

*E pluribus unum:*  
*The Berkeley Free Speech Movement of 1964*  
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Free Speech Movement march through Sather Gate, Mona Hutchin on the extreme right (marchers' perspective) and Mario Savio on the extreme left. From Warshaw p.56, photo credit: Ron Enfield, Nov. 20, 1964

During the academic year of 1964-65, a political movement took place at the University of California (UC), Berkeley bringing together students and faculty from across the political spectrum — from communists to campaigners for right-wing Republican presidential candidate Barry Goldwater. Members of the movement united in their demand for free speech on campus and specifically, to be allowed to set up tables on campus to campaign for political causes. Their movement took place through demonstrations and sit-ins, ultimately achieving success in December 1964, when the academic senate voted unanimously to approve a resolution that there would henceforth be no restrictions on the content of speech or political advocacy on campus, except in regard to time, place and manner. Histories of the Free Speech Movement (FSM) have represented it as left wing and have therefore overlooked one of its essential features: it was a broad coalition operating largely by consensus among people with widely differing political views. By restoring the center-to-right wing side of the history of the FSM, we can first of all recognize this broad coalition's existence, then also understand it was possible because of a form of universalism among students.

A universal principle united the members of the Free Speech Movement. Former members of the FSM across the political spectrum recall most vividly that although they disagreed on political issues and candidates, they were of one mind about the universal principle of free speech. Their universalism led members of the movement to believe deeply in the possibility of consensus and so they resolved to act by consensus whenever possible, so that everyone would feel represented. This consensus about a universal principle contrasts, as we will see briefly at the end of this paper, with today's political world, where many on both the left and right view politics in terms of the expression of identities, rather than universal principles.

Although the Free Speech Movement took place over just a few months during the fall of 1964 and early winter of 1965, its roots reach back much further. For more than a decade, faculty and students had seen their freedom of expression constricted by the university's administration. For example, in 1949, during the U.S. government's large-scale effort to flush communists out of government positions, Robert Gordon Sproul, then president of the university, had asked the board of regents to design a loyalty oath for faculty. The oath stated that no members of the Communist Party could be faculty at the university. Many faculty members protested the oath, seeing it as a threat to academic freedom and to the liberty they were entitled to expect as employees of a public university.<sup>1</sup> Resentment of such infringements on speech and expression had been brewing among the faculty for 15 years before the explosion of autumn 1964.

Meanwhile, many students at UC Berkeley were also prepared for the explosion of autumn 1964 by earlier experiences. "My head was filled with thoughts of Freedom Summer," recalled Jo Freeman, a senior in political science and a member of the Young Democrats.<sup>2</sup> The summer before the school year began, many students had participated in the Mississippi Summer Project,

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<sup>1</sup> Freeman, *At Berkeley*, 13-14; Cohen, "The Many Meanings of the FSM," in Cohen & Zelnik, *Free Speech Movement*, 10; Martin Roysner, "Recollections of the Free Speech Movement," in Cohen & Zelnik, *Free Speech Movement*, 141. Clark Kerr, later to be president of UC Berkeley during the Free Speech Movement, was among those who protested the loyalty oath. See Cohen, "The Many Meanings of the FSM," in Cohen & Zelnik, *Free Speech Movement*, 25.

<sup>2</sup> Freeman, *At Berkeley*, 118.

also known as Freedom Summer, a campaign to register African Americans in the South to vote. The campaign was organized by the umbrella of Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), which was made up of an alphabet soup of groups: SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee), CORE (Congress of Racial Equality), the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) and SCLC (Southern Christian Leadership Conference).<sup>3</sup>

Mario Savio, an undergraduate member of SNCC studying mathematics and philosophy, who soon emerged as the leading hero and public face of the Free Speech Movement, had taken part in the Freedom Summer.<sup>4</sup> Also, the previous spring, he and Freeman had both been involved in civil rights activism in Berkeley and Oakland, led by another person who would become a key figure in the FSM: Jack Weinberg, a mathematics major who had graduated from UC Berkeley the previous year and was the chair of campus CORE. Weinberg and CORE had coordinated campus participation in picketing organized by an umbrella group called the Ad Hoc Committee Against Discrimination. The picketers protested employment discrimination around businesses on Shattuck Avenue in downtown Berkeley and Oakland and in particular, the Sheraton Palace Hotel in San Francisco, where on March 4, 1964, 167 activists including Savio, Freeman and Weinberg had been arrested.<sup>5</sup> The students who arrived at UC Berkeley after the Freedom Summer and the previous spring of civil rights activism had been trained by the various organizing groups listed above in the methods of peaceful protest, passive resistance and civil disobedience. In one key regard, however, the FSM was an entirely different sort of movement from the Civil Rights Movement.

