

THE UNDERGROUND PRESS: ITS INFLUENCE ON
AMERICAN SOCIOPOLITICAL MOVEMENTS OF
THE 1960S AND 1970S

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Abstract: This thesis examines the underground press in the United States during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Through close analysis of the more popular underground newspapers from this time period and from different geographical regions of the United States, this thesis shows how the underground press helped aid in awareness for different sociopolitical movements as well as helped organize and gain support for these movements. This thesis focuses on three sociopolitical movements and their relationship with the underground press. These three movements are the Red Power Movement, the Women's Liberation Movement, and the Gay Liberation Movement. Inspired by the politics of the 1960s, papers like the *Berkeley Barb*, *East Village Other*, *Great Speckled Bird*, and *The Rag* challenged mainstream ideas about these three movements and many others. Unlike the mainstream press, which tended to prioritize objectivity and profits, the underground press prioritized empathy and political activism. The underground press gave the youths of America participating in these movements an opportunity to report their news the way they wanted it to be reported. The mainstream media at the time did not give these three sociopolitical movements the attention and sympathy these groups felt they deserved. The mainstream media, in many cases, showed either an unconscious or direct bias against these movements. As a result of the mainstream media's bias against and/or apathy towards these movements, and others, hundreds of underground newspapers formed across the United States in the matter of a couple of a years. They made it their mission to inform their readers of these movements and the plights of minority and oppressed groups and asked for the direct involvement of their readers to help these people. They were also many of these sociopolitical movement's primary means of organization for protests, demonstrations, and meetings. The underground press helped these movements spread awareness, gain allies, and support (physical, monetary, and political) which in turn helped these movements make long-term changes to American society and American attitudes.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

It was 1967 at Oklahoma State University in the small town of Stillwater, Oklahoma. Students had invited a guest speaker whose recently published book was titled, *Radical Theology and the Death of God*. While this book was actually a pro-Christian work, the President of OSU at the time, Dr. Robert Kamm assumed, because of the title, it was not and banned the author from speaking. Students at OSU were outraged at how administration would try to restrict something they felt they had a right to hear.¹ In March of that year a few thousand students protested on campus for what they thought was a direct violation of their rights as students. President Kamm and the administration held to their decision to ban him from speaking and continued their oppression of students' rights. Administration at the university would go on to continue aggravating students by enacting rules that banned faculty and staff from participating in protests and refusing to actually listen to the students about their frustrations. By the end of the spring

¹ Sarah Eppler Janda, *Prairie Power: Student Activism, Counterculture, and Backlash in Oklahoma, 1962-1972* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2018), 37-39.

semester in 1967, the entire sociology department had resigned as a result of President Kamm and administrations oppression.¹ Students that year were quite upset with the way they were being treated by administration. The tyranny they experienced did not just end at graduate students being denied their right to assemble or denying public speakers, but the university sponsored student newspaper was often restricted on what it could print, such as complaints about administration.

The *O'Colly*, OSU's official student ran newspaper, was frequently censored by the administration. As a result of the censorship at the *O'Colly* and a general lack of realistic student views being presented in the paper, students created their own underground newspaper in 1967 called the *Drummer*.² Those writing for the *Drummer* finally felt they had a safe place to write about the things they wanted to write about, and the students on campus reading the paper finally had a newspaper they enjoyed reading because it was not being watered down by administration. In its first issue, the writers at the *Drummer* explained they did not want to just aggressively attack administration, but also provide a place for students to think and discuss many topics.³ They ended the issue with a religious satirical piece by "Elijah the Student" which made fun of OSU's administration, "The administration is my shepherd: I shall not want?....It starveth my mind: It leadeth me in the paths of ignorance for its pocketbook's sake."⁴ This sentiment was characteristic of this paper and reflected many students attitudes towards

¹ Ibid., 42-45.

² Ibid., 38-41.

³ "Void Filler," *Drummer* 1, no. 1, (1967), 1. For links to the database with this newspapers and for the other newspapers used in this thesis, reference the bibliography section.

⁴ Elijah the Student, "Elijah the Student," *Drummer* 1, no. 1, (1967), 4.

administration. Something like this likely would have never been published in the *O'Colly*.

As tensions built on campus over this speaker issue, the *Drummer's* next issue had a large section to discuss how their rights as students had been violated by administration such as dictating rules for off-campus housing, not allowing women on campus to wear slacks, and restricting who the students could have come speak on campus. They said that students would continue to urge administration to loosen rules around campus until they did so.⁵ The next issue had a meeting time and place for a new group on campus called "Student-Faculty Association" which was formed because of student grievances. In this meeting they did plan to address what the group would do, which seemed to be about checking administrations power and influence over students and faculty.⁶ In the fourth issue students running for student government used the newspaper to advertise their plans for campus if they were to be elected. Most of these plans they had were to improve conditions for students on campus, like a book trading association because they were being swindled by the bookstore, and a better judicial process for regulating parking on campus.⁷

The 1967-68 school year would see a peak of student anger towards administration with their ruling to not allow Timothy Leary to speak on campus. This also led to a new speaker policy being put in place by Dr. Kamm and administration that restricted students' ability to pick their own speakers. The professor who was sponsoring Student-Faculty Association resigned as a response to this and to escape the alleged

⁵ David Block, "Campus Affairs," *Drummer* 1, no. 2, (1967), 4.

⁶ "Special Movement Edition," *Drummer* 1, no. 3, (1967), 1.

⁷ "UP Platform," *Drummer* 1, no. 4, (1967), 1.

harassment from administration for being on students side.⁸ In an issue from November of 1967, the *Drummer* advertised on the front page for a campus-wide meeting at the library to be led by the student senate to discuss how their rights as students were being violated and what to do about it.⁹ About 5,000 students showed up to this meeting.¹⁰ The next issue does not describe what happened at this meeting in depth, but does contain an article which details how the university sponsored newspaper, the *O'Colly*, censors its writers. The *Drummer* gave a specific examples of how they were not allowed to run an article with price comparisons of hygienic products across different stores in Stillwater because it might hurt some local business owners feelings. The writer of the article alleges it was actually being censored because it may hurt some people's pocketbooks instead.¹¹ Of course the university was not concerned with the student's pocketbooks. This is why students felt the need to form their own paper, because the official "student newspaper" was not actually for them.

The *Drummer* also ran articles about a plethora of things that OSU students may not have been exposed to very often. These included a story about an African American student and how they felt alienated on campus and unsure if they were ever really a part of the university's community.¹² Oklahoma State is an agricultural and mechanical college and was primarily attended by white students in the 1960s, mostly coming from rural Oklahoma communities. They were probably not often exposed to articles like that one, or the many others the *Drummer* published which ranged from different topics like

⁸ Pat Streck, "regentpower," *Drummer* 2, no. 4, (1967), 1.

⁹ "Special Editorial Edition," *Drummer* 2, no. 4, (Nov. 1967), 1.

¹⁰ Janda, *Prairie Power*, 52-53.

¹¹ Ron Ross, "O'Colly Censored," *Drummer* 2, no. 5, (Nov. 1967), 7.

¹² "Negro at OSU," *Drummer* 1, no. 6, (1967), 4.

birth control, drugs like marijuana and LSD, communism and socialism, the issues with the War in Vietnam and many other politically liberal leaning topics. The *Drummer* helped fill a void for many on OSU's campus, which is evident by its popularity. The *Drummer* sold 6,000 copies of their first issue.¹³ It seemed to be quite popular amongst students on campus. Most likely, the *Drummer* was read by thousands of students on OSU's campus at that time because where else could they get this kind of content?

The *Drummer* would continue to publish for a couple more years, on and off, but probably due to a decline in popularity and original staff members graduating and moving on, they stopped publishing. In 1971 the restrictive speaker policy that students had been protesting in '67 and '68 was finally revoked after students hired a lawyer which seemed to make Dr. Kamm realize it was not worth the time and trouble anymore.¹⁴ The information the *Drummer* provided was not being provided by the *O'Colly* or other press publication in the area. Public opinion in Oklahoma generally supported Dr. Kamm and the administrations decisions about these speakers. Many other Oklahoma newspapers were very supportive of administrations decisions as well.¹⁵ This was basically the only newspaper publishing in support of these OSU students struggle and helping to organize meetings and support for them over this issue. This was why they felt the need to make their own newspaper.

The *Drummer* is just one example of thousands of underground press publications that came into existence in the late 1960s and early 1970s as a response to restrictive,

¹³ "Pregnant?" *Drummer* 1, no. 2, (1967), 1.

¹⁴ Janda, *Prairie Power*, 59.

¹⁵ Janda, *Prairie Power*, 57. Chapter two of this book gives multiple examples of mainstream Oklahoma press being in support of restrictive speaker policies at OSU.

apathetic, and sometimes conservative leaning mainstream media outlets. The *Drummer* is an excellent example of what the many underground press publications across the country were doing around the same time and what kind of void these newspapers were trying to fill. This newspaper not only articulated the ideas of students because they had nowhere else to turn to, but it also gave them a means of organizing their meetings and protests, not unlike hundreds of other underground newspapers from the same time period.

This thesis examines the politics of the underground press during its height in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It does so through a close analysis of prominent underground press newspapers throughout different geographical regions of the country to show the broad reach of the underground press. This thesis places special emphasis on the press's treatment of three sociopolitical movements in particular: the Red Power Movement, the Women's Liberation Movement, and the Gay Liberation Movement. These three themes were not only central to the broad political changes taking place at the time, but they also illuminate important differences between the mainstream and the underground press. This thesis argues, broadly, that the underground press served as an important space for articulating and distributing countercultural ideas and liberal politics of the late 1960s and early 1970s in the United States. The underground press also offered a different type of journalism, one that emphasized empathy above objectivity and called for the direct political action of their readers.

Without the underground press the many civil rights movements of the "Sixties" like the Red Power Movement, Women's Liberation Movement, and the Gay Liberation Movement would have had a harder time spreading awareness to outside support and

organizing their movements. The underground press helped them gain sympathy from those outside of their movements and gave them an outlet for organizing protests and gaining support either physically, monetarily or politically. The underground press was an important aspect of helping these three movements, and many others, reach a wider audience and organize.

So, what is alternative or underground press (both terms are used interchangeably throughout this work) and why does it matter? The underground press could be a newspaper, magazine, book, or even a pamphlet that goes against the dominant publication norms of a society. Some examples of a “dominant” publication could be a newspaper like *The New York Times* that cover a more broad, national range of news, or local newspapers at the state and town level, or even college campus newspapers. The underground press, in general, presents a different perspective on a range of issues compared to their mainstream counterparts. When looking at the United States in the 1960s and 1970s, the underground press can be described as low-budget newspapers being produced by a small group of people who were generally politically motivated.¹⁶

A majority of these papers had a small readership and were focused on a specific community or group of people. However, there were many of these newspapers that became nationally known and were very popular. The industry also benefitted from two extensive networks connecting even small, local underground press papers to other underground papers all across the country called the Underground Press Syndicate and the Liberation News Service, both will be discussed further later. The UPS and LNS

¹⁶ ¹⁶ John McMillian, *Smoking Typewriters: The Sixties Underground Press and the Rise of Alternative Media in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 5-7.

helped the New Left and civil rights activist groups to better organize groups and circulate their ideas at a national level.¹⁷ Even though their productions were considered unprofessional and low budget, they reached millions of readers and were well-known in communities across United States.

The underground press has taken many forms across space time, but within the context of the history of the United States, the alternative press holds a special place. The publications of the founding fathers right before and during the Revolutionary War are considered alternative press. *Common Sense*, the pamphlet written by Thomas Paine in 1776 that gave a convincing argument to millions of colonists about becoming independent from Britain and forming a democratic society, is one of the best and most well-known examples of early American alternative press. In the nineteenth century abolitionist newspapers like, *The Liberator*, were considered alternative press publications and helped aid the abolitionist cause in the United States leading up to the Civil War.¹⁸ In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, papers with leftist sentiments began popping up all over the United States as a response to the political and economic climate at the time. The most popular one, *Appeal to Reason*, was a socialist newspaper published from 1895-1922 in Kansas. This paper, at its peak, was circulating 750,000 copies a week. Many of the editors and journalists of the alternative press of the 1960s and 1970s thought of themselves as the descendants of those who worked on these earlier papers and drew ideas and influence from these earlier American underground

¹⁷ Ibid., 5-7. For more information on this, look at John McMillian's book, *Smoking Typewriters*, Abe Peck's *Uncovering the Sixties* and Laurence Leamer's, *The Paper Revolutionaries*.

