

## Images of the Counterculture: WSU in the 60s

Paul Brians

Fine Arts Auditorium, November 2, 2006

[Passages in blue were omitted in the oral presentation to save time.]

### Part I: Art of the 60s

Over the years, I've often been interviewed about what WSU was like in the 1960s, usually by reporters incredulous that anything significant could have happened in "Pullberg." Things did indeed happen here, and they deserve a fuller recounting than they have received so far. This will not, however, be a systematic history of the period. The best source for that sort of thing is William L. Stimson's *Going to Washington State*. I'm going to tell some stories from the student point of view and barrage you with images of what it was like to be young and politically active at WSU between 1968 and 1970.



Because this talk is part of a series on the art of the period, I'll begin with some background on counter culture iconography. There was not one counterculture, of course, but many, sometimes in conflict, sometimes interwoven, constantly changing.

The art of the sixties now in the museum is from a different sixties than the imagery I'm going to explore tonight—literally. What is known as the "sixties counterculture" flourished between roughly 1966 and 1972, whereas the pop art and minimalist movements had gotten started much earlier and had very little resonance with hippies and protesters.

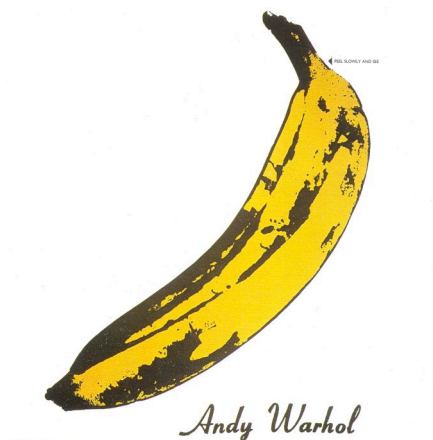
There were indeed artists, mostly on the West Coast, working in a vein much more closely akin to the counterculture, including our own Pat Siler; but that's not my subject tonight. Instead, I want to focus on the counterculture itself and how it affected WSU.

The result will be a glimpse of activism in the 60s from my own personal point of view, focusing primarily on images—their power and their limitations.

Most pop art drew on contemporary mass culture imagery, embracing its very banality, as in Andy Warhol's famous Campbell's soup cans.



This style entranced the art gallery crowd but had very little appeal for young people in the streets.



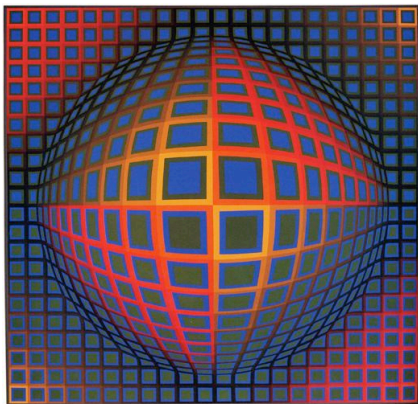
Warhol did have his own house rock band, of course, *The Velvet Underground*, and designed a famous album cover for them.



Warhol created an even more phallic-themed jacket for the Rolling Stones' *Sticky Fingers* album, complete with a working zipper.



Roy Lichtenstein drew on comics for their banality, their absurd sentimentality, and their crudity. By isolating single frames he made their weaknesses obvious and turned them into caricatures of themselves.



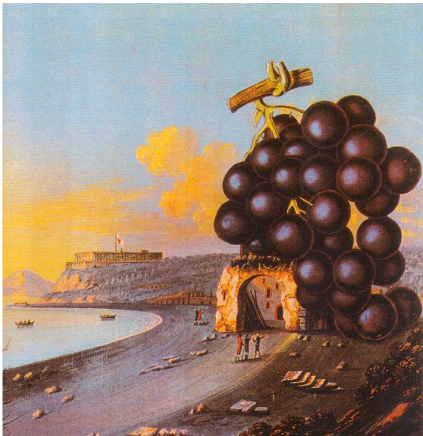
The color experiments of Victor Vasarely's op art had a certain influence on later rock poster art, in which the color contrasts were pushed to much greater extremes.



## Surrealism and the rock album cover

Most rock poster and cover art was far removed in style from the dominant schools of the New York gallery scene. It rejected minimalism for maximalism, jamming images together; rejected contemporary graphic styles for nostalgic references back to earlier periods; and instead of the cool distancing of much sixties gallery art, aimed to ram directly into the viewer's nervous system with maximum sensory and emotional impact.

One of the then unfashionable art styles exerting a strong influence on rock art was surrealism.



Collage drawing on antique sources, incongruous juxtaposition of separate elements, visual puns: all these traditional surrealistic techniques are present in the cover for Moby Grape's album, *Wow*.

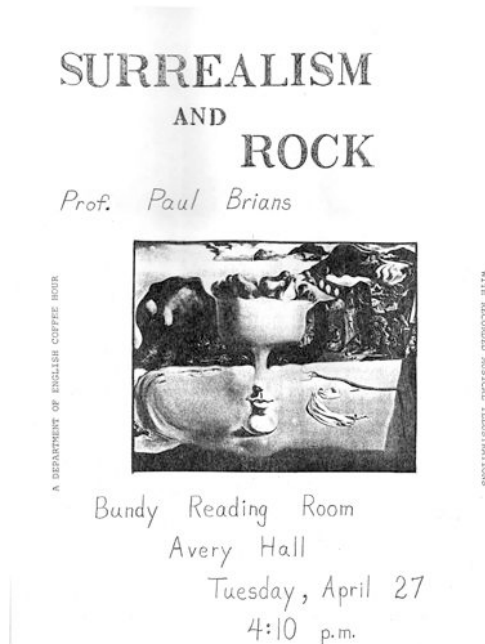


Although Israeli-born artist Mati Klarwein's *Annunciation* was created in 1961, it was not until 1970 that it became a cultural icon when it was used for the cover of the Santana album *Abraxas*. A flaming nude angel announces the miraculous birth to come to a similarly nude black Madonna, and the dove symbolizing the Holy Spirit which traditionally hovers above her is placed directly in front of her genitals, implying that whereas the Biblical annunciation story involved a purely spiritual meeting between the



divine and human realms, in this case the union is going to be physical, sexual. Klarwein's transformation of traditional imagery and interest in black figures is also reflected in his later album covers for the electric band of Miles Davis. The model for the central figure here was Klarwein's girlfriend from Guadalupe.

This sort of sexualizing of religious imagery is a hallmark of the surrealist tradition.



In graduate school I had taken a course on French surrealism, and my first published academic scholarly work was a review of new books on surrealism. It was logical that one of my early talks to the English Department in Pullman compared the psychedelic esthetic with surrealism.



A truly classic surrealist image decorated the cover of *The Mothers of Invention's* album, *Weasels Ripped My Flesh*.

### Art nouveau and the rock poster

The *art nouveau* style, known in Austria as the Secession Movement, exerted an enormous influence over the artists who created the San Francisco rock posters.



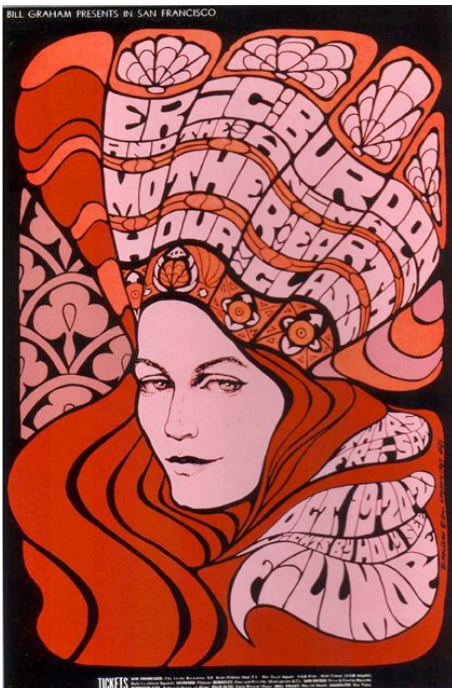
his blocky, difficult-to-read type face was designed by Alfred Roller, here shown in a poster for a 1903 exhibit of Secessionist art.



Roller's type face is fitted into curving shapes in this Captain Beefheart poster by Wes Wilson from 1966.

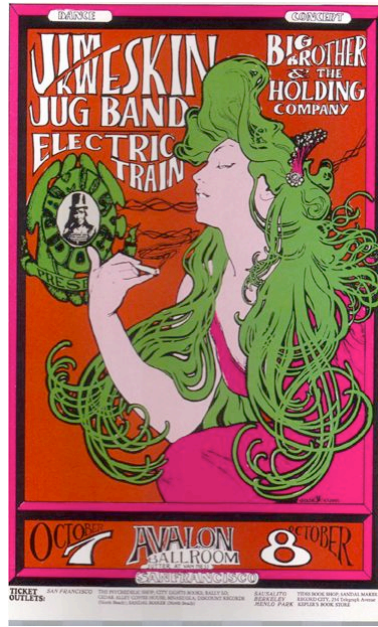
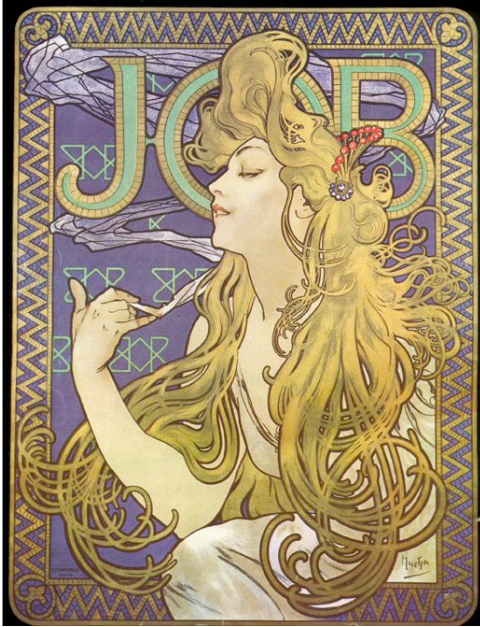


This Wilson poster for the Blues Project reduces the lettering almost entirely to a graphic element, making the poster more like a mandala for meditation than an informative advertisement.



Bonnie McLean, the only woman among the pioneer poster artists, worked in the same art nouveau style.

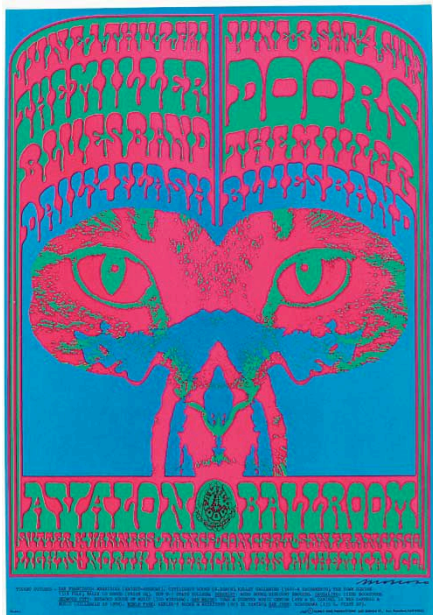




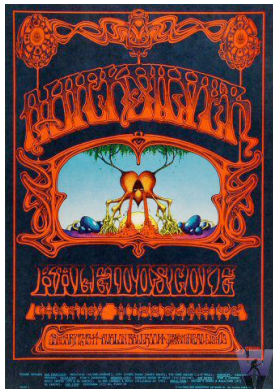
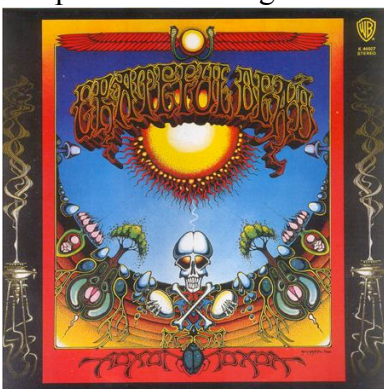
One of Alfred Mucha's most famous advertising posters became transformed by Mouse Studios into a context where the figure's smoke probably contained something other than tobacco.



