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Discussant: David J. Garrow

Professor Silverman at the beginning was kind enough to note that I was only sixteen in 1969 and so, by generational identification, perhaps I fall a little bit closer to many of the students in the audience than I do to most of my fellow panel members.

I think it is worth mentioning at the outset that just this year we are beginning to get some first-rate studies of the protest movements of the late 1960s. In Jim Miller's recent book focusing on Tom Hayden and the evolution of SDS[1] and Todd Gitlin's recent book *The Sixties*[2] we now have some good, solid, reflective scholarship that people can benefit from. I think in light of this panel's title, "The Protest Movement," singular, it is appropriate for me as both an academic and as a representative of the younger generation here to highlight a point Sandy Gottlieb talked about, which is that *the* movement, singular, was not of a piece both with regard to the antiwar community of the late 1960s and with regard to the black freedom struggle of that era. Within the antiwar movement there was a very significant tension, one might even say division, between the moderate wing, the SANE wing (namely, those who simply opposed the war), and those whom SANE viewed as the excessively radical foes of the war, who openly favored the Vietcong. Similarly, there was also considerable division within the black movement by the late 1960s.

I know that both the organizers of this session and my fellow panelists regret the fact that we don't have any representatives here of either the black movement of the late 1960s or of the feminist movement that was starting to emerge during those years. Nonetheless, I think it is quite important for us to realize that there had been a tremendous evolution between where the communities of dissent, particularly within the black civil rights movement, had stood in 1965–66 and where they stood by 1969–70.

The most successful period of the protest movement had come in the 1963–65 era. Then, in the years after 1965, America saw very extensive urban disorders in the Northern cities and also witnessed the emergence of black power and black nationalism as stronger tones in the black freedom struggle. By the fall of 1966, the unity and the sense of shared purpose and shared goals that had characterized most of the progressive community in the mid-1960s began to break down.

One example which I think is a very important example concerns Bayard Rustin, who died only two or three months ago. Rustin was one of the most important and influential black intellectuals and political activists, not only of the 1960s but of the two previous decades as well. As of 1963 or 1964, Rustin's emphasis and argument was that the civil rights forces had to turn toward economic issues and had to start raising questions about an economic redistribution of wealth in America. These ideas were viewed as very radical and dangerous,

and were arguments that many white Americans who might support desegregation of public facilities did not want to deal with. However, by 1966–67 Rustin had come to be viewed as a conservative, indeed by some as an "Uncle Tom," and what had happened, to put matters perhaps a bit simplistically, is that Rustin's emphasis upon an agenda focusing on economic issues, focusing on the problems of what we nowadays most often call the black underclass, had lost out among both blacks and whites. In many liberal white communities, that issue now had a very secondary status relative to opposition to the war, but it also had secondary status to the interest in nationalism, to the interest in the cultural concerns and black pride, that for many black activists the black power slogan represented.

What Rustin wanted to do, and indeed to some extent what Dr. King as well wanted to do as of the time of his assassination in 1968, was to build a multiracial coalition that would address fundamental economic redistribution in the United States. The strategy that Rustin wanted to follow at that time was a strategy of electoral action, a strategy of political organizing, and the slogan that both Rustin and his mentor, A. Philip Randolph, spoke of was "from protest to politics," namely, that the future was politics and the era of protest was now mostly in the past. With reference to some of the effects of protest that Mr. Gottlieb highlighted in his remarks, it needs to be appreciated that the disruptive, angry, and even bitter demonstrations that were often seen between 1968 and 1970 did not have simply a negative effect, did not have only the effect of turning off white middle America. Those demonstrations also had the effect of making moderate groups, both in the antiwar movement and in the black civil rights struggle, such as the National Urban League, look more attractive to the government, to foundations, and to the Nixon Administration. What one sees in the civil rights arena in those initial years of the Nixon Administration is an eagerness on the administration's part to assist and to advance those so-called "responsible" elements—for example, the Urban League and James Farmer, the one-time national director of CORE, the Congress of Racial Equality, who took a sub-cabinet post in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare in the Nixon years. In other words, these individuals were accorded more respect, more input, and more influence because of the fact that other people were in the streets, that other people were viewed as dangerous. Hence, I think our interpretation of protest in those years needs to have that double-edged appreciation that the radicals *helped* the moderates just as much, and perhaps more so, than the radicals *hindered* support for mainstream civils rights efforts and/or mainstream opposition to the war. I think, however, that it is very crucial for us to appreciate that the economic agenda that the black freedom struggle and its white supporters had in 1968–69 at the outset of the Nixon era was an agenda that essentially was not pursued, an agenda that in all frankness we have not done a very good job of addressing or advancing in the almost twenty years since.