¹⁸ Abe Peck, *Uncovering the Sixties: The Life and Times of the Underground Press* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 4-5.

publications.¹⁹ These newspapers would of course possess their unique characteristics while carrying on the American tradition of dissent.

All kinds of people and groups began publishing underground newspapers in the 1960s. This was due to several factors. First, publishing their own papers became cheap and much easier to do than before because of recent advances in printing technology. Printing a newspaper became more accessible to those who were not wealthy.²⁰ This explains the large quantity of underground press being published at the time. Motivation was a second factor. Many people in oppressed minority groups, women, and those who did not want to fit in with “traditional” society began writing their own papers. They felt ignored, ridiculed or just felt the reporting was too bland and objective. Or the mainstream media companies’ that journalists worked for would not allow them to publish the articles or ideas they wanted if they did not fit in with the status quo.²¹

During the 1950s and 1960s, mainstream media became heavily corporatized. There were fewer newspapers to choose from and many different newspapers were owned by the same companies and families. Previously, large towns and cities had multiple newspapers owned by different people. By the 1960s, many newspapers had disappeared and how these remaining newspapers reported the news had become more standardized.²² This made many journalists jobs much harder, trying to fit into this corporate mold of reporting the news and would inspire many to leave the jobs they were

¹⁹ McMillian, *Smoking Typewriters*, 32-33.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 6. The advances in printing technology allowed publishers to piece together what they wanted on the page and then take a photograph of that, which they would then just print copies of. For more information reference McMillian’s book.

²¹ Peck, *Uncovering the Sixties*, 24-25.

²² McMillian, *Smoking Typewriters*, 8.

at and make their own newspapers. Laurence Leamer said it best in his 1972 book, *Paper Revolutionaries*, “The mass media runs a company store, and in the name of integrity, good taste and profit, day after day they peddle the same bland product to a public that has never tasted the gritty, rich flavor of reality.”²³ The mainstream had lost touch with younger generation who yearned for a realistic view of the world they were soon to inherit.

The final factor for an increase in alternative media: there was an audience for it. There were millions of people who felt that the rigid, sterile and unforgiving Cold War society of the 1950s was something they did not want to be a part of. They were upset about the way the government and society had been treating people.²⁴ There were burgeoning civil rights movements across the country with lacking meaningful support from the mainstream media. The underground press provided an outlet for those who wanted to see news reported in a way that they could relate to. The underground press was often very emotional, aggressive and empathetic. The issues the world began facing at the time made people feel emotional, aggressive and empathetic. Political activism was popular and the underground press prioritized this. A large group of people in the 1960s began to prefer to read the news that was being reported in this way. The underground press fulfilled this void in the media for many. There seemed to be a general consensus among those who did not fit into the white middle class nuclear family mold: the mainstream media did not care about them and would not care about them.²⁵

²³ Laurence Leamer, *The Paper Revolutionaries: The Rise of the Underground Press* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), 182.

²⁴ McMillian, *Smoking Typewriters*, 4-5.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 4-8.

The underground press had more freedom to publish what they wanted which was part of the appeal. They had the freedom to say more and be more controversial, something mainstream press did not always have the luxury of doing. Because of this, many white suburban teenagers and young adults reading the underground press were being exposed to ideas and issues they never realized existed or had not thought about in such depth. They began to realize the world they were living in was not as pleasant as their parents and society had tried to make it seem. The underground press made many more aware of the world they were actually living in and gave them outlet to change things.²⁶

Different underground newspapers had different agendas or focused on different things, but overall, these underground newspapers gave everyday people a voice and an opportunity to take action. These papers helped give gay people, lesbian people, women, Native Americans, African Americans, hippies, teenagers, students, radical leftists and whoever else, a platform to tell their stories, organize for a cause and change the way people in America thought and did things. These marginalized groups of people used the underground press because they could not always rely on mainstream media to be on their side at this time. The underground press gave the different civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s an opportunity to reach wider audiences and organize their movements. This thesis will provide three specific examples of this by looking at the underground press's relationship with the Red Power Movement, Women's Liberation, and Gay Liberation.

²⁶ Ibid., 4-8.

There were thousands of underground newspapers in the United States at the time, but some of the largest and most influential ones were used for this thesis. This is because they would have had the largest noticeable impact. I primarily used the *Berkeley Barb*, *East Village Other*, *The Rag*, and the *Great Speckled Bird* in this work. The largest one, the *Berkeley Barb* was published in Berkeley, California from 1965 to 1980. It originated as more of an underground newspaper for students at the University of California but became the largest and most popular underground newspaper of the era. This paper sold around 90,000 issues a week at its peak in 1968. It continued to sell tens of thousands of copies every week for most of its lifespan.²⁷ The *Barb* was one of the largest weekly circulations in California.²⁸ It usually had around twenty pages per issue, give or take, and was characterized by its incorporation of sex ads. This was often how many of these newspapers helped fund themselves, by selling sex ads in their classifieds or on the main pages of the newspapers. It could range from personal sex ads to sex toy shops and porn theaters. These newspapers often included nudity throughout the paper, either in these ads or in artwork and photographs that were showcased along with the articles. This is something very characteristic about the Sixties underground press in general and was part of the appeal. It made these newspapers more radical and shocking. Discussions of sex, nude photos and drawings, and the hundreds of sex ads in the underground press gave was one major feature that set underground newspapers apart from their contemporary counterparts.²⁹

²⁷ Leamer, *The Paper Revolutionaries*, 8.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁹ McMillian, *Smoking Typewriters*, 125.

Another feature that set these newspapers apart from their mainstream counterparts is their use of unique artistic illustrations and images. Each newspaper had their own style and incorporated various amounts of intriguing, characteristically Sixties style artwork. One newspaper was especially characterized for its unique art and style it included on its pages. The *East Village Other (EVO)* was published from 1965 to 1972 in New York City. This paper began as a small underground paper sold at NYU but grew quickly into one of the largest in the country. At its height in the late 1960s, *EVO* was selling around 65,000 copies a week.³⁰ Like the *Berkeley Barb*, *EVO* ran articles on a broad range of topics and included its fair share of sex ads. Another underground paper that was very similar to the *Barb* and *EVO* was, *The Great Speckled Bird*. This newspaper was published in Atlanta, Georgia and it published from 1968 to 1976. It was circulating around 18,000 copies a week at its peak in the late 1960s. The *Great Speckled Bird* was one of the largest weekly circulations in Georgia at its height.³¹

The east and west coasts were not the only places publishing alternative press. Earlier the short story of Oklahoma State's underground paper the *Drummer* was an example of how this was something happening all over the country, even in places you would not expect. Austin, Texas was also home to a well-recognized newspaper called *The Rag*. *The Rag* was in circulation from 1966 to 1977 and was published primarily by students at the University of Texas, which at the time was very a very politically conservative campus. The staff of students publishing this paper were called the Ragamuffins or the Ragstaff. They generally focused on pushing a New Left political

³⁰ Abe Peck, *Uncovering the Sixties*, 33.

³¹ Leamer, *The Paper Revolutionaries*, 93.

agenda while also incorporating the fun and lightness of the counterculture as well.³² This paper was not as large as either the *Berkley Barb*, *EVO*, or *GSB*, but still pulled in more numbers than many other alternative papers and had a large legacy. *The Rag* was selling around 4,000 issues a week at its highpoint in the late 1960s.³³ This newspaper differs somewhat from the rest because it was smaller and was published primarily by students. The other newspapers featured in this thesis had students from nearby universities working for them, but they were not being ran primarily by students. This thesis uses different underground newspapers located around the country to show the scope of their reach as a whole. One way these newspapers kept in touch with each other and helped organized for political movements was through the help of two organizations call the Underground Press Syndicate and the Liberation News Service.

The Underground Press Syndicate was an organization formed in 1966 whose goal was to connect underground publications across the country. The UPS helped circulate stories and ideas within the underground press. This helped expand the underground press and its readership.³⁴ John McMillian (a historian of the underground press who will be discussed more later) mentions in his book, *Smoking Typewriters*, how the UPS helped the underground press expand and organize. McMillian includes a testimonial from a writer of the underground press: “membership in the UPS ‘brought immediate benefit to us, in the form of a wealth of interesting articles available for reprinting as all of the member papers began exchanging copies with one another.’”³⁵

³² McMillian, *Smoking Typewriters*, 54.

³³ Leamer, *The Paper Revolutionaries*, 62-63.

³⁴ McMillian, *Smoking Typewriters*, 73.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 74.

One example of the UPS and its ability to spread ideas amongst underground papers is the Banana Hoax. Dozens of underground papers printed articles about smoking banana peels to get high, knowing this was untrue, they still thought it was funny and kept printing about this. It eventually inspired head shops in many liberal communities in the U.S. to sell yellow pipes, t-shirts with bananas on them, and creative psychedelic posters featuring bananas.³⁶ The Banana Hoax demonstrates how the underground press was able to unite communities across the country and create national movements and trends through their papers, whether they were real or not.

A year after the formation of the UPS the Liberation News Service was created. This organization was similar to the UPS in its intent but was much more organized and serious about dispersing news to these underground publications and underground radio broadcasting channels. They were more proactive in their approach than the UPS and McMillian claims they would have reached millions of readers across the country.³⁷ Both the UPS and the LNS organized gatherings that invited underground editors and writers from across the country to meet and discuss their newspapers and what was going on.³⁸ These two organizations gave the underground press more opportunities to expand and gave them access to more information from different underground papers all over the country. These organizations gave the underground press better opportunities to reach more people.

How many people did the underground press reach? Well, that is a complicated answer. Circulation statistics on these newspapers is not concrete and has mostly been

³⁶ Ibid., 74-75.

³⁷ Ibid., 83.

³⁸ Ibid., 90-92.

reported through firsthand accounts from publishers. It is likely these figures are close to the actual numbers of copies sold, but they could have been inflated by those reporting them and of course would vary depending on what year it was. The Underground Press Syndicate reported 1.5 million circulations among the newspapers who were part of the organization in the late 1960s.³⁹ As a whole, the underground press likely sold millions of copies over their lifespans and were also passed around from person to person. So, it is likely to assume that the underground press was read by many millions of Americans during this time period. These newspapers were popular enough that they were seen and treated as a threat to the status quo by the U.S. government even. Publishers were often harassed by police, offices ransacked, journalists were watched and even arrested on many occasions.⁴⁰ Even the *Drummer* at OSU was put on a watchlist by the FBI for being “communist inspired”.⁴¹ Most of these newspapers were being watched by authorities for the same reason.⁴² This is another reason to speculate that newspapers were influential to some degree since the FBI was worried about their influence on American youths.

As for who was reading these newspapers, that is hard to say. There are no concrete demographics on who was reading these newspapers. There are a few things that historians can assume about the audience of the newspapers. Since they were being published for and by those participating in the New Left and the Counterculture Movement it is safe to assume that this is who was reading the newspapers. Those

³⁹ Leamer, *The Paper Revolutionaries*, 14. There are varying accounts of how many readers the underground press had, and no definitive figures exist on this. However, most existing figures range from 1.5 million to 18 million readers nationwide.

⁴⁰ Leamer, *The Paper Revolutionaries*, 19.

⁴¹ Janda, *Prairie Power*, 48-49.

⁴² For more information on this, John McMillian’s book, *Smoking Typewriters*, has a chapter about local and federal authorities watching and harassing the underground press once they became popular. Many books covering the press also include some information on this topic.

participating in the New Left and Counterculture were generally “white, nonconformist, college-aged youths of the 1960s who rebelled against American racism, imperialism, and bourgeois social relations.”⁴³ And those writing for these newspapers were often participating in the protests and meetings being organized within these newspapers. The writers of these newspapers could be described as “young men and women who saw themselves as activists first and journalists second.”⁴⁴ Many of these writers would go on to become successful journalists, working for 60 Minutes, PBS, the *New York Times* and NPR.⁴⁵ Some of those who wrote for the underground press ended up writing most of the existing books about the Sixties underground press.

