

Jerry Rubin and the Youth International Party

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November 2011**

Intensive Program: Europe and the US in the 1960s
John-F.-Kennedy-Institut für Nordamerikastudien
Freie Universität Berlin
September 12-24, 2011

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The 1960s stand as a significant, turbulent and monumental decade in American history. The historic events of those years resonate still today. The 1960s are thought of as a time of accomplishments, recognition of rights for minority and marginalised groups and a time where a counterculture took to the streets and voiced their hopes for, and their criticism against 'ordinary' American society. The figures of the 1960s who have received prominence are those who used activism and laid their own bodies on the line for the causes they believed in. It might seem futile today to devote all of one's time to a cause, but present day society owes much of its modernity to those activists.

The 1960s present various levels of activism and activists. The Civil Rights Movement had been active for quite some time whereas anti-war activists surfaced as the American involvement in the Vietnam War lengthened. This particular area of activism, the anti-war activists, received a great deal of media attention, and with activists such as Jerry Rubin, Abbie Hoffman and their Youth International Party (Yippies) at the forefront, it is no wonder. The actions of Rubin and Hoffman will be the focal point of this essay. As activists they were establishing new and creative modes of political opposition, as well as being extraordinarily capable of attracting media attention. By reviewing their form of provocative activism this essay will attempt to determine whether the approach they chose was the most effective in achieving their goals of facilitating change in America.

Both of these famous anti-establishment/anti-war protesters had begun their activist careers well before President Lyndon Johnson began to send massive deployments of troops to Vietnam. The fact that Rubin and Hoffman were already practiced radical activists made them capable of attaining leadership positions as the organised and massive anti-war protest movement began to gain ground.

It can be quite difficult sometimes to distinguish between people belonging to the counterculture and the student activists who were also significant in the political environment of the 1960s. It has been debated where Rubin, Hoffman and their Yippies fit into these categories. In his *Hippies: A Guide to an American Subculture* historian Micah L. Issitt writes:

'At the intersection of the hippies and the New Left were groups like Jerry Rubin's Yippies, dedicated to political action as a means of gaining attention for the larger youth movement. Rubin's Yippies protested the

Vietnam War, American materialism, and a host of other issues, often in unusual, provocative ways.’¹

In his argument, Issitt follows the conclusion of other historians, namely that while Rubin, Hoffman and the Youth International Party are not categorized as countercultural, their spirit, sense of purpose and the critique they ventured sprang from many of the values shared by the counterculture. Issitt also points to the fact that this divisive distinction is not necessary in the respect that the activists of the 1960s were able to bridge the gap and convene ‘the kids on the street and the larger political social movement that shaped 1960’s pop culture.’² Furthermore, he argues that the Yippies, were

‘the first to successfully blend activism into hippie culture, creating a middle ground between the New Left and the everyday hippie who had no clearly defined political connections. Hoffman and the Yippies enticed followers by making political activity fun, combining it with drug use, rock music, and the general party lifestyle of the hip scene.’³

These qualities have ensured a place for Rubin and Hoffman among the renowned activist personalities of the 1960s. However, the Yippies have also been heavily criticized, both at the time and subsequently. Many people thought of them as disruptive, outrageous and even hurtful to legitimate political protest ventured by more established activist organizations.⁴ Critique of their methods should not neglect the fact that Rubin, Hoffman and the Yippies did succeed in venturing a boisterous criticism of the established political system, the “war-mongering” actions of the Johnson Administration and that they were adamant in their attempt to illuminate their attitude and opinions. Their place in the political climate and culture of the 1960s is important.

Jerry Rubin began as a student activist, although he was always more of an activist than a student. He only maintained a slight connection to the University of California, Berkeley, primarily to be able to continue his activist career in the compound of campus.⁵ Historian Gerard J. DeGroot has written about the characteristics

¹ Issitt, Micah L., *Hippies: A Guide to an American Subculture* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Press, 2009), p. 51.