Even a partial list of student leaders of the FSM shows that they spanned the political spectrum. In addition to Savio, Weinberg and Freeman, student leaders included – reading from left to right – Bettina Aptheker, a junior history major and member of the campus Communist Party (CP); Dick Roman, a graduate student in sociology studying with the previously socialist but rightward-moving sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset and a member of the Young People’s Socialist League (YPSL); Suzanne Goldberg, a graduate student in philosophy connected with CORE and SNCC; Michael Rossman, a graduate student in mathematics; David Goines, an undergraduate in classics and member of the campus progressive political party SLATE; Art Goldberg (no relation to Suzanne), a graduate student in education and chair of SLATE; Jackie Goldberg, Art’s younger sister, who was an undergraduate studying social sciences and a member of SLATE and Women for Peace (later to become a Democratic member of the California State Assembly); Paul Cahill, a law student, member of the University Young Republicans (UYR) and president of the right-wing group University Society of Individualists (USI); Mona Hutchin, a junior in political science, libertarian member of UYR and vice president of USI; Warren Coats, a senior majoring in economics, also of UYR and USI; and Danny Rosenthal, another graduate student in mathematics and member of Cal Students for Goldwater (CSG).<sup>6</sup> We have traveled from communists to libertarians without missing a step.

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<sup>3</sup> Freeman, *At Berkeley*, 118-120.

<sup>4</sup> Cohen, *Freedom’s Orator*, 58, 66-70; Goines, *Free Speech Movement*, 96-97.

<sup>5</sup> Rorabaugh, *Berkeley At War*, 72-73; Goines, *Free Speech Movement*, 97; Waldo Martin, “Holding One Another,” in Cohen & Zelnik, *Free Speech Movement*, 91.

<sup>6</sup> Goines, *Free Speech Movement*, 653-665; Heirich, *Spiral of Conflict*, 151; Freeman, *At Berkeley*, 170-173, 190. Although Goines says Roman was in the YD, Heirich says he was in YPSL. This is also what oral historian Lisa Rubens of the Free Speech Movement Oral History Project at the Bancroft Library told me, and it makes more sense

In first-hand accounts of the Free Speech Movement, activists repeatedly emphasize that they united with those of opposite political views and worked together in an effort to protect something they unanimously viewed as an American right. “For the first time ever,” Rossman observed, “all the political groups on the campus united in opposing what the administration was doing. . . . It was really a united front, very strange political bedfellows. Because after all, here was a constitutional issue.”<sup>7</sup> By “constitutional issue,” Rossman implies a contrast with “political issue;” the movement was not about politics, but rather about fundamental principles. Another participant observer recalled, “I’d marched in many lines, but this was one of the most extraordinary I had ever seen. There were ultra-conservative Ayn Rand objectivists marching side by side with liberal Democrats and Republicans and communists and socialists of every stripe.”<sup>8</sup> Such reminiscences show that the breadth of the coalition was itself a defining feature. The students were marching not just on behalf of free speech, but on behalf of political unity in the demand for it. Myra Jehlen, a left-wing leader in the graduate coordinating committee and graduate delegate to the steering committee, told me she believes this unity was possible because the FSM was non-violent and oriented around a fundamental principle that everyone regarded as universal — and also because students restricted their conversations in the movement to this principle and put their other political views to one side.<sup>9</sup> There seems to have been a consensus that universalism and unity defined the FSM.

From the start, movement members had not only a universal principle to unite behind, but also a common opponent to unite against: the university administration. On Sept. 14, 1964, Vice Chancellor Alex Sherriffs insisted that Katherine Towle, the dean of students, send a letter to all the heads of the student political organizations, telling them that as of Sept. 21 they would no longer be allowed to set up tables at the entrance to campus on Bancroft and Telegraph avenues “to support or advocate off-campus political or social action.”<sup>10</sup> This ban would cripple all the political groups. This being long before Facebook or Twitter, their main way of communicating and publicizing their events was by using these tables, talking to people passing by and distributing flyers. With Dean Towle’s letter, the university administration had unwittingly provided a common cause around which all the political groups on campus, whatever their political differences, could unite.

