A Film From

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KITCHELL FILMS

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Dedicated to

Fred Cody of Cody’s Books

1916-1983

The Heart of Berkeley

BERKELEY

IN THE

SIXTIES

00:35[music]

01:00May, 1960

San Francisco City Hall

UNKNOWN In the 1960s my generation set out on a journey of change. Coming out of an atmosphere of conformity, a new spirit began to appear. One of the first signs was a demonstration organized by Berkeley students in May of 1960 against the House Un-American Activities Committee.

01:20Congressman Willis

House Un-American Activities Committee

CONGRESSMAN WILLIS What we’re here to do is to gather information as we are ordered to do by an active congress with respect to the general operation of the communist conspiracy.

01:30UNKNOWN I’m not in the habit of being intimidated and I don’t expect to start now. Now what was your question? What was your question.

01:40UNKNOWN Are you now in this instant a member of the communist party.

01:45UNKNOWN We came out to protest because we were against HUAC’s suppression of political freedom. In the ‘50s HUAC created a climate of fear by putting people on trial for their political beliefs. Any views left of center were labeled subversive. We refused to go back to McCarthyism.

02:00WILLIAM MANDEL If you think that I’m going to cooperate with this collection of Judases of men who sit there in violation of the United States constitution, if you think I will cooperate with you in any way, you are insane.

02:20UNKNOWN As witness after witness denounce the committee, the hearings grew stormy. The halls outside were filled with students seeking admission. Suddenly, the police turned fire hoses full force on the demonstrators inside the rotunda and then drag them down the steps of city hall. It turned out to be a political baptism, that transformed fear into determination. Something had changed. After this it would never be the same.

02:50John Searle

philosophy professor

JOHN SEARLE Now, the whole thing might have died down expect for the fact that the committee made a film, the film was called Operation Abolition and the film presented all of us. I had been in these demonstrations myself and it presented all of us as somehow or other engaged in a vast communist plot, not only to try to overthrow the United States government, but even worst to try to abolish the House Un-American Activities Committee.

03:15UNKNOWN Operation Abolition.

03:20FRANCIS E. WALTER Operation Abolition, this is what the communists call their current drive to destroy the House Committee on Un-American Activities and to render sterile the security laws of our government. You will see revealed the long time classic communist tactic in which a relatively few well-trained, hard-core communist agents are able to insight non-communists to perform the dirty work of the Communist Party.

03:55Frank Bardacke

Harvard student

FRANK BARDACKE That movie was scheduled to be shown at the Harvard ROTC class, the ROTC, the R.O.T.C. class, they had a class on campus and they were going to show Operation Abolition and I had heard all about Operation Abolition and I was clearly opposed to it and all that. So, a bunch of us decided to go to the class to protest. And I remember very, very well, that the way we protested in the film there's a place where the students stand up singing the Star Spangled Banner to show HUAC that don't pull your more American than us on us and the group of us stood up in the ROTC class to show that we were in solidarity with the students in San Francisco.

04:40[sil.]

04:45FRANK BARDACKE But what I really remember clearly is thinking, hey wait a minute, what am I doing here? Why aren't I there? And I checked this story out with a whole lot of people who are at Berkeley and they told me the exact same story, that Operation Abolition had recruited them to Berkeley. That they had seen it around the country in pro -- gone in to see it as a protest and they thought wow, let's go there.

05:20[music]

05:50Part One:

CONFRONTING

THE UNIVERSITY

Dr. Clark Kerr

President, University of California

DR. CLARK KERR The university is being called upon to educate previously unimagined numbers of students, to respond to the expanding claims of national service, to merge its activities with industry as never before. Characteristic of this transformation is the growth of the knowledge industry, which is coming to permeate government and business and to draw into it more and more people raise to higher and higher levels of skill. The production, distribution, and consumption of knowledge is said to account for 29% of gross national product and knowledge production is growing at about twice the rate of the rest of the economy. What the railroads did, for the second half of the last century, and the automobile for the first half of this century, may be done for the second half of this century by the knowledge industry. And that is to serve as the focal point for national growth.

06:50UNKNOWN When we went to college, President Kerr's vision became our reality. The University of California was a knowledge factory, the biggest public university in America. It did research for major corporations and it ran the government's nuclear weapons labs. Of the seven campuses, Berkeley was the jewel in the crown with the most prestigious faculty. Within the sea of students there was little evidence of political life, but a few of us who were interested in politics found each other and started an organization called SLATE.

07:25Susan Griffin

SLATE member

SUSAN GRIFFIN Some radical students had gotten together and, to run a slate of candidates in the student lections. And although SLATE was not really solely about student elections, the student elections were used as a kind of platform through which we could educate other students and reach them about the various issues that were alive during that time.