I would also like to highlight, particularly for the undergraduates who are present, the fact that our scholarship and our current-day historiography are relatively weak and oftentimes incomplete in appreciating the negative effects

of government repression and government hostility toward the protest movement, particularly with regard to the actions of the FBI against both black groups and antiwar groups. We tend at times, I think, to look at the movement and to look at the protests of those years somewhat apart from other things, and do not appreciate very fully just how harmful all of the government COINTELPRO[3] types of activities actually were. Most significantly, I think, we oftentimes minimize just how deleterious were the effects that the thousands upon thousands of paid government informants within the movement had on those organizations and on the tone and the feel of relations among people. What existed in many instances at that time, and what is perhaps nowadays often best forgotten by some of the people involved, was a very great fear of that panoply of informants and an attendant distrust of one's movement colleagues. Thus, the worst effect of the government's disruption and harassment of the movement was perhaps not so much what the informants or even J. Edgar Hoover's dirty tricks themselves wrought, but was instead the worry and the fear, and at times even paranoia, about government penetration and government threats that was generated.[4] On occasion these worries did fundamentally harm the strength and the unity of the movement and movement organizations.

In conclusion, while our growing academic appreciation of the protest movement is very good at noting, and at times celebrating, the moral strength and courage that thousands of people manifested during those years, I think that we need to appreciate equally the more painful story about the harm and the scars and the casualties that people suffered during that time, often at the hands of the government itself.

NOTES

1. Jim Miller, *Democracy Is in the Streets* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987); see also Tom Hayden, *Reunion: A Memoir* (New York: Random House, 1988).

2. New York: Bantam, 1987.

3. For Counterintelligence Program. See generally David J. Garrow, *The FBI and Martin Luther King, Jr.: "Solo" to Memphis* (New York: Norton, 1981), pp. 173–203, 220–227.

4. See generally David J. Garrow, "FBI Political Harassment and FBI Historiography: Analyzing Informants and Measuring the Effects," *The Public Historian* 10 (Fall 1988): 1–14.

Discussant: Sanford Gottlieb

I come with a question and, I hope, an insight. My question really is to Mr. Krogh, and I hope you will answer it later. It is on a personal level. Since I was on Nixon's enemies list, I wonder if you could tell us who was it in the White House to whom we can address our thanks for that distinctive honor?

On the insight, I think we haven't quite yet edged up to the real lessons of the protest movement. Tom has been getting there but we haven't quite faced it, and to me it is not a terribly enjoyable task. But it is one I think we have to go through, not just because we have been invited here to speak but because there are some very important lessons in it.

The moderator posed the question, was this a simple protest? The obvious answer is "no." We had come on the scene at a time when a new generation had arrived in the United States, a generation part of which, and I stress the part, was largely affluent, largely white, and in revolt against authority. In retrospect, much of what passed for an opposition to and a protest against the Vietnam War was in reality a protest against all forms and symbols of authority: the schools, universities, government, business, the military, Mom and Dad. That vastly complicated the task of those people who thought that we were protesting essentially against the Vietnam War. It was a tremendously volatile, emotional, complex protest movement that we had there. For those of us who were in the moderate wing—we had two wings, broadly speaking, we had moderates and we had radicals—those were pretty difficult times because of the complexities of the protest.

Let me give you a specific. It came during the Nixon Administration in 1970. Senators George McGovern and Mark Hatfield had introduced an amendment to cut off the funds for the Vietnam War. SANE, the organization of which I was executive director at the time, published a full-page ad in *The New York Times* urging people to support the McGovern-Hatfield amendment. The ad was essentially a petition in which people were asked to send their names to us, and we would give them to the senators.

Well, to our office in Washington came a petition signed by twenty-odd policemen from New York City. There was a cover letter from John Donellan, and he said the following—this was printed in an August 1970 issue of *The New Yorker* magazine:

> Dear Sirs:
> All of the twenty-one signatures belong to New York City policemen, my co-workers. We feel very strongly that individuality must be expressed and that no group (police, construction workers, students, parents) should be labeled and saddled with iron-clad ideologies. The media has stressed the affinity between the superficial "flag-wavers" and violence prone "hard-hats" with the "police mentality." We policemen resent this and