² Issitt 2009 p. 98

³ Issitt 2009 p. 102

⁴ Issitt 2009 p. 51

⁵ DeGroot, Gerard J., *Student Protest: The Sixties and After* (New York: Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1998), p. 86.

of student protest in his work *Student Protest: The Sixties and After*. In an excerpt DeGroot categorizes the protesters:

‘Students are often at the cutting edge of social radicalism, since they alone possess the sometimes volatile combination of youthful dynamism, naive utopianism, disrespect for authority, buoyant optimism and attraction to adventure, not to mention a surplus of spare time. They perceive themselves as the leaders of a future generation and are often over-eager to thrust themselves into the task of reshaping their society.’⁶

This description applies to Rubin. His time at Berkeley and the following years of devoted activism show that he was a social radical, with a dynamic and adventurous personality. Rubin proved that he could generate a following; thereby installing himself as an inspirational leader of activist groups. More than everything else, Rubin demonstrated a complete lack of respect for authority – evident in his writings.⁷ The vibrant character of Jerry Rubin was demonstrated in his work in the Vietnam Day Committee, where he partook in the planning and exercising of rallies, as well as disruptions of troop trains and of trucks carrying napalm.⁸ DeGroot argues that the difficulties concerning student protest is that it rarely extends its criticism beyond the boundaries of the university campus.⁹ This was not true of Jerry Rubin. The anti-war movement and the Yippies were more than just student protesters. When the time came in 1967 and 1968 for real protest against the Vietnam War, Rubin and Hoffman had already had important practice in activism.

Rubin’s activist career began with the Vietnam Day Committee at Berkeley in 1964, solidifying anti-war protest as the primary focus of his activism. For Rubin, anti-war sentiment was very closely linked to anti-capitalism and anti-establishment views. Rubin’s writings and actions display a massive antagonism towards ‘the establishment’, the American political system, roles of authority and the war-makers, personified in the Johnson Administration.¹⁰ These views were shared by the counterculture. Rubin, the Yippies and many members of the counterculture believed ‘It was not enough for the individual to submit to being governed by representatives of his choice, he had instead to participate actively in his own governance. ... through struggle came fulfilment’.¹¹

⁶ DeGroot 1998 p. 4

⁷ Rubin, Jerry, ‘DO IT! Scenarios of the Revolution’, (New York: Ballantine Books, Inc., 1970).

⁸ DeGroot 1998 pp. 5-6

⁹ DeGroot 1998 p. 5

¹⁰ Rubin, Jerry, *DO IT! Scenarios of the Revolution* (New York: Ballantine Books, Inc., 1970).

¹¹ DeGroot 1998 p. 90

Rubin agitated actively for this view and used his activism to promote and energize others to engage in this fight.

Anti-capitalist views were shared by the counterculture and the Yippies. The ideals of love, sex, drugs, and rock 'n roll that prevailed for the hippies were a reaction to counter the immense influence capitalism had in American society. Alan S. Kahan quotes Tocqueville in *Mind vs. Money: The War between Intellectuals and Capitalism*: 'If ever the vast majority of the human race were to concentrate its thoughts on the quest for material goods alone, we may expect a powerful reaction to take place in certain souls. These would plunge headlong into the world of the spirits lest they find themselves trammelled unduly by the fetters the body would impose on them.'¹² With these words, the 19th century writer Alexis de Tocqueville predicted the inevitable emergence of a counterculture and its quest for cultural revolution in a widely capitalist society.

The Yippies represented the exceedingly radical forces that sprung from the counterculture, manifesting a great deal of antagonism toward capitalism. The effectiveness of civil disobedience as a tool in activism was present in the counterculture, and Rubin had embraced this view from the beginning of his years as an activist. Rubin believed, as did many, that civil disobedience was not only effective, but also justified, when trying to change the oppressive system of American government and society.¹³ Another important feature of Rubin's activism was his regard for conducting political protest as theatre. The majority of happenings, be-ins and Rubin's activist endeavours were played out as theatrical setups, and in every dramatic action and protest orchestrated by Rubin, there was a focus on getting as much attention as possible, and showing voices of dissent by making a spectacle.¹⁴

Rubin and his Yippies represented a fragment of the counterculture of the 1960s. Issitt argues that the Yippies occupied a middle way between the political New Left, and the counterculture because they did not fit well into either category.¹⁵ They did, however, manage to attract a great deal of attention, which seemed to be the main attraction and purpose of their activism. Most of their activism can be defined as pranks, staged events that would ensure disruptions of the status quo. They believed media attention and the cause of outrage would emphasize the seriousness of their cause. DeGroot argues that pranks are an inevitable mechanism of student activism and that although there are often

¹² Kahan, Alan S., *Mind vs. Money: The War between Intellectuals and Capitalism* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2010), p. 227.

¹³ DeGroot 1998 p. 89

¹⁴ Monteith, Sharon, *American Culture in the 1960s* (Great Britain: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), p. 46.