Sometimes the influence of earlier art is very direct, as in this cover where the main image was simply borrowed from an old women's magazine cover.



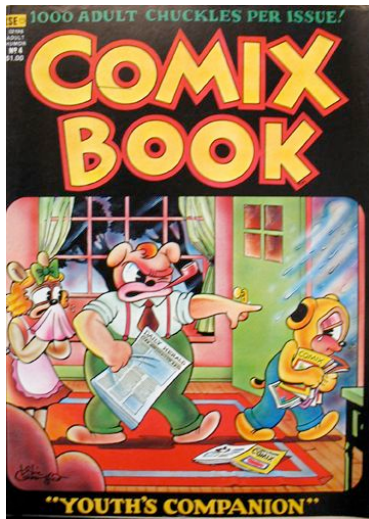
The poster artists specialized in combining colors that vibrated wildly against each other, violating every rule of traditional design. Notice in this Victor Moscoso work you have to keep switching between viewing a particular color as background or figure in order to decipher the lettering.



Rick Griffin developed his own illegible typography and mystical iconography. His work looked distinctive, but still clearly reflected *art nouveau* influences.

## Underground Comix

Another counterculture phenomenon which began in the late 1960s were the underground comix published by small independent companies, almost always in black and white, and featuring lots of sex, drugs, over-the-top violence and general outrageousness.

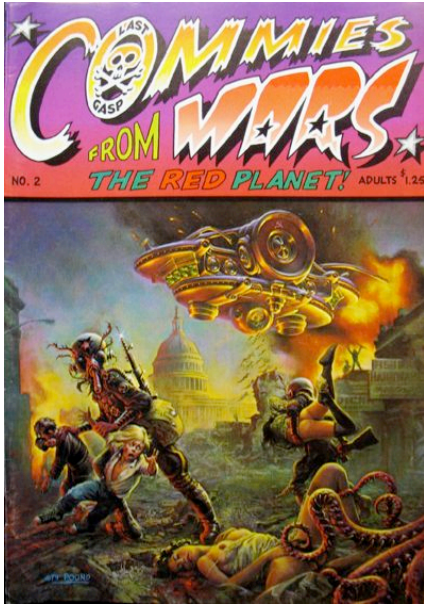


Styles ranged all over, but it was quite common to see a look recalling the comics of the thirties and forties. These comix were sold primarily in head shops, though I first encountered them in my home-town's Greyhound depot's magazine rack in 1967, when I began building the collection now housed in the WSU library's division of Manuscripts, Archives and Special Collections.

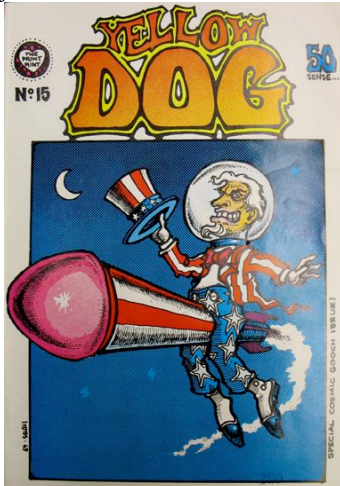


Contrast Lichtenstein's approach to the romance comics we saw earlier with this cover of *Snarf* featuring forties-style funny animals and the Venus de Milo.





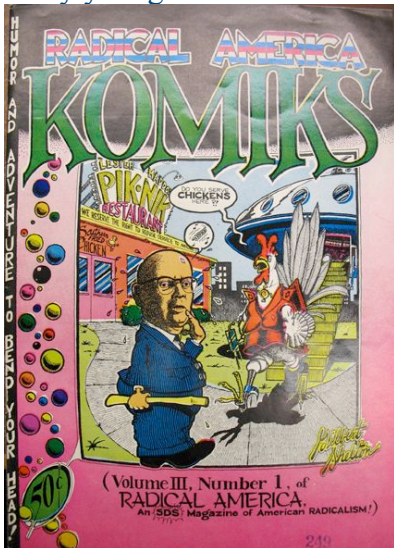
Underground comic artists were mostly apolitical, more engaged in general cultural criticism than specific causes, but this title mocks Cold War paranoia in its title: *Commies from Mars: The Red Planet*.



Political satire, when it appeared, was often crassly sexual, as in this variation on the memorable final scene of *Dr. Strangelove* in which Slim Pickins straddles the missile which will trigger Armageddon.



In more traditional editorial cartoon style, this drawing parodies the famous photo of the raising of the flag over Iwo Jima in World War II, and captures the disillusionment of many young soldiers with the war they were called on to fight.

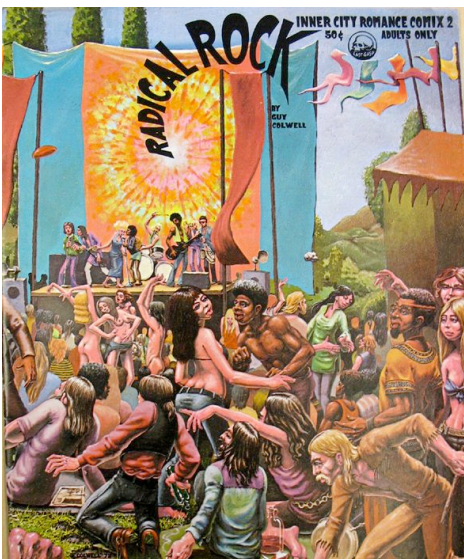


The audiences for underground comix and radical political publications rarely overlapped, so it stunned a lot of members of Students for a Democratic Society when in 1969 they found that a special issue of their usually grimly serious journal *Radical America* had been turned into an underground comic book featuring a cover cartoon of famed segregationist Lester Maddox. It alludes to a famous incident in which he attacked with an ax handle an attempted pro-integration sit-in at his fried chicken restaurant.



Cover to Zap #13, © 2002 Victor Moscoso

Many of the early titles were called “head comix” for their obvious psychedelic influences. Victor Moscoso, whose rock posters we sampled a moment ago, also worked on comics, especially the granddaddy title of them all: *Zap*. Here he creates mirror images of a winged surfer accompanied by one of his trademark images, the winged eyeball, which flashes the peace sign, on the cover of *Zap* no. 13.



One unusual underground artist was Guy Colwell, who celebrated interracial sex and rock and roll in his *Inner City Romance* comics. Most readers assumed he must be black, but he was in fact a white guy.



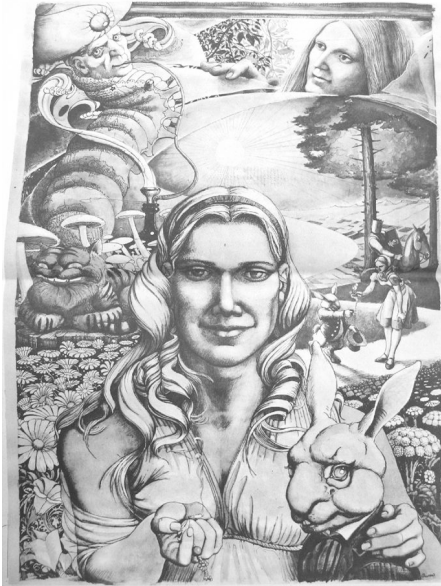


Unlike the pop artists, R. Crumb disdained 50s comics styles and drew instead on the bulging, jazzy forms of the 1920s and 30s in much of his work.

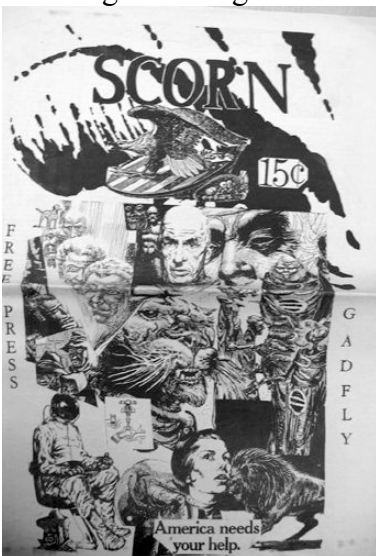
### Underground Newspapers



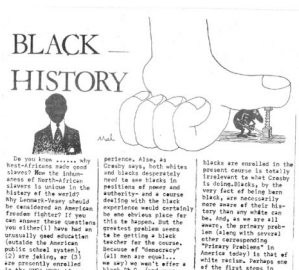
Every city and college town of any size had an alternative paper or two, but the most famous of them all was the San Francisco *Oracle*, which specialized in a layout heavily influenced by psychedelic mysticism.



The publisher got rich sending hippies out on the street to sell copies to straight tourists in the Haight-Ashbury, and he later absconded with the profits, putting an end to the *Oracle's* short but lively history. Whole pages were given over to elaborate collages featuring iconic figures like Alice in Wonderland and the Buddha.

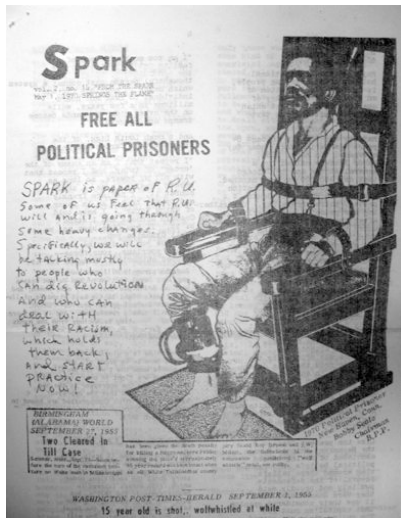


The first alternative paper in Pullman was *Scorn*,



which featured in its first issue an eloquent column advocating the study of black history, accompanied by a striking borrowed graphic.

WSU SDS—Students for a Democratic Society—issued a number of mimeographed position papers, but lacked a regular publication.



Radical Union, which succeeded it, initially put out a cheaply reproduced sheet called *Spark* after the revolutionary Russian paper founded by Lenin (in Russian, *Iskra*). The cover story deals with the then ongoing trial of Bobby Seale, the only black member of the Chicago Seven, whose courtroom outbursts were dealt with by shackling him to his chair and gagging him in a way that reminded a lot of viewers of the days of slavery.



From 69 on, white radicals responded to minority criticisms that theirs was a white movement by focusing prominently and forcefully on issues of race. The well-organized and highly visible Trotskyite Socialist Worker's Party made a special point of it, referring in this fall 1969 poster to both racism generally and "racist murders" in particular.

*Spark* was followed by *The Three Forks Press* and *Burgerville Blues*, both of which will be touched on below.



