a new gymnasium in a local Harlem area neighborhood. The protest, led by SDS leader Mark Rudd and consisting of approximately 100 students, marched to the library to protest in opposition to the administration's ban on indoor demonstrations. The group of participants steadily grew over the following days and soon the protestors took over several other buildings on campus. During the protest, students looted other students' permanent records and files, held the acting Dean hostage for several days in his office, and occupied several buildings on campus, including the administration building, declaring them "liberated zones."<sup>16</sup>

On April 30, after thirty days of occupation, the Columbia University administrators made an official report to the New York City police, explaining that negotiations with the students and Rudd had broken down. They asked them to come in and arrest the student protestors and put an end to the demonstration. When asked about the protest and the reasons behind it, Rudd claimed the group was protesting against the university in general since the only valid purpose for the school should have been "the creation and expansion of the revolution" but instead it had become "the prop of

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<sup>16</sup> Diggins, *Rise and Fall of the New Left*, 251.

bourgeoisie society.”<sup>17</sup> On April 30, police raided the campus and arrested nearly 700 students and non-students. In the process of making the arrests, seventeen New York City police officers were injured, but the protest ended.<sup>18</sup>

SDS members took from Columbia University the lesson that a radical militant style of protest was extremely effective and worked much faster at producing results than their original non-violent protest style. The new style also attracted support from other students and forced the administration to take action quickly. In some instances, the process of acting quickly caused the administration to either make mistakes or take actions that increased support for the students’ cause.<sup>19</sup> For example, at Brooklyn College in New York, the administration called in the local police to arrest student activist Jeff Gordon for setting up an SDS table next to a Navy recruitment table on campus. When Gordon refused to leave, other students attempted to prevent his arrest by corralling around him. The dispute soon escalated and in an attempt to stop the protest and arrest Gordon, police began beating and arresting students by the dozens, causing more harm, and garnering support from other students for the protestors. Similar instances took place on college campuses across the country. Violence by the authorities only seemed to bring more support from students. In addition, several protests were

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<sup>17</sup> Debi and Irwin Unger, eds., *The Times They Were a Changin’: A Sixties Reader* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1998), 78.

<sup>18</sup> “Weather Underground Organization” FBI Report.

<sup>19</sup> O’Brien, “The New Left 1967 – 1968,” 39.

filmed for local or national news shows allowing many Americans to view the violence that was taking place on university campuses.<sup>20</sup>

Another militant style uprising took place that same year at Cornell University. SDS's belief in the success of their new ideology of campus confrontation was reaffirmed when three African American students took over a university building in response to a cross burning on campus. Armed with rifles, they demanded the university start a "Black Studies Program" and dismiss professors they considered "racist." Acting quickly, the university consented to an African American Studies program, but they refused to fire any professors.<sup>21</sup> The protest only lasted three days, but it accomplished what many students had been attempting for the previous two years.

The biggest conflict-style demonstration of the year took place at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. SDS called for all of its members and any interested students to go to Chicago to protest. SDS felt this protest could be vital to their cause because it not only had the potential to be the largest student-led protest up to that point, but it was also going to be televised. Noted journalist Tom Brokaw was in Chicago covering the convention for the National Broadcasting Company. Recounting the events of that week in a recent interview, he joked, "I have now covered 20 national political conventions. In 1968 in Chicago was my first political convention. That was a riot and a

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 34 – 35.

<sup>21</sup> Diggins, *Rise and Fall of the New Left*, 252.

convention happened to break out, it turned out.”<sup>22</sup> Radical protestors did not show up in the extremely large numbers the leaders of SDS hoped for, but the protestors who had shown up fully embraced the newer militant style tactics of campus confrontation leading to three days of riots and chaos throughout the city.

