

Library Research Award:

The Forgotten Radical: Southern Women and the New Left Student Protests of the 1960s

My paper attempted to combat the established narrative of the 1960s student New Left that excludes the role of women and the South. The idea came out of a class on the United States from 1945 to the present which included readings on the 1960s, focusing on protests in Berkeley, Ann Arbor and Columbia and male leaders such as Mario Savio, Abbie Hoffman and Tom Hayden. Later, a research paper for the class required research on Georgians reactions to a certain issue. I chose Kent State, and discovered, through old issues of the Red and Black, that students at the University of Georgia held protests after Kent State. Students even succeeded in getting the administration to shut down the school in accordance with a nationwide student strike in sympathy for Kent State students. I was surprised that any protest activity had occurred at the university, since the campus today isn't particularly politically active, and the South is never mentioned in 60s protests outside of the Civil Rights Movement.

In addition to wanting to explore more of UGA's involvement with the 60s New Left I wanted to know about women's roles in these movements, because women, like the South, were left out of the major student activist movement.

My advisor recommended my most useful secondary source, a thesis paper on radicalism at UGA, covering everything from integration to lgbt movements. I mined the footnotes for the dates of important protests at UGA so I could read the Red and Black articles on them. The Red and Black has an online archive, and I spent a lot of time reading articles on the various sit-ins and protests and op-eds and letters to the editor showing student opinion of these protests. In addition, by reading the newspapers I could get a feel for the atmosphere at UGA at the time, noticing societal pressures that would have made it harder for women to lead or be active in

student movements - notably the "Girl of the Week" feature, articles on the "Southern Belle" and the existence of the looks and boy obsessed "Women's Interest Section".

My second most important source was the Richard Russell Special Collections Library. Using the footnotes from the thesis and the reading guide on the website I found the pertinent boxes for the papers of President Fred Davison, Dean of Men William Tate and Dean of Women Louise McBee. The archives contained their papers and internal memos and there I received more information about events like the sit-ins and Vietnam Moratorium protests. I was able to see the petition students signed at the sit-in, thus getting a sense of how many people were there. I read letters to Davidson from people concerned about the campus Students for a Democratic Society. The campus handbooks from the 60s helped get a sense of changing rules for women and free speech, a major part of my paper. Some boxes even contained the occasional copy of a newsletter from the campus SDS or Young Americans for Freedom (the conservative counterpart of the SDS). One of the most entertaining pieces was a schedule of a Vietnam Moratorium protest with a handwritten note listing the biggest campus "trouble makers".

In addition I went to Georgia State for a couple of days to read issues of the Great Speckled Bird, an Atlanta radical newspaper, to see any references to activity in Athens. This paper gave me a different perspective and opinion from the more conservative Red and Black.

I also used the microfilm in the basement of the library to read the issues of the Athens Banner Herald and Athens Daily News at this time so I could get the more "adult" reporting and viewpoints of what was happening on the UGA campus. I was also able to read the SDS papers via a microfilm copy at the library. With this I was able to see correspondence between the Georgia chapters, or just Georgia students, and the national chapter of the SDS, providing further proof there was activism in the South that was connected to national activism.

As for secondary sources, I used sources from the thesis and books I owned as well as simply using google to type in appropriate keywords. There I would look in the index for references to the south or women, and often read the introduction or other seemingly relevant chapters. Using secondary sources worked in two ways. One, many books had a section on how women were treated and I was able to use those footnotes to find autobiographies by women in the movement or the women's liberation publications they put out (easy to find in books of collected works or just in online archives). Using what they wrote and experienced I was able to link the female UGA experience to the wider 60s experience. In addition, when I noticed books left out the SSOC (Southern Student Organizing Committee, a Southern version of the SDS) or even explicitly said the south wasn't involved, I could use that to strengthen my argument that the south was unjustly left out of established 60s narratives. I noticed the books about the SSOC were few and far between and was even required to use interlibrary loan to track down an oft referenced work about the SSOC.

Because I was attacking an accepted historical narrative and writing about a subject that was often polarizing, I needed to use a mix of secondary sources as well as primary sources offering a variety of viewpoints. Through these measures I believe I painted an accurate picture of the female student radical at UGA and how she related to Southern, and national, student activism.

Bibliography

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