## Part II: Counterculture signs and symbols

The term “counterculture” had real meaning in the 60s when television, Hollywood, and the press steadfastly ignored most manifestations of the emerging youth culture.

Although everyone knows that the Beatles appeared on American TV once, the Rolling Stones, The Who, and the Jefferson Airplane were nowhere to be seen. Anyone depending on television to research the 60s will get only very vague and confused inklings of what they were like.

In response, young people developed their own organizations, customs, newspapers and magazines, their own comic books, poster art, their own music, signs and symbols.

Prominent among these were the peace sign and the peace symbol, now frequently confused with each other.



Let's begin with the peace sign. During World War II, British Premier Winston Churchill popularized the “V for victory” sign, which had immense resonance for people of that generation.

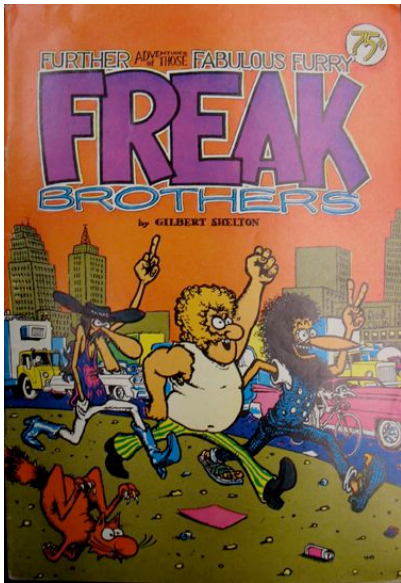
This generally came to be seen as a cheerful, upbeat sign, and was adopted by the hippies as a general expression of goodwill and—ironically—of peace.



This photo is of the famous “Death of Hippie” march in the Haight in late 1967.

It seems a fitting symbol of the gesture's fragility.

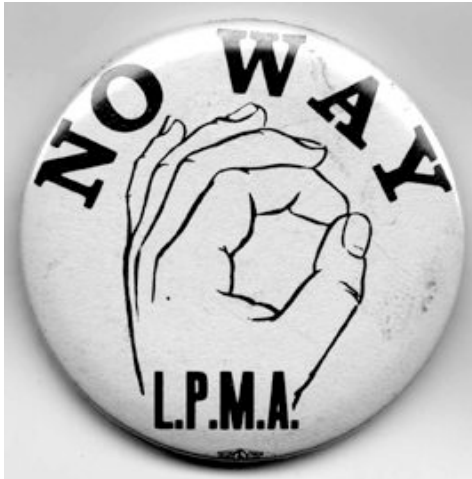
The peace sign almost immediately became a joke and was abandoned by all except commercial artists and little kids who loved flashing it at anybody with long hair who might return the gesture.



Gilbert Shelton's Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers demonstrate the three most common hand gestures of the period, all of which played a role at WSU.



The nascent Christian Right adopted the annoying “One Way” hand symbol emphasizing that only faith in Jesus could solve our problems.



A few of us, fed up with their smugness, formed a group to argue that religion produced more problems than solutions, and funded our activities by selling these extremely popular counter-buttons, reading "No Way."

My friend David Mathiason came up with the group's rather unfortunate name: "The League for the Promotion of Militant Atheism." We had to waste a lot of energy explaining the difference between "militant" and "military." He claimed he had seen the name inscribed over an office window in Seattle; but when he returned later, he couldn't find it. Therefore, he claimed, it had been miraculously revealed to him—a typical bit of Mathiason humor.

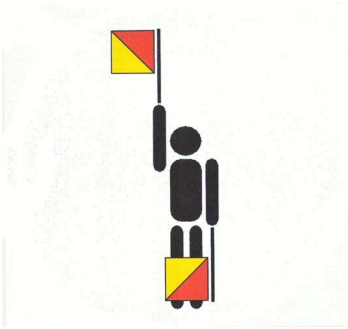
I wrote all the pamphlets for the group and did most of their public speaking. Fundamentalist groups were eager to debate with us and we enjoyed the opportunity to annoy them.

Much more popular among political activists and longer-lasting was the peace *symbol*. It was designed in 1958 by artist Gerald Holtom as the symbol of the British Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

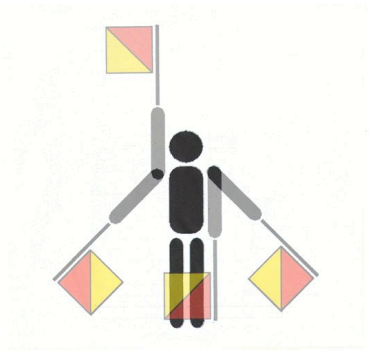


He combined the semaphore signal for the letter "N" for "Nuclear"

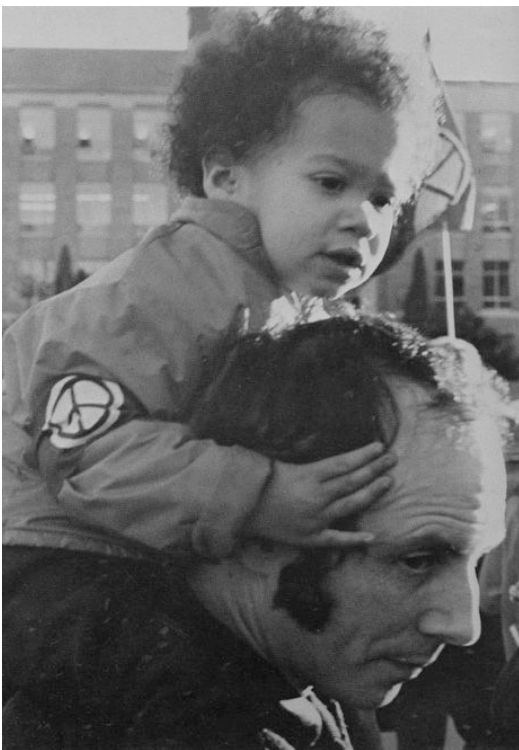




with the signal for the letter “D” for “Disarmament.”



Lay them on top of each other and draw a circle around them, and you have the peace symbol.



Most often seen on buttons, the peace symbol was also worn on armbands during demonstrations. Here are a couple of examples from WSU.

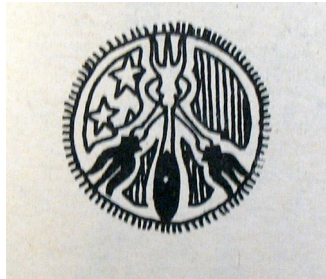


From the beginning there have always been people who confused the peace symbol with the Mercedes-Benz symbol, omitting bottom of the bottom vertical stroke.



Incorporated into the design of the American flag, it became the peace flag, a symbol of what protesters felt the country *should* stand for.

Here two flags are carried in a 1968 Vietnam Moratorium protest march to downtown Pullman.



The logo of the *Three Forks Press*, the Radical Union newspaper published at WSU consisted of a peace sign formed out of three forks over stars and stripes. In pioneer days, one name for this area was “Three Forks,” referring to the three forks of the river that merged here, so that became an alternative name for Pullman.



Young Americans for Freedom, a student pro-government group, reworked the symbol as a circle around a B-52 bomber, with the slogan “Peace Through Victory.”



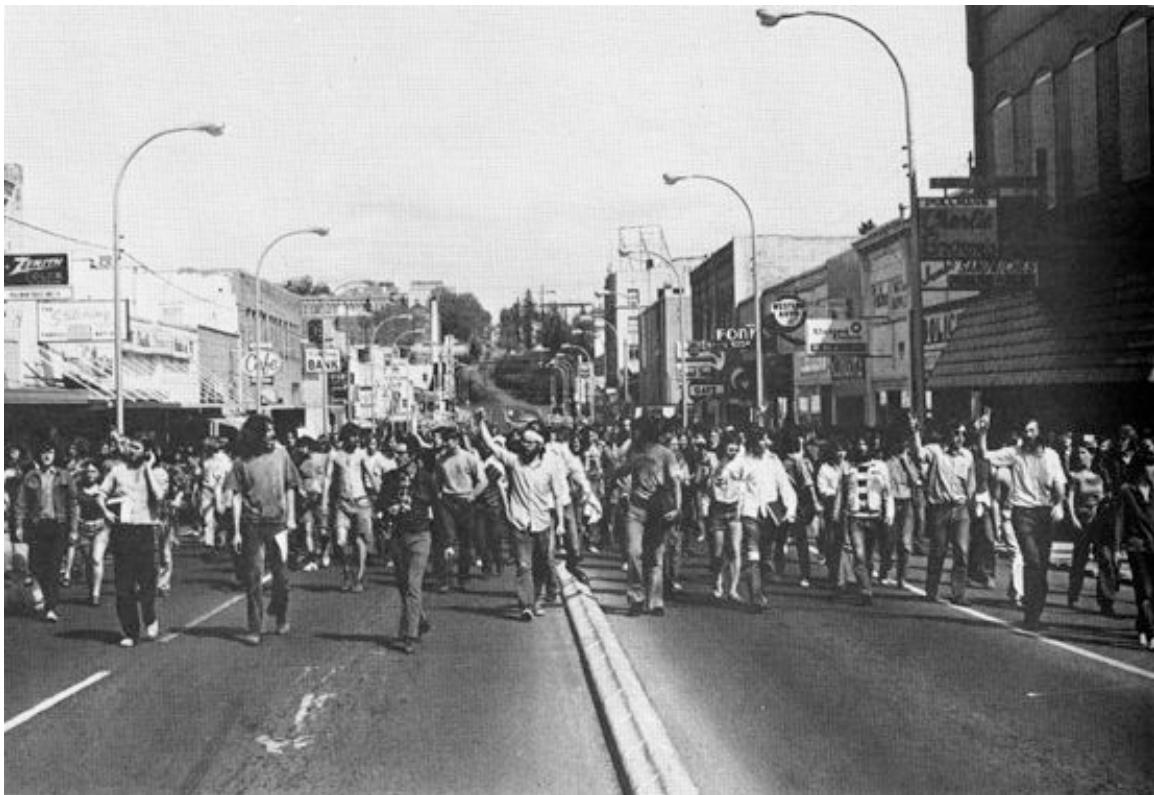
Although the peace *sign* was short-lived, it was soon succeeded among activists by the raised-fist salute. It harked back to the old leftist tradition, still very alive in Europe at the



time, in which the clenched fist hoisted aloft symbolized defiance of authority, the union of individuals—represented by the clenched fingers—to create unity and strength. Intended to inspire the masses, it also annoyed many who were not so committed and did not appreciate having clenched fists shoved in their faces at every turn.



Early anti-war imagery had sometimes been almost childishly naïve, showing the clear influence of the hippie era, as in this Vietnam Moratorium poster that I had hanging in my office for years. That all quickly changed.



You can see the transition in this photograph from a Spring 1972 march down Main Street.

