



Global Nonviolent Action Database

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University of California at Berkeley students campaign for freedom of speech, United States, 1964

September 10,
1964

to: January 4,
1965

Country: United States

Location City/State/Province: Berkeley, California

Location Description: University of California at Berkeley

Goals:

1. Advocacy of any political viewpoint or action or to be able to distribute literature to that effect in the Bancroft-Telegraph area of campus.
2. Permission to distribute literature from tables, from which they can attract, by means of posters, interested people.
3. Permission to accept donations at tables.

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 006. Group or mass petitions
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 016. Picketing
- 034. Vigils
- 038. Marches
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 063. Social disobedience
- 162. Sit-in

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
- 006. Group or mass petitions
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 034. Vigils
- 039. Parades
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 063. Social disobedience

- 162. Sit-in
- 172. Nonviolent obstruction

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 005. Declarations of indictment and intention
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 016. Picketing
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 063. Social disobedience

Methods in 4th segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 006. Group or mass petitions
- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 037. Singing
- 038. Marches
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 063. Social disobedience
- 162. Sit-in

Methods in 5th segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 006. Group or mass petitions
- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 016. Picketing
- 019. Wearing of symbols
- 038. Marches
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 062. Student strike
- 063. Social disobedience
- 097. Protest strike
- 162. Sit-in
- 171. Nonviolent interjection
- 173. Nonviolent occupation

Methods in 6th segment:

- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 039. Parades
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 063. Social disobedience

Classifications

Classification:

Change

Cluster:

Democracy

Human Rights

Group characterization:

- University students

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

Free Speech Movement (FSM) Steering Committee

Partners:

Graduate Coordinating Committee

External allies:

CORE; SNCC; American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU); Executive Committee of the Association of California State College Professors; Inter-Faith Staff Workers and Student Leaders; University Young Republicans

Involvement of social elites:

Joan Baez, folk singer; Benny Bufano, sculptor

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

- CORE
- FSM Steering Committee
- SNCC

Groups in 2nd Segment:

- ACLU
- Executive Committee of the Association of California State College Professors
- Inter-Faith Staff Workers and Student Leaders
- University Young Republicans

Groups in 3rd Segment:

- Graduate Coordinating Committee

Groups in 4th Segment:

Groups in 5th Segment:

- Joan Baez
- University Young Republicans (exit)

Groups in 6th Segment:

- Benny Bufano

Segment Length: Approximately 20 days

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

The Regents of the University; Chancellor Strong; also, the police and Governor Brown

Nonviolent responses of opponent:

Not Known

Campaigner violence:

One protester bit a police officer's leg

Repressive Violence:

Arrests, suspensions

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

5 points out of 6 points

Survival:

1 point out of 1 points

Growth:

3 points out of 3 points

Notes on outcomes:

They were successful in achieving all of their demands, but the rules were provisional.

The size of the campaign increased greatly, with the addition of faculty, staff, and students in support.

In the fall of 1964, student activists at the University of California at Berkeley set up information tables on campus and solicited donations for civil rights causes. However, according to existing rules at that time, fundraising for political parties was limited exclusively to the Democratic and Republican school clubs. On September 16, 1964, Dean of Students Katherine A. Towle announced that advocacy of political causes or candidates, outside speakers, political recruitment of members, and fundraising by student organizations at the intersection of Bancroft and Telegraph Avenues would be strictly prohibited.

In response to this ban, student activists began a campaign that had two main goals. First, they demanded for advocacy of any political viewpoint or action to be able to distribute literature to that effect in the Bancroft-Telegraph area. Second, they insisted on permission to distribute literature from tables, from which they could use posters to attract interested people. Essentially they demanded the right to free speech and academic freedom. A student spokesman offered to conduct a traffic flow survey and to police for violations of University rules. Most of the groups also indicated they would be willing to forego collection of money in that area. Furthermore, insisting on their rights to remain at the Bancroft-Telegraph entrance, student activists continued to apply pressure via petitions, pickets, vigils, and rallies.