¹⁵ Issitt 2009 p. 135

serious political messages behind activist pranks; student activism will often generate great division, manifested by both support and contempt for their cause.¹⁶ Pranks resulting in contempt would eventually become a hindrance for the Yippies. While a majority of Americans would eventually regard the Vietnam War as a disgrace on American history, most Americans would come to regard the Yippies with even greater contempt. The 'ordinary Americans did not condone Yippie behaviour and the nature in which they resisted the war.'¹⁷ This lack of support from the general public, however, did not dissipate the resolve of Rubin and Hoffman. For the Yippies, activism meant more than just resistance and criticism of what they believed to be wrong in American society. Activism was a tool to disrupt society and shake the general American public out of their apathy.¹⁸ From writings and actions of Rubin and Hoffman it is apparent that they desired a revolution or a change in American society, more than an end to the War in Vietnam. In his Yippie manifesto *DO IT! Scenarios of the Revolution* Rubin wrote the following:

'The yippies are Marxists. We follow in the revolutionary tradition of Groucho, Chico, Harpo and Karl. What the yippies learnt from Karl Marx – history's most infamous, bearded, longhaired, hippie commie freek agitator – is that we must create a spectacular myth of revolution. Karl wrote and sang his own rock album called 'The Communist Manifesto'. 'The Communist Manifesto' is a song that has overthrown governments.'¹⁹

It was specifically white middle class youths who Rubin and Hoffman were trying to reach with their activism, because they believed them to be possible revolutionaries.²⁰ The desire for revolution was powered by the view that American society had become alienated, a view shared by the counterculture. The rise of capitalism, the flight to suburbia, and increasing individualization had successfully created widespread alienation in America.²¹ It was this negative tendency that Rubin, Hoffman and their Yippies were trying to reverse, and the tool at their disposal was civil disobedience, happenings and making a spectacle to achieve 'Woodstock Nation', a concept Hoffman defined in his court testimony:

¹⁶ DeGroot 1998 p. 6

¹⁷ Reiss, Matthias, *The Street as Stage: Protest Marches and Public Rallies since the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 224

¹⁸ DeGroot 1998 p. 92

¹⁹ Rubin 1970 p. 116

²⁰ Rubin 1970 p. 115

²¹ Kahan 2010 p. 215

‘It is a nation of alienated young people. ... It is a nation dedicated to cooperation versus competition, to the idea that people should have better means of exchange than property or money, that there should be some other basis for human interaction.’²²

In pursuit of their goal of stirring the American people, the Yippies were reliant on media attention. This was made possible in the respect that the 1960s became the decade where mass media began to exercise the massive influence it had been awarded by the coming of live television. For the Yippies, as well as others the influence of television media ensured that their political message would be broadcast to the general American. The massive exposure awarded to the Yippies was, however, not void of criticism and Issitt points to the fact that other leftist organizations criticised the Yippies for being without substance and more into publicity stunts. The Yippies, responded with the claim that all publicity that successfully alerted attention to their cause was positive.²³ This positive spin on the criticism of Yippie activism is not shared by Simon Hall who argued that anti-war demonstrators used ‘tactics that alienated media and public alike, thereby helping to restrict their popular appeal and political influence.’²⁴ This argument suggests that the method of Yippie activism was not the most prudent one. However, Hall also recognizes the fact that the media did not report objectively on Yippie activism, and that media distortion occurred.²⁵

The disruptive nature of Yippie activism and the complications of media distortion are perhaps best illustrated in the following example. One of the more provoking events happened in New York, where the Youth International Party was originally founded. The Yippies decided to focus their antagonism against capitalism in a happening. Yippies activists successfully created havoc at the New York Stock Exchange by entering the gallery and throwing dollar bills onto the trading floor where brokers stood. The actual event was short-lived seeing as the activists, led by Hoffman, were quickly escorted out by security guards. However, the event was reported in the international media, giving the Yippies a great deal of attention. The short duration of the event did not provide an opportunity for the Yippies to make a statement or anything to that effect. What was left was the symbolic nature of the action. To prevent such actions in the future the gallery of the Stock Exchange was fitted with bullet-proof glass windows. The official explanation was that the new feature had been installed as a ‘security

²² Issitt 2009 p. 136

²³ Issitt 2009 p. 51

²⁴ Reiss 2007 p. 213

²⁵ Reiss 2007 p. 227

measure'. This shows that the media, in the moment of action reported on the matter, but more as an attack, and violation of the sanctity of Wall Street as a New York landmark than as a political protest against capitalism. Focus on the publicity stunt denigrated the political critique behind the action.²⁶ Yippie activism successfully caused outrage though their political views seemed to drown more and more in their media stunts.