The student organizers of the various groups realized that there would be power in uniting and set about establishing a united front. “We thought it was particularly important that *all* the student political groups be represented in the united front,” recalled Jo Freeman.<sup>11</sup> Art Goldberg was especially eager to keep the three main conservative groups — the UYR, CSG and

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since Roman was the research assistant of Lipset, who had also been in YPSL and was also a socialist. So, I’ve decided to take Heirich’s word over Goines’s.

<sup>7</sup> Rossman, “Birth of the Free Speech Movement.”

<sup>8</sup> Hurwitt, “Present at Birth.”

<sup>9</sup> Jehlen interview.

<sup>10</sup> Freeman, *At Berkeley*, 144-45. Towle disagreed with the ban, even though her administrative role put her in the position of writing the letter, but felt unable to oppose it. See Heirich, *Spiral of Conflict*, 110; and Cohen, “The Many Meanings of the FSM,” in Cohen & Zelnik, *Free Speech Movement*, 23. According to Art and Jackie Goldberg, Towle in fact acted like the later Watergate “Deep Throat;” she was an administration informant to the FSM through Jackie Goldberg. FSM Oral History Project, Art and Jackie Goldberg interview transcript, 36. Sherriffs, meanwhile, turned out to be an FBI informant. See Rosenfeld, *Subversives*, 188-90, 203-204, 210-12, 227-28.

<sup>11</sup> Freeman, *At Berkeley*, 147.

California College Republicans (CCR) — in the united front, thinking this would make them more persuasive to the university administration. They therefore made all decisions by consensus, effectively giving any group veto power.<sup>12</sup> Over the next week, the united front protested the ban on political tables through petitions, rallies and picket lines, as well as by continuing to set up their tables as before. They also set up tables in a new area, farther onto campus, in front of a landmark arch called Sather Gate, at the inner edge of Sproul Plaza, the area in front of the administration building, Sproul Hall.<sup>13</sup> Throughout these actions, the students discovered an admiration for one another across political divisions. In several accounts, left-wing members of the movement remember Paul Cahill for his ability to maintain unity. Jackie Goldberg recalled him as her “own personal hero in these early meetings:”

He was so thoughtful, articulate and statesmanlike. I was astonished. For me it meant I could no longer look at all Republicans alike. That was a ‘blow.’ But Paul was committed to working for his candidate, Barry Goldwater, for president. And he believed that it was his perfect right to do so on the campus of the University of California. He was willing and able to articulate a position that kept many center- and right-wing folks in this early coalition.<sup>14</sup>

Cahill, a member of a group – the USI – whom many on the left regarded as “young fascists,”<sup>15</sup> commanded a great deal of surprised respect among the more left-wing FSM activists, as we will see. His sister, Sally Cahill Tanenbaum, told me that Cahill joined the movement out of a realization that “liberals and conservatives come together on a number of issues” and that he saw “freedom of speech . . . as an area where they would naturally agree.” She recalled her brother as a “good listener” who could “listen to both sides and not get emotionally pulled.” He was deeply committed, she said, to the principle that “on almost any issue, there’s valid arguments really on both sides.”<sup>16</sup> Her description of her brother matches Jackie Goldberg’s memory that he “had a different argument for each person . . . . He was really brilliant.”<sup>17</sup> Cahill’s talent for working with each person to find common ground appears to have rested on his conviction that there existed a universal common ground underneath all political differences and perhaps also that this common ground was defined by the Constitution.

Another right-wing student leader who inspired admiration among the left-wing members was the libertarian Mona Hutchin. Suzanne Goldberg judged her “a decent person who had a lot of integrity. She had real conservative values, as opposed to — excuse me — bullshit values, like a lot of Republicans do.”<sup>18</sup> David Goines approved of the button he remembered Mona Hutchin

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<sup>12</sup> Freeman, *At Berkeley*, 147; Cohen, *Freedom’s Orator*, 128-29.

<sup>13</sup> Goines, *Free Speech Movement*, 694; Heirich, *Spiral of Conflict*, 107-122.

<sup>14</sup> Jackie Goldberg, “War is Declared!” in Cohen & Zelnik, *Free Speech Movement*, 108.

<sup>15</sup> Rossman, “Birth of the Free Speech Movement.”

<sup>16</sup> Tannenbaum interview.

<sup>17</sup> FSM Digital Archive, Art and Jackie Goldberg transcript, 36. During the interview, Jackie Goldberg did not remember the name of the student in question, but a comparison with her observation about him in the Cohen and Zelnik volume makes it clear it was Paul Cahill.