On September 21, Dean Towle accepted most of the conditions demanded in the petition for use of the Bancroft-Telegraph area; she would allow groups to set up a regulated number of tables with posters attached in the area, and she would allow distribution of informative – as opposed to advocatory – literature from them. She also announced the establishment “on an experimental basis” of a second free-speech area at the entrance to Sproul Hall. However, she refused permission to advocate specific action and recruit individuals for specific causes. Also prohibited was solicitation of funds and donations to aid projects not directly connected with some authorized activity of the University. Considering these rejections, the students refused to accept Dean

Towle's concessions. The same night, about 75 students held an all-night vigil on the Sproul Hall steps and petitioned to gather student support.

On September 28, Chancellor Edward W. Strong announced a substantial concession; campaign literature advocating "yes" and "no" votes on propositions and candidates, campaign buttons and bumper strips could now be distributed at Bancroft-Telegraph and at eight other campus locations. Meanwhile, pickets formed in front of Wheeler hall and students marched to the faculty and staff's University meeting. Once outside the meeting, students set up several tables with only one or two having the necessary permits. Furthermore, most of the organizations ignored the University's requirements and either solicited money and members, or advocated off-campus activities other than voting. At noon the next day, University Friends of SNCC and CORE set up tables at Sather Gate as well.

University administration representatives approached each table and took the names of the people stationed at the tables. Five students were requested to appear before the Dean of Men, Arleigh Williams, for disciplinary action. That action triggered what was to become the first of the Sproul Hall sit-ins. Under the direction of Mario Savio, Art Goldberg, and Sandor Fuchs, more than 500 students and protesters appeared outside Dean Williams' office and signed a petition demanding: (a) That everyone in the group who signed be treated exactly the same as the students who were summoned into Dean Williams' office, and (b) that all charges should be dropped until the University clarified its policy, and that it be clear whether or not there had been any violation. None of the students summoned went to the meeting with Dean Williams. Savio then announced that since it appeared none of their demands had been met, that they would remain in Sproul Hall throughout the night. As a result of boycotting the meeting, Chancellor Strong announced that those students would be suspended indefinitely.

When the group of activists reconvened, they decided that three short-term goals needed to be achieved. So the future protest action would focus on dropping the disciplinary action against the suspended students, a continuation of the fight for demands on the free speech areas, and the stipulation that no disciplinary action would be taken against any students participating in further demonstrations. Students organized a sit-in and a lie-in, and on this night the "Free Speech Movement" (FSM) was born.

On October 1, police arrested Jack Weinberg, a former student, after the sit-in the day before for trespassing. In response, about one hundred students laid down in front of the police car, another eighty sat behind it, and Mario Savio climbed on top of it, urging the crowd to join. By noon, about three hundred demonstrators surrounded the police car; by 12:30, several thousand students were crowded around the car. Savio later led about one hundred and fifty students into Sproul Hall, where they sat outside the Dean of Students Office. This group eventually increased to four hundred people who voted to pack solidly in front of the door to the Dean's office, and not let anyone out. Later that evening, the demonstrators outside decided to form a united front and ordered those inside the building to come out and join them on the mall. By the night, the crowd grew to 2,500 people.

The next day, the rally continued, and crowds grew to 4,000 people, and also gained the support of conservative groups on campus. At 4:45pm, police officers from Oakland, Alameda County, Berkeley, and the California Highway Patrol marched onto campus. As the police arrived, onlookers and protest sympathizers swelled the crowd between Sproul Hall and the Student Union to more than 7,000 people. As a possibility of police action against the demonstrators increased, protesters were instructed on "how to be arrested" and counseled on their legal rights.

Various reactions were inspired by the student protest demonstrations. First, Ernest-Besig, the executive director of the Northern California chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) sided with the protesters. The Free Speech Movement also gained support from the Executive Committee of the Association of California State College professors and the Inter-Faith Staff Workers and Student Leaders. On the other hand, the protests caused Cal Students for Goldwater to support the Regents' right to regulate as they deemed necessary and complained of the non-enforcement of rules applying to campus political activities.