07:50Michael Rossman

MICHAEL ROSSMAN Friends wrote me letters of the discussions that were happening in the coffee shops of Berkeley. You know, people were interested in politics there, something was happening. They had already organized some little, dinky, student activist group on campus that was starting to experiment with actually doing things.

08:05Jack Weinberg

JACK WEINBERG I grew up in small ethnic community in Buffalo, New York. I just knew I couldn't live within its limitations. I had a couple years of college there, I quit school, I hitchiked around, I ended up in San Francisco, I got married and then I went back to school, and I came to Berkeley really, I was looking for truth, I was looking, I was looking for meaning in my life.

08:30DR. CLARK KERR One of the most distressing tasks of a university president is to pretend that the protest an outrage of each new generation of undergraduates is really fresh and meaningful. In fact, it is one of the most predictable controversies that we know. The participants go through a ritual of hackneyed complaints, almost as ancient as academe, while believing that what is said is radical and new.

08:55Mike Miller

founder of SLATE

MIKE MILLER From the very beginning the administration at Cal was trying to undermine and really prevent what we were trying to do. They were very upset about the introduction of what they called off-campus issues. Anything having to do with civil rights or with the testing of nuclear weapons or apartheid in South Africa, these were off-campus issues. Well, this of course, is what we were attacking, we were opposed to sand box politics. The administration really started to turning the screws. They disenfranchised the graduate students because that was a big block of the SLATE vote, and then they actually through the organization off-campus. There was a big outrage at that. We got reinstated. So, there was a growing community of people who wanted to make liberal or radical, however they thought about it, politics legitimate in the country.

09:50MARTIN LUTHER KING JUNIOR When we look at modern man, we have to face the fact that modern man suffers from a kind of poverty of the spirit, which stands in glaring contrast to his scientific and technological abundance. We've learned to fly the air like birds, we've Iearned to swim the seas like fish, and yet we haven't learned to walk the earth as brothers and sisters.

10:30[music]

10:35UNKNOWN More than any other cause, the civil rights movement became the well-spring of student activism and inspired our entire generation. In 1963, Berkeley students began to band together with black activists to protest discriminatory hiring practices of Bay Area businesses. We sat in at restaurants, supermarkets, and automobile showrooms. Our biggest challenge came when we tried to secure jobs for blacks and other minorities in the hotels of San Francisco. A picket line formed around the Sheraton Palace while negotiations with the Hotel Owners Association took place inside.

11:15JACK WEINBERG It was getting to the point where we were saying, we are going to create a confrontation, we are going to create a situation that's intolerable and we're going to force you to respond to it in some way, and we're willing to get arrested in order to do it. And now the ball's in your court.

11:40[sil.]

11:45SUSAN GRIFFIN All of us in this elegant lobby, I can't convey to you the effect. It was like the riff-raff coming to the White House or something. And, the real democratic masses had moved in and taken over, saying, No, you cannot continue to run this hotel in this racist fashion. The world is being redefined, things cannot continue on that way, they just won't.

12:05BILL BRADLEY We just entered into a discussion with the Sheraton Palace for the last 8 hours and we were given a 7-page document which is supposed to summarize the agreement, but it seemed that there was only one hitch. The Sheraton Palace wasn't willing to sign.

12:25[sil.]

12:45Jackie Goldberg

JACKIE GOLDBERG It was the first major victory of anything I had been involved in. The Sheraton Palace Hotel arrests and convictions and trials and so forth led to the first agreement that I knew of in the north of its kind, and that was an agreement between the entire hotel industry and the Adhoc Committee to End Discrimination to hire minority individuals at all levels of employment including management. It was very historic and it was very elevating and it really pumped us all up to think that, my god, we really could have an effect on history. We could have an effect on lives of people we'd never know, we'd never meet. And it was simply by taking seriously the words of the Constitution, the preamble, and the Declaration of Independence, and all that stuff we believed in, you know, with great vim and vigor. And here we just saw it happen and it worked.

13:40JACK WEINBERG It was a very thrilling experience for us, but the flip side of it is other people saw it very different light. That is the business community saw it as a threat, as something that's going to cause them some real problems. And the fact that a hundred Berkeley students were arrested, probably 5,6, 800 Berkeley students were involved in the thing, it just portended things to come. And very quickly there was pressure put down on the university. You've got to stop this. And the terms that were being used were, the university cannot be used as a base for attacks on the community.

14:15JACKIE GOLDBERG In the fall of the school year ‘64-‘65, we returned to campus and find out that the tables on Bancroft and Telegraph, which had historically been the campus political activity lifeline, were banned. Tables have been permitted out in front of Bancroft and Telegraph to distribute literature and these literatures including the ideas of policy and advocating stands.

