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Constructive Dissent: UC Irvine as a Case Study for the American Student Movement against the Vietnam War

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### Author

Engler, Samantha

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# **Constructive Dissent: UC Irvine as a Case Study for Student Protest against the War in Vietnam (1965-1970)**

**Samantha Engler**

Advisor: Dr. David Iglar

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In his complete summary of the decade, Todd Gitlin brands the sixties as "Years of Hope, Days of Rage."<sup>1</sup> The nationalist frenzy after World War Two died out and the youth began to question the "Leave it to Beaver facade". Gitlin compares the time to "sixteenth-century Germany" when "the urgent young, disgusted by the corruption of values, beat on the doors of established power in the name of reform"<sup>2</sup>.

The sixties overflowed with change and revolution. The Civil Rights Movement moved "from Southern nonviolence to black power"<sup>3</sup>. The movement's fight for representation stood as the "template for every other movement of the decade"<sup>3</sup>. The Women's Movement succeeded leaps and bounds as they rapidly normalized the presence of women in the workplace. Lifestyles opened up through longer hair, rock & roll and the "commercialization of sex"<sup>4</sup>. The youth began to stand up as students and as yippies to fight for various types of change. One of their greatest enemies was the United States' involvement in the Vietnam War.

Protest against the Vietnam War has become a symbol of the sixties. A hippie decked in peace signs and tie-dye holding a "Make Love Not War" sign is the archetype for 60s youth. When it comes to the war, the recollection isn't quite so clear. Most, if not all, Americans have heard about the war. They've learned the basics in school, but those lessons on the war are often shallow, perhaps out of fear to recognize that the United States did not win. Before delving into protest against the war, it may be useful to fill some historical holes and provide context of the war.

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<sup>1</sup> Gitlin, Todd. *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*. Toronto: Bantam Books, 1987.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.* pg xxii.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.* pg xv.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.* pg xviii. This includes the rise of pornography and sexualized images in mainstream media/advertising.

What we know as the Vietnam War is more officially known as the "Second Indochina War."<sup>5</sup> After a hundred years of French colonial rule and plenty of conflict, France was forced out of Vietnam in 1954. Their departure left the question: who rules Vietnam?

The North leaned toward communist rule while the South tended to lean more toward Western democracy. The solution to this division in the 1954 Geneva Peace Accords was to further it; to partition the country into Northern and Southern pieces. The plan was that 1956 elections would reunify the country, but they never came to fruition due to US interference and fears of The North spreading communism through the whole country. Instead, staunch anticommunist Ngo Dhin Diem became president of Southern Vietnam with CIA support despite opposition and protest from students and the rest of the Vietnamese youth. A party called the National Liberation Front formed and quickly gained popularity on a strictly anti-Diem platform. President John F. Kennedy's administration supported a general's coup to assassinate Diem. Even after Diem's (and Kennedy's) assassination, political problems persisted in Saigon, which resulted in President Lyndon B. Johnson calling for military intervention.

Thus began the United State's military intervention in Vietnam. In 1968, the northern forces led massive attacks to weaken the United State's participation with the Tet Offensive. In 1970, the US and the Republic of Vietnam (the South) led the Cambodian Campaign: a series of thirteen major operations in Cambodia. Though Cambodia was a neutral country, the North used them as a safe place and the US saw it as

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<sup>5</sup> Brigham, Robert. "The Wars for Viet Nam." The Wars for Viet Nam. Accessed November 21, 2014. This course website provided a full background on the Second Indochina War. All of the information in this section is sourced from the site.

an important Northern stronghold to break. US involvement ended in 1975 with the Paris Peace Agreement. Soon after, in 1975, the North ultimately ended the war by taking the presidential palace in Saigon.

