

Letter to the Editor

To the Editor:

Instead of offering a serious review of David Goines's *The Free Speech Movement*, Kenneth Heineman (in the Spring 1995 *HEQ* issue) published a polemic against Goines and the Berkeley student Left of the 1960s. From Heineman's diatribe one would never guess that Goines's book contains the richest collection of oral history material (scores of pages of fascinating, previously unreleased, and historically significant interview transcripts) ever published on the Free Speech Movement (FSM). Nor did Heineman notice that Goines's book offers much new information which historians can use to assess the Free Speech Movement, on issues of internal democracy, factionalism, anti-intellectualism and leadership within the FSM, as well as student-faculty relations and the legal case which followed the mass arrest at Sproul Hall. Goines's biases are irritating (especially his sexism and cardboard characterizations of the administrators he loathes), but a fair reviewer would acknowledge that he has written the most detailed memoir yet published on the FSM, an insider's account, which captures the spirit of the Berkeley student revolt. The review failed to mention that Goines's book included more than 200 photographs, along with political cartoons (and FSM song lyrics), which are wonderfully evocative of Berkeley in the 1960s. The visual dimension of the book seems connected to Goines's work as one of America's leading graphic artists—work which Heineman never mentions, even though Goines's memoir recounts the ironic way in which his alienation from the university in the 60s led him to drop out of college and move into the print medium in which he would prove so successful.

Although book reviewers are obligated to describe and assess the book under review, Heineman did neither. Nowhere is this more evident than in Heineman's conclusion, which virtually ignores the book, but instead mocks Goines's politics and those of his fellow Berkeley activists. This polemic distorts the history of Berkeley student activism. For example, Heineman claims that FSM organizers, as supposedly undemocratic "privileged activists rejected working peacefully through the ballot box to bring about social change." Heineman seems unfamiliar with the leadership and meaning of the Free Speech Movement—both of which were linked to "working peacefully through the ballot box" for social change. Just prior to his emergence as a key FSM leader, Mario Savio traveled to the South, where he (along with other students) risked his life to register black voters in Mississippi Freedom Summer of 1964. Other FSM leaders became involved in attempts to promote social change through electoral politics, including Jack Weinberg, who served as an organizer in the Peace and Freedom Party in the 1960s. Berkeley student activists ran one of America's first peace candidates for local office, Robert Scheer, whose campaign did not win the election, but did publicize their critique of the Vietnam War. FSM

veterans helped to transform electoral politics in their city, promoting progressive candidates, who created Berkeley's rent-control system; they also participated in the coalition politics which contributed to the rise of Ronald Dellums to local and then national office (Dellums was among the first African-Americans elected to Congress from a white majority district). Jackie Goldberg, a former FSM Steering Committee member, also pursued reform via the ballot box, serving on Los Angeles's Board of Education and City Council.

Since the story of the Free Speech Movement itself never appears in Heineman's review, it is worth noting here that the free speech fight on Berkeley's Sproul Plaza grew out of a peaceful attempt to use the ballot box for social change. The FSM began after students were arrested for raising money on campus to fund civil rights organizations (CORE and SNCC) that were engaged in historic voter registration drives in the deep South. And the crackdown on the students came in part because of the heat the UC administration was getting from William Knowland, the right-wing Republican publisher of the *Oakland Tribune*, who was furious because Berkeley students had picketed both the Republican Convention at San Francisco's Cow Palace in summer 1964 and his own newspaper's offices that fall, in protest against his and Goldwater's reactionary position on civil rights. If the students did not care about electoral politics, or if they disdained peaceful change via the ballot box, then why would they have taken the time to picket outside the Republican Convention?

Unlike Heineman, Goines avoids such major factual errors (and New Left bashing) in his depiction of the FSM. Goines's memoir merits a serious reading by historians who want to understand rather than indict the free speech struggle it portrays.

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Letters to the Editor are published verbatim. Professor Heineman declined to respond.