In his memoir, Todd Gitlin claims that by the time of the Chicago convention SDS maintained a clear “us-versus-them mentality” and could only maintain this stance by “the collective willingness to suspend one’s better judgment.”<sup>23</sup> In addition to SDS, other New Left groups came to Chicago to protest as well. Nearly 10,000 protestors took to the streets, causing property damage, harassing police and news people, and disrupting the convention as much as possible. Knowing of SDS’s intentions to cause disruptions, Mayor Richard Daley had claimed for several days beforehand, “No thousands will come to our city and take over our streets, or city, our convention.” To prepare to combat the protestors, Daley called in approximately 12,000 police officers, 300 of whom wore full riot gear, 6,000 Illinois state police officers, and 5,000 National Guardsmen. In addition, Daley refused to grant permits for any large gatherings, making it illegal for anyone to protest within the city limits.<sup>24</sup> On August 28, the nearly 10,000 New Left protestors came up against the 23,000 police and National Guard at a protest rally in Grant Park. Violence erupted and much to the dismay of Mayor Daley, media sent there to cover the

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<sup>22</sup> Tom Brokaw, “Interview with Tom Brokaw” Interviewed by Jon Stewart for *The Daily Show*, Comedy Central, Original air date 4 September 2012), full interview available online at <<http://the.dailyshow.com>>.

<sup>23</sup> Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1993), 346.

<sup>24</sup> James Miller “*Democracy Is In the Streets*”: *From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 295.



convention caught most of the action on video.<sup>25</sup> To some people watching from their homes across the country it appeared like police brutality, making an impression on thousands of people. When asked about the protests and the violence that had occurred, SDS leader and organizer Tom Hayden claimed, “Our strategy for change is based on direct action and organization outside the parliamentary process. We are in the streets because no institution is changeable from within.”<sup>26</sup>

Many historians point to the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago as the beginning of the end of the student-led movement and the public’s realization of the radical nature of the New Left, a result of the violent and militant style of the protest. Although many SDS members agreed on the effectiveness of the new protest tactics, SDS as a whole organization could not reach an agreement on a coherent and cohesive ideology. The following spring at its national convention, SDS officially separated into two distinct groups. The first group consisted of the Progressive Labor Party (PLP) members and other radicals who wanted to start looking for recruits beyond campuses and ghettos and wanted to focus more exclusively on the working class as a base from which to draw support. The second group consisted of members of the Radical Youth Movement (RYM) who felt the organization needed an even more revolutionary ideology and to align with other international groups such as the Vietnamese people, Cuban rebels,

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<sup>25</sup> For an in-depth study of the 1968 Democratic Convention and the protests of the New Left see: Alan Brinkley “1968 and the Unraveling of Liberal America” in *1968: The World Transformed*, Carol Fink ed., (London: Cambridge University Press, 1988, 219 – 236); David Farber, *Chicago '68* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); and David Caute, *The Year of the Barricades: A Journey through 1968* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988).

<sup>26</sup> Miller, *Democracy Is In The Streets*, 296.

and other third world country revolutionaries. The RYM's goal was to "create havoc and overextend American power thereby ending the power of the imperialistic war machine."<sup>27</sup> The RYM joined with some smaller radical groups and formed one larger organization, changing their name to "the Weathermen" after the Bob Dylan song "Subterranean Homesick Blues" which states, "You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows."<sup>28</sup>

The first public act of the Weathermen took place in Chicago in October 1969. The group termed this protest against the Vietnam War, "The Days of Rage," and the organization called on student protestors to "bring the war home." The Weathermen led a three-day rampage through the streets of Chicago, breaking windows, trashing storefronts, and causing riots. The group also bombed a police statue in Chicago's Haymarket Square. Over the course of the three days, police arrested 287 people but many other protest participants escaped to New York.<sup>29</sup> After the rioting ended, "The Days of Rage" had caused the city over \$200,000 in damages. Different from the previous SDS, the Weathermen used a more violent, militant technique to protest what they considered an abuse of power by the authorities or as retribution for government actions, they considered unjust. In addition to the violent protests, they also began bombing various government buildings, police departments, military facilities, and banks, all places they felt were associated with American power.

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<sup>27</sup> Diggins, *Rise and Fall of the New Left*, 263.

<sup>28</sup> Dylan, "Subterranean Homesick Blues."

<sup>29</sup> Diggins, *Rise and Fall of the New Left*, 264.