The historiography of the underground press from this era is quite small. Abe Peck, a journalist, editor and professor, was one of the first to publish a book with a primary focus on the underground press. His book was the most popular one on the press for many years. Peck published his book, *Uncovering the Sixties: The Life and Times of the Underground Press*, in 1985. In the 1960s, he worked for an underground paper. He is not a professional historian, which is common for books covering this topic. Most of the authors lived through the era and wrote accounts of what it was like to be a part of it all, or published a popular history version of these publications, like Peck did.⁴⁶ Laurence Leamer, is another important author who has written about the underground press. His book, *The Paper Revolutionaries: The Rise of the Underground Press*, was published in

⁴³ McMillian, *Smoking Typewriters*, 11-12.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 173.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁴⁶ Some of these other publications include, Ray Mungo’s, *Famous Long Ago: My Life and hard Times with Liberation News Service*; Steve Diamond’s, *What the Trees Said: Life on a New Age Farm*; Geoffrey Rips, *Un-American Activities: The Campaign Against the Underground Press*. Todd Gitlin mentions the underground press somewhat in his book, *The Sixties*, but does not look at it in depth. He does briefly discuss some of the publishers and a few articles throughout the book.

1972. Like Peck, he was involved in the underground press and the counterculture movement. His book details how the underground press came about and what had happened in the industry up to that point in 1972. His book gives details on circulation numbers and who was publishing which paper and how much money they were making and then all the drama in between. While neither of these books are a scholarly work, they still important sources when discussing the underground press because there is not much to work with.⁴⁷

Until 2011, there were no scholarly publications written by professional historians on the alternative press of the 1960s and 1970s. The person to change this lack of scholarship was historian, John McMillian. His book, *Smoking Typewriters: The Sixties Underground Press and the Rise of Alternative Media in America*, is the first and so far, only, scholarly book to exclusively cover the underground press of this time period. McMillian argues that scholars writing about the Sixties and the counterculture have ignored or underplayed one of the most important factors in the development and strength of the counterculture and New Left, the underground press. McMillian believes that the New Left could not have been as widespread, influential, or as organized as it was without the alternative press.⁴⁸ McMillian also claims in his book that the underground press helped to link communities across the country and was “the youth’s movement’s most important means of internal communication.”⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Other countries in Europe like the United Kingdom experienced similar youth movements. The UK also had its own underground press movement. For information on this see Caroline Hoefferle’s book, *British Student Activism in the Long Sixties* (2013).

⁴⁸ McMillian, *Smoking Typewriters*, 5-6.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 74.

McMillian thinks the underground press “served as agents of mass recruitment” for the youth movements of the era.⁵⁰ He sees these newspapers as being the only real source of countercultural, alternative and liberal ideas and trends because it was frowned upon everywhere else. He sees that the underground press was the “main public forum for discussion about the meaning and direction of the youth revolt.”⁵¹ McMillian thinks the UPS and LNS helped expand their influence even further by allowing these papers to become easily interconnected through these two organizations.⁵² McMillian states in his introduction that the UPS and LNS became the New Left’s “primary means of internal communication. Absent such newspapers and organizations, the New Left could not have circulated its news, ideas, trends, opinions, and strategies without having them ‘strained through a mainstream filter.’”⁵³

Another author who has written on American underground press is Rodger Streitmatter, his book, *Voices of Revolution: Dissident Press in America*, covers the underground press from the formation of the United States all the way to the underground press of the 1960s and 1970s. Part four of his book explains how the underground press helped the different social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. He argues, “during the turbulent 1960s, multiple genres of the dissident press helped spread a social revolution unprecedented both in force and in scope – fueling opposition to the Vietnam War as well

⁵⁰ Ibid., 80.

⁵¹ Ibid., 80.

⁵² Ibid., 80.

⁵³ Ibid., 6.

as supporting the counterculture, black power, gay and lesbian rights, and women's liberation."⁵⁴

Other scholarly works about the Sixties often mention the underground press briefly or include articles as primary sources from time to time. The book, *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s and '70s*, edited by Peter Graunstein and Michael Doyle, offers a chapter by Beth Bailey about the underground press. Bailey's chapter, "Sex as a Weapon: Underground Comix and the Paradox of Liberation" offers a short analysis of the underground press and its relationship with liberating women while simultaneously exploiting women.⁵⁵ The book does offer great information on the Counterculture Movement as a whole. Robert Cottrell included a chapter in his book, *Sex, Drugs, and Rock 'N' Roll: The Rise of America's 1960s Counterculture*, about the underground press. It does not offer much analysis about the press but includes a lot of interesting articles and historical context.⁵⁶ Both of these books are great for understanding the era in general and do give readers some understanding of the underground press, but they do not focus on it.⁵⁷

This thesis aligns itself with the work of John McMillian. It is in full agreement with his work and argument. McMillian's book takes a macro look at the underground press and its impact on the sociopolitical movements of the Sixties. He gives more of a

⁵⁴ Rodger Streitmatter, *Voices of Revolution: The Dissident Press in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), x.

⁵⁵ Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle, *Imagine Nation: the American Counterculture of the 1960s and '70s* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

⁵⁶ Robert Cottrell, *Sex, Drugs, and Rock 'N' Roll: The Rise of America's 1960s Counterculture* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015).

⁵⁷ Other excellent books to consult for more information on the Sixties are Todd Gitlin's, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*; Michael Kazin's, *American Dreamers: How the Left Changed a Nation*; Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin's, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s*; Stewart Burns, *Social Movements of the 1960s*; David Farber's, *The Age of Great Dreams: America in the 1960s*.

general overview of what the underground press was and what it did in many ways. This thesis takes a more micro view of the underground press and its relationship with three sociopolitical movements in particular, these being, the Red Power Movement, Women's Liberation Movement and the Gay Liberation Movement. My study looks more in depth at how the underground press influenced and helped these sociopolitical movements, something that is lacking from the existing scholarship. The underground press impacted more than just the three sociopolitical movements covered in this thesis. Hopefully more scholarship will come about that also details the underground press and its relationship with other sociopolitical movements of the Sixties. By looking at the underground press in this way, it showcases the significance of the underground press on American society. The Sixties had a serious impact on American society and politics and should be treated in this way by the American public and historical scholars. Understanding the Sixties could help Americans understand the present sociopolitical climate they are in, especially considering they are still arguing about the same issues that were first brought into the light during this time period by these people writing these underground newspapers.

Laurence Leamer said, "...the underground press has had to create a revolutionary medium that interweaves personal life, journalism and activism."⁵⁸ This a great way of describing these newspapers. Unlike the media of the establishment, they showed emotion in their articles and called for action from their readers. They took it upon themselves to help people and a cause that they were not always a part of. Had these newspapers not explained to its readers how people were suffering and being ignored, they may have had a harder time gaining support for their movements and the mainstream

⁵⁸ Leamer, *The Paper Revolutionaries*, 14.

media may have never seen the necessity to be more empathetic. Because the underground press popularized activism, mainstream media followed in their footsteps because it was popular and would therefore increase profits.

The underground press took as its mission the task of introducing and explaining the plights of minority rights movements to the youth of America. In doing so, the underground press showed readers a view of the United States rarely seen in the mainstream press—a view of social inequality from the side of the oppressed. They unapologetically put a view of inequality right in the readers faces. And yet, like many groups and people throughout history, the press sometimes stumbled in its mission, deploying stereotypes and misinformation in its efforts to cover the civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s. In this sense, understanding the successes and setbacks of the underground press in the 1960s and 1970s is a necessary part of a broader historical conversation about how the media both reveals and perpetuates social injustices. The underground press was not perfect, but this should not take away from its importance.

CHAPTER II

“The Victory for the Indians is a Victory for Us All”: The Underground Press and the Red Power Movement

The 1960s and 1970s underground press aided in awareness of Indian activists' fight against discrimination and for sovereignty, their own rights guaranteed by treaties previously signed with the federal government. The underground press was a major distribution network not just for youths and hippies participating in the counterculture but was also a major distribution network for spreading awareness for problems facing oppressed groups in the United States, including Native Americans. These papers, no matter their agenda, were read by millions of people across the United States coming from so many diverse backgrounds, but specifically, middle class white youths were reading these papers. These papers spread ideas and organized or advertised for events and protests for the Red Power Movement. The underground press spread awareness of Native Americans issues to non-Native American readers and directly asked them for help, whether that be monetary, political, or physical help. Without the underground press, the Red Power Movement would not have been able to gain as much support as it did from those outside of the movement and outside of the Native American community.

This chapter explores how the underground press treated Native American issues and the Red Power Movement within their newspapers. The chapter is organized by two pivotal moments for the Red Power Movement. These events are the occupations of Alcatraz and Wounded Knee. These two events gained a lot of media attention from both underground and mainstream sources. This is where coverage in the underground press is the heaviest. Native Americans had faced many hardships as a result of the previous centuries of wars, removals, genocides, boarding schools, forced eradication of their cultures, allotment, urban relocation and a lack of funding or care on most reservations across the country. Native Americans experienced high rates of poverty and oppression and this was something many Americans had seemed to overlook.¹ As a result of all of this, Native Americans began to speak up about this in the 1960s and eventually got the American public to listen. The underground press was one of their biggest allies in their fight for better conditions and rights.

Historians so far, have not discussed in great detail that the underground press was influential in helping the Red Power Movement. Some have mentioned it, but have not explore it in depth. Historians have, however, discussed how the Counterculture Movement and/or the New Left either benefitted or damaged Native Americans. The topic of Native Americans, Red Power, and the counterculture is not a new field of historiography, but it is a small one. Philip J. Deloria's *Playing Indian* (1998) discusses America's long history of stealing Native American culture when it beneficial. His final chapter discusses the counterculture and how hippies appropriated Native American

¹ Paul Chaat Smith and Robert Allen Warrior, *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee* (New York: The New Press, 1996), 39-47.

culture. Deloria sees this as entirely negative for Native Americans. Young, usually white, Americans “played Indian” as a way of breaking away from the America they grew up with but no longer identified with without considering how that effected Native Americans.² Deloria perhaps failed to see how there were moments within the Sixties when Native Americans found allies in the people who appropriated their culture.

Sherry L. Smith’s book, *Hippies, Indians and the Fight for Red Power* (2012) argues against Deloria’s claim in that she sees those participating in the counterculture as helping raise awareness towards Native American rights and as allies to the Red Power Movement. She does not de-emphasize the roles of actual Native American peoples in this but wants to shed light on others who helped them. For most of the history of the United States, Americans saw Native Americans as a problem, or obstacle to progress. By the mid-twentieth century, that attitude began to change. Native Americans were disappearing, and many Americans began to see this as a problem.³ Smith argues,

Historians of the sixties social movements have slighted Native American activism. And students of Native American history have not paid sufficient attention to the crucial interplay between Indians, on the one hand, and Anglo-dominated counterculture types, left-leaning political organizations, progressive religious groups....civil rights advocates, Mexican American activists and black nationalists, on the other.⁴

Smith also goes on to point out how the underground press was one “means by which these various groups and movements learned about one another and spread the word to

² Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 161.

³ Sherry L. Smith, *Hippies Indians and the Fight for Red Power* (New York: Oxford, 2012), 5-6.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

national and even international audiences.”⁵ Smith does go into great depth on the underground press and its relationship with the underground press, however.

Underground newspapers were interested in the Red Power Movement and frequently reported on it.⁶ Many papers covered these stories, but the *Berkeley Barb* did much more so than others. The reason for a lot of concern on Red Power and Native Americans in the *Berkeley Barb* could be contributed to the high population of Native Americans in the Bay Area. The reason for the high population of Native Americans in the Bay Area was because of the Urban Relocation Program available for many Native Americans in the 1950s to get them to move to large cities, urbanize and assimilate to American culture. Many of the Native Americans who took part in the Urban Relocation Program moved to San Francisco and the surrounding Bay Area towns and smaller cities.⁷ As a result of urbanization policies and previous policies that were of total detriment to Indian communities, Native Americans became inspired to fight back, demand their rights, sovereignty and justice for the wrongs against them by the federal government. Berkeley, California, was in the middle of a lot of this. This is why in this chapter the *Berkeley Barb* will be used more prevalently than the other newspapers.

Before the Occupation of Alcatraz, media attention on Native American issues was small, but activism for and by Native Americans was increasing in the mid-1960s. The underground press seemed to catch on to the Red Power Movement before it captured mainstream media attention with Alcatraz. One early example of this coverage

⁵ Ibid., 8.

⁶ There were many Native underground press papers but did not reach as large of an audience outside of the Native American community at the time.