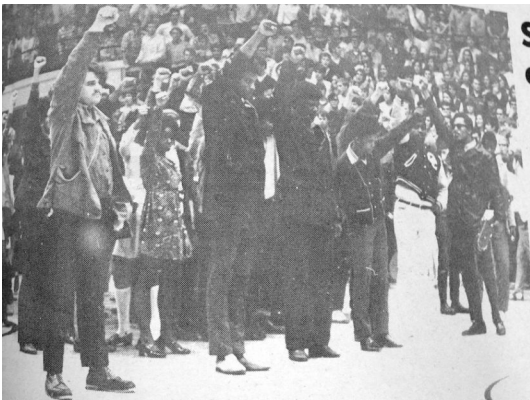
The guy on the right is flashing the old peace sign while the one in the center is waving his fist.



This stencil pattern was everywhere on campus in the spring of 1970.



The raised fist made its greatest impact in the U.S. at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico, when two black medal-winners defiantly raised their fists during the playing of the national anthem in what was referred to as the “black power salute.” This caused a huge uproar.



When black students and some white supporters made the same gesture before a WSU basketball game the reaction was less widespread, of course, but equally vehement.

*fistsalute.jpg*



The pro-War crowd tried to monopolize the flag which they felt the protesters had contempt for, as in the picture on the left at a Young Americans for Freedom rally, on an armband. But on the right, the stars and stripes are carried side by side with the peace flag in an anti-war march.



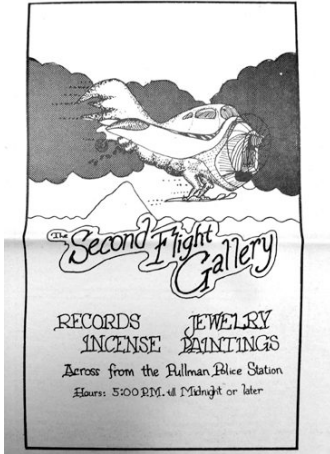
There are not a lot of photographs from campus events in this period. When people started snapping pictures at demonstrations they were assumed to be either cops or press photographers. The Spokane television stations sometimes sent units down to campus, which were highly visible.

### **Part III: Protest in Pullman**

The rest of this presentation will not be a systematic historical account, but rather a literal series of snapshots of protest in Pullman during the period 1968-1972.

**When I arrived in Pullman** August, 1968, the only sign of a counter-culture was a languishing little poster-and-incense shop on the ground floor of the soon-to-be-demolished Pullman Hotel.





It was replaced by the Second Flight Gallery, housed in what is now the Swilly's building, as it liked to boast, "across the street from the police station."

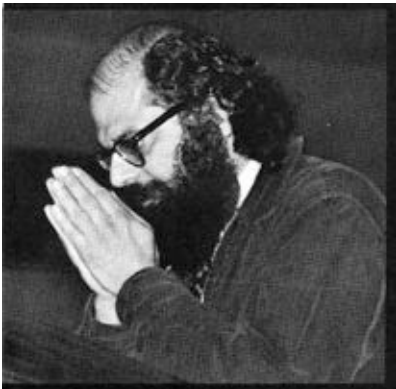


I didn't know it at the time, but I had come to work at the alma mater of one of the founding fathers of the psychedelic counterculture. Timothy Leary received his MA in psychology here in 1947. Somehow that fact never gets mentioned in WSU recruiting materials.

I was a new-minted Ph.D., just 26, closer in age and interests to the students than to most of my fellow faculty members.



The first anti-war march I took part in after moving here was on a drizzly day in Spokane. Years later the *Spokesman-Review* printed this photo of the demonstration to illustrate a retrospective article on the 60s, focusing on the striking young woman holding the flag upside down. That's me on the left.



Alan Ginsberg came through Pullman in April of 1969, chanting and reciting his often politically inflected poetry to great effect in Bohler Gym. When I was invited that year to take part in a debate at the University of Idaho over the proposal for an Anti-Ballistic Missile force, I wrote a poem based on a good deal of research called "ABM ABC" and recited it sitting cross-legged atop the symposium table in my brightest shirt with my long hair hanging down. It created quite a sensation, for at that time the U of I was even more conservative than WSU.



Plenty of celebrities came to campus, often leading figures for various contemporary causes, like Dick Gregory, who had by then abandoned comedy for politics.

### **Hair**

Hair was a Big Deal in the sixties, the most visible sign of rebellion. Several students told me that when they went home for Thanksgiving their parents refused to let them in the house until they cut their hair. It is astonishing how much venom and passion were expended on the battle between short-haired conservatives and the longhairs.



To represent the look of students around 1969, this photo of student government officers will do. Notice not only how clean-cut they are, but how the women are draped ornamentally over the men—all that would change shortly, with the rise of women's liberation.





The black student in the back row is Carlton Lewis, who was to play an important role as student president in the spring of 1970, sporting a larger Afro.

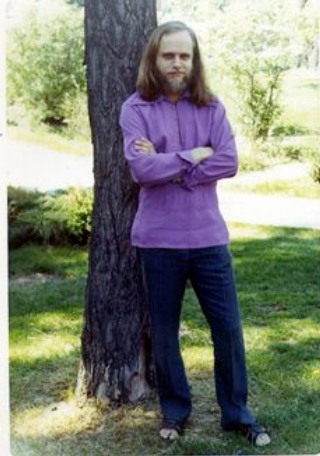
*carltonlewis.jpg*

Lewis was a charming, intelligent young man—a natural-born leader, and very highly regarded among students and faculty alike.



Above: Program Board. Row One: Stan Weber, Bill Davis, Jay Hines, Gary Larson, JoAnn Ross, Jim Mertes, Steve Waters, Ron Kercheval, Rose Webster, Chris Day, Jan Kiviluoma, Steve Van Buren.

The next year students were considerably shaggier. This photo of the ASWSU Program Board still features one lap-sitting young woman, but note that she's been joined by two lap-sitting young men. The guy in the middle is Gary Larson, later to become famous as creator of *The Far Side*.



This is me in 1970.

There were longhairs and longhairs. At first, radicals disdained hippies, and wouldn't be caught dead in tie-die and love beads.



This Pullman couple created a highly successful business in making candles and selling them on the street, here in front of the Common Ministry building next to the Bookie.



Anti-capitalist true believers scorned such hip entrepreneurship in cartoons like this one which appeared in a campus radical paper.

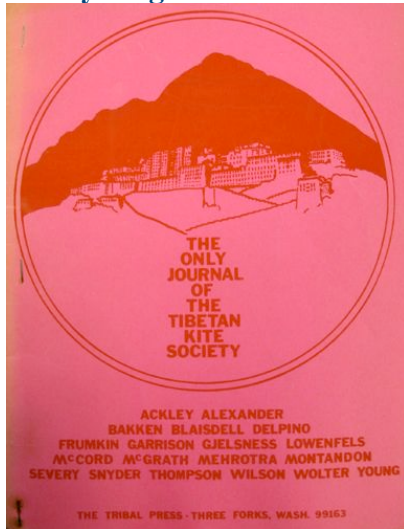


Students protest in 1970 near the Stephenson Complex.

The preferred dress for the truly committed was jeans topped by an Army fatigue jacket. Some of the guys earned their fatigues the traditional way, by doing a tour of duty in the military; but most bought them from the then very common Army surplus stores. I can't say where the guy with the bullhorn in this WSU demonstration got his, but he has the look down perfectly.

This distinction began to break down, partly under the dissolving power of music and drugs. I remember vividly my astonishment the first time I saw an SDS leader wearing love beads with his Army jacket. The fact that he was a vet—though he had not seen combat—made it all the more striking. The various strands of youth subculture never blended into a single mass, but they did intertwine in all sorts of interesting ways.

## Poetry magazine



The title of this little magazine, edited by our poet in residence, Howard McCord, combined Buddhist imagery with flying—usually an allusion to psychedelics: *The Only Journal of the Tibetan Kite Society*.

## The Free University

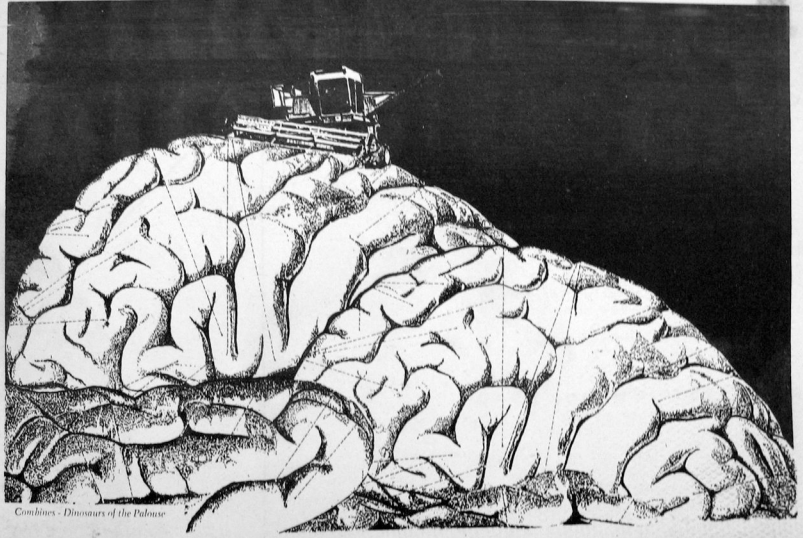


Starting in San Francisco and spreading around the country, students began creating alternative educational institutions offering classes in radical or unusual subjects not on the official college curriculum. Most of them were called “Free Universities.” As we had to explain repeatedly, the word “free” in the name referred to freedom, not to lack of cost. The one we founded at WSU in 1969 charged one dollar per course, later raised to three dollars. I was one of five founders, and after my student comrades graduated, became the coordinator of what eventually became known as the Community Free University for thirty years. After printing one initial article about our founding, the *Evergreen* steadfastly refused to print any of our publicity, so if you want to read about our history you’ll have to consult my Web site. Just type “Community Free University” into Google.

The teachers were unpaid volunteers, and the money was used exclusively for printing brochures and buying advertisements.



## Free University Bulletin



We experimented with several catalog designs before settling on the drawing WSU graphics artist Ole Kvern did for us.

I found the Palouse brain image particularly memorable.

### The Mothers



A unique feature of Pullman was the faculty motorcycle club which bore the proudly swaggering name “The Up Against the Wall Motherfucker Motorcycle Club.” They were usually referred to as “the Mothers.” To join you needed a serious hog and a Ph.D.



They mostly just rode around for fun on weekends, sporting their leathers featuring a modified peace logo on a shield.



One of the moving spirits behind the Mothers was Jerry Lilje, an extraordinary philosophy professor who for a time ran a lively bar in Palouse.

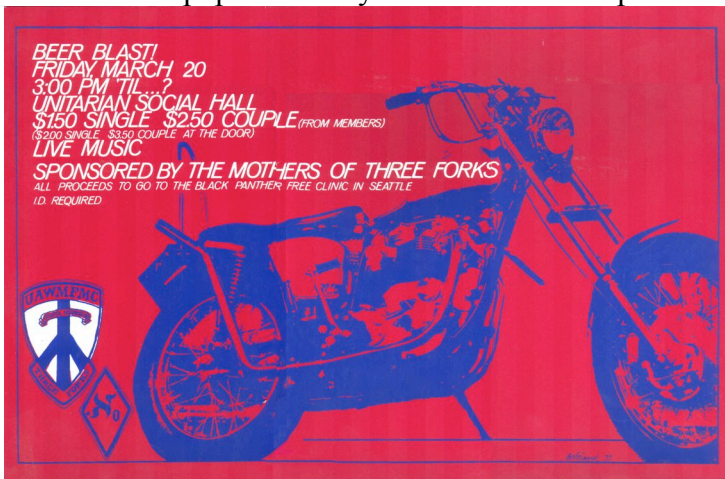


Here's Jerry hanging out with leaders of the Black Student Union at a Radical Union party in Reaney Park, raising funds for black student defendants.