In an issue of *New Left Notes*, the former official newsletter of SDS, the Weathermen explained their reasoning behind their militant and revolutionary ideology. They claimed, “The main struggle in the world today is between the U.S. imperialism and the natural liberation struggles against it. The goal of the revolutionary struggle must be the control and use of this wealth in the interests of the oppressed people of the world. The goal is the destruction of U.S. imperialism and the achievement of a classless world: world communism.”<sup>30</sup> They claimed violence was the most effective way to achieve these goals since it was something everyone understood and those in power could not ignore. To this end, after each bombing, the group issued a public statement explaining why they had set the bomb and against what government policy they were retaliating.

In 1970, the group changed their name from the Weathermen to the more gender neutral Weather Underground Organization (WUO). Additionally, most of the group’s members went “underground” into hiding to avoid capture and prosecution for any of their earlier protests or bombings. President Richard Nixon officially labeled the group “a menace” and ordered the State Department to investigate them as a terrorist organization. In addition, the FBI named the group “domestic terrorists” and placed several of their founding members on the FBI’s Most Wanted list.<sup>31</sup>

One such person was William Ayers. A longtime member of SDS and active student protestor, Ayers helped found the Weathermen and acted as one of the group’s leaders for several years. Originally from Chicago, Ayers attended the University of

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<sup>30</sup> “Weather Underground Organization,” FBI File.

<sup>31</sup> For more information on the Weathermen see Ron Jacobs, *Way the Wind Blew: A History of the Weather Underground* (New York: Verso Publications, A Haymarket Series, 1997).

Michigan for his undergraduate degree. In his memoir, Ayers recalls how he joined the Movement after listening to SDS leader Paul Potter give a speech at a teach-in at the University of Michigan. Ayers claimed, “You could not be a moral person with the means to act, and stand still. To stand still was to choose indifference. If we did not speak out and act up, we were traitors.”<sup>32</sup> Ayers became active in the Ann Arbor, Michigan chapter of SDS, quickly rising into leadership. This group’s aggressive style of protest earned them the name, “The Jesse James Gang.” When SDS began to fragment into various splinter groups in the late 1960s, Ayers led one of the more militant factions that eventually became the Weathermen and finally the Weather Underground Organization.

In March of 1970, the WUO lost three members in a bomb making accident. While connecting the wires on a pipe bomb intended for a military dance at Fort Dix, the bomb exploded, killing all three people inside the Greenwich Village townhouse. One of the members killed was Ayer’s roommate; another was his girlfriend. Rather than end their militant and violent actions, the WUO continued their protests, and even vowed to carry on the bombings in the slain members’ honor. Shortly after the accident, WUO released a statement entitled “A Declaration of a State of War” to the media. In it the WUO claimed, “Amerikan imperialism is everywhere. All over the world, people fighting Amerikan imperialism look to Amerika’s youth to use our strategic position behind enemy lines to join forces in the destruction of the empire. Tens of thousands

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<sup>32</sup> William Ayers, *Fugitive Days: Memoirs of an Anti-War Activist* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), 64.

have learned that protests and marches don't do it.<sup>33</sup> Revolutionary violence is the only way.”<sup>34</sup> WUO members continued to argue that violence was the only practical form of protest. Affirming this theory, Ayers wrote an article titled, “The Necessities of a Violent Revolution.” In it he claimed, “Revolutionary violence must be specific, comprehensible to the people, and humane. The violence of the revolution must be clearly distinguished to the oppressed, exploited people from the violence of a capitalistic society. People do not need us to be fearful or to create chaos. Chaos prevails. Our task is to show the way out of the madness.”<sup>35</sup> Through their “communications” and published letters to the public, Ayers and WUO attempted to distinguish between the violence of the WUO and the violence the group thought America was spreading across not only the nation but also, more importantly, the world. They consistently pointed to the war in Vietnam as their primary example of American imperialism and unnecessary violence.

Over the next two years, WUO planted bombs in buildings they felt were symbols of American government sanctioned violence. Some of their targets included the Capitol Building in Washington, the Department of Corrections Office in San Francisco, a Corrections Department building in Albany, New York, and the Air Force section of the Pentagon. In the official FBI report on the WUO, the group was linked to 37 bombings

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<sup>33</sup> The Weather Underground began using the alternate spelling of America, “Amerika” to imply that the United States was a fascist state since this is the Russian and German spelling of the word. In all the communications released by the WOU they spelled America this way. For more on this, see: Sale, *SDS*, 440, and “Weather Underground Organization” (FBI Report, 21 June 1997, FBI Weatherman Files, E, no. 100-439048-3816, Washington, D.C.) available online at <<http://foia.fbi/foiaindex/weather.htm>>.