⁷ Smith and Warrior, *Like a Hurricane*, 6.

before the Occupation of Alcatraz was in 1967 by *EVO*. In an article titled “American Indian Aid,” the author lays out a few important statistics: “His average life span is 43 years. His average schooling is five years. His average family income is \$1500. Forty-five percent of all Indians are unemployed.”⁸ This article was potentially read by thousands of people. Prior to reading this article, many readers, who were likely white middle class college students, probably had no idea of the kinds of conditions many Native Americans faced at that time.

Another early example of the press giving time to Native American issues was an *EVO* reporter wrote an article about the Indian Resources Development Act of 1967. First the author starts with talking about how this could be another ploy by the federal government to assimilate the “savages” and steal more land from them. Then he goes on to say, “Keep in mind, however, that the American Indians are no minorities of the United States, but sovereign nations surrounded by Americans.”⁹ Sovereignty was something Indians had never lost sight of. They pushed to exercise it through allotment, urbanization, assimilation, and termination over the previous hundred years. This newspaper would have expressed to thousands on the East Coast that these tribal nations should still be considered sovereign nations. This is quite a significant stance for a newspaper to take at the time since it was so negative towards the federal government in relation to Indian policy.

Above this article they also included this intriguing picture, featured on the following page. This picture showcases the kind of artistic style *EVO* often had and

⁸ “American Indian Aid,” *EVO* 2, no. 16, (July 1967), 20.

⁹ Bob Rudnick, “Indian Affairs: If You Can’t Beat ‘Em, Buy ‘Em,” *EVO* 2, no. 17, (Aug. 1967), 8.

definitely would have drawn more attention to the article directly below it. This artwork being included in this paper shows that the writers at *EVO* were thinking about Native Americans and their collective struggle because they were willing to devote precious space to a trippy looking picture of Native American boy. This image gives the reader a face to look at. So, as they think about how the federal government had stolen millions of acres of land from Native Americans, they would also have to look a little boy, who is directly affected by this, right in the face.



Figure 1: Photograph by The Group Image from *East Village Other* (New York), August 1967.

A few months before the Alcatraz Occupation the *Berkeley Barb* ran an article about how Native Americans were underrepresented in American history. The way they were represented in before the 1960s was often inaccurate or they were just ignored.¹⁰ In June 1969, an article briefly discusses Native American history. The article discusses how American schools do not teach actual Native American history, "...the Indian

has suffered through the most massive land rip-off in history, religious and cultural

¹⁰ Abe Peck, *Uncovering the Sixties: The Life and Times of the Underground Press* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 4.

persecution, economic starvation, and genocide...”¹¹ This sort of sentiment about Native American history was beginning to spread across America and is visible within articles pertaining to anything about Native Americans in alternative press papers. This is the start of people trying to flip the narrative of history and/or, begin telling more of the truth. For a lot of readers of the paper, this could have very well been the first time they had ever heard of what happened to the Indians as a genocide being committed by the federal government and settlers.

The 1960s saw an increase in Indian activism in the United States. There were several protests and occupations before the 1969 Occupation of Alcatraz, but these did not receive the media attention that other events would later. In the Pacific Northwest in the mid-1960s, there were fish-ins (protests for fishing rights of Native Americans in the area) that received a decent amount of media attention, but only when people like Jane Fonda and Marlon Brando showed up to help.¹² The underground press did cover these fish-ins some as well. Native Americans did occupy Alcatraz Island previously in 1964, but this did not last long and did not get much coverage. They claimed they had jurisdiction to take the island because of the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty between the U.S. and Sioux tribe which stated they had a right to surplus or abandoned federal land.¹³ This would also be used during the 1969 occupation as well as a reason for taking the island.

¹¹ “a Shoshone First,” *Berkeley Barb* 8, no. 24, (June 1969), 2.

¹² Smith and Warrior, *Like a Hurricane*, 46.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 10.

ALCATRAZ OCCUPATION, NOVEMBER 1969 – JUNE 1971

In November of 1969, the Indians of All Tribes landed on Alcatraz Island and began their occupation to raise awareness for Native American issues and to eventually create different institutions for Native Americans on the island. These would be a Center for Native American Studies, an American Indian Spiritual Center, Indian Center of Ecology, and a Great Indian Training School. Conditions on the island were harsh, but around 100 people lived there for many months, and it was described as a “truly wild place” because of the lack of structure and many of the people who were on the island were unpredictable.¹⁴ Even though the occupiers faced many hardships, they persevered and their movement would become a vacuum for media attention, especially from the underground press, who were ready to help the movement.

The Alcatraz Proclamation written by the leaders of the Occupation of Alcatraz in 1969, encapsulates the general attitude Native Americans held about their history in relation to the federal government:

We, the Native Americans, re-claim the land known as Alcatraz Island in the name of all American Indians by right of discovery. We wish to be fair and honorable in our dealings with the Caucasian inhabitants of this land, and hereby offer the following treaty: We will purchase said Alcatraz Island for 24 dollars in glass beads and red cloth, a precedent set by the white man's purchase of a similar island about 300 years ago. We know that \$24 in trade goods for these sixteen acres is more than was paid when Manhattan Island was sold, but we know that land values have risen over the years. Our offer of \$1.24 per acre is greater than the 47 cents per acre the white men are now paying the California Indians for their land. We will give to the inhabitants of this land a portion of that land for their own, to be held in trust by the American Indian Government for as long as the sun shall rise and the rivers go down to the sea -- to be administered by the Bureau of

¹⁴ Ibid., 29-30.

Caucasian Affairs (BCA). We will further guide the inhabitants in the proper way of living. We will offer them our religion, our education, our life-ways, in order to help them achieve our level of civilization and thus raise them and all their white brothers up from their savage and unhappy state. We offer this treaty in good faith and wish to be fair and honorable in our dealings with all white men.

We feel that this so-called Alcatraz Island is more than suitable as an Indian Reservation, as determined by the white man's own standards. By this we mean that this place resembles most Indian reservations, in that:

It is isolated from modern facilities, and without adequate means of transportation.

It has no fresh running water.

The sanitation facilities are inadequate.

There are no oil or mineral rights.

There is no industry and so unemployment is very great.

There are no health care facilities.

The soil is rocky and non-productive and the land does not support game.

There are no educational facilities.

The population has always been held as prisoners and kept dependent upon others.¹⁵

The Proclamation seems to be a satirical nod to how little Native Americans were given for their land when Euro-Americans took it for little compensation over the last few centuries. The *Great Speckled Bird* printed this proclamation in an issue from December 1969. Accompanying this proclamation, they explained, briefly, that the Indians of All Tribes had occupied the island and why they felt justified in doing so.¹⁶ The inclusion of the Proclamation in their article not only informed readers on what was going on but also gave a voice to the people occupying the island. By including the proclamation, the *GSB* was trying to give readers a real sense of what was going on all the way on the other side

¹⁵ Ibid., 29.

¹⁶ Larry Bensky, "Red Power on Alcatraz," *Great Speckled Bird* 2, no. 39, (Dec., 1969), 14.

of the country. This article gave positive coverage and would have informed readers all the way in Atlanta, Georgia of the justifications of this occupation. This could have garnered more sympathy in that area for the budding Red Power Movement.

In November of 1969, when the Indians of All Tribes had occupied Alcatraz Island, the *Berkeley Barb* did not shy away from coverage in support of the occupation either. *Berkeley Barb* had very frequent coverage of the Alcatraz Occupation because of their proximity. At least once a month, throughout the entire occupation, the *Barb* published an article about the Alcatraz Occupation and posted at least one “need” ad a month, if not more, for supplies needed on the island and where to take the supplies or find other ways of helping the occupation. In an issue from the last week of December in 1969, the *Barb* posted an article about the first Radio Free Alcatraz broadcast and told listeners how to tune in for the broadcast.¹⁷ John Trudell, a Sioux man who became a popular Native American activist, was the host of the show and they got one hour a day for five days a week on a local Berkeley radio station. They discussed Alcatraz and other topics relating to Native Americans.¹⁸ The *Barb*’s coverage of the radio show could have led more people to listening in to it.

In their next issue, the *Barb* discussed the plans that had been established for Alcatraz by the Indians of All Tribes, such as the university, cultural center, and an art studio. They also briefly mention Vine Deloria and his book, *Custer Died for Your Sins*, which had just recently come out.¹⁹ Deloria’s book displays conditions for Native Americans in multiple aspects of society, and throughout history, in a humorous, often

¹⁷ “Indianland Calling,” *Berkeley Barb* 9, no. 25, (December 1969), 9.

¹⁸ Smith and Warrior, *Like a Hurricane*, 71.

¹⁹ Joe Gaughan, “Indian Plans Reach Beyond Island Center,” *Berkeley Barb* 9, no. 26, (January 1970), 4.

satirical way, while shedding light on just how unjust the treatment of Native Americans by the government and society was. The book was quite popular and became a legacy of the Red Power Movement. Their recommendation of this book to their largely, white middle class college student audience could have worked and got many to read the book and become more sympathetic of the Red Power Movement.

In a December 1969 issue, shortly after the Occupation of Alcatraz started, *EVO* writers printed an article discussing Alcatraz, and, at the end, asked readers to send food and supplies to help the occupiers. It also implored readers to write to the mayor of San Francisco and their representatives in Washington D.C. to “let them know your feelings about returning Alcatraz to the first Americans.”²⁰ Even on the other side of the country, alternative press and those reading these papers were interested enough about what was going on with Native Americans to help Native Americans win their fight against the federal government. Not only were they spreading awareness, but also encouraging readers to pressure their legislative leaders into supporting Native Americans. The underground press did encourage this on multiple occasions for all kinds of different issues. This may have led to many people calling their legislators about the Occupation. It could have persuaded some politicians to at least consider a positive viewpoint of the Occupation.

The writers for *The Rag* in Austin, Texas were also supportive of the Occupation. An article titled “They Did It!” was featured in a December 1969 issue. The article describes that the Occupiers of Alcatraz Island continued their occupation for “justice and

²⁰ Eugene Schoenfeld, “Alcatraz,” *EVO* 5, no. 3, (Dec. 1969), 8.

self-determination.”²¹ *The Rag*’s viewpoint on the occupation would have been something many white college students with middle class backgrounds (their readership) would not have frequently been exposed to, if at all. This piece in the paper could have given many young students at UT a new perspective on Native Americans. *The Rag* did not report as much on the Alcatraz Occupation but when they did, they were in full support of the occupation and displayed much sympathy for the movement and the occupiers. As the Occupation continued over the next few months, underground publications continued running stories on it, updating their readers and would continue to offer ways for their readers to support the Occupation.

The underground press was not just interested in Alcatraz however, they were interested in other news relating to Native Americans at that time as well. In an issue from March 1970, *EVO* printed an article called “Indians of All Tribes Outline Plans for Ellis Island.” They describe how the Indians of All Tribes were talking with the government to repossess Ellis Island. Then the article briefly discussed Alcatraz, and also the attempted occupation of Fort Lewis and Fort Lawton in the Northwest, a part of the Fish Wars. They discuss how the Bureau of Indian Affairs was ineffective and how it was under jurisdiction of Vice President Agnew and Chairman of the Department of the Interior Hickel. They essentially allude that these two were not really doing their jobs and that the government should just hand over the unused lands so the Indians can build schools and cultural centers for the betterment of society.²² It is likely most readers of *EVO* were not particularly aware of the functioning of the Bureau of Indian Affairs or

²¹ “They Did It,” *The Rag* 4, no. 9, (Dec. 1969): 9.

²² “Indians of All Tribes Outline Plans for Ellis Island,” *EVO* 5, no. 17, (March 1970): 4.

lack thereof. This would give readers key information about why Native Americans were upset in general and why these protests and occupations were necessary for them to gain rights and to be acknowledged.

The *Barb* also showed their lack of confidence in the federal government in April 1970, with an article titled “White Man’s Way to Fool the Public.” In this article the author claims that the government has a plan to ignore the demands of the Indians occupying Alcatraz and a way to turn public opinion against them and then eventually come in and arrest everyone they could.²³ A stereotype of the New Left and Counterculture was a distrust in the government. This could be partly explained by the existence of the underground press which had been regularly informing readers of the injustices of the federal government. Shirley Keith, an occupier of the island, said in a speech in early December of 1969, “We reject the alternatives of the federal Indian policy. We reject the chronic and cyclical poverty of reservations and the relocation transfer of that poverty into Red Ghettos in the cities. We reject these alternatives. This is why there’s no more end of the trail for us. We’re on a new trail. We’re creating our own alternatives!”²⁴ The parallels between what she is saying and these newspapers is there. Neither believe the federal government is successful with their treatment of Native Americans. It is unclear if there were Native Americans working for underground newspapers. As far as I can tell, they mostly were not. Most of the people reporting on Native issues were those who grew up outside of Native American communities but were concerned about Native American issues anyway. These newspapers and their staffs were

²³ Paul Cantor, “White Man’s Way to Fool the Public,” *Berkeley Barb* 10, no. 14, (April 1970), 2.