14:40FREE SPEECH MOVEMENT

1964

Jackie Goldberg

JACKIE GOLDBERG At this particular point, we have been denied this, and we think, whether or not this is true or not, as far as why they are doing it, the effect of cutting this off is to stop political activity on this campus. We knew at the time that it was aimed at the civil rights movement and at progressive organizations and at those of us interested in the peace movement and civil rights, mainly civil rights. But by banning all of us they created an enormous reaction, because they united a group of people around the need to have those tables that couldn't have united themselves under any other circumstances.

15:20DR. CLARK KERR We told them they had to go back on the streets where they had been traditionally for this kind of activity. And they then took the position that we want to undertake these activities on campus property itself. And we said this is not possible.

15:35JACK WEINBERG When the university banned political action at Bancroft and Telegraph, they said it was as same as the rest of the campus and therefore it was illegal. We said if it is same as the rest of the campus, then we can do this anywhere, because we’ve a right there, we have right anywhere. We decided to move our tables to Sather Gate. There were five students sitting at tables and Deans came by and said, if you don't leave we are going to have to cite you. And the students, remember one of them said, I'm sorry sir, my organization has not authorized me to leave this table, and so he was cited. As soon as a student was cited, the Dean would go to the next table to cite the next student, somebody would get up, somebody else would sit in their place. Well, after they cited five people, they just didn't want to be there writing all day. So the Deans started leaving, and people said, No, me too, me too. Well at 3 'o clock 500 people marched into Sproul Hall saying, Whatever you do to those people, you've got to do to us.

16:25UNKNOWN If you don't stand up for your freedom now, you're dead guys.

JACK WEINBERG The Deans wanted the students who were cited to go into the Dean's office. We said, we all did it, you have to treat us all the same. So, we were out in the halls and nobody would go into the office, and at about 8 or 9 o'clock at night they announced that those five people, plus three of the demonstration leaders were suspended. Well, the next morning, we really knew it was gonna happen. We set our tables up right in front of Sproul Hall steps. I guess I was one of the more noisy people, so a Dean came up to me and he asked me to identify myself and I refused to identify myself and he said if I didn't identify myself I would be arrested. Well, it wasn't the first time that I had been threatened with arrest. Two policemen took me under the arms, I went limp, they dragged me into the police car and before I got into the police car it was surrounded with people. It was two minutes to twelve, there was this commotion going on, some people are joining in, some people are stopping to watch. This police car is going nowhere.

17:25Jack Weinberg

October 1, 1964

JACK WEINBERG I just did what any of my fellow students or my fellows in all these organizations would have done. So I was just singled out, chance selected me, I'm no martyr.

17:35John Gage

JOHN GAGE I found I couldn't understand why people were prohibited from speaking in the plaza. And if this demonstration around this police car was some way to indicate it was wrong, well it seemed like a good idea to me. I didn't like the idea of seizing a police car very much, but it was certainly a peaceful seizing. People began to speak.

17:55MARIO SAVIO The only reason that I took part in this is because I like Cal very much, I'd like to see it better.

18:00JOHN GAGE And they’d stand on the car. People were very careful about the car. People would take their shoes off and gently climb up on the car. They move from the hood of the car up onto the roof of the car. Then the argument raged. Are you with us or are you against us? I wasn't either. I was watching and listening to speeches.

18:25JACK WEINBERG There was open microphone on top of the police car and anybody who wanted to speak could sign up on a list and they had three minutes to say anything they wanted to say. And hour after hour, people were getting up and orating. It was like an explosion of ideas.

18:40UNKNOWN Aristotle said if you are not a citizen you are either a beast or a god. Now I ask you a very simple question.

18:50MICHAEL ROSSMAN People start talking, bringing in the Greek Philosophers, bringing in the French Revolution, talking about all these ideas, Constitutional liberties, as if they had meaning.

19:00JACK WEINBERG Late at night there were some fraternity people who came down, there was some confrontation, they were talking of breaking it up, but I remember they were heckling from the back. So one of the people on the mic says, come on up. They got one of the fraternity boys to come up and say his thing on the mic, and by the time he got there he forgot why he was against it, and his friends start booing him.

19:20JOHN GAGE It really was a political awakening, because there was a political issue here and we were all part of this. We weren't observing it on television, we were actually part of deciding what would happen, as was the university administration. No one from university administration came to speak. No one came to present any reasoned point of view about why the arrest had occurred, or why the rules restricting political speech were justifiable. Nothing.

19:45JACK WEINBER I ended up sitting in that police car for 32 hours. And at the maximum time there were as many as 6,000 people sitting down around the police car at various points when the police were arrests were threatened, people didn't run away, more people came and sat down. People who were trying to avoid it felt they had to sit down. People were saying, join us, join us.