Another example of how the political views of the Yippies drowned in their quest for publicity and use of happenings to get attention is their March on the Pentagon on October 21, 1967. Abbie Hoffman explains in the following, the views and reasons for the March:

'He (Jerry Rubin) said that the war in Vietnam was not just an accident but a direct by-product of ... a capitalist system in the country, and that we had to begin to put forth new kinds of values, especially to young people in the country, to make a kind of society in which a Vietnam War would not be possible. And he felt that these attitudes and values were present in the hippie movement and many of the techniques, the guerrilla theatre techniques that had been used and many of these methods of communication would allow for people to participate and become involved in a new kind of democracy.'²⁷

One could say that the March on the Pentagon was divided into two separate parts. The first was the official march, with more than a 100,000 people gathering at Lincoln Memorial to protest the American involvement in Vietnam. A few hours later a smaller group of about 35,000 continued towards the Pentagon. This was the part of the demonstration the Yippies had planned, and included an attempt to levitate the Pentagon building. By nightfall more than 600 arrests had been made and the Yippies had once again succeeded in producing a spectacle.²⁸

The anti-war demonstration occurred at a time when the U.S. had become deeply entrenched in the war in Vietnam, more and more troops were being deployed and the military involvement had begun to weigh heavily on government budgets.²⁹ Still, no signs of drawing back and diminishing involvement were in sight. The frustration that

²⁶ Issitt 2009 p. 51

²⁷ Issitt 2009 p. 138

²⁸ Reiss 2007 p. 223

²⁹ Kissinger, Clark, "Overview," in *Law and Disorder* ed. Donald Myrus and Burton Joseph (Chicago: Donald Myrus and Burton Joseph, 1968).

previous demonstrations and heavy critique of the war did not amount to any change, made the decision to apply civil disobedience at the Pentagon demonstration an easy one. Rubin, Hoffman and their Yippies were not the only ones. MOBE (National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam) who had a connection to Rubin were also adamant in their attempt to gain influence by engaging in civil disobedience.³⁰ Besides surrounding the Pentagon while chanting ‘Ommm’ as described by Norman Mailer, the activists burned draft cards, and urinated on the building, a sign of utter revolution.³¹ The disrespect performed at the Pentagon, one of the most important governmental organs was magnified by the hostile media coverage. Urination on government property generated contempt and caused immense outrage in the American public. Sidney Lens a veteran of the anti-war movement, recognized this problem: ‘the anti-war movement’s use of confrontational tactics, provocative rhetoric, and counter-cultural protest helped to ensure that it was one of the few things in America that was actually *more* unpopular than the Vietnam War itself.’³²

Micah L. Issitt points to another problem, namely the fact that the attention centred on Rubin, Hoffman and the Yippies was so massive and negative that it would detract attention from more legitimate activist groups, who, due to their less provocative nature, could have generated more substantial change than the Yippies. This did not affect Rubin and Hoffman who seized every opportunity to show their own contempt for the establishment, even at their criminal trial, later known as the Chicago Conspiracy Trial.³³

A review of Rubin’s activist career portrays an escalation in methods used in activism. Continued escalation is not uncommon with protest demonstrators, as Göran Therborn, a Cambridge University professor of Sociology, states: ‘a revolutionary process hardly ever starts with people intending to overthrow the system. Rather, it involves a process of radicalization which depends upon the reaction of the authorities and their agents to initial limited demands.’³⁴

This is helpful in understanding the escalation of Yippie activism which ultimately culminated at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in August 1968. Being a marginalised activist group, the Yippies experiences a lack of positive results of their activism and a spiteful reception in the political climate. This lack of change only encouraged them to resolve to more aggressive and provocative happenings.