Here's a poster for another Mother's function aimed at raising money for something called "The People's Bank," which I confess I know nothing about. These remarkable posters were all designed by artist Bill Voiland, and printed in the sort of vibrant colors that had been popularized by the San Francisco poster artists.



These posters feature the logo of the Mothers, a modified peace symbol, inscribed with a motto in Swahili which, loosely translated, means "Beware of the pigs"—or "look out for the cops." They were too cool to call themselves after Pullman, so of course their shield also bears the place name "Three Forks."

When a more traditional band of outlaw bikers decided to challenge them, the Mothers hastily disbanded. In the end, despite all their macho swagger, the Mothers proved to be, like Planet Earth in the *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, "mostly harmless."

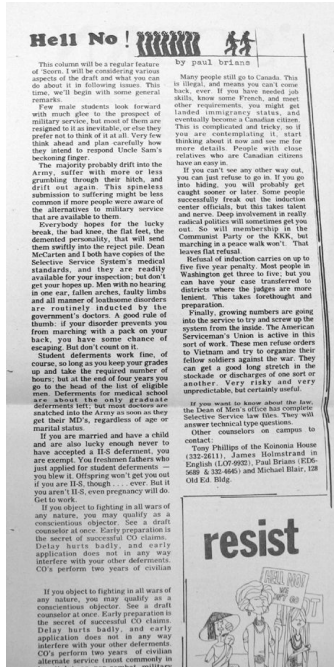




The Mothers had no monopoly on left-wing partying. In reaction to the annual ROTC military ball, radicals on campus held an Anti-Military Ball for a couple of years.

### **Draft Counseling**

One of the first things I got involved in politically in Pullman was a draft counseling service in the Koinonia House run by the Common Ministry. The K-House was home to all kinds of activism in those days, and ran a popular alternative cofeehouse in the basement with the walls papered with underground publications. A lot of SDS members scorned draft counseling, viewing it as a cop-out for prosperous white students to evade the draft at the expense of poor people of color. They preferred to advocate resistance and jail, or exile in Canada. Despite the fact that I agreed draft counseling was far from perfect, I still felt that young men should not be forced to fight in a war they opposed; and spent a lot of time and energy helping many of them find alternatives, with a fair amount of success. *Although I myself prepared my case for conscientious objector status, I eventually lucked out in the draft lottery.*



I wrote this draft column for *Scorn*, and later did a regular column in the *Evergreen*.

## Guerilla Theater



The San Francisco Mime Troupe, despite its name, specialized in short satirical plays on political subjects, with little miming involved. They appeared on campus in 1968 and inspired local radicals to put on political sketches of their own from time to time.



The sketches we staged were fairly crude and propagandistic, but they attracted an audience better than the usual political harangue. This sort of thing was called “guerilla theater” when actors would show up by surprise and perform a sketch before an unsuspecting audience, and technically ours was not that because we tried to publicize our sketches in advance as much as possible.



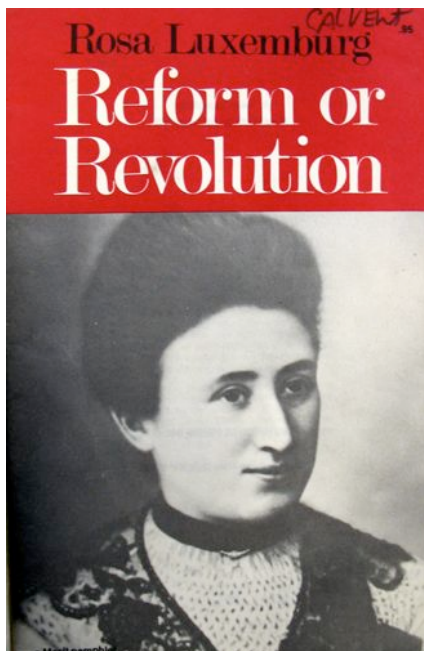
One of the hallmarks of the 60s was the connection between protest and music. In this photo from the CUB west entrance you can see an electric guitar lying behind the speaker addressing a crowd on the mall.



Pullman didn't have a Woodstock, but it did manage a Pullstock, whose publicity did a clever variation on the better-known rock festival's logo.

### The Rosa Luxemburg Collective

A large house on A street housed the Rosa Luxemburg Collective, through which a lively cast of activists, freaks, and others constantly rotated; but where many of the ideas of the movement in Pullman were hatched and created, often in the large kitchen in the center of the house, with its back wall covered with a huge portrait of the German socialist intellectual Rosa Luxemburg. [I have been unable to find any photos of the mural, later painted over in a less radical era.](#)

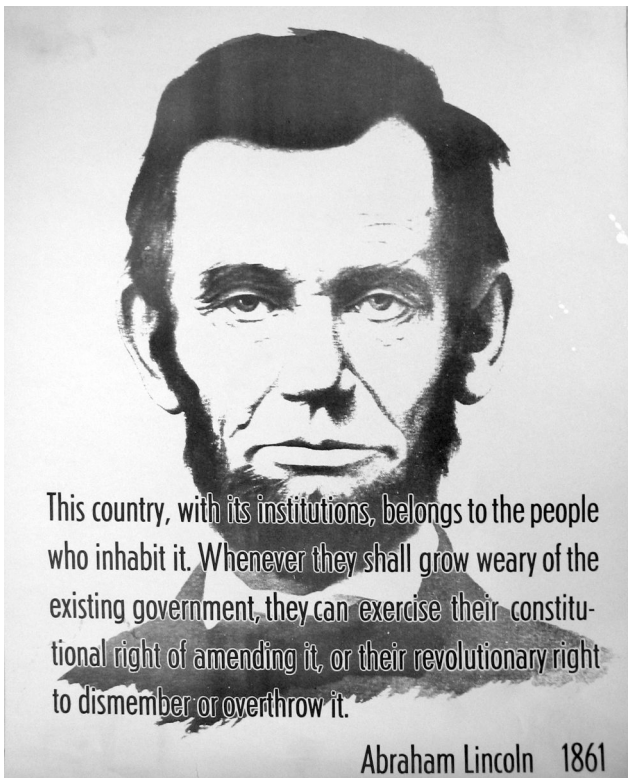


[She was chosen as their symbol not only because she was an important radical woman, but because she broke with Lenin and fought for a truly democratic socialism in Germany, opposing the increasing oppressiveness of the Soviet Regime.](#)





Here people are using the kitchen to spray-paint some of those fist posters that kept springing up all over campus.



A lot of silkscreened posters were created at Rosa's including this one featuring a radical quotation from Abraham Lincoln.



Two of the most important and creative inhabitants of Rosa's, as it was called, were David Mathiason and Molly Martin, both journalism students who worked on the *Evergreen*,



but put far more of their energies into SDS, Radical Union, Women's Liberation, and other organizations and causes.

Molly went on to a career as an electrician and electrical inspector and wrote a remarkable book about women in the building trades. They were both brilliant, energetic, fearless, and had great senses of humor and a low tolerance for dogmatism. David especially liked to riff sarcastically on the teachings of self-appointed revolutionary leaders like Albania's Enver Hoxha and North Korea's Kim Il Sung.



Although the antiwar movement is generally considered an affair of youth, people of all different ages marched with us, and several of the most important local leaders were graduate students, like PhD candidates Jerry Calvert, and Vic Stevens. The movement was not just an upsurge of adolescent hormones.



Another lively group of hipsters and activists lived in the country on a place they called “Maggie’s Farm” after a Bob Dylan song, and had the original idea of posing for their portrait in the yearbook, just like all the Greek houses. At one time there were enough communes and collectives like this in Pullman that they organized a buying cooperative to get better prices on food.

### **The 1968 Presidential Campaign**

There has been no end of analysis purporting to explain why the Baby Boomers erupted in revolt as they entered young adulthood, but it’s worth focusing on the short-term influences that led to the events of 1968 and 1969. On April 4, 1968, Martin Luther King was assassinated, dashing the hopes of many young idealists. This catastrophe was followed by the eruption of a massive wave of violence in the cities which now seems like a close parallel to the lethal riots that erupted in 1947 upon the assassination one of

his models: Mahatma Gandhi. The Presidential campaigns of Eugene McCarthy and Robert Kennedy inspired a lot of young people and gave them hope that the war might be ended through the electoral process. But Kennedy was assassinated, and the Democratic establishment cracked down hard on the peace faction at the 1968 convention in Chicago, nominating instead Lyndon Johnson's vice president, Hubert Humphrey. To the older generation, Humphrey was the Happy Warrior, the great defender of liberal causes, including civil rights. To the younger generation, he was a perfect example of the liberal sell-out, having joined in support of the mad crusade of Johnson in Vietnam.



The cover cartoon from this early underground comic publication conveys crudely but vividly many young people's attitudes toward Humphrey.

The Vietnam War was intensely unpopular with many young people for many reasons: 1) it was built on lies, 2) it constituted an illegal intervention in what was essentially a civil war, mistakenly hoping to keep enemies from our own shores 3) we had allied ourselves with unreliable and corrupt leaders, 4) the principal victims were innocent civilians, mostly women and children, and 5) no amount of resources poured into the effort or lives lost seemed to move us an inch out of a seemingly endless quagmire.

Sound familiar?

The campaign year, after a highly successful initial beginning for antiwar forces, turned into a huge disappointment, with no alternative for those who wished to vote for peace.





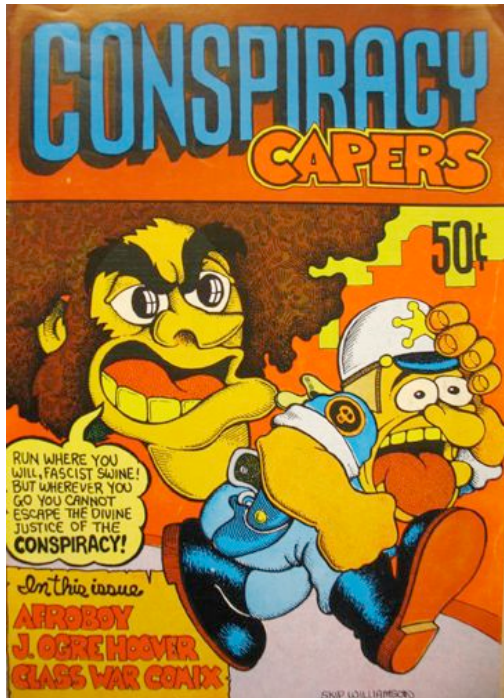
THE SWINGING QUARTET above on the library lawn were created by the Society for Democratic Students to protest national election "no-choices," and Humphrey, were hung in effigy to mark what the SDS felt was the "death" of democracy. Uncle Sam and his associates, Nixon, Wallace, Photo by Terry Dixon

## WSU protest mourns 'death of democracy'

That fall SDS staged an anti-election protest on the west side of Holland, hanging the candidates in effigy. I didn't much like the effigy business, but I went ahead with the talk I had been asked to give. I was regretting that I had earlier sent an absentee ballot to Indiana, where I was still registered, voting for the Humphrey ticket; and I and other faculty members urged voters to sit this one out. Some analysts like to blame people like us for Nixon's election, but it's clear that we had very little effect on the outcome, and I still blame the Democrats for not having given us an alternative.