At home, the war was met by protestors who disagreed with the US' involvement and viewed it as a dangerous case of imperialism. The protestors were mostly young. Many of the protestors were in many ways privileged or elite. After all, the people with the privilege of attending college were largely the "children of the most affluent and well-educated strata of the American middle class"<sup>6</sup>. A large amount of those who opposed the war were the very veterans that fought in it. They were more than young rebels, they knew the war from the inside. In 1967, six veterans marched in New York and grew into Vietnam Veterans Against the War, more commonly known by the acronym "VVAW"<sup>7</sup>. VVAW was a prominent grassroots organization of over 30,000 who wanted to "expose the ugly truth" of the war.<sup>8</sup> They led large strikes and marches nationwide, as seen in Figure 1 below of a 1975 March in New York City.



Figure 1: "VVAW Veterans Day March - New York City 1975". Found on [www.vvaw.org](http://www.vvaw.org)

<sup>6</sup> E.M. Schrieber. "Opposition to the Vietnam War among American University Students and Faculty." *The British Journal of Sociology* 24, no. 3 (1973): 288-302. Accessed November 21, 2014.

<sup>7</sup> "VVAW: Where We Came From, Who We Are." Vietnam Veterans Against the War. Accessed February 10, 2015.

<sup>8</sup> This organization is still active. According to their website, they're now fighting for veteran's rights, "social and economic justice for all people" and education about the war.

The government and so-called "silent majority"<sup>9</sup> of older conservative America had fears of the anti-war movement. They saw it as a threat to American nationalism and security. The government responded to the movement with police action, often brutal, a CIA spying program<sup>10</sup>, and thick anti-activist rhetoric that wrote off activists as rebellious, un-American youths. The government's actions against the anti-war movement were fairly effective in controlling public opinion. In the late 1960s, opinion polls had an ironic result: "Americans opposed both the war and the antiwar protesters"<sup>11</sup>.



Figure 2: Protesters at the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago face police.  
Los Angeles Times file photo.

One of the most important and lasting aspects of this movement is its presence on college campuses; this was a largely student-run movement. It's no surprise to see protest at colleges, they are the ideal location: a dense population of youths experiencing independence for the first time, looking for a way to establish whom they are. The biggest and most remembered moments of student anti-war protest are mostly dramatic episodes of violence.

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<sup>9</sup> Christian G. Appy, "Give Peace Activism a Chance: A Review of *The War Within: America's Battle Over Vietnam* by Tom Wells." *American History* 23, no. 1 (1995): 138. Accessed November 21, 2014.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.* This program lasted from 1967-1974 and was an illegal domestic program called Operation CHAOS.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*

The University of California, Berkeley has a longstanding reputation as being full of rebellious hippies. While it is one of the top-rated universities in the nation, its name conjures up images of drugs and protests. The root of this stereotype is likely the Berkeley Free Speech Movement, which began in 1964 and changed and morphed into various protest movements during the sixties and seventies. Since the 1930s, the campus had strict rules against student participating any off-campus politics within the campus borders. When George Wallace was on the campaign trail in 1958, he gave his campaign speech in the gutter right outside of the campus property line.<sup>12</sup> If the campus boundaries expanded, students would move their political activity with it. In 1958, New University president Clark Kerr authorized a small plaza on the edge of campus for political activity. Students used the space for many different reasons, especially civil rights protest. As activity increased, the administration decided the protestors needed to be tamed. The Dean of Students declared that students could no longer use the plaza for political activity but when the students realized that such a proclamation wasn't within her jurisdiction, student organizations erupted. Rallies were held in the plaza as well as near the administration building. Sitting students held a cop car attempting to arrest protestor and alumnus Jack Weinberg hostage for 32 hours. The Free Speech Movement came to end on November 20, 1964 when a massive Academic Senate Movement "voted overwhelmingly for no restrictions on the content of speech or advocacy".<sup>13</sup>

The Free Speech Movement paved the way for protest against the Vietnam War by allowing students the freedom of political activism in a nationally tumultuous time. A

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<sup>12</sup> Personal Interview with Retired UCI Professor of History, Keith Nelson.

<sup>13</sup> Freeman, Jo. "The Berkeley Free Speech Movement". *Encyclopedia of American Social Movements* (4 vols) edited by Immanuel Ness, Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2004, pp. 1178-1182.

