

DELIVERY
The Free Speech Movement

The Free Speech Movement [FSM] turned forty in 2004. At Berkeley, the birthplace of FSM, leftist journalist Alexander Cockburn reflected, "Free speech is worth nothing unless it's militant free speech, unless it's organized free speech."

Forty years ago [1964], at the edge of Sproul Plaza, FSM was born. University of California administration accused the student movement of being Communist-influenced and banned political advocacy such as civil rights organizing. The FSM's acts of civil disobedience included a 32-hour capture on October 1, 1964 of a police car on Sproul Plaza that was attempting to take away civil rights organizer Jack Weinberg and a December 2, 1964 occupation of Sproul Hall that led to the largest mass arrest of students in U.S. history.

How did the FSM organize before pagers, cell phones, instant messaging? FSM leaders called 30,000 in the student body. They contacted 500 volunteers and asked each to call 30 or 60 students from their own phones.

How did the FSM create conviction on controversial subjects? One notable individual was the late Mario Savio of FSM, who fired up students with his incendiary rhetoric, including this segment from a speech he gave from atop the police car, surrounded by thousands of students in Sproul Plaza:

We have an autocracy which runs this university. It's managed. We asked the following: if President Kerr actually tried to get something more liberal out of the Regents in his telephone conversation, why didn't he make some public statement to that effect? And the answer we received -- from a well-meaning liberal -- was the following: He said, "Would you ever imagine the manager of a firm making a statement publicly in opposition to his board of directors?" That's the answer! Now, I ask you to consider: if this is a firm, and if the Board of Regents are the board of directors, and if President Kerr in fact is the manager, then I'll tell you something: the faculty are a bunch of employees, and we're the raw material! But we're a bunch of raw material[s] that don't mean to have any process upon us, don't mean to be made into any product, don't mean to end up being bought by some clients of the University, be they the government, be they industry, be they organized labor, be they anyone! We're human beings!

[Applause]

There is a time when the operation of the machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick at heart, that you can't take part; you can't even passively take part, and you've got to put your bodies upon the gears and upon the wheels, upon the levers, upon all the apparatus, and you've got to make it stop. And you've got to indicate to the people who run it, to the people who own it, that unless you're free, the machine will be prevented from working at all!

After reading the text of the speech and visualizing the situation where the rhetor spoke [remember the communication model that includes both physical setting and cultural setting], type your response to the following questions:

1. Look up and write out the definition of "autocracy." How does that contrast with "democracy?"
2. In your opinion, is it possible for a university to be run as a democracy? [Please note the structure of the university—the president is the chief executive responsible for day-to-day operation of the university and the board of regents sets institutional policy and approves its budget. Then there are a provost [chief instructional officer], deans, faculty, classified staff, and students. At our college, we have a college president, vice presidents of instruction [this is similar to a provost] and student services, deans, faculty, classified staff, and students. Our college is part of a 3-college district that is headed by a chancellor who works with an elected board of trustees.] Provide two reasons to support your position.
3. What is the analogy that Savio uses in this speech? Is the argument by analogy effective and why does it work or not?
4. What is an example of anaphora in this address? Anaphora is the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginnings of phrases or sentences in close proximity.

After you have written the response, look and listen to a recording of the above segment, which may be found at www.lib.berkeley.edu/MRC/FSM.html. Once you are on the page, scroll down to "Mario Savio, Sproul Hall Steps, December 2, 1964" to watch this segment.

After viewing Savio's speech, it may surprise you to know that he grew up with a severe stuttering problem. However, he put his mind to it [a case of nurture over nature] and participated in student government when he was in high school. Please go on to type responses to these additional questions:

5. Use three adjectives to describe Savio's speaking style.
6. Do you feel that nonverbal aspects such as facial expressions, gestures, and vocal qualities enhanced or detracted from this speech. Explain your position.
7. Do you feel the impact of this address would have been changed had the speaker been delivering a manuscript speech? How so?
8. Think: What is something you feel strongly enough about to speak to in a public speaking situation?
9. Think: Using the topic that you came up with in the previous response, develop an analogy [have at least 3 points of comparison] that describes a concept or aspect of that subject. Remember that an analogy is based on a comparison between two dissimilar things and that comparison is extended over at least three different characteristics. For example, the university is compared to a machine . . . the operation of the machine is odious . . . you have to put your body upon the gears, wheels, levers, apparatus, to make it stop . . . you've got to indicate to the people who run it, who own it, that unless you're free, the machine will be prevented from working at all. Throughout this comparison, our minds are on the machinery of the university, the university as machine, and the students who would use their bodies in an act of civil disobedience. Record your analogy here.