<sup>18</sup> FSM Digital Archive, Suzanne Goldberg interview transcript, 23. The following year, on Feb. 2, 1965, Mona Hutchin was again in the news for protesting segregation of the sexes on San Francisco’s cable cars. Women were not allowed to stand on the running board (which is obviously the best place to ride). Hutchin took a position on the outside of Powell-Hyde Car #521 and refused to leave, leading to a lifting of the ban. See Echeverria, et al., *Images of Rail*, 105.

habitually wearing that said “I am a right-wing extremist,” explaining that it referred to a line from Barry Goldwater’s speech accepting the Republican presidential nomination: “Let me remind you that extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice. Let me further remind you that moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue.”<sup>19</sup> This sort of conservative extremism was one that Goldberg, Goines and other left-wing members of the FSM could endorse because it represented a constitutional principle.

Collaboration among students of different political orientations was possible because all assumed their movement was rooted in a common, universal document — the U.S. Constitution. Carl Riskin, a left-wing economics graduate student in the FSM, recalled collaborating with Charlie Vars, a more politically centrist fellow economics graduate student. Riskin, Vars and some others went to Sacramento on Dec. 4 to talk with people in Gov. Pat Brown’s office and represent the demands of the FSM. Riskin remembers that he and Vars acted the part of calm, scholarly graduate students, with Vars assuring the politicians that no one was trying to “molly-coddle” the undergraduates. They were not radicals, in other words, but sober, conservative scholars asking only for their constitutional rights. In this connection, Riskin also recalled a late-night coaching session for the student leaders with law professor Robert Cole, who taught them the constitutional principle of limiting only the “time, place and manner” but not the content of speech.<sup>20</sup>

There are many retrospective accounts of left-wing students such as Goines and Goldberg and they figure prominently in histories of the FSM. But I was curious to know how the right-wing student leaders, such as Cahill, Hutchin, Hackett or Coats, remembered the alliance and I found no accounts either by them or their fellow Young Republicans. I was able to find Coats through his blog and he kindly talked with me about how he understood the political unity of the movement. He confirmed the left-wing students’ recollection that the universalism of belief in constitutional rights unified the movement. “[B]ack then, all of us across the political spectrum respected and believed in free speech,” he told me, “[and] . . . that we all benefited from hearing one another’s views freely expressed.” Coats recalled middle-of-the-night strategy meetings of the FSM Steering Committee at 2 and 3 in the morning in Lipset’s office, to which Roman had a key, emphasizing that “it wasn’t a left-wing gathering, it wasn’t a right-wing gathering, it was five of us from both sides who shared a common commitment.”<sup>21</sup> Even though these meetings took place in the office of a socialist faculty member using the key of a socialist graduate student, the participants regarded them not as socialist, but constitutionalist.

Political unity was a central message at the united front’s all-night vigil that began at 9 p.m., Wednesday, Sept. 23.<sup>22</sup> “They brought food, guitars, bongos, blankets and books,” according to the campus newspaper, the *Daily Californian*, “but there was little actual studying done.”<sup>23</sup> It was part activism, part party. When the students heard that the board of regents was meeting at University House, campus home of UC President Clark Kerr, they decided to march to the

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<sup>19</sup> Goines, *Free Speech Movement*, 496-497.

<sup>20</sup> Carl Riskin interview; Goines, *Free Speech Movement*, 417. See also Lipset and Wolin, *Berkeley Student Revolt*, 276, 372.

<sup>21</sup> Coats interview.

<sup>22</sup> Goines, *Free Speech Movement*, 694; Heirich, *Spiral of Conflict*, 108-114-15.

<sup>23</sup> Lubar, “Free Speech Vigil.”

meeting. Their plan was to have Art Goldberg and Paul Cahill represent them and seek an audience with Kerr and the regents. The students walked over in a peaceful single-file procession singing — as Robert O’Donnell, who was president of the UYR, recalled to me — a new verse to the Civil Rights Movement anthem, “We Shall Overcome” that they wrote themselves: “left and right together, we shall overcome.” But arriving at University House, they found only the regents’ secretary, Marjorie Woolman, still there. She agreed to wait while Goldberg and Cahill wrote a letter for her to present to the board of regents the next morning. They then returned to an uncomfortable night in front of Sproul Hall (except for Cahill, who had brought his mattress).<sup>24</sup>

The students’ solidarity survived as tensions with the administration continued to grow over the next week. They kept setting up their tables and protesting the ban, while the administration, though making small concessions, condemned the demonstrations, upheld the ban on political advocacy and suspended eight students: Mark Bravo, Sandor Fuchs, Art Goldberg, David Goines, Don Hatch, Mario Savio, Beth Stapleton and Brian Turner.<sup>25</sup> At noon on Wednesday, Oct. 1, tensions finally exploded. If UC Berkeley was a powder keg like Europe on the eve of World War I, the arrest of Jack Weinberg was like the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand: the match. When Weinberg was arrested for distributing leaflets for CORE on Sproul Plaza, students spontaneously sat down around a police car that had been driven into the middle of the plaza, keeping it there for 32 hours while different people climbed onto the car and gave speeches. The students again sang “We Shall Overcome,” but they also sang “The Star-Spangled Banner,” showing they were a broad coalition demonstrating on behalf of the U.S. Constitution, not against it.