May 1965 36-hour teach in attracted 30,000 students. Not all protests at Berkeley were peaceful, however. The campus Vietnam Day Committee led a march in November 1965 to Oakland, more specifically to the Oakland Army Induction Center.<sup>14</sup> They were met by heavy law enforcement and the march grew into a full-on riot. This was only one of the violent outbursts at Berkeley. This was a violent time for the campus that lasted from 1964-1974 and fought both against the war and for the civil rights of various minority groups.

The movement at Berkeley was one of the focuses for Governor Ronald Reagan in his 1966 gubernatorial campaign<sup>15</sup>. The relationship between Reagan and the University of California is one of the most important relationships for both the California and National movements. Reagan's response to student activism made the anti-war protests a political issue. According to Reagan, the only reason he talked about the movement at all was because people kept asking about it. His goal was to target academic freedom. If he could connect the acts of the students to the UC administration, he could blame them and incumbent Governor Brown for failing the system and gain approval from the constituency. Reagan made many promises during his campaign regarding student protest. Among these was a commission with the exclusive goal of "investigating why 'the campus had become a rallying point for Communism and a center of sexual misconduct'"<sup>16</sup>. He also promised to implement a code of conduct for the faculty to keep

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<sup>14</sup> "Unforgettable Change: 1960s: 1960s in Vietnam and in Berkeley." Oakland Museum of California. Accessed February 22, 2015.

<sup>15</sup> Gerard J. DeGroot. "Ronald Reagan and Student Unrest in California, 1966-1970. Pacific Historical Review, UC Press, 1996. This section draws extensive information from this article. I suggest reading it to learn more about Reagan's political aims, which I largely omit here for the sake of focus.

<sup>16</sup> Pg. 111 *ibid*. The inner quote comes from Reagan's campaign announcement speech in 1966.



their actions controlled, as well as threats to Chancellors that they could be replaced if they didn't "administer the University properly".<sup>17</sup>

Reagan won the 1966 election (and later the 1970 reelection) comfortably. Once in office, he continued his pursuit of the UC anti-war movement. At Berkeley, Reagan used militaristic acts to combat students, including using force at a May 1969 People's Park Demonstration (which resulted in one death and hundreds of injuries) and dropping gas on the campus. He talked about the students in ways that dehumanized them in order to remove legitimacy from their actions. He implied that they were criminals, murderous "Negroes" and even drew comparisons to Nazis and Hitler Germany. In 1970, after Reagan had established himself as the conservative face against the student movement, he requested that the UC and California State University campuses close for four days of reflection.<sup>18</sup> At most universities, however, this just provided four days to speak more about the situation in Southeast Asia. Rather than calming them down, it gave them an opportunity to organize.

When it came to the faculty, Reagan made many threats but not a lot of action. One thing he did do, was fire the UC President Clark Kerr. He succeeded getting rid of Kerr by using his poll and campaign success to bully the UC Regents. He argued that the people were on his side and since the people paid for the UC system, they should be the strongest voice. The regents didn't always do his bidding, however. In one case, they refused to seize power from the campus' individual academic senates. Reagan used this refusal politically as an example of the University's lack of interest in what the people want. This was truly the most important action of Reagan regarding the student anti-war

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<sup>17</sup> Ronald Reagan, *A Plan For Action speech announcing candidacy*, Jan 4, 1996.

<sup>18</sup> William Drummond, "Campuses in State Close for Reflection", *LA Times*, May 8, 1970.

movement: he talked about it. The more Reagan talked about the movement, the more effect he had and the more he benefited. If his talking stopped protesters he would seem successful in the public's eyes and if it only made them more radical, the situation would only seem more important. In reality, the movement in 1966 was almost completely contained to the Berkeley campus. Even there, the movement was not the entire student population. Reagan's campaigning against it, however, made it a state-wide problem by angering students and scaring the constituency. Once the movement became a political issue, it spread and the stakes were raised.