²⁴ Smith and Warrior, *Like a Hurricane*, 27.

taking it upon themselves to help a movement they had no reason to be directly involved in.

The *Berkeley Barb* devoted an entire page in June 1970 to organizing what was called “The Geronimo Trail.” The author calls on those within the Berkeley community to join in an effort to create a strong supply line to Alcatraz after buildings were burned down on the island, allegedly by some white men who had previously been harassing those on the island. This author, calling readers to action, saying: “The Indians have chosen Alcatraz as the front on which they will wage their war of liberation against the pig capitalism and cultural imperialism of AmeriKa. It is now up to we people on the mainland to show our solidarity with the struggle and keep the front supplied.” Later he goes on to say, “If you support our Indian brothers, join us on the Trail,” and provides information on where to go and what to bring to help.²⁵ Then in the first article from the paper from the following week was titled in very large font, “Great White Father Fucks Around.” The author displays that the government was beginning to panic and started coming down harder on occupiers on the island because of the Black Panther Party and Chicano’s support of the occupation. They were barring boats from going to the island and even shut off electricity and water going out to the island. At the end of the article, information was provided on how to support the occupation.²⁶ These two articles provided information on how to help the Red Power Movement. It gives readers opportunities to help in multiple ways and gives them an alternative viewpoint of Native Americans and their relationship with the government and capitalism. These articles in

²⁵ Red Ram, “Hit the Geronimo Trail!” *Berkeley Barb* 10, no. 22, (June 1970), 8.

²⁶ Phil Pukas, “Great White Father Fucks Around,” *Berkeley Barb* 10, no. 23, (June 1970), 2.

the *Barb* would have given their mostly white readers something different to think about and given them multiple opportunities to help out had they felt so inclined.

In early July of 1970 the *Barb* published information about a rally in San Francisco, sponsored by the Indians of All Tribes. Many different significant people related to the Red Power Movement were expected to speak, including John Trudell. Representatives from tribes on the East Coast were coming and even a man from the Nisqually was expected to speak on the fish-ins happening in the Pacific Northwest.²⁷ The following issue, after the rally had taken place, devoted half of the front page to covering the rally and continued the story later on with positive reviews and highlights of the rally.²⁸ The *Berkeley Barb* never stopped supporting the occupation or anything else Indians were doing to gain better rights and treatment. The *Barb* could have made a lot of people not only aware of what was going on in the lives of Native Americans, but also helped many understand why this was happening and why something had to be done. The *Barb* had tens of thousands of regular readers at this time, so it is likely that they helped spread a lot of positive awareness for the Red Power Movement among its mostly young, white readers. They also gave these people many opportunities to help the movement in multiple different ways. Other underground publications like *EVO*, *GSB*, and *The Rag* were doing this as well. It is not unreasonable to expect that many of their readers did help and could be part of the reason why overtime more people were becoming involved in the Red Power Movement or at least sympathetic to it.

²⁷ Paul Cantor, "Tribal Rally," *Berkeley Barb* 10, no. 25, (July 1970), 6, 12.

²⁸ Paul Cantor, "Tribal Vibes Tell World Rock Isn't Island," *Berkeley Barb* 10, no. 27, (July 1970), 1, 10.

One example of *The Rag* taking an active stance like the *Barb* and *EVO* by asking readers for support can be seen in one issue about the march on Mt. Rushmore and following occupation that began in August of 1970. The article describes some history of the area and how the U.S. government did not follow a treaty they signed with the Sioux in the area previously, so the Indians were repossessing their land.²⁹ On the bottom of the same page, a small piece read, “Saturday, Sept. 12, is the 350th anniversary of the invasion of the Pilgrims. The town of Plymouth is re-enacting the event. But the Tribe is getting together – come dressed as Indians, stop the colonizers from landing. Be there by noon, know your lawyer before you go. Sponsored by Yippies – if you have a Yippie flag, bring it.”³⁰ While there are some possible controversies with them dressing as Indians because of cultural appropriation and inaccurate or offensive stereotypes, it seems these people were generally trying to help Native Americans. Phil Deloria was not entirely incorrect in his book, *Playing Indian*, that there was cultural appropriation going on. However, these people were genuinely trying to help, they just made a few mistakes that they were most likely not at all aware they were even making.

Mainstream press coverage of Alcatraz was common as well. *The New York Times* reported on the occupation about ten days after it happened. They were respectful of the occupation, they did not show any bias for or against the occupation, and clearly outlined some of the reasons for the occupation and the demands they had. The article was informative and seemed to have an overall positive view of the occupation.³¹ Even

²⁹ *The Rag* 4, no. 42, (Sept. 1970), 12.

³⁰ *The Rag* 4, no. 42, (Sept. 1970), 12.

³¹ “Indians Rally Behind the Seizure of Alcatraz Island,” *New York Times* (1923-Current File), (Nov. 1969), 80.

though one of the largest mainstream press publications in the United States had a relatively positive view of the occupation, it is important to note how they differ from the alternative publications. Alternative publications were often advertising how to help with the movement, in many different ways, and they more frequently covered the occupation as well.

The New York Times put this article on page 80 of that issue. While alternative publications were much smaller, they still put more importance on this occupation and placed it much earlier on in their papers. *The New York Times* did continue to update readers on the occupation, but only every few months. When Alcatraz ended, they printed a short article about the government's repossession of the island. The article was objective and plainly explained how it was retaken.³² A couple of months after the occupation, they did publish an article about literature that focused on Native Americans and the article also pointed out how uninformed Americans were about Native Americans of the past and present.³³ This was on the second page of that issue, which shows that mainstream press was beginning to follow in the footsteps of the underground press.

The *San Francisco Chronicle*, a mainstream newspaper in San Francisco had originally been in support of the movement, but as months went on, their support waned. After the death of Richard Oakes' (leader of the Occupation) daughter after she fell off of a structure on the island, the *Chronicle* ran a two-part series that basically ruined the reputation of the Occupation. The article called out a lot of the issues that were happening on the island, but the scathing review in the *Chronicle* of what had happened to the

³² "Indians Expelled from Alcatraz: 15 Are Seized on Island by Force of 35 Marshals," *New York Times* (1923-Current File), (June 1971), 14.

³³ Dee Brown, No title, *New York Times* (1923-Current File), (Aug, 1971), 2.

Occupation had dulled support in the Bay Area from the mainstream population.³⁴ This scathing review did not help Occupiers, and it most likely damaged the Red Power Movement's overall reputation in the minds of the paper's many readers in San Francisco. Sherry Smith also described in her book, *Hippies, Indians, and the Fight for Red Power*, that Bay Area mainstream press was supportive of Indians of All Tribes removal from the island.³⁵ Smith characterizes the underground press in the Bay Area, including the *Berkeley Barb*, as allies to the Alcatraz Occupation.³⁶

In the first issue after the Alcatraz Occupation ended in early June of 1971, one writer at the *Barb* blames themselves and, well, everyone else for letting the occupiers down. They criticize Americans for not doing enough to help them keep their occupation going. The author sees this as a "turning point" for the American conscious. They see what the Red Power Movement is doing as a piece of what all the revolutionaries of the United States are trying to accomplish, which is to build a better society for everyone to live in.³⁷ This occupation was close to home for those writing for the *Barb* and those reading it. After the Alcatraz occupation ended, the *Barb* and other underground newspapers did not stop coverage of the Red Power Movement, but there was not as much coverage as there was during the Occupation.

After negotiations with the government failed, electricity and water was cut off to the island. In June 1970, a fire destroyed many of the buildings on the island and there were not many people left on the island after that. The Occupation still went on for

³⁴ Smith and Warrior, *Like a Hurricane*, 65-66.

³⁵ Smith, *Hippies, Indians, and the Fight for Red Power*, 108.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 78-82.

³⁷ Black Bart, "Who Let the Indians Down?" *Berkeley Barb* 12, no. 23, (June 1971), 3.

another year though. The last few remaining occupiers were removed by government officials in June 1971 and the Occupation was over.³⁸ When Alcatraz ended, the occupiers were living in a different world than the one in which they began. Now, national media attention was paid to Native Americans. Native Americans issues had finally entered the conscious of American society as a result of this movement. Teenagers and college students across America had been reading article after article in the underground press about the falsities taught in American history about Native Americans, the conditions on reservations, judicial and legislative issues facing Native Americans, and the hypocrisy of the federal government when it came to Native Americans and their treaties. The underground press formed because the mainstream media was so restrictive. The underground press responded to this strictness by openly discussing Native American issues and asking their readers to help the cause. While publications on Native Americans would gradually decrease in these papers, they were still present. Then in 1973, the whole world would begin talking about Native Americans again, and at the center of it would be the underground press.

WOUNDED KNEE OCCUATION, FEBRUARY 1973 – MAY 1973

In early 1973, many living on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota had become upset over the corruption of the reservation's leader, Richard Wilson. He was accused of voter suppression, corruption, and abuse of power by many. He also militarized the reservation and had his own group of goons going around and beating up his opponents and intimidating those who lived there. Conditions on the reservation were

³⁸ Smith and Warrior, *Like a Hurricane*, 90, 110.

also less than ideal, like at most reservations across the United States, because of a lack of care by the federal government. Eventually those on the reservation got sick of their mistreatment by the United States and by their own leader. Many had become involved with the American Indian Movement (AIM). Residents asked them to help because all the other “legal” channels they had to go through to ask for help did nothing.³⁹ AIM of course came to their aid and a group of around 100 Oglala Sioux and AIM members occupied the town of Wounded Knee, the site where the 1890 Wounded Knee Massacre had taken place. Occupying the town was symbolic of previous injustices against Native Americans, but also showed the public how bad things had to be for these people to take up arms and occupy a small town to get anyone to listen to them.⁴⁰ They took several hostages, many of them elderly white residents of the town. Because of this and the fact they were armed, it seemed to capture national attention much more so than Alcatraz did.

Wounded Knee was widely publicized across America in 1973, since it was seen as more radical and more violent than Alcatraz, it got a lot of coverage. The underground press published more on Wounded Knee and offered all kinds of articles in support of the occupation and Red Power. They also began illustrating a lot of artwork with Native Americans or themes and symbols to go along with their artwork. This could be because the newspaper itself had begun to include more artwork, or that the full artistic style of the Sixties had taken a hold on the underground press and was now being more utilized. Those who occupied Wounded Knee released this statement or list of demands:

³⁹ Ibid., 194-200.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 200-203.

Wounded Knee Demands:

Senator William Fulbright to convene Senate Foreign Relations Committee immediately for hearings on treaties made with American Indian Nations and ratified by the Congress of the U.S.

Senator Edward Kennedy to convene Senate Sub-Committee on Administrative Practices and Procedures for immediate, full-scale investigations and exposure of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Department of the Interior from the Agency, reservations offices, to the area offices, to the central office in Washington D.C.

Senator James Abourezk to convene the Senate Sub-Committee on Indian Affairs for complete investigation of all Sioux Reservations in South Dakota.⁴¹

Not surprisingly, these demands were not met, but on the bright side, the underground press tried to help organize aid to them, raise awareness, yet again, for what they were upset about. This time they were specifically concerned with the corruption going on at the Pine Ridge Reservation, and on the mistreatment of Native Americans throughout history, and at that time, by the government. The underground press offered a lot of coverage on Wounded Knee and did not shy away from asking readers for support.

⁴¹ Alvin Josephy Jr., Joane Nagel, Troy Johnson, *Red Power: The American Indians' Fight for Freedom* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 49.