Throughout October, students continued to hold demonstrations and organize petitions, urging the administration for the right to set up tables in the Bancroft-Telegraph area. Then on November 9, the FSM and eight other off-campus organizations set up card tables along the steps of Sproul Hall. There were donations cups and sign-up sheets on each table, in violation of University regulations. Each table also offered a petition that stated: "We were at the tables and support those who were manning them."

Steve Weissman, the Graduate Coordinating Committee representative to the FSM, said that if the police attempted to arrest the students, the graduates would refuse all cooperation. He added that such an action might be cause for a strike by the teaching assistants and faculty.

On November 20, a mass student rally on Sproul Hall steps, encouraged by folk singer Joan Baez, preceded a “peaceful mass pilgrimage-demonstration” by more than 3,000 people. Following a noon rally held on Sproul Hall steps, the majority of the gathering quietly marched across campus, led by a banner declaring “Free Speech,” to sit on the lawn across Oxford Street from University Hall while the Regents met that afternoon. The demonstrators sang songs, denounced President Kerr and Chancellor Strong, and verbally advocated actions that, according to some interpretations, were against University regulations.

Four days later, the Academic Senate defeated (by the narrow margin of 274-261) a motion to limit University regulation of speech, political and social activity on campus.

Then on December 2, approximately 1,000 people – students, some faculty members, and non-University people – occupied four floors of Sproul Hall following a huge rally in the plaza between Sproul Hall and the Student Union. As evening arrived and the 7pm closing time for Sproul Hall approached, food was brought into the building and distributed to the demonstrators. Outside the building, approximately 635 uniformed police officers had been assembling for nearly an hour. It took twelve hours to clear the building. After clearing the fourth floor, they shifted their attention to the second floor, where demonstrators from the first and third floors had joined those on the second for a massive jam-in. As arrests continued in Sproul Hall, pickets attempted to block campus entrances, encouraging faculty members, teaching assistants, and students to stay away from classes in protest over the arrests of demonstrators.

That same night, the University Young Republicans formally withdrew from the Free Speech Movement. Conversely, 361 faculty members sent a telegram to Governor Edmund G. Brown, condemning the presence of the State Highway patrol on the Berkeley campus.

On December 4, demonstration leaders and others arrested the day before were released on bail and arrived on campus wearing large white “V’s” on black backgrounds and attended a huge noon rally on Sproul Hall steps. More than 5,000 people jammed the plaza and many lined the balconies and Dining Commons roof to hear protest leaders and faculty members condemn Governor Brown, the Regents, President Kerr, Chancellor Strong, and the police. The student strike continued through the day, with picket lines at campus entrances and construction sites. Labor unions, having been asked to support the FSM pickets, generally condemned the use of police and the “denial of free speech” on the campus but would not officially endorse or recognize the student strike.

Finally, on December 8, Professor Feuer’s amendment, which was passed 737-284, did not increase the student’s rights but did prevent them from decreasing. Nearly 3,000 observers were gathered outside Wheeler Hall to listen to the proceedings over loudspeakers, cheering as the vote overriding Feuer’s amendment was announced. Joseph Tussman, professor of philosophy, summarized the Senate’s resolution: “Anything that is illegal in the community at large is still illegal on the campus. The question is: Should the University impose more restriction in its students in the area of political activity than exists in the community-at-large? The Senate said: No.”

Then on December 31, Chancellor Edward W. Strong announced the Committee on Academic Freedom’s recommendations would go into effect “provisionally” on Monday, January 4, the first day of classes after the Holiday break. On January 2, Martin Meyerson was appointed Acting Chancellor so that Chancellor Strong could recover from an illness diagnosed earlier in the campaign. The following day, Meyerson announced three provisional rules. First, until final plans could be developed for a suitable alternate discussion area, the Sproul Hall steps area would be available for temporary use for that purpose at noon and between four and six in the afternoon. Second, student organizations could set up tables in more places than prior to the campaign, between 7am and 6pm. Lastly, The required advance notification for off-campus speakers was reduced from 72 hours to 48 hours.

At noon on January 4, 1965, the Free Speech Movement held its first legal rally on the steps of Sproul Hall.

Research Notes

Sources:

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