Figure 3: Protesters at Berkeley in the Free Speech Movement. Found in Berkeley's FSM Archives.

Perhaps the most violent event occurred on May 4, 1970 at Kent State University in Kent, Ohio. On Friday May 1, students held a rally against the war and the campus ROTC.<sup>19</sup> Protests escalated by nighttime to violence in the city streets between activists and local police. Protesters were finally forced back to campus by the law enforcement's

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<sup>19</sup> Jerry M. and Thomas R. Hensley. "The May 4 Shooting at Kent State University: The Search for Historical Accuracy.", KSU, <http://dept.kent.edu/sociology/lewis/lewihen.htm>. Accessed February 18, 2015.

employment of tear gas. On May 2nd, city officials made the decision to request the presence of the Ohio National Guard at Kent State. National guardsmen arrived that night to see the Kent State ROTC building up in flames. Although the exact arsonist was unknown, arrests were made of protesters who tried to get in the way of firemen trying to squelch the blaze. Rallies continued through Sunday; rocks thrown by students were retaliated against with tear gas. On Friday, students had called for another planned rally on Monday May 4. This time, the rally was more about the presence of the National Guard than the war itself. Tensions rose and the guardsmen were ordered to have their M-16 rifles at the ready. Between sixty and seventy shots were taken at once, most in the air or to the ground. Nine of those bullets hit students, four of them fatally.



1971 Pulitzer Prize: John Paul Filo  
 Courtesy: John Paul Filo  
 Figure 4: Filo, John. Pulitzer Prize Winning Photograph, 1971.

The deaths of the four students quickly found their way into the nation's conscience. The above picture, which shows Mary Ann Vecchio, a 14 year old runaway grieving over the body of Jeffrey Miller, who was slain by the shooting, earned photography major John Filo a Pulitzer Prize. T magazine wrote about the shooting in an article on May 18, 1970 (one week after the shooting) as a catalyst for a momentous change in American society. While Time recognizes the effect of the massacre on the nation, even calling it "Martyrdom that Shook the Country", it does not directly support

the anti-war movement. The article blames the escalating violence on "beery students...responding to the rock beat" on Friday night. The article's lack of clear sympathy with either the protesters or the government is representative of the chasm between public opinion on the war. Kent State had barely started to get the national anti-war sentiment rolling; there was no majority opinion at this point.

Public dissent against the war quickly grew after the Kent State Massacre. 441 colleges were affected and many shut down entirely. Demonstrations occurred everywhere from the active universities like Harvard and Berkeley to unexpected campuses such as the University of Nebraska in the "heart of Nixon country"<sup>20</sup> and Nixon's own alma mater Whittier College.

More and more people were beginning to attend college at this point in the century. College enrollment increased 300% from 1965 to 2005<sup>21</sup>. This generation was one of the first examples for student protest and their effects have been lasting. Not only have students reflected on their actions for their activism, but the public has preserved their actions as well. The images of these students have become the archetype for student protest. The types of events that are entrenched in history are stories of violence and drama like the ones above. These are the events that can be found recounted again and again in scholarship of the era. There is quite a sufficient amount of work done on the college movement during the Vietnam War, especially considering it occurred less than

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<sup>20</sup> "At War With War." *Time Magazine*, May 18, 1970

<sup>21</sup> "The Future of Children, Princeton - Brookings: Providing Research and Analysis to Promote Effective Policies and Programs for Children." - The Future of Children -. Accessed February 11, 2015. <http://futureofchildren.org/publications/journals/article/index.xml?journalid=72&articleid=523&ionid=3589>

fifty years ago. Some books like Gerard J. DeGroot's "The Sixties and After" look objectively at the effectiveness of the protest. Others, consider the differences in protest in different areas or opinions. He studies how protest was different in the South and compares anti-war and pro-war movements. There are many other articles and books that delve into more specific aspects of the movement, such as the Kent State Massacre in or Berkeley's contention with Ronald Reagan.<sup>22</sup> What all of these sources have in common, however, is that they focus on the schools with the most exciting or violent events which is an understandable choice.