³⁰ Reiss 2007 pp. 223-24

³¹ Reiss 2007 p. 222 and p. 225

³² Reiss 2007 p. 226

³³ Issitt 2009 p. 135

³⁴ Reiss 2007 p. 36

In Chicago, the Yippies had planned a 'Festival of Life', a happening of dance, song, and hanging out in the parks of Chicago simultaneous with the Democratic Convention.³⁵ Issitt argues that Rubin and Hoffman claimed they had every intention of conducting the protest peacefully, but recognizes this as a hollow claim, seeing as the Yippie leaders had instructed their fellow demonstrators to resist the Chicago police if a riot broke out.³⁶ Although various sources differ on this issue, regardless of the possible good intentions, the demonstration did develop into a violent riot.³⁷

The violence erupted at the Democratic National Convention when presidential candidate Eugene McCarthy, who ran on an anti-war platform, was defeated as the official Democratic candidate and Hubert Humphrey was picked for the ticket to run against Republican candidate Richard M. Nixon.³⁸ Prior to Convention Week, Hoffman and Rubin advocated for the use of civil disobedience in the underground press. However, when met with denials of petitions to hold legitimate demonstrations, Hoffman prudently decided to tone down the thundering rhetoric. He declared in *The Realist*: 'It is not our wish to take on superior armed troops who outnumber us on unfamiliar enemy territory. It is not their wish to have a Democrat nominated amidst a major bloodbath.'³⁹

This was a sensible decision seeing as Chicago Mayor Richard Daley was prepared to meet the demonstrators with immense force.⁴⁰ Daley already had practice in this respect. Following the assassination of Martin Luther King in April that same year, riots had broken out in a number of American cities. Chicago was no exception and Mayor Daley had ordered that police should meet arsonist rioters with a 'shoot to kill' approach. Though this order was later retrieved and denied by Daley's administration, it had slipped out and caused an uproar in the media.⁴¹

To understand why this harsh attitude was prevalent in Chicago, it makes sense to examine sociological aspects concerning mass demonstrations. In *The Street as Stage*, Stephen Reicher and Clifford Stott reference the French social psychologist and sociologist Gustave Le Bon, known for his works on crowd psychology: 'in the

³⁵ Issitt 2009 p. 102

³⁶ Issitt 2009 p. 103

³⁷ Van Doren, Charles, "Press," in *Law and Disorder* ed. Donald Myrus and Burton Joseph (Chicago: Donald Myrus and Burton Joseph, 1968)

³⁸ Kissinger, Clark, "Overview," in *Law and Disorder* ed. Donald Myrus and Burton Joseph (Chicago: Donald Myrus and Burton Joseph, 1968).

³⁹ DeZutter, Henry W., "Politicians of the Absurd," in *Law and Disorder* ed. Donald Myrus and Burton Joseph (Chicago: Donald Myrus and Burton Joseph, 1968)

⁴⁰ Linder, Douglas O., "The Chicago Seven Conspiracy Trial"

<<http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/Chicago7/Account.html>> 29/8 2011.

⁴¹ Koch, Lewis Z., "TV2," in *Law and Disorder* ed. Donald Myrus and Burton Joseph (Chicago: Donald Myrus and Burton Joseph, 1968)

anonymity of the crowd, people lose their individual identity and hence their capacity for reason and judgment. This means that they are incapable of resisting any passing idea or, especially, emotion'.⁴² According to Reicher and Stott, this now outdated explanation of crowd psychology, is still how police forces perceive crowds to act during demonstrations.⁴³ The violence that unravelled in the streets of Chicago during the demonstration can attest to the fact that this view of crowds was certainly shared by the Chicago police force and that they came prepared to face violent, unstable protesters. DeGroot argues that the use of violence against demonstrators is often accepted by the public. He emphasizes that this is even more common with student protesters, often seen as spoilt children 'acting out' against authority. Another curiosity about the Chicago riot is the fact that several eyewitnesses, referenced in *Law and Disorder* has pointed to the fact that apart from Yippie leaders and radical demonstrators the police seemed to target reporters and medic workers, two groups usually kept out of the range of fire. This was also the conclusion of the Walker Report, drawn up by the commission that reviewed events surrounding the Chicago Convention.⁴⁴ A psychologist, present during the riot, provides the following explanation to this: 'In violence feelings are polarized he tells me. A cop sees someone in white bending over to help a kid already wounded, his own guilt is evoked, and-blam!'⁴⁵ Colourful as this description is, it displays the intensive brutality of the Chicago policemen during the riot, a brutality that the Yippie leaders perhaps had not anticipated.

When the riot ended, more than 1,500 people had been injured; this figure includes injured police, civilians and a majority of young demonstrators. Jerry Rubin, Abbie Hoffman and several other prominent protest leaders, later known as the 'Chicago Seven' were arrested. The following trial would once again expose the activist nature, the contempt for authoritative institutions and the flair for publicity stunts so ingrained in the nature of Rubin and Hoffman.