How could we know that this was the period of moderation? Two and a half years later when Nixon was hanged in effigy on the campus again, he was also burned.



The authorities tried to hold some of the organizers of the 1968 Chicago Democratic convention protests responsible for the chaos that followed, and tried the group known as the “Chicago Seven” for conspiracy rather than for any specific acts, though the seven had only the vaguest connection with the events that followed. This comic satirizes the whole conspiracy concept. The hippie on the cover is clearly a caricature of Abbie Hoffman, one of the most famous of those on trial.

## Black Students



In the account that follows, I am going to use the term proudly claimed by African Americans in the 60s—“black”—because to do otherwise would be to distort history. There were about 150 black students at WSU in 1968, and they were often viewed as outsiders by the rather insular white students. Grad students conducted a survey which

estimated that there were five to ten self-confessed white bigots among the students for every black student.

In the right rear of this portrait of the officers of the Black Student Union Union president Ernie Thomas wears the sort of black leather jacket associated with the Black Panthers and those who emulated them. Thomas later earned his PhD. and is now president of a community college in Texas.

There were several clashes with racial overtones, the earliest significant one that year a heated argument at a basketball game which led to four armed black athletes invading a fraternity house and firing some shots at the walls. Arrested and convicted of assault, the black students called on their allies in SDS and elsewhere to Colfax, where they were supposed to turn themselves in for the first of a series of weekends according to a sentence which allowed them to continue their studies during the week.

Rather confused about the point of the exercise, I went along and witnessed the amazing sight of dozens of white and black students surrounding the four, insisting that the sheriff jail all of them or none of them. They were housed in a church overnight and fed at public expense, and forty-five people peacefully submitted to arrest the next morning and were given light fines.

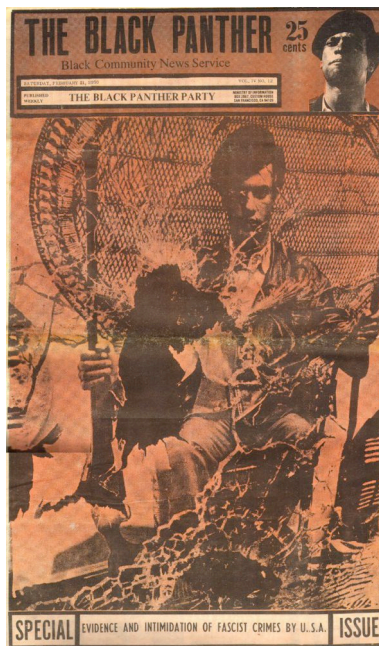
The episode was to prove characteristic in several ways of Pullman during this era: the issue involved race and was dealt with interracially, the protesters were nonviolent, and the authorities acted with great restraint.



In several cases involving black students, Spokane civil rights attorney Carl Maxey acted on their behalf. He was a distinguished, much-beloved figure who spoke frequently on campus, as in this photograph. He was interested in the civil rights of all people, regardless of race, and worked with me on the case of a soldier who had run away from the Army when his claim for conscientious objector status was denied. His death in 1997 was a great loss.



A distinctive feature of the black movement of this period was the use of African art, clothing styles, and imagery, as illustrated here by the poster of an African mask hanging in the office of Black Studies director Talmadge Anderson.



The most visible radical black force at the time was the Black Panther Party, originating in Oakland, California, and spreading to several cities. Angry, loud, and armed, they thrust themselves on the national consciousness in a big way, and a major campaign was waged by them to free from prison founder Huey Newton, who had been accused of killing a police officer in a gunfight. This poster was displayed in a lot of dorm rooms during the period.

Although the Panthers had the support of only a minority of blacks in the country, they profoundly impressed more people than actually agreed with them. Their fearless defiance became a model for many others, black and white. What was less clear at the time was that the Panthers were heavily influenced by white radical organizations, like



SDS. SDS and the Panthers engaged in an elaborate dance of one-upsmanship and emulation during their heyday.



The strongest faculty ally and advisor of the black students at WSU was the brilliant Johnetta Cole in anthropology, who might have appeared outspokenly radical to the administration, but actually exercised a moderating influence at many points, making BSU protests much more effective than they might have been.

She went on to distinguish herself as president of Spelman College.

### **Chicano students**

Not long after the Black Student Union became highly visible, MECHA ([Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán](#)) was formed by Chicanos on campus.



Mexican-American immigrants and their offspring had long used the term “Chicano” to label themselves, and the term gained widespread usage during this period, especially in the struggle to organize migrant laborers in the grape and lettuce fields of California by the United Farmworkers. Founder and leader Cesar Chavez didn’t make it to campus, but Dolores Huerta, his distinguished co-founder and organizer, did.

In this photo you can see around her neck the symbol of the UFW, the Aztec eagle borrowed from the Mexican flag.



This banner featuring the UFW symbol was hung in the entrance to the CUB during the student campaign against non-union lettuce being served there.



The leader and spokesperson of MECHA was another remarkable woman: Margarita Mendoza de Sugiyama. The only photograph I could find of her is this recent one. The daughter of migrant workers herself, she was passionately devoted to the cause of the UFW and was the leading force behind the various student initiatives to support them. She has gone on to have a distinguished governmental career working on civil rights issues and often returned to WSU to lead racism workshops and speak on related issues.

Note the consistent pattern: student leaders at WSU were often women.



After months of boycotting grapes and pressuring local grocery stores to stock union grapes, many of us were growing exasperated. This was the background to an event that got huge publicity around the state, the “Great Grape Stomp.” It actually began with a planned demonstration at the Selective Service office in downtown Pullman.



The draft board knew we were coming, and we arrived to find the office locked and deserted. Having a large band of activists on hand, Margarita, who was marching with us, suggested we take our protest instead to the local grocery stores in support of the farmworkers' boycott. Nothing illustrates better how intimately intertwined various causes were in this period.

Unfortunately, when we arrived at Safeway on Grand Avenue, where UPS is located now, some hotheads decided to go inside, grab nonunion grapes, and trample them in the parking lot. As a crime against property it was pretty absurd, but I knew right away it would mean trouble. The same routine was repeated at the other two grocery stores at the north end of town.

Although the damage amounted to a few bucks, it caused a huge furor; but the store owners were unable to identify the grape stompers. The police wound up arresting Ralph Atkins, a highly conspicuous young black guy who had been shouting through a bullhorn but who had nothing to do with the grape stomping, and certainly didn't incite the march. At worst he could have been accused of cheerleading. It was obvious that he was arrested *because* he was black and protesting. We spent a lot of time, money and energy defending Ralph, and this was not the last time, either.

### **The 1969 SDS Convention in Chicago**



This is not the place to detail the events surrounding the catastrophic August 1969 convention of SDS which ultimately led to the dissolution of the organization. That story has often been told in print, but I would like to share a few of my own views and experiences. I was one of a group of delegates who drove from WSU to Chicago in a battered old car to represent our local chapter at the national meeting. We had a difficult time sorting through the forces that clashed with each other, as various groups broke off in independent caucuses.



On the floor of SDS convention plenary.

Women often complained about the male dominance of the movement, but there were plenty of outspoken young women like this one.





The main groups in conflict with each other were the highly disciplined Maoist-inspired Progressive Labor Party faction and the national leadership, Maoist in a different way, calling itself the Revolutionary Youth Movement, one faction of which was to shortly develop into the famed underground terrorist group known at first as “The Weathermen,” and later, in gender-neutral language, as “The Weather Underground,” after a famous line from a Bob Dylan song: “You don’t need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows.” This poster was Weatherman propaganda in the form of photographs superimposed on the North Vietnamese flag.

In the chaos of denunciations, clashing demonstrations, and walk-outs, the only people that seemed to me to be making sense were the anarchists, and this marked the beginning of my gradual disillusionment with the Marxist left and interest in other kinds of American radical traditions.

Students for a Democratic Society had succeeded because it lived up to its name of being extremely democratic. Initiatives usually came at the local level, with the national officers acting as little more than coordinators. [The major popular breakthrough of the movement that spring had been the People’s Park demonstrations in Berkeley, and the UC delegates came expecting to be acclaimed, but were instead met with a barrage of criticism from radicalized activists denouncing them as elitist counterrevolutionary dilettantes.](#)

For me, the low point of the convention came when the national officers brought onto the stage a row of armed, fierce-looking Black Panthers to stare down those who were objecting to their attempts to expel PLP and steer SDS in their own direction. [This cynical manipulation of the overwhelmingly white delegates’ respect for and fear of the Panthers to intimidate them into agreeing with the national officers’ program met with widespread anger, which turned to contempt when it was learned that they had used our dues to bribe the Chicago Panthers into acting as their bodyguard-enforcers.](#)

Not that this act was wholly opportunistic. The Weathermen emphasized the battle against “white skin privilege” and frequently featured Panther-style imagery in their calls for immediate revolution.





RU leader Jerry Calvert indignantly marked up his copy of the Weatherman publication which featured a photo of revolutionary cadre preparing to take on the the Chicago police force, scrawling across the top of this puerile manifesto: "Read this shit."



Robert Crumb satirized this sort of bravado in the cover for *Motor City Comics*, which reflects less support for revolutionary violence than it does Crumb's well-known fetish for women with large muscled legs.



The Weathermen announced a “Days of Rage” action in Chicago in which a few hundred radicals clashed with the Chicago police, with the unsurprising result that the students were thoroughly pounded and arrested, including at least one WSU student I knew personally, a young woman who probably didn’t weigh 98 pounds but who was arrested for assaulting a cop with her bare hands.



In Pullman, RU was the leading political voice from the fall of 69 to May of 1970, which is an astonishingly short period when I look back on it now but which seemed then like a whole era, and a very tumultuous one. One of the products of RU was the nicely produced tabloid “Burgerville Blues.”

On the western edge of Pullman, on the road leading into town, there used to be a popular drive-in called “Burgerville.”

*burgerville.jpg*

The probably apocryphal story was that a truck driver arrived in Moscow, puzzled as to why he had missed Pullman, his destination. When someone explained to him that he would have had to pass through it on his way from Spokane, he is supposed to have said



“I never saw Pullman, but I passed through some place called ‘Burgerville’.” So



“Burgerville” became a joking name for Pullman. I love the graphic on the cover of this issue, featuring a jokey salute to Chairman Mao. Tongue-in-cheek humor was a hallmark of a lot of Radical Union activity.

Earlier publications had constantly been subject to being shut down as various print shops refused to work with them. The old saying that “freedom of the press belongs to those who own one” is very true, *Burgerville Blues* benefitted from being produced on a small press which its publishers had bought and hauled to Pullman. Unfortunately, a group of Seattle activists with a more-radical-than-thou attitude decided the revolution wasn’t going to happen in Pullman and appropriated the the press for their own purposes, using firearms to back up their arguments. The Pullman crowd debated defending the press forcefully but ultimately decided it wasn’t a cause worth dying for.