This choice to focus on the violence, however, has hindered the effectiveness of student protest by painting protesters as nothing but rebellious youth. In his article *Opposition to the Vietnam War among American University Students and Faculty*, E.M. Schreiber argues that student protest in the sixties and seventies was actually not as common as it is made to seem. It's also not true, however to think that there was only two types of schools: those that protested against the war violently and those who didn't protest at all. It is important to be aware that there was student activity against the war on other campuses that was quiet. Most campuses did not experience intense episodes, riots or police intervention. In 1968-69, in the early stages of the student movement, most campuses did not even report any anti-war protests. The quiet campuses are important to remember as examples of non-violent student protest. One of these campuses was the University of California, Irvine.

UC Irvine was opened in 1965 as the ninth University of California campus. The UC system was quickly expanding, between 1954 and 1965, four new campuses opened

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<sup>22</sup> Gerard de Groot, *Ronald Reagan and Student Protest in California*, Pacific Historical Review.

their doors. After exploring the state looking for ideal campus spaces, the regents set their eyes on land in the Irvine Ranch due to its wide space and proximity to urban centers.<sup>23</sup> The land was granted to the University of California by the Irvine Company in 1960. Daniel Aldrich was appointed as Chancellor in 1962 and President Lyndon B. Johnson dedicated it in 1964. The tone of the dedication was hopeful.<sup>24</sup> Johnson and UC President Clark Kerr spoke broadly of the bright future of higher education in the US. Chancellor Aldrich spoke more directly of his hopes for the Irvine campus. He hoped for a campus that would provide students with the "opportunity to seek deeper insight into human experience and shall lead them to know the vast body of knowledge and heritage of beauty in all forms upon which our society rests."<sup>25</sup> From this first speech, the administration encouraged students to speak their opinions.

According to UCI professor Samuel McCulloch, who spent a lot of time compiling a history of the university, UC Irvine experienced many of the same tensions as the rest of the nation but the activity was more constructive than most.<sup>26</sup> This pride was furthered in a personal interview with Professor Emeritus Spencer Olin who remembered being impressed with the all the students who participated. There weren't a high percentage of people participating in anti-war protests but those that did were "very committed faculty and very smart students".<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Rob Kling, Spencer Olin and Mark Poster, *Postsuburban California*, UC Press. This compilation of articles is a thorough source on the development of Orange County after World War Two. For more on the Irvine Company and the purchase of the UCI land, see Chapter 3, "Designing the Model Community" by Martin J. Schiesl.

<sup>24</sup> "Campus Dedication Ceremony: Transcripts and Recording." Online Archive of UCI History. Accessed February 23, 2015. <http://ucispace.lib.uci.edu/handle/10575/5918>.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.* "Remarks of Chancellor Daniel G. Aldrich Jr."

<sup>26</sup> McCulloch, Samuel Clyde. "Chapter 8: Student and Faculty Unrest 1968-1972." In *Instant University: The History of the University of California, Irvine, 1957-93*. Irvine: University of California, Irvine, 1996.

<sup>27</sup> Personal Interview with Spencer Olin.

Protests did not consist of violent riots; they were more in the vein of teach-ins and strikes. In one such strike, during which classes still continued as usual, students conducted one of their most progressive acts: they set up "The Free University" which was a teaching effort that used the campus and surrounding community to teach various anti-war ideas as well as classes against racism and misogyny.<sup>28</sup> In a May 1970 article published in the LA Times titled "Sophisticated Dissent Earns Credit at UCI"<sup>29</sup> the school's movement is applauded for their lack of violence and credited it largely to the administration who encouraged open activity through an Academic Senate decision that actually offered credit for participation in anti-war activities, officially registered as Alternative Education courses.



Figure 5: "Aerial View of UCI Dedication" - UCI University Archives

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<sup>28</sup> "Irvine Free University Charter", UC Irvine. May 1970.

