

UC Berkeley Activists of '64 Return to Takeover Site

■ **Reunion:** Former Free Speech Movement members reunite for a weekend to share memories of the student uprising 30 years ago.

By LOUISE YARNALL
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

For many who were at UC Berkeley in 1964, the sit-ins and the sing-alongs with Joan Baez seem like yesterday. But it was 30 years ago this weekend that a sea of students took over the university administration building to help inaugurate an era of activism.

This weekend, several Westside residents were scheduled to take part in a reunion of students of the Free Speech Movement, returning to the steps of Sproul Hall.

Some, like Vivian Rothstein, who runs a homeless program in Santa Monica, and Los Angeles City Councilwoman Jackie Goldberg, have carried on their activism. Others, like film entrepreneur Sydney Levine, feel

the old enthusiasm when they walk into a voting booth or read the newspaper.

"It did set my life on course," said Rothstein, the 48-year-old executive director of the Ocean Park Community Center. "You put your body where your values are. [Movements] don't get built by people who think they're going to win."

Hot topics at the reunion are expected to include the passage of Proposition 187, which denies a wide range of public services to illegal immigrants, and the lopsided Republican victories in state and congressional races.

"What are we going to do?" asked Levine last week. The pendulum "has swung back to 40 years ago."

But amid the discussions of today's political climate, there will be time to reminisce.

Rothstein, like others, had no idea that the small student movement on the Berkeley campus would become a flash point for a generation. She eventually dropped out of college to work in the civil rights movement full time. At this weekend's reunion, she is scheduled to speak on a panel about free

speech and homeless people.

When Rothstein's generation came of age, they entered a world where the slightest hint of nonconformity could bring on taunts of "Commie" and "Red." An outspoken activist risked being tracked by the FBI. In those days, the editor of the Oakland Tribune routinely referred to the Berkeley campus as "the little red schoolhouse."

At the time, just a small number of Berkeley students were active in the civil rights movement. Some had spent the summer of 1964 in the South. Others had picketed local hotels and auto stores that refused to hire minorities in "visible" positions—like desk clerk or car salesperson.

When these activists sought to recruit other Berkeley students to their cause, they ran into opposition from university authorities. The restrictions on political activity gradually increased in the early 1960s, until the university banned all political tables, literature and recruitment from the campus vicinity in the fall of 1964. The student activists then turned all their well-honed

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CASSY COHEN / Los Angeles Times

Homeless center director Vivian Rothstein is among local alumni going to the reunion.

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organizing and civil disobedience skills against the university.

Councilwoman Goldberg, who was a sorority girl from an apolitical Inglewood family when she started her studies at Berkeley, was one of those arrested during

the occupation of Sproul Hall on Dec. 2 and 3, 1964.

In that occupation, the last of a series that transformed the campus that fall, students moved into the main administration building, camped out, set up a makeshift kitchen, watched Laurel and Hardy movies and rifled through secret administration files.

At the end of the second day, 800

of the protesters were arrested by police under orders from then-Gov. Edmund G. (Pat) Brown Sr. But as soon as they were released, they resumed their protests.

By Dec. 8, it was over. The administration capitulated and the campus faculty voted in favor of giving the students the right to circulate political literature on campus.

It was an intoxicating victory, and one that inspired some key participants to pursue political activism for the rest of their lives. One of those was Goldberg. Still, when she looks back, she plays down the aura that came to surround the Free Speech Movement.

"I would tell students today that they shouldn't be intimidated by the mythology of that period," said Goldberg, who is also scheduled to be a panelist at the reunion. "We weren't anything special."

Another local resident making this weekend's pilgrimage is for-

'I spent the first half of my life creating conflicts, and now I'm spending the next half resolving them.'

KEN CLOKE
FSM Panel Member

mer Brandeis University sociology Professor John R. Seeley. Three decades ago, Seeley surprised his colleagues by defending the Free Speech Movement early on and even corresponding with one of its leaders. He remembers watching events unfold in 1964 while he was on sabbatical at Stanford.

"I was shocked by the administration's conduct, which seemed to be ruthless," recalled Seeley, now an 81-year-old West Los Angeles psychoanalyst. "They dragged the students down the stairs, their heads bumping on every stone stair."

Other scheduled panelists include Ken Cloke, who runs the Santa Monica-based Center for Dispute Resolution. He remembers the protests as a "powerful, spontaneous creation of community." He went on to help organize similar student movements in New York, Tokyo and Paris. Today, Cloke, 53, says he remains politically active, but adds that he has learned to forgive and to discuss politics without yelling.

"I spent the first half of my life creating conflicts, and now I'm spending the next half resolving them," he said. "I have a deeper understanding of . . . the degree to which university officials are trapped . . . by their own ambition and their own need to pay for mortgages."

Levine, 50, of West Hollywood, said she planned to return to Berkeley this weekend to replenish the radical spirit. "I want to get a perspective and see where I'm going to go from here," Levine said. "It's time to get active again."

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