

NHD Process Paper

Topic Selection

The five of us have always shown interest in American politics and wanted to focus on something that involved American history. Given that we all go to school 30 minutes away from San Francisco—a city full of history and influence on modern culture—we wanted to research a movement that was very close to home, so that we could better understand how the deep and interesting history of the Bay Area and California as a whole impacts us today. The idea of Reagan—a conservative figure—being governor of California—a now liberal state—intrigued us, so we decided to explore his rise in relation to California’s history in the 60s.

Connection to “Revolution, Reaction, & Reform in History”

The counterculture movement, in a sense, can be considered a revolution; it brought about a strong youth-led social movement emphasizing free expression and a stark rejection of the “status quo”. Reagan’s run for governor embodied a reaction to the counterculture movement with his campaign platform using rhetoric in which he positioned his law-and-order, hard-line stance against the perceived chaos and upheaval seen in the Bay Area. As governor, Reagan delivered numerous speeches and legislation in hopes of reforming the social unrest he saw in Berkeley through budget austerity, tuition debates, and administrative crackdowns.

Research Conduction

As a group, we all worked together to find sources online and in-person to fuel our argument. For example, the Free Speech Movement Archives helped us a lot with primary sources. We also had the privilege of going to the Stanford University Library to look through the archives of photos and documents. Our research includes many different interviews, speech transcripts, photo archives, and old newspaper articles.

Website Creation

To create our website, we included a header and a photo that embodied the subtopic. Each individual page is different, but mainly has separated text boxes of primary and secondary source quotes, integrated MP3 and MP4 recordings, and our commentary to accompany it.

Historical Argument

The counterculture movement personified the 1960s, serving as a microcosm of the significant social changes and cultural development that marked the era. From one extreme rose another; the countercultural revolution sparked an equally powerful conservative backlash, embodied by figures like Barry Goldwater, solidifying through Ronald Reagan's rise in California.

Historical Significance

Reagan's campaign victory not only changed California's political landscape but also foreshadowed the conservative realignment that would impact American politics for decades during his presidency. The events of the 1960s parallel those of the 2020s, but now with university protests in support of Palestine in the Israel-Palestine conflict. Donald Trump campaigned with a hard-line, law-and-order stance on the perceived immorality and lawlessness at universities such as Columbia University, very similar to the way that Ronald Reagan did in 1966. The same historical argument in the 1960s—that the UC Berkeley protests indirectly helped Reagan be elected as governor—can be argued for the current protests against Israel: Did Trump win the election as a result of positioning himself on a moral high ground over the unrest occurring at college campuses?