The Rag had quite a bit to say on Wounded Knee. The first thing they published on Wounded Knee just a few days after the start of the occupation were a few paragraphs and an illustration of Russell Means (AIM activist), located on the right. The text in the top left discusses the formation of an American Indian Movement (AIM) chapter in Austin and

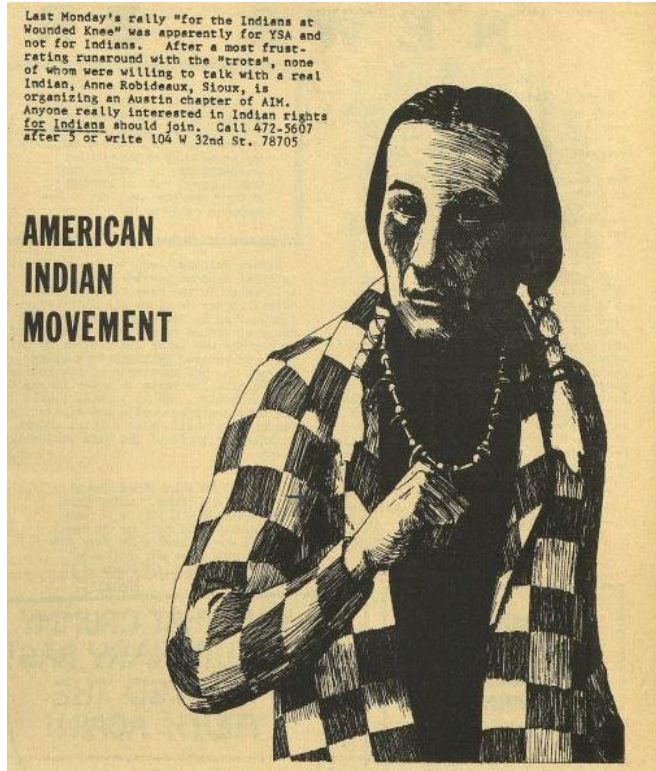


Figure 2: Photograph from *The Rag* (Austin, Texas), March 1973.

provides information on how to join AIM.⁴² This illustration of Means would have drawn eyes to the article and gives readers the impression that something about this is important. This image gives readers the impression that Native Americans were not “savages” or stuck in the past. The man in the illustration is wearing modern clothing and it might have forced readers to consider their own prejudices. This may have made some readers think that Native Americans were not just historical figures wearing head dresses, but they were also modern people just like them.

⁴² “American Indian Movement,” *The Rag* 7, no. 18, (March 1973), 9.

In March 1973, *Berkeley Barb*, put at the very top of their front page, above their own name (which was not very common) “WHAT ABOUT WOUNDED KNEE?” and had an article that interviewed an Alcatraz activist, Adam Nordwall. He said,

The thing going on at Wounded Knee is Indians seeking equal protection under the law and not getting it...the overriding question is the obligation of the government to observe the treaties that were enacted as laws of the land. It has come to light that the government is the most flagrant violator of its own laws.⁴³

The author also goes on to say that Nordwall was also concerned with the lack of justice Native Americans were receiving in the courts as well. Then they describe how at Wounded Knee the authorities had sealed off the area and telephone communications had been shut off. At the end of the article, they talk about how there are meetings that weekend for establishing a way to support the Indians occupying Wounded Knee and give the number to call for information.⁴⁴ The *Barb*'s presents itself as on the side of the AIM and the occupiers of Wounded Knee with this. The article gives readers the impression that the reason they had to occupy is for the same reason as last time, no matter what legal channels Native Americans went through, their concerns were never actually dealt with. The only way to get anyone's attention seemed to be occupations. On the following page they devoted an entire page to the illustration on the following page.

⁴³ Sam Silver, “Those Wonderful People Who Brought You Sand Creek, Wounded Knee and Alcatraz, Say They Will Negotiate,” *Berkeley Barb* 17, no. 9, (March 1973), 6.

⁴⁴ Sam Silver, “Those Wonderful People Who Brought You Sand Creek, Wounded Knee and Alcatraz, Say They Will Negotiate,” *Berkeley Barb* 17, no. 9, (March 1973), 6.



Figure 3: Photograph from *Berkeley Barb* (Berkeley, California), March 1973.

reading that issue of the paper would not have been able to miss it. The message it displays is clear. It shows the underground press was trying its best to show support for the Red Power Movement and the Occupation of Wounded Knee. It makes the readers confront the injustices they are starting to realize their own government committed against Native Americans since its formation.

The *Barb* featured a page devoted to discussion of Wounded Knee in early March. The writer, Sam Silver who wrote a lot of the Wounded Knee stories said, “The U.S. Government in 1924 granted ‘full’ citizenship to all Native Americans in the hope that the Native Americans would concede it is illegal for a nation to make a treaty with its

⁴⁵ Ins, “FBI Attacks Defense Lawyers,” *Great Speckled Bird* 6, no. 32, (Aug., 1973), 10.

This picture was intended as a poster for people to keep. This picture was also featured in an issue of *Great Speckled Bird* that accompanied an article about legal issues going on with FBI agents at Wounded Knee.⁴⁵ This image shows sympathy towards Native Americans and displays them as victims of oppression. This took up the entire page and anyone

own citizens.”⁴⁶ This sort of sentiment would likely have never been expressed in mainstream media at that time. Most people reading this newspaper were not Native Americans and therefore would have never really had to consider what kind of implications granting citizenship would have had on Native American sovereignty and rights.

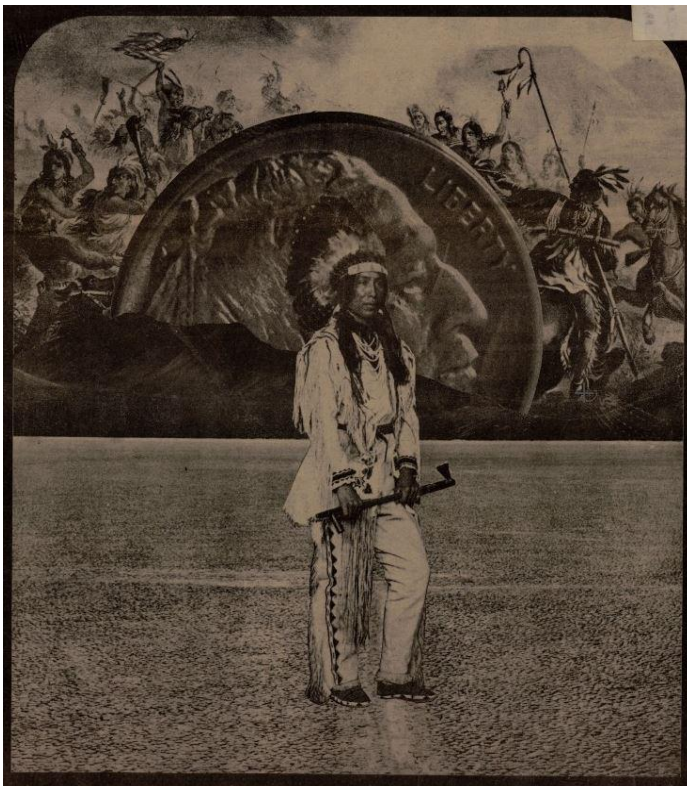


Figure 4: Photograph by David Singer from *Berkeley Barb* (Berkeley, California), March 1973.

massacre. The fact they put this image on the front page also shows the reader that Native Americans are important, and their issues are something that should be front page news.

The first two pages of this issue are different articles about Wounded Knee or other Native American issues, such as Richard Oakes’s (a Mohawk activist, leader of

In the following issue of *Berkeley Barb*, the front page consisted of this image on the left. This picture took up half of the front page and underneath it said, “FROM INSIDE WOUNDED KNEE.”

The background of the image shows Indians fighting in some battle, most likely a depiction of the Wounded Knee Massacre.

This might have made readers

feel some compassion about the

⁴⁶ Sam Silver, “Indian Prayers for Sioux in Siege,” *Berkeley Barb* 17, no. 10 (March 1973), 2.

Alcatraz Occupation) murder. In one of these articles the author says, “Despite the wide coverage of the event at Wounded Knee the media has failed to convey to the American public the relevant facts regarding the illegal state war by federal agencies against Indians...”⁴⁷ This is the reason many turned to these types of papers, because mainstream media was not covering things that mattered to a lot of people. The underground press provided thousands with information they really were not getting anywhere else, at least not to this extent.

The *Great Speckled Bird* showed its support of the Wounded Knee Occupation with a full-page article in one of its April 1973 issues. At the bottom of the page was a large picture of one of the occupiers holding a gun with a scope. This article was on the sixth page of that issue, readers would have definitely noticed it was there. The author listed out the Wounded Knee demands while also explaining why they wanted these demands in the first place. They were also very sympathetic to the movement. The first line of the article states: “The governments clear refusal to deal with the real political issues behind the takeover at Wounded Knee has become increasingly and not surprisingly evident over the past three weeks.”⁴⁸ The article explains the events leading up to the occupation and then what so far had been going with the occupation. They ended the article with the line, “The victory for the Indians is a victory for us all.”⁴⁹ This statement is significant because it shows the authors were deliberately conveying to the readers why they should be concerned about Native American issues and Red Power.

⁴⁷ “Lawyer’s Peace Plea,” *Berkeley Barb* 17, no. 12, (March 1973), 3.

⁴⁸ No author, “Direct from Wounded Knee,” *Great Speckled Bird* 6, no. 12, (April 1973), 6.

⁴⁹ “Direct from Wounded Knee,” *Great Speckled Bird* 6, no. 12, (April 1973), 19.

They want the reader to understand that being an ally to Native Americans would benefit everyone, not just Native Americans.

The next issue of *Great Speckled Bird* contained an article on the sixth page with information about a recent AIM picket that took place in Atlanta that week before. They also stated there were plans to open an AIM chapter there in Atlanta. The end of the article then provided information about how to donate money for supplies and legal defense for those at Wounded Knee. They also gave a phone number to call if someone wanted to get more involved in helping AIM.⁵⁰ Another example of the underground press organizing for the Red Power Movement. Their encouragement to send supplies and money for legal defense could have worked and this could have greatly assisted the occupiers. Also, by providing the information to join AIM, which would have definitely never been in mainstream media sources, they possibly led many people to the organization.

In April of 1973, *The Rag* published another article on some Wounded Knee updates, and at the end, provided readers with where to send food and supplies. Then they urged people to call their representative in Congress and the Justice Department to let them know they want them to follow the original treaties they signed with the Oglala Sioux.⁵¹ In the following issues of *The Rag*, an article discusses just what exactly has occurred so far and then talks about how law enforcement in Las Vegas and Chicago were apparently arresting those who they thought were attempting to deliver food and supplies to the occupiers at Wounded Knee. At the end of the article, the author says what

⁵⁰ Atlanta AIM Solidarity Committee, "AIM Comes to Atlanta," *Great Speckled Bird* 6, no. 13, (April 1973), 6.

⁵¹ "The Independent Oglala Nation at Wounded Knee," *The Rag* 7, no. 20, (April 1973), 10.

exact piece of legislation the FBI agents were using to arrest these people and then says, “On its face this action seems an outrageous extension of the spirit of the original legislation, which is of questionable constitutionally itself.”⁵²

Native American issues and Wounded Knee were featured in an April issue from 1973, *Berkeley Barb*. At the bottom of one page was a small list of statistics on Indians that the writer found “plain sad.”⁵³ As to where they got the information is unknown, but it probably shocked its readers:

Indian male life expectancy is 44.5 years

For every white child that is born and lives, an Indian child will die.

Suicide is 15 times the national average.

Malnutrition on reservations is common.

Unemployment is 90%.

School dropout rate is 75%.

The average annual income is \$1,000 (on some reservations it is \$500).

95% of housing is substandard.⁵⁴

The other articles surrounding it discuss Wounded Knee and a few other related things. Most readers of this paper would have had a very small understanding of real issues facing Native Americans. This kind of information was something people at this time likely did not have a lot of exposure to. Mainstream media was not keen to cover political, social, cultural and economic problems pertaining to minority groups, and when they did, it usually did not criticize the United States for it. These kinds of statistics could have led to many young white college kids becoming more active in the Red Power

⁵² “Independent Oglala Nation: Clumsy FBI busts of AIM Aiders,” *The Rag* 7, no. 21, (April 1973), 7.

⁵³ “Statistics on Indians Plain Sad,” *Berkeley Barb* 17, no. 13, (April 1973), 2.

⁵⁴ “Statistics on Indians Plain Sad,” *Berkeley Barb* 17, no. 13, (April 1973), 2.

Movement or at least becoming sympathetic towards it because of how shocking these statistics were. This would have shown readers that something needed to change.