<sup>34</sup> “Weather Underground Organization,” FBI File.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

over a period of six years. Although linked to several public bombings, only one person connected to the group was ever arrested.

The WUO continued to protest and release statements until about 1974. Many of the members remained on the FBI's Most Wanted list throughout the 1970s, and the group remained on the CIA's Watch List as a domestic terrorist group under the order of the president. In October 1973 a few members were caught but had to be released when the CIA admitted they had conducted illegal searches, tapped phones without a warrant, and did not read the group their Miranda Rights when arrested. The CIA finally dropped most of the charges against the organization after their botched arrest attempt. Ayers and fellow member turned wife Bernadine Dohrn, however, remained in hiding until December 1980 at which time they turned themselves in. Only a few members ever served any prison time in association with the bombings or the actions of the Weather Underground. Ayers and Dohrn never did.

When questioned about his participation in the violence of the WUO, Ayers has stated numerous times he felt what the group did was violent but called for at the time due to the drastic situation of the war and what he felt was America's over-reach of power. In an interview with another New Left protestor, Ayers claimed, "If you read the FBI documents from '73 say, there were tens of thousands of political bombings in the country. Every draft board, every ROTC building, every recruiting station had problems in those years. It was really a phenomenon that was quite widespread. So, the fact that

the Weather Underground took credit for twenty bombings was in that context.”<sup>36</sup> The group felt justified in their militant violence claiming it was only in response to the violence perpetrated by the U.S. government. They felt they were acting on behalf of the people in Vietnam who had no voice and could not respond themselves. In a film about the Weather Underground, Ayers again justified the violence by saying “Did we do something horrendous and awful? I don’t think so. I think what we did was respond to a situation that was unconscionable.” He went on to claim that the bombings never really put people in any real danger. “Whenever we put a bomb in a public space, we had figured out all kinds of ways to put checks and balances on the thing and also to get people away from it, and we were remarkably successful.”<sup>37</sup> No one was ever killed in one of WUO’s public bombings although an untold amount of damage was done to public buildings, monuments, and police cars.

After all the criminal charges and investigations were concluded, both Ayers and his wife began work in academia. Both are now noted professors; Dohrn is a law professor at Northwestern University and Ayers is a retired professor of education, and an educational reformer at the University of Illinois, Chicago.<sup>38</sup> When asked about his decision to work in academia, Ayers claimed it was a natural extension of his earlier work with children and education. “I had been a teacher of young people in the 60s and then again when our kids were born, I got back into early education. I had been arrested

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<sup>36</sup> Andrew Hunt, “How New was the New Left?” in *The New Left Revisited*, John McMillian and Paul Buhle, eds., (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003),145.

<sup>37</sup> Sam Green and Bill Siegel, *Weather Underground*, DVD, Directed by Sam Green (New York: Documentary film for the PBS series “Independent Lens,” 2002).

<sup>38</sup> Claire Suddath, “The Weather Underground” *TIME* (6 Oct 2008).

and spent ten days in jail with a man whose wife worked in a local community school. They were consciously trying to make school consistent with their own values – not the capitalist segregated society it was.”<sup>39</sup> Ayers initially became interested in education, as a means to unify what he felt was a segregated and stratified society. Teaching children, he believed, was the best possible way to ensure a more socially unified future.

Ayers has continued to work for educational reform at both the state and national level, focusing on teaching teachers how to be more effective and democratic in the classroom. In his work, *To Teach: The Journey of a Teacher*, Ayers claims that he bases all his ideas on education around the main tenant that “Education and democracy are linked: A strong democracy requires a thoughtful, engaged, and active citizenry, and an education encourages critical thought, reception and resistance, participation and empowerment pushes toward a more vital and inclusive democracy.”<sup>40</sup> Ayers also draws from his past experiences as a student radical with the New Left Movement to make a case for radical changes within the education system now. Citing several noted activists, most commonly, Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., Ayers claims, that King rightly recognized that a new phase in the Movement had begun. According to King, people must demand structural changes to the system in order to level the playing field and lessen the gap between the rich and the poor in this country. This he argued would require “every ghetto to be turned into a vast school, every street corner into a classroom,

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<sup>39</sup> Green and Siegel, *Weather Underground*.