<sup>29</sup> Scott Moore, *Sophisticated Dissent Earns Credit at UCI*, LA Times. May 17 1970.



Figure 6: "Aerial View of Campus: 1966-01". UCI University Archives

Why was student protest at UC Irvine not as violent as the activity at schools like Berkeley or Kent State? There are many factors that could have calmed activity at the Irvine campus. The school was new so it did not have an established campus culture of protest. The surrounding community of Orange County was a much more conservative area than other areas, such as Berkeley. There are even stories that the Irvine campus was built to limit protest. So with so many reasons for there to have not been any protest at UC Irvine, perhaps the better question is: Why was there any at all? How did these students and faculty overcome the three aforementioned factors to voice their opinions on the United States' involvement in Vietnam?

When it comes to a campus culture there are two questions to ask: was there a campus culture at UCI at this time and if so then did that culture contribute at all to anti-war protests. The most scientific way to answer these questions is through a 1973 Student Life Study conducted by the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs.<sup>30</sup> The

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<sup>30</sup> Bernstein, Melvin. *Student Perception of the Campus Atmosphere at UC Irvine*. Irvine: Office of the



study consists of pages of student poll results lined up with the national average responses. Overall, the study seems to say that students did not sense a true campus atmosphere. Student responded negatively to the statement "The school helps everyone get acquainted" while the national average was positive. They responded similarly to "The history and traditions of the college are emphasized". While the students may not have felt a connection to a school atmosphere, they did find ways to get involved and make their voices heard. Through these means they were creating a campus culture, whether they realized it or not.

One of the ways these students created an atmosphere was through their choice of a mascot. The story of how UC Irvine became the anteaters is almost legendary, it's told to every tour group of prospective students. Here's how the legend goes. With a major water polo game on the horizon, Chancellor Aldrich decided the school needed a mascot. The administration offered four ideas, from Hawks to Unicorns. The students were unhappy with all of their options so two students advertised a write-in candidate: the anteater. The anteater won as the write-in candidate but Aldrich wasn't satisfied so a second vote was planned. Before the second vote, the students rallied like crazy for the anteater, including using it at the water polo game, screaming "ZOT!" (the catchphrase for the anteater in B.C. comics). When the second vote came around, the anteater won with 95% of the vote, the administration acquiesced, and the anteater was adopted as the mascot. Pat Glasgow, class of '68, was one of the students rallying for the anteater. He saw the anteater as "an antihero. He was kind of standing up for passiveness. But when

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Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs, 1973.

backed into a corner, anteaters will fight.”<sup>31</sup> The school's mascot itself is a symbol of these students' desire to be new. They did not want to be like every other university and they did not want to let the administration make all their decisions for them. Perhaps they did not sense much of a campus atmosphere because they were too busy creating it.

This sense of agency and individualism translated into the anti-war effort through the campus' student run newspaper "New University". The New University was the campus' first newspaper and it is still publishing today. Since this was not run by the administration, it was still printed during the shut down and the tumult. In May of 1970, four consecutive publications were focused on dissent with the war. The May 6th edition even has a changed logo that features a clenched fist: the symbol of the strike and solidarity.<sup>32</sup> Articles from Irvine writers are intertwined with pieces from non-students around the nation. Articles include "We Do What We Can"<sup>33</sup> which address the sentiment behind the activism, and an article called "The Bomb in Your Closet"<sup>34</sup> by John Bull, a correspondent from Washington on fears of atomic research centers.

In the May 6, 1970 edition the headline reads: "On Strike". According to the article by Richard Sharn, there was a meeting on May 4th to outline the purpose of a strike which was attended by over five hundred members of the UCI community. They made plans for picket line, a march with military, to support a workers strike at a war materials supplier company and daily picketing and leafleting. On Tuesday a rally was held by the library to gain support for the strike. At the rally, Professor Steve Shapiro explored the

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<sup>31</sup> "‘B.C.’ Comic Strip Artist Coming to Celebrate UCI." 'B.C.' Comic Strip Artist Coming to Celebrate UCI. April 11, 2011. Accessed February 23, 2015.