Mario Savio giving a hand to Charlie Powell, president of the student government, the Associated Students of the University of California. From *Warshaw*, p. 36, photo credit: Ron Enfield, Oct. 1, 1964.

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<sup>24</sup> Robert O’Donnell interview; Lubar, “Free Speech Vigil”; Heirich, *Spiral of Conflict*, 115. Lubar says the right-wing representative was Coats but Heirich says it was Cahill; Coats himself says he does not recall having co-authored the letter (Coats interview), so it seems likelier that Heirich is right.

<sup>25</sup> Goines, *Free Speech Movement*, 150.

Savio was the first to speak, asking permission of the police and then considerately removing his shoes before climbing onto the car.<sup>26</sup> He made various speeches over the course of the sit-in, at one point recounting a conversation with UC Chancellor Edward Strong regarding the constitutional right to free speech. “You know about the First and Fourteenth amendments,” he recalled having told Strong, explaining that they guarantee freedom of expression and equal protection of the laws. The campus restrictions on speech, Savio argued, violated both by limiting students’ right to express and hear ideas and by making an “arbitrary distinction” between students and non-students.<sup>27</sup> Don Hackett, a member of the Young Republicans, also made a speech from the car roof, describing the movement as deeply conservative, since they were protecting values that the founding fathers had written in the Constitution against “innovators” who were trying to undermine these values.<sup>28</sup> Hackett and Savio probably agreed on little else, but they shared their car-top stage on Sproul Plaza because they agreed on the importance of uniting in the struggle for a constitutional right.

Unity across the political spectrum was also a theme of the Oct. 2 pact, an agreement between the student leaders and Kerr, ending the police car sit-in. The pact laid out rules for continued negotiations, gave a deadline by which the university would announce the duration of the suspensions for the eight suspended students and included the university’s agreement not to press charges against Weinberg. It was signed by Kerr and nine student FSM leaders representing the entire political spectrum from Savio to Cahill. Only Danny Rosenthal of CSG refused to sign. He had a reputation for being a troublemaker and threatened to ruin the fragile agreement by complaining that the pact was discriminatory against conservatives — it allowed left-wing students to violate campus rules with impunity whereas conservatives were obliged by their own political culture to follow the rules. But Cahill came to the rescue, once again inspiring great admiration on all sides: “Paul Cahill, the very conservative representative of the UYRs, took him on,” Freeman recounted. “Danny represents only Danny, he said. The UYRs and the other conservative groups are with the united front.”<sup>29</sup> David Goines, with SLATE, called it “a real guts-ball move.”<sup>30</sup> Once the pact was signed, Savio climbed once more up onto the now flattened police car roof and read it out. “Let us agree by acclamation to this document,” he concluded. “I ask you to rise quietly and with dignity and go home.”<sup>31</sup> Both Cahill, in his rejection of Rosenthal’s distinction between conservatives and left-wing students, and Savio, in his call for an acceptance of the agreement by acclamation, ended the sit-in with a confirmation of the movement’s intact unity.

The United front came closest to collapsing at the very end of the movement, in late November and December, when the left-wing members wanted to occupy Sproul Hall and many of the

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<sup>26</sup> Heirich, *Spiral of Conflict*, 122-139; Freeman, *At Berkeley*, 153-168; Goines, *Free Speech Movement*, 695; Warshaw, *Trouble*, 33.

<sup>27</sup> Car Top Rally, Part 3, beginning at 27 min. 6 secs.

<sup>28</sup> Car Top Rally, Part 2, beginning at 43 min. 20 secs.

<sup>29</sup> Freeman, *At Berkeley*, 162-166, quote on p. 166. Freeman writes that soon after, Mario Savio and Jack Weinberg tried briefly to conduct a partial purge of moderates – centrists and Democrats – but ultimately it did not really take place. Jackie Goldberg left the Steering Committee but remained on the Executive Committee. Art Goldberg left the Steering Committee only for a few days and was then reinstated. Freeman herself remained the UYD representative to the Executive Committee. Freeman, *At Berkeley*, 170-71.