The trial, that later became known as the Chicago Conspiracy Trial, began on September 24, 1969.⁴⁶ The seven defendants, originally eight, were tried with

⁴² Reiss 2007 p. 27

⁴³ Reiss 2007 p. 29

⁴⁴ Federal Judicial Center, Chicago Conspiracy Trial; Historical Documents: "Walker Report Summary," <http://www.fjc.gov/history/home.nsf/page/tu_chicago7_doc_13.html> 12/10 2011.

⁴⁵ Alexander, Shana, "Eyewitness," in *Law and Disorder* ed. Donald Myrus and Burton Joseph (Chicago: Donald Myrus and Burton Joseph, 1968).

⁴⁶ Linder, Douglas O., "The Chicago Seven Conspiracy Trial"

<<http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/Chicago7/Account.html>> 29/8 2011.

conspiracy, and the crossing of state lines with intent to cause a riot.⁴⁷ Rubin, Hoffman and the remaining defendants were the first to be tried and convicted under the Anti-Riot Act, a provision incorporated in the Civil Rights Act of 1968.⁴⁸ The judge assigned to the case was known to take a very ‘tough stance toward criminal defendants’.⁴⁹

The trial, as most events involving Rubin and Hoffman, developed into quite a spectacle. It was widely covered by the press, with reporters from the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* reporting from the trial.⁵⁰ A general disrespect for the court was displayed during the trial, with defendants sleeping or making outbursts in the middle of court proceedings. These actions resulted in numerous convictions of contempt of court. Another spectacle, which the media reported with great delight, happened on February 6, 1970, when Rubin and Hoffman entered the courtroom wearing judicial robes. Rubin and Hoffman were successful in making a mockery of the court with the intent to ‘convince the public that the court proceedings amounted to a political rather than a criminal trial.’⁵¹ When the trial ended in 1970, Rubin and Hoffman, and three other defendants were found innocent on charges of conspiracy but convicted of inciting a riot. The verdict was later overturned at a retrial in 1972.⁵²

The counterculture was a powerful voice for change during the course of the 1960s. Civil rights, feminism and environmental protection, experienced great changes and important accomplishments were made. The Vietnam War changed the draft; after the war, it became impossible to draft hundreds of thousands of young Americans and force them to fight in a war that was not supported by the public.⁵³ Despite the political victories achieved, Kahan argues that the counterculture was in fact responsible for the rise of neoconservatives in the late 1960s and their continuing influence.⁵⁴ Kahan’s argument is that neoconservatives came to prominence as a direct reaction to the counterculture: ‘They could not understand why America’s middle class youth was rejecting the life of economic privilege and opportunity that lay open to them, in the

⁴⁷ Issitt 2009 p. 107

⁴⁸ Federal Judicial Center: Chicago Conspiracy Trial; Historical Documents: “Anti-Riot Act.”: <http://www.fjc.gov/history/home.nsf/page/tu_chicago7_doc_11.html> 12/10 2011.

⁴⁹ Lahav, Pnina, “Theater in the Courtroom: The Chicago Conspiracy Trial” *Law and Literature*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Fall 2004), p. 384.

< <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/lal.2004.16.3.381>>

⁵⁰ Federal Judicial Center: Chicago Conspiracy Trial; Historical Documents: “Media Coverage and Public Debates,”: <http://www.fjc.gov/history/home.nsf/page/tu_chicago7_media.html> 12/10 2011.

⁵¹ Federal Judicial Center: Chicago Conspiracy Trial; Historical Documents: “Media Coverage and Public Debates,”: <http://www.fjc.gov/history/home.nsf/page/tu_chicago7_media.html>

⁵² Issitt 2009 p. 107

⁵³ Issitt 2009 p. 129

⁵⁴ Kahan 2010 p. 231

name of some nebulous spiritual utopia.⁵⁵ The term neoconservatives is used to describe socialists, liberals and Democrats who had rejected the views of the New Left. Neoconservatives believed in the positive workings of capitalism instead of seeing it as an evil force infiltrating American society.

Much of the criticism directed at the Yippies, repeated in this essay is well-founded and in looking at the accomplishments of the Yippies an image of futility to their cause has formed. Critics have been right in pointing out that the attention-seeking nature of the Yippies, and Rubin and Hoffman's determination to cause outrage meant that they detracted attention from serious New Left political organizations.