<sup>32</sup> *The New University*, May 6, 1970. Vol 2 No 45.

<sup>33</sup> Anthony, Dennis. "We Do What We Can". *The New University*, May 8, 1970, Vol 2 No 46

<sup>34</sup> Bull, John. "The Bomb in Your Closet". *The New University*. May 12, 1970. Vol 2 No 47.

Cambodian Invasion within the larger problem of American Imperialism. Steve Shapiro was a humanities professor who was fired for his involvement with student activism and became an idol for the student activists. Professor John Paine spoke about activity on other campuses. This is a very important point because even if the UC Irvine students didn't have their own campus culture they had plenty of neighboring schools to connect with and share discounts with. This connection to other schools was often made through the faculty, such as Professor Emeritus of History, Keith Nelson.

Keith Nelson was a founding faculty member at UC Irvine. In a personal interview, Nelson remembered a lot about the environment at UC Irvine during the times of protest. He remembers people brimming with hope, and described the time as "exciting", "unpredictable" and "challenging". He remembers the faculty as being very close knit and, especially, young. The low ages of the faculty meant that they had been in graduate school more recently and still held those connections to other universities. For example, Keith Nelson finished his PhD at Berkeley soon before he was hired at UC Irvine. He described the young faculty as "green" and wanting to lead change. Nelson and some of his colleagues began taking small steps to allow their students some extra freedom, such as holding class outside and stopping giving grades. The presence of these green professors helped the student activism by providing them a link to other universities as well as internal support. By seeing themselves as part of the grander scale of universities, the protesters were able to find encouragement and examples. Ultimately, while it may be true that there wasn't an overwhelming campus culture, the students were driven and determined to make one. The hope of being new and noteworthy combined well with the national anti-war movement to allow student activity at UCI.

Another factor that abated anti-war activism at UCI was the surrounding conservative community of Orange County. After World War Two, millions migrated to California for jobs and settled in single family homes. Los Angeles was the most popular destination but many also set their eyes on neighboring Orange County, which was presented as a "suburban heartland"<sup>35</sup>. With its lack of strictly divided towns and its abundance of tract homes, Orange County attracted many from the Midwest and the South. These people brought with them conservative cultural baggage, from racism to preferences for small government. The baggage and need for a meeting place due to the lack of a downtown combined to make OC the perfect location for a conservative grassroots movement. This movement would prove very successful and produce three of the most prominent faces of 20th Century conservatism: Barry Goldwater, Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan<sup>36</sup>.

This conservatism did not overrun UCI. The community had its concerns about the campus. These concerns came to a head when a gasoline fire burned a Bank of America across from the UC Irvine campus (where University Center, or UTC, is now situated) on October 26, 1970.<sup>37</sup> The fire was connected to the recent arson of UC Santa Barbara Bank of America, which was done by protestors because of Bank of America's role as bookkeepers for the Vietnam War.<sup>38</sup> The local community grew very concerned that this fire too was the act of anti-war student protestors. This link was strengthened by

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<sup>35</sup> Lisa McGirr, Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right, Princeton University Press, 2001. pg. 21

<sup>36</sup> For an extensive and interesting tour of the rise of conservatism and OC's effect on it, see Lisa McGirr's "Suburban Warriors".

<sup>37</sup> "Local Bank of America burned, 1970", UCI Special Collections & Archives, Anteatr Antics, 2011.

<sup>38</sup> Bank of America Boycott Committee, "The Boycott: A Nonviolent Alternative", flyer.

graffiti on the bank walls that included phrases such as "Death to the Pigs" and "All Power to the People"<sup>39</sup> but the actual arsonist was never found. Nevertheless, Chancellor Aldrich received many calls of people expressing fear that the events at UCI were becoming serious. Aldrich denounced the violent act but did not blame the students. Nobody was ever charged for the act and it remains one of UC Irvine's greatest mysteries.