The mainstream press did heavily cover Wounded Knee but did not always accurately portray what was going on or why the occupiers felt the need to occupy the small community. The *New York Times* published many articles detailing the occupation. Articles that initially covered the occupation were objective and did explain briefly why the occupation was happening, but do not go into too much detail about AIM's reasons for the occupation.⁵⁵ These were put at the beginning of the paper, but most likely because they were armed and took hostages, not because they were trying to raise awareness for the issues. In a later issue published by the *New York Times* about Wounded Knee, they end the article with,

There are many divisions among the Indians here between the full blooded ones and half-breeds, and between those who own varying amounts of land. And some of the political lines appear to be drawn by family relationships as much as by ideology.⁵⁶

The way the article ends deemphasizes the issues AIM was trying to get people in the United States and the government to listen to and do something about. The language used here is demeaning towards the activists. Even though Wounded Knee was a bit messy, this takes away from the main point, which was still very clear to the underground press.

After Wounded Knee, mainstream and underground media coverage of Native American issues died down quite a bit. But in 1974, the *New York Times*

⁵⁵ These are two articles released right after the occupation: "Armed Indians Seize Wounded Knee, Hold Hostages: DAKOTA INDIANS HOLD 10 HOSTAGES Pledge by Abourezk," *New York Times* (1923-Current File), (March 1973), 1. And, John Kifner, "Indians at Wounded Knee Free 11 Held for 2 Days," *New York Times* (1923-Current File), (March 1973), 1.

⁵⁶ John Kifner, "Federal Force Rings Wounded Knee; FBI Car Hit: Federal Force Rings Wounded Knee a Grimmer View," *New York Times* (1923-Current File), (March 1973), 1.

published a full-page article about a Native American man's view on Thanksgiving. While this article was only on the 33rd page, it still gave many Native Americans a voice they did not often get. It explained how Thanksgiving was not a happy holiday for many Native Americans. It explained the falsities of Thanksgiving and how early colonists were terrible to the Native Americans they lived around. It explained how Thanksgiving reminded Native Americans of death and disease and despair. It went on to explain how many were tired of hearing false narratives, tired of being ignored when they came out and said they were being treated unfairly, tired of being ignored by the federal government and tired of not being allowed to practice their own traditions and cultures.⁵⁷

This article in the *New York Times* was something the underground had already been doing for at least the last five years. The underground press gave Native Americans a bigger voice and tried to help as much as they could even though they clearly did not have to. Sometimes they exploited stereotypes or said the wrong thing, but overall the underground press was sympathetic and helpful. The underground publications covered in this text were all campus associated newspapers in predominantly white communities. Many of the people on the staff for these papers were young white people with middle-class backgrounds. The main reader base for the underground press were also young, white, middle class college students. The underground press gave these people a viewpoint they had

⁵⁷ James Lee West, "A Native American Reflects on Thanksgiving," *New York Times* (1923-Current File), (Nov, 1974), 33.

probably not seen before and even encouraged them to get out and do something about it.

Wounded Knee ended with two deaths, a couple of injuries, and one missing person. It ended after several gunfights between troops stationed outside the town and the occupiers.⁵⁸ Eventually, talks between occupiers and the government did lead to something. The justice department promised they would investigate Richard Wilson and Pine Ridge Reservation. While not everything they wanted happened and many of them including their leader, Russel Means, were arrested, AIM still saw this as a win. Few had died and some of the demands were met.⁵⁹ Also, AIM and Native American issues had received heavy national coverage. The underground press had made themselves a major ally for Red Power and may have led to millions of young white middle class Americans becoming aware of the oppression facing Native Americans. These newspapers could have helped harbor sympathy in many readers minds and surely helped Red Power gain many outside allies.

In the years that the Red Power Movement reached its height, the underground press offered a powerful and consistent voice of support. The impact of the underground press on spreading awareness for the Red Power Movement is evident. The underground press blazed the trail for representing Native Americans and their issues in a way that more closely aligned with how they wanted to be represented. While they occasionally used stereotypes or felt they did not do

⁵⁸ Smith and Warrior, *Like a Hurricane*, 233-235.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 241.

enough to help, the underground press had a positive impact on the Red Power Movement overall. Hundreds of thousands of young Americans would have read about the many issues facing Native Americans at the time, which is something they were not heavily exposed to. Many allies were gained for Native Americans through the underground press and these papers even helped them gain money and supplies, or in some cases, more people to protest with them.

CHAPTER III

“Why the Women Are Revolting”: The Underground Press and the Women’s Liberation Movement

Another civil rights movement that was heavily covered in underground press publications was the Women’s Liberation Movement. Radical feminist views were not often present in mainstream media (or even moderate feminist views initially) and if they were they were often subject to intense scrutiny or were not given enough attention.¹ The underground press raised awareness for Women’s Liberation and often gave them a means of organizing and recruiting. They also ran many articles that detailed issues facing women and how men and women could go about fixing these problems. While women were aware of their own variety of problems, men may not have been so aware that they had any struggles at all. By reading these newspapers it is likely many young men were being exposed to how women felt about how they were treated and what men could do to help fix it at the personal and national levels. Some women may have also felt lost and alone, by reading these papers they would have discovered there were millions of

¹ Susan J. Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing up Female with the Mass Media* (New York: Times Books, 1994), 7-9.

women feeling and thinking similar things as they were. These papers provided women with support groups as well. There are many ads and articles featured in the underground press detailing how women can get involved in activist groups, support groups, and find safe and easy access to birth control and abortions. The underground press gave women an outlet to express themselves, spread awareness, gain support, and organize their own movement.

The Women's Liberation Movement in the 1960s and 1970s swept the nation and the world. Women for centuries had of course been fighting for better rights and treatment and had many wins over the centuries. The 1960s however saw a resurgence of women pushing for freedom and equality. This era of feminism is different from the last because of the conditions women had been facing since the end of WWII. The 1950s was a time period where women felt especially trapped by society because of their gender. They had gained the right to vote and many even attended college and were working during the war. Many women had begun to feel some freedom from their forced dependency on men. But when all the soldiers returned home from war, these women were laid off and forced to go back to raising children and keeping a home. The sterile culture of the 1950s did not make this "imprisonment" any easier. Women were expected to be perfect wives, housekeepers and mothers even though many felt they had more to offer the world or at least just wanted the option.¹

Betty Friedan's book, *The Feminine Mystique*, would be the spark that ignited the flame for the Women's Liberation Movement of the Sixties and would drastically change

¹ Kathleen C. Berkeley, *The Women's Liberation Movement in America* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999), 22-25.

American society forever. The book spoke of the “problem that has no name” and many women began to feel they were not alone in feeling hopeless about how their lives turned out.² After little legislative support through the beginning of the 1960s, women began to take matters into their own hands and started their own civil rights movement. Probably the most complex one of them all from that time period. The National Organization for Women (NOW) was formed in 1966. Their initial agenda was to accumulate “evidence of discrimination and propose solutions in education, employment, the family, the media, politics and the law, and religion.”³

The feminist movement branched off many times over the next few years for either being radical enough, being too radical, and internal disagreements on topics like abortion, sex, gender, and sexuality. They also disagreed on the roots and solutions to their oppression. Was male supremacy to blame or was capitalism to blame?⁴ Even though Women’s Liberation branched off in many directions, activism increased dramatically by the end of the 1960s and the world began to see the change happening. Women began demanding things get better and the underground press helped in this fight. Historians have not covered in depth how the underground press helped (or hindered) Women’s Liberation, but some have discussed it briefly in their books.

John McMillian’s book, *Smoking Typewriters*, does not discuss women and the underground press in depth. However, he does say, “...much of the energy that fueled the women’s liberation movement arose *in response* to the patriarchy and sexism they

² Ibid., 26-27.

³ Ibid., 30-31.

⁴ Ibid., 44.

encountered in the New Left – and, especially, in its underground newspapers.”⁵

McMillian is not incorrect, but that is not the whole story. In many instances, these newspapers featured sexist editors, staff members, and articles (sometimes, but also rarely) and often included pictures that objectified women. However, many alternative newspapers frequently published articles with information on women’s rights issues and advertised for feminist rallies and demonstrations. Most of the writers writing about women’s topics were women themselves. While these women were not treated with as much dignity and respect as they had hoped within the underground press and the New Left, they were still given more freedom and respect than they had received in other more mainstream circles and organizations.

In the book, *Imagine Nation*, the eleventh chapter, “Sex as a Weapon: Underground Comix and the Paradox of Liberation” by Beth Bailey, describes the paradox of women’s liberation within the counterculture and New Left and the underground press. Bailey describes women’s demands within the underground press to staff more women, and to run more articles about women, by women and for women. By the late 1960s, most newspapers had conceded to this and were publishing more articles pertaining to women’s issues and liberation that were written by women. Many women were also pushing for a decrease in the sexual exploitation of women within the newspapers, which was a controversial issue within these underground press communities. Some saw that the inclusion of a lot of female nudity within the artwork of the newspapers as liberation. It was seen as a rejection of societal norms and a liberation

⁵ John Campbell McMillian, *Smoking Typewriters: The Sixties Underground Press and the Rise of Alternative Media in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 12.

of their bodies and sexual freedoms. Others saw that in many cases, these newspapers and the counterculture in general were taking this too far and using images of naked women to sell more newspapers and gain attention.⁶ This did work though. These sex ads kept the papers printing. The money they made from the ad revenue helped and the sex ads also drew in an audience looking for these sex ads, which could have led to them actually reading the rest of the paper anyway.⁷

Frustrations with men in the New Left and their underground press led many women to form their own underground newspapers that were exclusively about female topics. Ruth Rosen's book, *The World Split Open*, argued that, "Men in the New Left also helped spread word of women's liberation, if only through repeated derision and ridicule."⁸ From women's frustration with the underground press's tendency to favor men, women were inspired to do it themselves without men.⁹ Like Rosen, Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo's book, *Daughters of Aquarius: Women of the Sixties Counterculture*, analyzes women and their role, or lack thereof, in the counterculture of the Sixties. She does not heavily cover the underground press but does say that it was published by and for a white male middle-class audience. Santangelo thinks that the underground press treated women only as sexual objects and that their often-naked graphics of women

⁶ Beth Bailey, "Sex as a Weapon: Underground Comix and the Paradox of Liberation," in *Imagine Nation: the American Counterculture of the 1960s and '70*, ed. Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle. (New York: Routledge, 2002), 317-19.

⁷ Laurence Leamer, *The Paper Revolutionaries: The Rise of the Underground Press* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), 55.

⁸ Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America* (New York: Penguin Group, 2000), 131.

⁹ There were a lot of underground newspapers that were exclusively by and for women and Women's Liberation at this time. These were not as popular and mostly had female readers, which is why they were not used in this thesis.

“reinforced the notion that women provided sex on demand.”¹⁰ While there is some truth to this claim that the underground press aided in the over-sexualization of women, that is not the whole story. Like anything, the underground press is not so black and white. Many women worked on these papers and published hundreds of articles that aided in awareness of women’s issues and these newspapers often provided actual opportunities to help change things.

Both Rosen and Santangelo’s books did not cover much about the underground press. It was mentioned mostly in passing, even the female dominated portion of the press. While their concerns with underground press are valid, they painted the underground press as being entirely harmful to Women’s Liberation. In reality, the underground press was often one of their largest supporters at times. The sexual exploitation of women by these newspapers and the New Left was actually addressed within these newspapers from time to time. In an issue from November 1968, the *Barb* put it in a large article titled, “Sexual Freedom Faction Fends for Women.” The first line of the article starts with “Sick male chauvinism does indeed infect the Left... but the visibility of this male supremacy attitude foretells future health, for prejudice has been flushed into the open by the recent revival of the feminist movement.”¹¹ Women were highly aware of their treatment by many men in the New Left and other aspects of their life and frequently complained about it in the underground press.

With widespread availability of the birth control pill, and abortions becoming legalized across the country, women in the United States finally had control over their

¹⁰ Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo, *Daughters of Aquarius: Women of the Sixties Counterculture* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009), 24.

¹¹ “Sexual Freedom Faction Fends for Women,” *Berkeley Barb* 7, no. 19, (Nov. 1968), 10.

sexual lives and the freedom of choice.¹² Essentially, they were given the same sexual freedoms as men, but obviously still having to deal with more social stigmas about their sexual freedoms than their male counterparts. This paradox of being sexually liberated, while simultaneously being objectified for it, was something that did happen in the underground press sometimes. Sex became much more casual, but for many women it seems they felt not for the benefit of them, but the benefit of the men who “supported” their sexual liberation. One article from June 1967 in the *Berkeley Barb* was titled “Women Passive?” and it discussed how a man was going to give a talk titled “The Sexual Passivity of Women” and he goes on to say, “I invite all women to come and defy this base charge.”¹³ While this is obvious evidence of men’s patronization of Women’s Liberation, this chapter will provide many examples of how the underground press did try to make up for these not so progressive moments.