<sup>30</sup> Goines, *Free Speech Movement*, 217.

<sup>31</sup> Warshaw, *Trouble*, 44.



right-wing members disagreed. Negotiations, demonstrations and sit-ins had continued throughout the fall and the administration, while making some concessions, had maintained that there would be certain limitations on political speech on campus and disciplinary actions against some students who had violated university rules during the fall. From the start, the right-wing groups had been reluctant to participate in civil disobedience. “The conservative groups fully agree with the purpose of the sit-ins in Sproul Hall,” Mona Hutchin had explained at the time of the police-car sit-in in October. “Individual members have expressed their sympathy by joining in the picketing on the steps of the hall and will continue to do so. However, our belief in lawful redress of grievances prevents us from joining the sit-in.” She concluded, though, by emphasizing, “Let no one mistake our intent. The united front still stands.”<sup>32</sup> By late November, the FSM leaders were divided, not on their core principle of free speech, but rather on how far they were willing to break the law in pursuit of it.

On Nov. 23 there was a sit-in during which the participants continued to debate the legitimacy of sit-ins. Finally, the steering committee rejected the sit-in by a 6-5 vote. Crucially, the members who had voted for the sit-in immediately began to defend the outcome of the vote against angry demonstrators. “Let us not override this decision, even though I voted against it,” pleaded Weinberg. “We must not split the movement. . . . [A] lot of us came in here against our better judgment to support others. We cannot ask others to continue.” When he was shouted down, Bettina Aptheker took over. “We are a political movement!” she argued. “. . . If we’re gonna win, we gotta stick together!” Savio added, “I voted against leaving, but I urge you to abide by this, for there are good reasons on the other side.”<sup>33</sup> Even when there was a lack of consensus and the decisions had to be made by majority vote, the leaders on the losing side tried hard to make it seem as much like a consensus as possible by urging their followers to acknowledge the reasons on the other side.

By the time of the Dec. 2 rally on Sproul Plaza, the FSM was national news. Joan Baez came to sing for the demonstrators.<sup>34</sup> Savio gave his most famous, spontaneous speech from the steps of Sproul Hall, in which he implicitly referred to President Kerr’s description of universities as centers in a “knowledge industry” and extended the metaphor: if universities are centers of industrial production like factories, Savio said, the students must be the “raw materials,” being worked into a product to be bought and sold. He ended with a rousing cry for protest against the machine-like movement of an institution that should instead encourage freedom of thought and expression.<sup>35</sup>

Still, the political unity of the FSM was in grave danger despite Savio’s rhetorical brilliance. The leadership was again divided on the question of whether or not to occupy Sproul Hall. On Dec. 2, just before the occupation, the UYR, represented by Warren Coats, officially withdrew from the FSM. “What the FSM is asking,” Coats said at the time, “is that the administration cease to be an administration.” This was a reference to Savio’s demand in speeches that the administration restrict itself to “sweeping the sidewalks” and let the students make policy.<sup>36</sup> When I asked him about this decision, Coats explained that although he and the UYR continued to support the

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<sup>32</sup> Heirich, *Spiral of Conflict*, 463.

<sup>33</sup> Heirich, *Spiral of Conflict*, 261-263. See also Cohen, *Freedom’s Orator*, 167.

<sup>34</sup> Freeman, *At Berkeley*, 201.

<sup>35</sup> Cohen, *Freedom’s Orator*, 178-79; Kerr, *Uses*, 112.

<sup>36</sup> Heirich, *Spiral of Conflict*, 274 and 473 n. 16.

demand for free speech, “I left at that point because I strongly, and my organization, disagreed with physically taking over the administration building.”<sup>37</sup> However, although they disagreed on tactics, they still agreed on principles. The UYR did not participate in the occupation but continued to support the movement in its demand for free speech. Furthermore, even though Warren Coats and the Young Republicans withdrew, the right-wing group USI, of which Paul Cahill was president, stayed in. Mona Hutchin, the vice president of USI, and perhaps Paul Cahill, were arrested along with the other protesters during the occupation of Sproul Hall on Dec. 3.<sup>38</sup>

The coalition had held out long enough to win its cause. On Dec. 8, the academic senate voted unanimously in favor of a resolution that, while the university would continue to subject “the time, place and manner of conducting political activity on the campus” to “reasonable regulations to prevent interference with the normal functions of the university,” henceforth “the content of speech or advocacy should not be restricted by the university.” Thousands of students were assembled outside Wheeler Hall, where the meeting took place, listening to the proceedings on loudspeakers.<sup>39</sup> Leaving the meeting, faculty members “passed through a crowd of several thousand cheering, applauding students, who formed an honor guard lining either side of the entrance. The ovation lasted until the last faculty member had left. A number of people were crying.”<sup>40</sup> Not only had they won a victory for a basic democratic principle, but they had done so by managing to maintain their unity in defense of it.