### The IWW



Librarian Siegfried Vogt joined the Industrial Workers of the World and recruited myself, Dan Maher, and several other people, in a gesture of solidarity with America’s oldest

continuing radical organization, with a deep commitment to the popular will, freedom of speech, and hostility to Leninist centralized Communism. Although the Wobblies managed to organize a few bookstore workers on one campus and carried on a lively publishing program, their efforts were more symbolic than real, a protest against the increasing mindlessness of groups like the Weathermen.

## Sex



In the midst of the turmoil on the WSU campus in the spring of 1969, the *Evergreen* took the time to salute with this photo a hallowed legend, commemorated with the traditional rhyme “Hurray, hurray, for the eighth of May; outdoor intercourse starts today.” The result was a stern rebuke from the Publications Board.

*8thmay.jpg*

## ROTC Review protest



ROTC had been the target of many protests over the years, with some faculty arguing that their courses did not deserve academic credit, and many students finding them offensive during a period when they were generating large numbers of officers to lead the troops in Vietnam. The story of the protests at the May 1970 annual ROTC Review has been told only in fragments, so I will try to piece together the elements that were to lead to one of the strongest visual images of the period, though it is difficult to illustrate because it involved an advertised act that never took place and culminated in one that was not photographed. There is just this one photograph to illustrate this segment.

Radical Union scheduled a political theater performance for the CUB Auditorium the day of the Review, during the lunch hour. [This was a much more extensive, well-researched, and complex pageant than the short sketches which had earlier been performed on the mall. I played the role of an anti-war Vietnamese Buddhist monk, wrapped in a saffron-dyed sheet.](#) The CUB was packed, and we considered the event quite a success.

The idea was to invite the audience to proceed with us down to the football field to protest at the ROTC ceremony about to take place where graduates would be honored by various officials, including President Terrell. But when we emerged from the CUB, we encountered an enormous crowd, expecting a very different event. Pranksters had posted signs on the mall announcing a noontime bra-burning by the Women's Liberation organization, and thousands of students had shown up to witness it. People had climbed on the rooftops of surrounding buildings for a better view. This was a much more massive crowd than RU had ever been able to inspire.

Here let me insert a little background on bra-burning. The image of the "bra-burning feminist" is one of the most durable urban legends of modern times. It originated at the Miss America Pageant in Atlantic City September 7, 1968, when a group of women

showed up with protest signs and a barrel which they called the “Freedom Trash Can,” and into which they tossed various items constraining women such as make-up, high-heeled shoes, women’s magazines, and—yes—bras. Nothing was burned, but the legend of the bra-burning had been born and shows no sign of dying four decades later.

It is true that this was not entirely an invention of the news media. The original intention had indeed been to set the items in the barrel alight, but the protesters could not get a burning permit. And it was Lindsay Van Gelder, a young feminist journalist, who coined the phrase in an article for the September 1968 issue of *Ms.* magazine in which she compared young men burning their draft cards with women burning their bras. The context was quickly forgotten and the isolated phrase “bra-burning” spread like—pardon the expression—wildfire.

It was a stereotype of the time that feminists were supposed to be man-hating sexless haridans, and the incongruous but titillating image of such activists sporting the no-bra look so common among hip young women of the time burned itself into the public imagination, and ever afterward feminists have found themselves having to explain that they have never advocated the burning of brassieres.

So it was not surprising that on that day in May, 1970, when pranksters posted signs announcing that women’s liberation would burn their bras on the mall at noon, more than 2,500 students turned out to witness the spectacle. Chants went up of “we want bras,” but the only response was one man who flourished a bra and burned it and a few other men who burned their shorts. During this latter event, one young man brandished an athletic supporter and shouted “This is to show my support!”

It was this fired-up, disappointed, but not particularly political mob that the Radical Union members encountered when they emerged from the CUB. I was encouraged to seize the occasion to invite the crowd to join our march down to the football field, and many of them did.

The authorities were prepared for us, and had set aside an area out of sight from the main reviewing stand into which we were herded to picket and chant to our hearts’ content while the ceremony went on. Suddenly four women robed in black witches’ costumes and with faces painted red and blue, ran onto the field carrying a sheet by its four corners which they dumped in front of a group of graduating cadets facing President Terrell and various ROTC officers. Piled on the sheet was a heap of what appeared to be bloody guts. In fact it consisted of assorted animal organs from a local butcher shop liberally sprinkled with ketchup.

The effect was stunning. Without a word they had transposed the context of the ceremony from one of abstract patriotism to bloody death. [They had told nobody of their plan ahead of time, and ran off the field and disappeared before officials could react and drag the sheetload of carrion out of sight, and they were never publically identified.](#)

My first thought was “Wow! How amazing!” And my second thought was “Am I going to be arrested for inciting this?”—a not very heroic but I hope understandable reaction, which was increased when moments later emboldened protesters began to leap the barricades and run out onto the field during the final review of cadets marching past the officials. Groups of protesters interspersed themselves within the parade, chanting



slogans, taunting the cadets, and some began giving the Nazi salute to Terrell and the officers as well.

Even at the time, this bothered me intensely. Treating every political opponent as another Hitler is an appallingly simplistic and offensive feature of American political life. Now that I know President Terrell was among those who landed at Normandy on D-Day to fight Hitler I am amazed that he did not respond more angrily than he did. Note the dog in the foreground of this photograph, which began nosing around the discarded animal guts, creating a macabre effect.

I was down on the field too, but I was not happy with the way the demonstration was turning out, with individuals being attacked rather than institutions and policies. To my way of thinking, this demonstration combined the most brilliant wit and most deplorable witlessness of the antiwar movement, and illustrated clearly how impossible it was to control both events and images once they got underway.



You may wonder why, if I wasn't arrested, I was at least not thrown out of the faculty. After all, most of the other professors and teaching assistants who were conspicuous in the protests of these years were forced out or left in short order. For my survival I have to thank partly my innate sense of caution, but mostly the decency and intelligence of my department chair, John Elwood, who shielded me from many hostile forces I was only vaguely aware of at the time.

### **Women's Liberation**



M. Hawkins, with Donna Brians, speaks at Women's liberation workshop.  
Photo by Rich Birmingham.

The real women's liberation movement was founded at WSU in a couple of groups led by female members of SDS. The most prominent was the Women's Liberation Front, which took a typically radical-sounding name, but engaged in a lot of very intensive study and public education, like these spokeswomen for WLF, one of whom I was married to at the time.

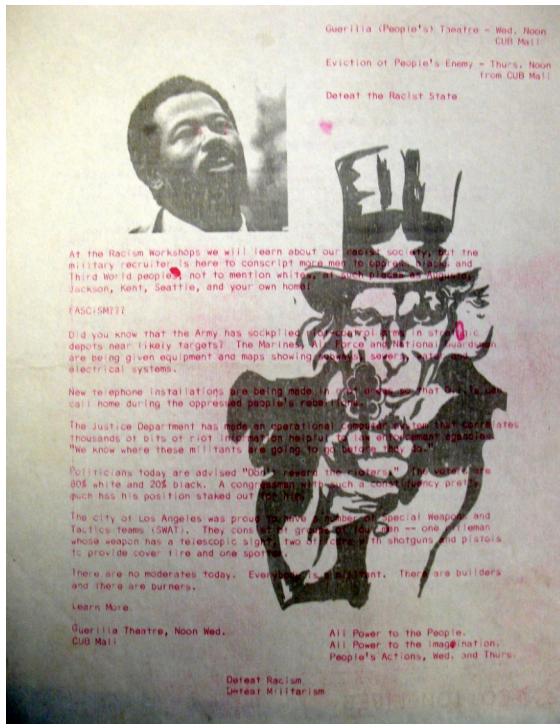


Women's liberation activists generally regarded the National Organization for Women as too conservative for their liking, and instead of the rather stodgy NOW logo, devised their own variation on the clenched-fist theme.

At that time men's social groups often had women's auxiliaries who provided feminine support by conducting bake sales and such, and I thought it would be fun and a consciousness-raiser to form a Men's Auxiliary of the Women's Liberation front for the sole purpose of selling male-produced baked goodies once a year to fund their activities. These bake sales, held in front of the Koinonia House, were highly successful, **but some men were convinced we must be somehow attacking the women. They just couldn't wrap their minds around the concept.**

After the 60s movement died away, I found myself drawn back to feminism as one of the most successful lasting radical movements around, and served for several years as the secretary of the local NOW chapter.

## Placement Center Bombing



Radical Union used this poster design for several communications, combining anti-racism and anti-war themes. This particular poster refers to both the upcoming racism workshops and the anti-military recruiting theater performance about to take place. Note that the text refers to the disproportionate number of non-white draftees being sent to Vietnam. This was a constant theme of anti-war protests in the era.



Students agitated to ban the CIA and Marines from recruiting on the WSU campus, with no success. RU finally assembled a crowd for an anti-war skit, and then urged them to mill around inside the Placement Center in the Old Administration Annex, where Marine recruiters were being hosted on campus. The director of the center tried to block the entrance, but the protesters shoved past.



In the center of this photograph of the building occupation is one of the most important couples of the period, anthropology professors Johnetta and Bob Cole.

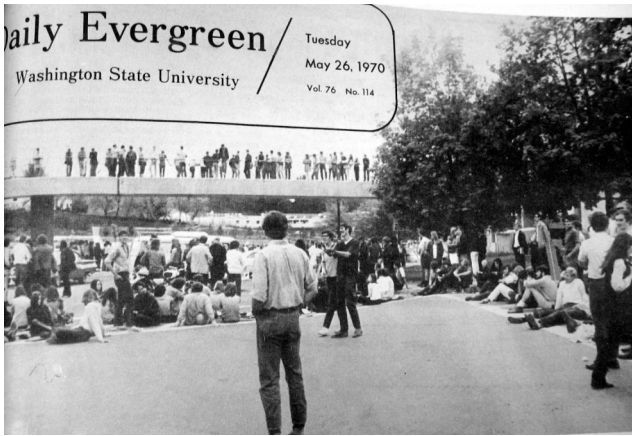


Two of the students wound up being charged with assault for this shoving incident. The one on the left was Don Smith.





Don was a generally quiet, thoughtful fellow, but he had strong feelings about the war. Here he has a starring role in the RU skit performed on the mall just before the demonstration which led to his arrest.



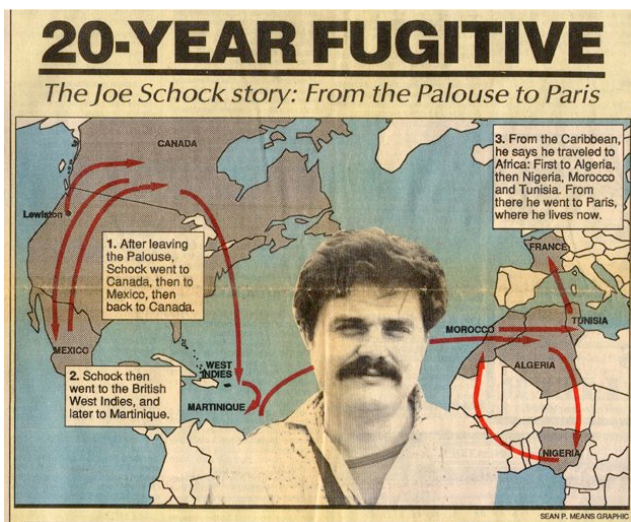
During the later Cambodian bombing sit-in in Stadium Way, when a driver threatened to roll right over the students, Don grabbed a 2x4 from a barricade and slammed it through the car window.





NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO  
THE HEAT from the Lewiston Armory fire was so intense it melted metal frames of National Guard jeeps. In all, 29 vehicles worth \$250,000 were destroyed.

Whereas Don got in trouble only when he felt force was being used against him, Joe was less introspective and a lot more impulsive. On his own, he rode his motorcycle down to Lewiston on May 5, 1970 to the National Guard Armory, splashed gasoline liberally around the motor pool, and burned up a lot of expensive military vehicles.



Unfortunately for him, he couldn't resist hanging around to watch the spectacle, his clothes reeking of gas. He was quickly arrested, but fled for the Canadian border when he was released on bail. I ran into him in Vancouver on a trip the next year, and he didn't know what he was going to do next. French Canadian separatists smuggled him to Martinique, where he achieved political refugee status, and he finally settled in Paris, where he lives with his family today.

When people generalize about protesters vs. vets, I often think of guys like Joe.

## Bombing the Placement Center



The protests at the Placement Center failed to dislodge the Marine recruiters, and exasperated activists came up with an ingenious response. A crowd gathered in front of the Placement Center (the old Administration Annex building) where a huge sculpture of a stick of dynamite labelled “TNT” was erected.



Today that would have been enough for the whole thing to be shut down immediately by the cops and everyone arrested, but it was clear that this was not a bombing in progress, but another act of political theater. We gathered in a circle surrounding the “bomb” and we chanted a countdown: “ten, nine, eight,” and so on, and at “zero” the two halves of the dynamite were pulled apart



to reveal a magnificent papier maché sculpture brightly decorated with stars and stripes which became known from that moment on as The Finger. This was not the politically most successful demonstration we had ever held, but it was very satisfying.





When the *Evergreen* printed this close-up of the Finger the next week, it earned a stern rebuke from the Publications Board, one of many.



The finger was a feature of several subsequent protests, brought out from its place of origin, the Rosa Luxemburg Collective.

### **The Cambodia Bombing & Kent State**

Despite several years of agitation and protest, the anti-war movement was flagging by the spring of 1970. Most students were still standing aside or actually opposed to the movement. Then on April 30, President Nixon announced he had for many months been sending bombers across the border from Vietnam into Cambodia where he said the “Viet Cong”—as the administration called the Vietnamese Liberation Front—had hidden command posts. The result was a tide of bloodshed among the innocent civilians of

Cambodia, and a chaos which eventually enabled Pol Pot's murderous Khmer Rouge to seize power and begin their massacre of the population. Attempting to prevent toppling dominos from spreading Communism in Southeast Asia, Nixon triggered the first falling domino himself.



Stop signs in Pullman were reworked as protest signs.



The country erupted in renewed protests, including the students at WSU.



The most famous of these protests occurred at Kent State, in Ohio, where four students—not all of them protesters—were shot to death by National Guardsmen.



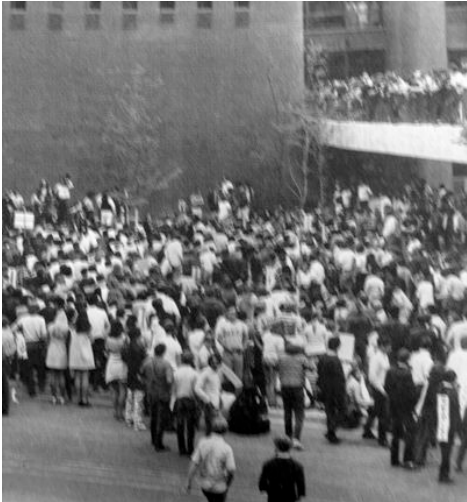
This improvised memorial appeared in a planter on the mall here even before the identities of the Kent State victims had been determined.

*kentcross.jpg*

The war indeed seemed to have come home, but it was not the students who were leading the way—they were the enemy. Several parents were interviewed on national television, saying that if their own children had been among the protesters they would have approved of their being shot. This was probably the low point in the famous “generation gap.” Many young people felt that war had been declared on them by their elders.



Enraged WSU students quickly organized large protests, including a sit-in at French Administration Building



and a blockage of Stadium Way at rush hour.

It was not Radical Union guiding events now; new coalitions quickly formed and new leaders emerged.



In the fall of 1969, a remarkable young woman named Nola Cross had been made editor of the *Evergreen*. Although not a radical, she was a devoted foe of the War in Vietnam and a strong supporter of various protests on campus, and she transformed the paper, which had hitherto mostly ignored our activities, and covered them in detail, supporting the movement with intelligently reasoned editorials.





Her advocacy journalism outraged her conservative assistant editor, Gary Eliassen—and the supervisory board—which that spring replaced Cross with Eliassen as the new editor.

Eliassen completely reversed the course of the paper, ignoring most antiwar activity and dismissing or attacking the rest. Whereas in the fall there had been many pictures of the campus events which were transforming WSU, there were very few in the spring, when events reached their climax. The result is that the *Evergreen* is of little use as a historical record for that period.

But while Eliassen controlled the campus news, it was Cross who was now making news. She became the leader of the hastily organized anti-Cambodia bombing campaign and acknowledged spokesperson for the insurgent students of WSU. She later went on to become the chair of the ensuing student strike as well. She has since had a distinguished career as a labor lawyer.

Shortly after the Kent State shootings, protesting black students at Jackson State College in Mississippi were fired on by police, with twelve wounded and two killed. This event went almost unnoticed in the wake of the intense news coverage given the shootings at Kent State. Black students here drew the conclusion that white radicals identified only with other whites, and decided the time had come to press some of their urgent concerns about the racial climate on campus.

They drew up a list of demands which sound similar in some ways to the Black Panther program. They called together several of us in the campus movement for a meeting at the Koinonia House, where they proposed a student strike to support their demands.



This was the beginning of a unique and impressive moment in WSU history. While the rest of the country was convulsed with demonstrations and strikes against the war in Southeast Asia, WSU students and faculty launched a strike against racism.

Critics like to depict the baby boomers as self-absorbed, but during this period thousands of WSU students devoted themselves to unselfishly agitating for the rights of the small number of students of color at WSU. True, a student strike involved not going to class, and many students might have done that anyway. But thousands of them turned out for rallies and teach-ins, marched, picketed, and debated constantly for several weeks for a cause which had no obvious selfish benefits, which indeed involved considerable culpability on their own parts and which required them to change.



The protest was directed especially against President Glenn Terrell, as had been the Cambodia bombing sit-in at French Administration Building shortly before. Terrell's acolytes have in the years since crafted a cozy image of him as "the student's president," the friendly guy who loved to stroll across the mall and stop to chat with random students. In front of the library which has been renamed for him is a new sculpture which was inspired by his stride, and is constructed of books, though he was neither a notable scholar nor a particular supporter of the libraries.

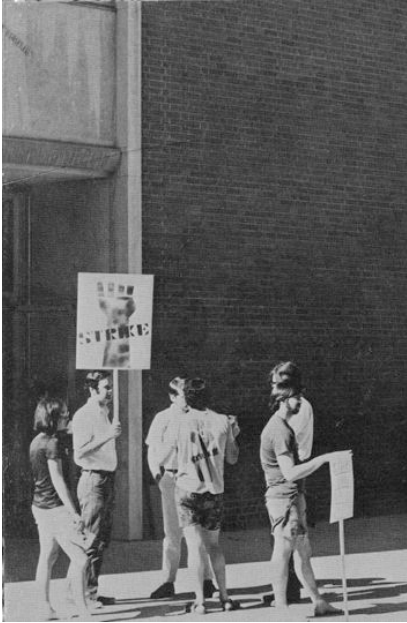


I never heard the phrase “the student’s President” until decades after he left, and you’ll look in vain through student publications at the time for signs of any particular affection for him. It’s true he liked to chat with random students, but many of them didn’t have a clue who this old guy was trying to talk with them.

I’ll say this for him: he could have been worse. Presidents at other schools summoned troops on campus, loudly denounced protesters and expelled students *en masse*. Terrell was cautious and made a great show of listening to all sides; but he irritated the hell out of a lot of faculty and students by addressing them in a simplistic, condescending tone that didn’t begin to come to grips with the complexities of the issues we were raising reminding me at least of the patronizing public speaking tone of Lyndon Johnson.

Here’s a photo from a faculty meeting a few years later that illustrates my own feelings about the president.

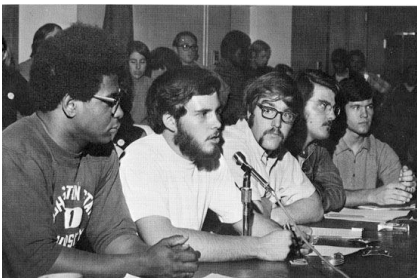
When the striking students presented their demands, Terrell at first refused to meet with them, following the pattern of other college presidents in saying he would not deal with “non-negotiable demands.” Bob Cole and I went to see him and explained that the demands were not “non-negotiable”—the students wanted desperately to talk things over with him. He had been making assumptions based on what he had heard about other campuses and had very little idea of what was going on among the students at WSU. He made a great show of always keeping his door open, but many of us felt that his mind was another matter.



As the white students continued to strike and agitate, the black students negotiated, and some of them continued to go to class, on the grounds that they could not afford to give up their educations, and the white students happily agreed to strike on their behalf.



Stores were asked to place signs opposing racism in their windows. This one appeared in the Bookie after it had been criticized for a display of books stereotyping American Indians.



Although few of the initial demands were realized, there were solid gains during this period, including the strengthening of minority studies programs, recruiting, and the establishment of a series of racism workshops which were extremely well attended and very intense. Here's a panel at one such workshop.

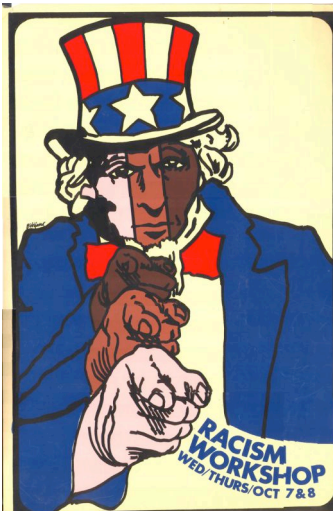




Here's a view of the audience crowded into Todd Auditorium.



The campus YWCA became one of the leading forces in this effort, but the Black Student Union and MECHA were important as well.



This brilliant poster featuring a multiracial Uncle Sam advertised the first fall workshop following the strike.

When people think of Pullman in the 60s, they often forget the Strike Against Racism, even misremembering it as a strike against the war, like the ones taking place on other campuses. But to me it marked a moment when, despite the disarray of the movement's national leadership and the increasing craziness and extremism of the left, a large number of students came together in an idealistic effort which eventually improved education at WSU in several ways. WSU didn't have the biggest demonstrations, or the most violent ones, but it did produce people and events worth remembering and celebrating.

Thank you.