<sup>40</sup> William Ayers, *To Teach: The Journey of a Teacher*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. (New York: Teacher’s College Press, Columbia University, 2010), 7.



everyone into an activist and a student.”<sup>41</sup> With this sentiment as his driving force, it is easy to understand how Ayers could transform himself from a radical activist into a teacher – he sees little difference between the two.

Ayers recently retired from his position as the Dean of the College of Education at the University of Illinois, Chicago. During his more than twenty years at the university, Ayers earned several distinguished awards and founded several organizations including the Center for Youth and Society, the Chicago School Reform Collaborative (The Annenberg Challenge), the Small Schools Workshop at the University of Illinois, Chicago and served as editor of the “Teaching for Social Justice Series” published by the Teachers College Press at Columbia University in New York. Even in retirement, Ayers continues to give speeches and lectures on educational reform.

Although his views have become more mainstream and more widely accepted, Ayers continues to draw criticism from numerous groups and organizations on his views on radicalism and student action. For example, in May of 2012 during a speech at the University of Oregon, Ayers called on his student audience to “pay attention and be astonished” and then to “do something about it.” He also warned the students that “America’s empire” was coming to an end and thus, action was necessary for the successful future of the country. The speech was recorded and released on the internet as a YouTube video causing several groups to call for Ayers not to be allowed to give any other speeches on the grounds that he was a “terrorist” and was promoting “terrorist

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

actions by students.”<sup>42</sup> In his career, Ayers has achieved many noted accomplishments including being named the assistant deputy mayor for education in Chicago for the 1989 and 1990 school years, and was the vice president of the American Educational Research Association in 2008.<sup>43</sup> Ayers was also instrumental in Chicago’s winning bid for funds from the Annenberg Challenge in 1994. The previous year, billionaire philanthropists Walter Annenberg announced his intention to donate \$500 million to various urban school systems and arts education programs across the country. Ayers, along with two of his colleagues, wrote a grant proposal gaining Chicago’s school system approximately \$49.2 million dollars.<sup>44</sup> Although some speeches are cancelled due to his political stance, Ayers still maintains a full lecture schedule and numerous organizations consider him an educational reformer and expert.

The activism of the 1960s and 1970s changed academia. Ayers is proof of this. His ability to maintain a position in an institution of higher education for so many years after such a spotted past shows how mainstream his actions and views have become. The changes to academia are not only in the areas of course offerings and ROTC policies, but also in the way non-traditional, and in Ayers case, radical views, are regarded. Before the changes proposed by the New Left Movement and student activism took place,

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<sup>42</sup> There are several websites detailing Ayer’s speech at the University of Oregon, <<http://www.theblaze.com/stories/bill-ayers-calls-on-students-to-act-and-join-him-in-driving-out-nato-from-chicago/>>; and <<http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-bloggers/2879182/posts>>, are two that are easily accessed.

<sup>43</sup> William Ayers, “The Shifting Ground of Curriculum and Thought and Everyday Practice” (*Theory Into Practice*, vol. 31, no. 3, Summer 1992, Special Issue “Grounding Contemporary Curriculum Thought”), 259 – 263.

<sup>44</sup> Full story and report available online at <<http://www.annenbergfoundation.org/news/chicago-annenberg-challenge-records>>, accessed 23 Jan 2013.

professors rarely were able to state their own views or opinions in their classrooms, with some colleges taking action to restrict some topics and subjects all together. It is now acceptable, however, and somewhat expected for college professors to provide their own views or thoughts on a wide range of topics.

The most radical of the three professors featured in this work, Ayers' ability to maintain his politically radical stance speaks to the changes in academia accomplished by the New Left and student protest groups of the 1960s and 1970s. In a documentary about the Weather Underground made in 2002, Ayers claimed, "I'm a radical, a Leftist, a small 'c' communist – maybe I am the last communist who is willing to admit it."<sup>45</sup> Many argue over Ayers' past and his association with one of the most prolific and noted militant protest groups of the 1970s but few can argue that changes to education occurred because of these student protestors and the ones who came before him.<sup>46</sup> It was this change in the education system that allowed student protestors to become academics themselves. The reformed higher education system provided a place for academics to pursue research topics and teach in areas that not only interest them but also allows them to educate and inspire the next generation of student activists.

