

# Student

SUR - STUDENT UNREST

# ACTIVISM

## Student activism

during the turbulent 60s took many forms—some peaceful, some violent. In an effort for change, activists took it upon themselves to form social and political transformation in response to a war in Southeast Asia and a civil rights movement sometimes as bloody as that foreign confrontation.

The Claremont Colleges witnessed incidents. On a Tuesday afternoon in late February 1969, 2 bombs exploded on 2 campuses. The first, in a mail pigeonhole in the Carnegie Building at Pomona College, detonated at 4:30 p.m., causing a female secretary to lose 2 fingers and suffer serious eye injuries. Only 4 minutes later, another one went off in the women's bathroom in Balch Hall on the Scripps campus. Though the second bomb injured no one and the total damage from the 2 was under \$5000, the colleges were shaken by the unrest.

As part of a remembrance of facets of the 60s titled "In The Streets", 2 men who were activists spoke to a about 60 people in the Athenaeum last week on "The Politics of Protest".

David Harris was the student body president at Stanford University in 1966, and would later spend time in jail for refusing to enter the draft.

"We all grew up listening to WWII stories and watching Victory At Sea and were fed the notion that it was American to fight for what was right and true. Anyone who took high school civics classes remembers that. So when you went to the south and saw 'Whites only' drinking fountains it was a shock. It's a shock when you realize that all those things America was supposed to stand for—freedom, truth, justice—aren't really there. I found that if you were black and wanted to vote in the south you might be lynched. When you have a shotgun show-ed in your face and someone tells you, 'You niggerlover, we're giving you 5 minutes to get out of town', it's a rude awakening," he said. He spent time in Mississippi as a civil rights worker.

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**R**ICHARD Flacks was one of the figures involved in founding Students for Democratic Society. Now a professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara, he was once left for dead at the University of Chicago after he supported a student protest and was confronted by someone else who disagreed.

“As far as I'm concerned, the key event in the decade was in February of 1960 when 4 black students decided to stop talking about segregation and do something about it. So they went to a Woolworth's which had 'white only' lunch tables and they sat and ordered coffee. They didn't realize the history they were making. Inside a few weeks 50,000 blacks did similar things,” he said.

What he remembered was growing up in a time where the fate of the world was beyond the individual. “Happiness was in self-development. Government was either corrupt or irrelevant to one's life.”

And while the civil rights movement sparked activism in the early part of the

decade, the Viet Nam War added to the fire.

“We killed all those people over there, or left 50 per cent of them homeless. What matters to me is how it affected the people directly involved,” stated Mr. Harris. “Not Lyndon Johnson, not Robert McNamara, not Congress. They all sat on their fat asses making speeches about patriotism. It was us, the 19-and 20-year-olds either sent or threatened with the draft who had to live with it. A bunch of men sent gullible boys to fight and die in the rice paddies of southeast Asia for no good reason. For us who saw that, who had to live with that, execute that fact, watch our peers getting blown away or losing limbs in the name of the United States it was heinous,” he stressed.

**S**O with that came the resistance. Mr. Flacks pointed out how by 1970, one out of every four men called to the service in Oakland did not report. The point of much of the protest was self determination.

“Use your life as an instrument against the government trying to take it from you. If that (returning draft cards) was against the law, that's the government's problem, not ours,” said Mr. Harris who was married to Joan Baez for a couple of years and now writes as a free lancer.

“I was not going to stand by while they did that in southeast Asia, even if that meant going to jail, which I did. And I'm comfortable with that. No one loses anything by standing up for what they believe,” he said.

Mr. Flacks added that despite the stereotype, most of the protest done in the 60s was by a relative minority. “Most students were passive. I don't think a change really came about until what happened at Kent State and Jackson State with the killings in May of 1970. That's when students, teachers, administrators went on strike for 2 months. But that degree of involvement was really a momentary wave. Something like that

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