The Free Speech Movement left a powerful legacy in a couple of ways: by serving as a model and inspiration for campus activism and by establishing the importance of free speech and freedom of political expression at a public university.<sup>41</sup> However, in one regard it did not leave a powerful legacy, in fact, with regard to the very aspect of the movement that the members themselves found most crucial: the FSM failed to serve as a model for coalition-building and political unity. In the immediate aftermath of the FSM, public perceptions associated the movement with left-wing activism rather than broad coalition-building, as politics on campus became more polarized.<sup>42</sup> Many people involved with the FSM became victims of a right-wing

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<sup>37</sup> Coats interview.

<sup>38</sup> Goines, *Free Speech Movement*, 530, 542. Cahill is listed as “newspaper listing only” and does not appear in court records. Cahill’s sister, Sally Cahill Tannenbaum, told me that she does not recall his having ever been arrested (Tannenbaum interview).

<sup>39</sup> Freeman, *At Berkeley*, 219-223; Heirich, *Spiral of Conflict*, 301-315; quoted passage at the “Free Speech Movement Chronology,” FSM digital archive, at <http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/FSM/chron.html>.

<sup>40</sup> Heirich, *Spiral of Conflict*, 315.

<sup>41</sup> Cohen, “The Many Meanings of the FSM,” in Cohen & Zelnik, 1-42; Freeman, *At Berkeley*, 279-86. Barbara Epstein, who was a student at Radcliffe during the FSM, recalled how the movement, even from a distance of 3,000 miles, galvanized students at Harvard and Radcliffe to demand the right to political speech on campus. FSM Digital Archive, Barbara Epstein transcript, 3-4. Tom DeVries, who covered the FSM for the Collegiate Press Service, remembered that the FSM spread from Berkeley “like fire.” FSM Digital Archive, Tom DeVries transcript, 2.

<sup>42</sup> Cohen, “The Many Meanings of the FSM,” in Cohen & Zelnik, 40. For example, Todd Gitlin described the FSM as “reddish” in 1987, which seems to reflect only half the political spectrum of the movement, from left to center, leaving out right-wing leaders such as Cahill, Coats and Hutchin. Gitlin, *The Sixties*, 164. W.J. Rorabaugh in 1989 described the movement’s leaders as having had a “Left orientation” and having been Jewish except for Savio. In his list of the most important leaders, Rorabaugh indeed includes mostly the leftist Jewish ones, apart from Savio. He mentions Hutchin in passing as having been “added” to the movement, but not Cahill or Coats. Finally, he wrote that “Democratic students favored the FSM; Republicans students did not.” This would have come as a surprise to the

backlash beginning especially when Ronald Reagan was elected governor of California in 1966, promising to “clean up the ‘mess’ at Berkeley.”<sup>43</sup> The FBI placed Mario Savio under surveillance and Reagan presided over a meeting of the board of regents at which they fired Clark Kerr, whom Reagan regarded as having been too soft on the FSM.<sup>44</sup> The FSM-style solidarity of left and right did not characterize the campus movement against the Vietnam War that grew out of the FSM, which was a left-wing movement in the midst of Cold War anticommunism.<sup>45</sup>

In the time since 1964, both the left and the right on campus have transformed in ways that have carried them away from universalist principles in general and the principle of free speech in particular. Many on the left began to question whether free speech and universal principles were of a higher political value than diversity of cultural and ethnic identities on campus<sup>46</sup> and to argue that speech should be limited so as to promote a sense of comfort and safety for diverse groups of people on campus. Meanwhile many on the right reacted by representing right-wing politics itself as a form of oppressed minority identity to be expressed through provocations in the form of hate speech or borderline hate speech. Such right-wing actors turned “freedom of speech” from a universal principle into a symbol of their own identity akin to a swastika or a burning cross.<sup>47</sup> With regard to freedom of speech, alumni of the FSM from opposite ends of the political spectrum have more in common with one another than with their counterparts among the present-day students. Coats, for example, rejects “safe zones and other restrictions on free speech” but at the same time says of right-wing provocateurs such as Ann Coulter, Milo Yiannopoulos and Ben Shapiro, all of whom were recently invited to speak by the UC Berkeley Young Republicans, “some of the people they invite, I never would, myself.” Still, for those students who protested the invitations, Coats told me, “I would expect them, in the tradition of Berkeley and free speech, to . . . raise critical questions, challenge what’s being said, have an intellectual dialogue . . . Why in the world did you go to the university in the first place, if not to have your thoughts challenged?”<sup>48</sup> Likewise, Jehlen, though on the opposite end of the FSM political spectrum from Coats, told me the exact same thing: she too greatly dislikes such speakers, but she continues to think it is essential that they be permitted to speak.<sup>49</sup>