Professor Keith Nelson remembers faculty thinking of themselves as very separated from the county, even making jokes about its conservatism<sup>40</sup>. They saw themselves much more as part of the greater community of UC Campuses, as aforementioned. This is not to say they were completely absent of influence. At the Class of 1969's 20-year reunion, Biology Major and former basketball player Bill Roley acknowledged the lack of militancy at UCI but argues that the movement was still impressive considering it was "Orange County in the 60s--students from some pretty conservative families".<sup>41</sup> It is true that many students came from conservative families and perhaps it is also true that the school's location is why student protest didn't reach the same level as a campus such as Berkeley but it was not enough to stifle all protest.

The final factor to explore that may have had an effect in truncating UCI anti-war protest is the campus itself. Many myths exist that UCI was designed to keep students from being able to protest like they were at other campuses across the nation.<sup>42</sup> It is because of these myths that many current students at UC Irvine aren't even aware that their school experienced a movement.

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<sup>39</sup> Bob Gettemy and Dial Torgerson, "Arsonists leave Radical Signs After Burning UC Irvine Bank", LA Times, October 27,1970.

<sup>40</sup> Personal Interview with Keith Nelson.

<sup>41</sup> Herman Wong, *What It All Meant: Members of UCI's First 4 Year Class...Hindsight*", LA Times, 1989.

<sup>42</sup> "Tunneling Toward Truth", UC Irvine News, 2008.

The first myth is that there is no central meeting place at UC Irvine so that students can not organize together. Clear meeting places are separated by school. For example, in the middle of the Social Science schools lies Social Science Plaza. Students still found places for campus wide protest. Many events, such as a 1969 Moratorium, took place in between the school's Library and Gateway Commons (now Gateway Study Hall). The 1969 rally called for people to take time to contemplate events in the Vietnam War and attracted quite a large crowd, as seen in the image below from the UCI Special Collections and Archives' online University Archives. Alternative classes taught around the campus and the greater community accompanied the rally.<sup>43</sup> This space was well situated between three of the most important zones at UCI, the library, the commons (where daily debates between students and faculty members occurred regarding the war) and Campus Park that was later renamed as Aldrich Park<sup>44</sup> and was used often for speeches, rallies and strikes.



Figure 7: Students gather for the Vietnam War Moratorium, Found in UCI SCA.

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<sup>43</sup> "Vietnam War Moratorium", UC Irvine Student Made Flyer, October 15, 1969.

<sup>44</sup> "Vietnam War Moratorium, October 15, 1969", UCISCA University Archives, 2014.

Another campus myth is the existence of tunnels under the campus to allow an entrance route for the National Guard as well as an exit route for faculty and staff. While the existence of the tunnels is true, they are only meant to house the school's heating and cooling pipes, and wires for electricity, phones and data. The third campus myth is the architecture of the buildings designed by William Pereira. Some believe that the recessed windows of the building was a choice to prevent glass from falling and people from scaling the building. In fact, the fixture is merely a common fixture in the brutalism architecture of the 1960s. While the campus was being built, UC President Clark Kerr actually encouraged that the campus allowed political activity so it is unlikely that any constructional aspects intentionally combatted activism.

Despite any factors that may have abated UC Irvine's protest against US Involvement in the Vietnam War such as a lack of campus culture, the surrounding conservative county or the campus itself, UC Irvine still protested. They were driven by a sense of the sixties. They were fueled by the hope for change laid by the civil rights movement and Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society legislation. They were inspired by the prevalence of the draft and the shocking assassinations of icons such as John F. Kennedy, Ted Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. A lot was changing at this time and the UCI students and faculty wanted to be a part of it.

The factors against protest that have been discussed in this paper all have grounds and truth but they were not all encompassing. No, UCI and many schools like it didn't have a free speech movement and the majority of students didn't participate in anti-war activity but that doesn't mean the events there were not important. It is important to study

and publicize schools such as UC Irvine in order to give a new face to student protest.

Student protesters are more than radical, rebellious youths, they are an important voice that should be taken seriously.



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