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<sup>45</sup> Green and Siegel, *Weather Underground*.

<sup>46</sup> For examples of this see Alan E. Bayer and Jeffrey E. Dutton, "Trends and Attitudes on Political, Social, and Collegiate Issues among College Students: Mid-60s to Mid-70s" (*The Journal of Higher Education*, vol. 47, no. 2, Mar – Apr 1976), 159 – 171; Michael Bérubé, *What's Liberal About Liberal Arts? Classroom Politics and the Bias in Higher Education* (New York: W.V. Norton and Company, Inc., 2006); and David Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students* (New York: Simon and Shuster Paperbacks, 1987).

## CONCLUSION

When he finished his research on SDS in 1972, Kirkpatrick Sale wrote about the organization's legacy. In his work's final chapter he claims,

Though it had achieved none of its long-range goals, though it ended in disarray and disappointment, it left a legacy, as suggested in the beginning, of deep and permanent worth. It shaped a generation, revived an American left, transformed political possibilities, opened the way to changes in the national life that would have been unheard of in the fifties; it was a good measure responsible for the changes in university governance, the liberation of campus life, the reordering of the curricula, the aeration of American education, [...] lessening the overt role of universities in military research, and it directly affected the lives of hundreds of thousands of university and high school students across the land.<sup>1</sup>

It was this legacy of change that many historians view as the accomplishments of the Student Left; however, most historians agree that the New Left ultimately was a failure. Historian James Diggins claimed, “the actual reason for its failure was the assumption that it stood for more than itself. There was no agency of change.”<sup>2</sup> Echoing this sentiment, former SDS leader Tom Hayden stated, “We ended a war, toppled two presidents, desegregated the South, broke other barriers of discrimination. How could we accomplish so much and have so little in the end?”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS: The Rise and Development of the Students for a Democratic Society, The Organization that Became the Major Expression of the American Left in the Sixties – Its Passage From Student Protest to the Institutional Resistance to Revolutionary Activism and its Ultimate Impact on American Politics and Life* (New York: Random House, 1974), 656 – 657.

<sup>2</sup> John Patrick Diggins, *The Rise and Fall of the American Left* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992), 265.

<sup>3</sup> Tom Hayden, “Tom Hayden: Rolling Stone Interview Part Two,” Interviewed by Tim Findley (*Rolling Stone*, 9 Nov 1972), available online at <<http://www.rollingstone.com/allaccess/9.11.1972/hayden.html>>, accessed 13 June 2012.

SDS and the Movement in general became muddled in both ideology and organization after the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago. Before the convention there was a clear distinction between student protestors, militant radicals, and the counter-culture but soon after the protests in Chicago, many viewed these groups as one large crowd of disgruntled youth.<sup>4</sup> The lack of organization, the militarization and factionalism that resulted from the breakup of SDS, and the failure of these groups to realize the utopian vision once held by the New Left all coincided with a surge of new more specific topics of protest. Many within the Movement began embracing new causes such as environmentalism, Women's Rights, Native American Rights, Gay and Lesbian Rights, along with a host of others.

During this decline of legitimacy of the SDS and the Student Left, Todd Gitlin, Sara Evans, and, after his brief stint as a fugitive on the run, William Ayers joined major universities as full-time professors. It was in this academic setting that they found a place to continue their work as activists and protestors although through different medium. Changes in the university settings and atmosphere brought about by theirs and their fellow student activists' protests allowed them the freedom to research and teach on a wide array of topics. They had the ability to discuss with a new generation of students the problems of society and how they could effectually change it. All three professors found a place to continue to study and discuss the topics for which they passionately fought. They have each become prolific writers, noted speakers, and award winning teachers for their work and contributions in academia over the years. Additionally, they all still continue to teach and lecture on a wide array of topics from student movements,

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<sup>4</sup> Bruce J. Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (Cambridge: Perseus Books Group, 2002), 15.

the issues surrounding women's rights, politics, education, and the significant influence of their own generation, which now helps inspire new generations of student protestors.

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