While many students on both the left and the right have thus moved away from the notion of free speech as a universal principle, the university administration has upheld it, drawing on the memory and legacy of the FSM. In 2000, the university built the Free Speech Movement Café on campus and, at the same time, also established the FSM Digital Archive and Oral History Project

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UYRs, USIs and CSG’s among the leadership, all of whom saw themselves as representing their parties. *Berkeley At War*, 24-25, 34.

<sup>43</sup> See Rosenfeld, *Subversives*, 2.

<sup>44</sup> Cohen, *Freedom’s Orator*, 233, 239, 251-52, 254; Freeman, *At Berkeley*, 270; Rorabaugh, “The FSM, Berkeley Politics and Ronald Reagan,” in Cohen & Zelnik, *Free Speech Movement*, 515. On the right-wing backlash against Kerr, see also Raskin, “The Berkeley Affair,” 89.

<sup>45</sup> Rorabaugh, *Berkeley At War*, Ch. 3. Warren Coats, for example, was not involved in the campus Anti-Vietnam War Movement and recalls having been ambivalent about it (Coats interview).

<sup>46</sup> Chemerinsky & Gillman, *Free Speech*, 5-9, 13-17.

<sup>47</sup> Chemerinsky & Gillman, *Free Speech*, 148-49.

<sup>48</sup> Coats interview. Robert O’Donnell also told me that there was “a willingness, indeed a desire, to engage in discussion with those with different views” and suggested that the loss of this might have to do with “identity politics” or the “tribalism to which social media seems to lead.” He concluded, “[a]ll I know is that I find it incredibly depressing.” O’Donnell interview.

<sup>49</sup> Jehlen interview.

at the Bancroft Library.<sup>50</sup> In response to the right-wing speakers invited by the campus Young Republicans in 2015-2017, mentioned above, who used hate speech as a provocation and also in response to student opposition to these speakers, Chancellor Carol Christ formed a task force on free speech. In 2018, the task force released its final report, concluding that the “University of California, Berkeley, in its commitment to adhere to the First Amendment, must continue to embrace its obligation to protect the fundamental right of free speech, including hate speech.”<sup>51</sup> Today, in other words, there has been a reversal from autumn 1964: the administration has taken on the mantle of the universal principle of free speech, defending it against student demonstrations. It is now the older generation and university establishment that believe in universal principles and the possibility of consensus. Still, however, their belief in these things is not political, but shared across the political spectrum.

The Free Speech Movement was not, as it has been presented by many people since, an action by radical left-wing students, but rather a coalition that represented students of all political views. They were united in fighting for what they perceived as a universally agreed upon constitutional right, regardless of personal politics, and stayed together by maintaining a consensus policy that made all members of the movement feel represented. If we recognize this, we recognize also an important connection between universalism and coalition-building: the first provides a basis for the second. This connection also raises the question of what the future of political coalition-building might be if there are no longer any universally embraced principles such as the principle of freedom of speech.

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<sup>50</sup> Free Speech Movement Oral History Project, at <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/libraries/bancroft-library/oral-history-center/projects/fsm>, accessed 28 March 2019.

<sup>51</sup> *Report of the Chancellor's Commission*, 2.

## **Alphabet Soup Guide**

CCR – California College Republicans

COFO – Council of Federated Organizations

CORE – Congress of Racial Equality

CP – Communist Party

CSG – Cal Students for Goldwater

FSM – Free Speech Movement

NAACP – National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

SCLC – Southern Christian Leadership Conference

SLATE – This one is not an acronym! It is only disguised as one. It was the name of a UC Berkeley progressive political party.

SNCC – Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee

USI – University Society of Individualists (aka libertarians)

UYD – University Young Democrats

UYR – University Young Republicans

YPSL – Young People's Socialist League

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