Rubin and Hoffman harboured serious political views, but were unable to transform these views into serious political action. What they managed, as previously touched upon in this essay was to cause outrage. Simon Hall's argument, that the form of activism chosen by the Yippies and the alienation it created in the public and the media, limited their influence on the political scene. Because Rubin and the Yippies chose such grand and provoking happenings the political views behind it were lost in the symbolic nature of the protest. Other activist groups and protesters such as the Civil Rights Movement had understood how to fuse political activism with political change. The Civil Rights Movement would use the judicial system to create change in America, of which they were very successful. Rubin, Hoffman and the Yippies experienced no such success. Where the Civil Rights Movement had specific tangible demands, the Yippies only managed a criticism of abstract concepts such as capitalism and the 'establishment'. Such concepts, though very influential in American society were difficult to aim a frontal attack at, though the Yippies tried their best.

If the Yippies had opted for making a change on a more specific level, instead of redirecting their own outrage at these concepts, they might have been more successful. The fact remains that their legitimate political criticism remained symbolic rather than explicit. In a way, the notion that the Yippies occupied a space between the political New Left and the counterculture is correct in the respect that the counterculture caused outrage as well, and did not care much that they did so. Furthermore, Rubin and Hoffman had strong political views similar to those of the New Left, but aside from attracting attention, the way they carried themselves put a stop to their political influence. By looking at the form of activism and the views of especially Jerry Rubin one gets the impression that perhaps this lack of results did not bother the Yippies and Rubin much. In Rubin's *DO IT! Scenarios of the Revolution*, there is much rhetoric of

⁵⁵ Kahan 2010 p. 233

revolution, and he expresses many views of the evils of capitalism, but what is even more significant about the text is that its primary purpose is to cause outrage. From the happenings dealt with in this essay, a picture of Rubin's activist agenda forms. It becomes quite clear that the way the Yippies conducted their activism was indeed to attract attention, and even more so to cause outrage. Due to the accomplished nature of Rubin and Hoffman in the respect of attracting attention, their political influence was diminished, but they did certainly manage to stir the American public and cause outrage, which was their stated goal from the beginning, so in this respect they were extremely successful.

As political activists, the Yippies did not manage to create much political change. However, the imaginative activism, their monumental happenings and Rubin and Hoffman's success as publicity manipulators make them deserving of attention as part of the political activist scene of the 1960s.

In the aftermath of the 1960s, Abbie Hoffman continued his years of activism by focusing on environmentalism. His collisions with the police continued, resulting in several years of hiding underground and undergoing plastic surgery to avoid capture.⁵⁶ Following his years as a radical activist, Jerry Rubin became an accomplished businessman; he changed his views on activism and became a promoter of economic investment as a tool of inciting societal change. Although, Rubin and Hoffman were less successful at inciting change during their years in the Youth International Party, Hoffman's environmental activism and Rubin's views on economic activism are still viable to student activist movements worldwide.⁵⁷

The Yippies, Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin were important personalities of the 1960s. They were accomplished activists and provided a great deal of exposure to activists and their causes during the course of the 1960s. Despite the fact that Rubin, Hoffman and the Youth International Party were not the most successful activists they were instrumental in provoking change, and provoking more than anything else. Rubin and Hoffman have been called 'public relations wizards'⁵⁸, a name they have earned. Their happenings successfully attracted attention to an extent that would not have been possible without television media and the focus on activism so prevalent at the time. Rubin and Hoffman promoted anti-establishment, anti-war and anti-capitalist views and they used their happenings and their skills as activists in promoting these views. The

⁵⁶ Issitt 2009 p. 103

⁵⁷ Issitt 2009 pp. 103-107.

⁵⁸ Lahav, Pnina, "Theater in the Courtroom: The Chicago Conspiracy Trial" *Law and Literature*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Fall 2004), p. 382.

intention behind their activism was centred round the idea of revolution; the Yippies believed that America had become alienated because of the massive influence capitalism had on society. Rubin and Hoffman deeply desired for 'ordinary' Americans to be shaken out of the apathy, they believed, engulfed them. The belief that it would be possible for them to accomplish this was what drove their activism. The greatest accomplishment of Jerry Rubin, Abbie Hoffman and their Yippies was to cause outrage in the American public. However, their activism would generate contempt which ultimately hindered serious influence on political change in America.

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