The *Great Speckled Bird* dealt with their own issues of oppressing women in one of their 1970 issues. They ran a half-page article where they explained how the women who worked there began demanding to be treated with the same respect as men and be given proper time off for maternity leave and childcare. They also faced issues with giving women a full voice in the paper. Since female staff members began expressing their concerns, the paper had been trying to be more understanding, respectful and inclusive. They were working towards eradicating sexism in the workplace and giving women their due.¹⁴ *GSB* was legitimately trying to work to be better and make changes to

¹² Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 142-43.

¹³ “Women Passive?” *Berkeley Barb* 4, no. 25, (June 1967), 2.

¹⁴ No author, “Rap,” *Great Speckled Bird* 3, no. 45, (Nov., 1970), 14.

be more inclusive towards women. They recognized they had work to do, apologized, and started giving into these demands by the women on their staff. They even went as far as to inform their own readers of their own shortcomings and apologize for them.

This chapter will show how even though the underground press did have its own flaws when it came to representation of women, they were trying to do better, and they were trying to help women. They gave women opportunities to spread awareness, organize their movements and help educate the uneducated on the problems women faced on a daily basis. These newspapers even made readers aware of how they needed to change and do better to help women feel respected and included. They were not perfect, but overall, they helped more than they harmed Women's Liberation. The underground press was one of women's biggest allies and were a primary means of organization for many of their marches, protests, and meetings. Had the underground press not existed, Women's Liberation would most likely have struggled to gain as much support from the New Left and the Counterculture and subsequently, the general population. The underground press was the New Left's primary means of news consumption and means of organization. Without it, they would have lost some vital information about women's issues.

This chapter is organized into two parts, the first being about general coverage of Women's Liberation and the second about abortion. It is organized in this way because the two largest topics these newspapers discussed were general issues relating to women like oppression by the mainstream media, government, and society, and then abortion. Their coverage of women's issues was consistent throughout publication so there were no

significant gaps in coverage like with the other movements. The underground press was a consistent supporter of Women's Liberation, and this chapter will show this.

General Coverage of Women's Rights

During the 1960s, the unequal treatment and oppression of women was present in every aspect of American society. Writers for these newspapers frequently discussed and complained about the challenges they themselves and others faced on a daily basis. The articles women wrote were often featured on the first few pages of the newspaper and given a lot of page space. "Where Most Men Fail?" was the title of an article in a *Berkeley Barb* issue from January 1969. The author discusses how some of the things men say are sexist and how even when they support women, they still say insensitive jokes and do not actually get why women are upset with the way they are treated within society. The author also points to how even men within New Left groups or civil rights groups will still talk like a misogynist.¹⁵ This may have made many male readers rethink how they might be part of the problem. This article could have made some men realize how their actions might actually affect women negatively. Since the New Left was consistently reading underground press publications, especially the *Barb*, it is possible many men within the New Left began to reconsider how they were leaving women out or making them feel uncomfortable.

This article also gives statistics on women in the workforce. It used the statistics to showcase how even though women made up 35% of the workforce, they were not in positions of authority or had jobs past being a secretary. The article then points out a 40%

¹⁵ Ellen S. Mendicino, "Where Most Men Fail?" *Berkeley Barb* 8, no. 1, (Jan. 1969), 10.

wage gap between men and women who held the same position.¹⁶ Providing these statistics gave readers a concrete example of how women were being oppressed not just socially, but economically as well. Similarly, a year later in February of 1970, an article in *EVO* featured information on how women are not treated equally in the workforce and are often victims of sexual assault and harassment in the workplace.¹⁷ The issue of sexual assault in the workplace for women was just coming into the light for many Americans at the time. It is important to consider that many of the people reading these articles in both these papers were young college students, soon to enter the workforce themselves. Making them more aware of how women are mistreated in the workforce could have prevented many of them from repeating these same mistakes and possibly advocating for better treatment of women in their own workplaces.

The workforce was not the only thing the underground press was concerned about when it came to women's issues. They also concerned themselves with many other issues facing women at the time. The *Great Speckled Bird* had a special issue in February 1969 entirely devoted to women's issues. The front page was a simplistic drawing of a naked woman, the second page contained information on how women were lacking in fields like history, economics, sociology and most other classes. They were also left out of the curriculum as well, according to the article.¹⁸ The next section of the page provided information on different activist groups forming chapters in different states and on different campuses and how to get in contact with those groups.¹⁹ This issue of the *GSB*

¹⁶ Ibid., 10.

¹⁷ Lil Picard, "Women in Art," *EVO* 5, no. 12, (February 1970), 12.

¹⁸ Lyn Wells, No Title, *Great Speckled Bird* 1, no. 36, (Feb., 1969), 2.

¹⁹ Lyn Wells, "A Movement for Us," *Great Speckled Bird* 1, no. 36, (Feb., 1969), 2.

went on to discuss a plethora of issues pertaining to women like abortion rights, sexual exploitation in the media, employment rights, representation in sports, religion and academia. This issue provided solutions to problems, books to read, and activist groups to get in touch with. One article even described how the institution of marriage was a form of oppressing women and explained how. It also brought to light how tens of thousands of women were laid off when WWII soldiers returned so why should women be trying to stop the war in Vietnam since it would just lead to them not being able to get any jobs.²⁰ This was a little bleak, but it is easy to understand why women would feel this way after reading this issue of *GSB*.

This issue of the *GSB* was full of valuable information pertaining to women's rights. They devoted basically the whole issue to women's issues and were not shy about stating how harmful some of this stuff could be to women. These articles were also being written by women. These articles could have helped thousands of men in the Deep South reading this newspaper understand why women needed a liberation movement in the first place. It gave women's perspectives on things and did not delegate it to the back of the paper or to a special women's section. This shows that the underground press saw women's issues as issues that everyone should know about and start trying to fix.

The Rag also did its part to raise awareness for women. It had a small section of a page dedicated to an ad for the group W.I.T.C.H. in October of 1968. The ad consisted of this paragraph:

We are the ancient Earthmother behind it all: peacegroups, international student' conspiracy the Revolution—all are our children. We concocted Chicago from Vat for Peace, numerous

²⁰ Charlotte Hill, "Pop Masculinity," *Great Speckled Bird* 1, no. 36, (Feb., 1969), 7.

Democratic toads, and a pressure-cooked American flag. We who have an ancient stake in freed (Burn Baby Burn) are responsible for the Sacred Marijuana Ritual, which now has subverted people all over America into flying. Lurleen Wallace, ex-witch who let herself be used by racist George we snuffed. Congressman Poole, who dared to smoke Salem cigarettes, we snuffed. The head of this committee, who just lost his primary election, we snuffed. Lyndon Johnson could not run again after our leader First W.I.T.C.H. Ladybird cast her spell in his large ear. Women are the oldest oppressed people on earth, but this, at last, is the Season of the W.I.T.C.H. Satan himself sits on this Committee, and we demand the right to report to him, and kiss his ass as all America does. O Asarte! O Hecate! O Isis! O Bonnie Parker! Our spirits inside the Committee room don't need these bodies to put a hex on both their houses of Congress. Dean men sit on this Committee. We have not finished. We have just begun. We are the Power!²¹

This ad fit right in with the general vibe of *The Rag*, which could be quite off the wall.

This ad does not really describe the organization but leaves readers to figure out for themselves what the group is about. Obviously the writers of the ad want the readers to consider that women do hold some power, even if they are just the wives of those in power. It gives women agency and even though they say they are the “oldest oppressed group” they still show that women are very powerful despite that. The inclusion of this in *The Rag* shows that the paper shows they supported the group to some degree. The inclusion of this ad could have inspired many women to join the group or find other ways to get involved.

W.I.T.C.H. was seen as more radical but was actually not very radical when compared to other women's groups from the time. They began as a branch off from the New York Radical Women group. W.I.T.C.H. was an acronym for various different things, depending on who was asked, but generally it stood for, Women's International

²¹ “W.I.T.C.H.” *The Rag* 3, no. 2, (Oct. 1968), 13.

Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell. They disagreed with NYRW about what the root cause of women's oppression was and what they should target to fix. W.I.T.C.H. thought that capitalism was the real oppressor of women and that men themselves were not entirely the culprits. They also wanted to focus on allying with other movement groups of the time because they wanted everyone to escape to oppression and revolutionize society for the better.²²

The group was very theatrical in its approach to activism. On Halloween in 1968, the group, dressed in witch costumes, went to Wall Street and hexed the New York Stock Exchange for its oppression of women. *EVO* covered this demonstration in an issue the following July where they also pointed out that the stock market actually did fall the next day.²³ W.I.T.C.H. did protest numerous other things like a bridal convention and even assisted NOW in a protest outside of a hospital about abortions. They wanted to spread awareness for women often not having access to safe abortions because of restrictive laws in place at the time.²⁴ *EVO* covered this protest in an article titled, "The Women's Crusade," published in a May 1969 issue. The article also provided information about New York's restrictive abortion laws and how those laws harm women.²⁵ *EVO* and other underground newspapers were not afraid to publish articles in support of groups like W.I.T.C.H. and allowed their female writers to freely publish articles about women's rights.

²² Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle, *Imagine Nation: the American Counterculture of the 1960s and '70s* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 54.

²³ Robin Morgan, "Women's Liberation," *EVO* 4, no. 34, (July 1969), 20.

²⁴ Braunstein and Doyle, *Imagine Nation*, 54.

²⁵ Claudia Dreifus, "The Women's Crusade," *EVO* 4, no. 24, 1969, 6.

The underground press even allowed its female writers to call out its own readers. In May 1969, on the fifth page of the issue, the *Berkeley Barb* featured a large article titled, “Why the Women Are Revolting.” In this article, the writer, a woman publishing anonymously, begins discussing an “obviously male chauvinist” who was featured in the letter to the editor section in the previous issue. This man wrote about women’s liberation in a negative light.²⁶ The writer proceeds to discuss women’s liberation in response to what he said. This woman’s discussion was eloquently phrased. She said:

Women’s liberation isn’t fighting for equality, or equal rights under capitalism, or any of that shit. We don’t want to take over men’s jobs in the corporation, we don’t want to become bomber pilots and napalm the liberation forces of Vietnam, and we aren’t out to emasculate men by forcing them to sit at home in frilly aprons and masturbate. Women are fighting for their reality as human beings, for their psychic survival.²⁷

The article is large, centered in the middle of the page. The writer truly conveys just how upset women at that time were with how they were being treated. She goes on to say later that this is not about hating men. Women’s liberation is about improving women’s lives so everyone can be happy, not just the men.²⁸ Thousands of men could have read this article and have begun thinking more on what women’s liberation was truly about. This could have helped ease some of the paranoia some men felt about Women’s Liberation. Even women who may have been hesitant to support women’s push towards equal rights may have read this and realized they more closely aligned with the movement than they had previously thought.

²⁶ Gumbo, “Why the Women Are Revolting,” *Berkeley Barb* 8, no. 20, (May 1969), 5.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

The underground press was not afraid to tell the blatant truth about women's issues. "As women we are oppressed in all aspects of our lives – economically, socially, physically, and psychologically," was one of the first sentences in an article from *The Rag* in May of 1969.²⁹ The entire page was devoted to an explanation of the lack of rights for women in American society. They discuss women's inability at that time to get a satisfying career, how they were often treated as sexual objects rather than people, and how they were heavily targeted by advertising companies to spend more money on beauty products to look better for men. The article encourages women to come to meetings of a group where they discuss their frustrations and find ways to overcome them. They say educating women and men on how to make society a better place for women is key and they encouraged women to come to their next meeting.³⁰

Advertising exploitation of women was addressed in a later issue from *The Rag*. In July, a full-page article was dedicated to how women's psyches are affected by the mistreatment they receive from society. Advertisers manipulate women into buying products by putting them down. Women are expected to be perfect, they are excluded from certain career fields, they do not get paid what a man gets paid for the same job, and they do not have control over their own bodies.³¹ The double standards and high expectations put on women was probably something many men were not exposed to often. This article could have painted a picture for men reading the paper of how women were being oppressed in even the most subtle ways.

²⁹ "Women," *The Rag* 3, no. 14, (May 1969), 14.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

³¹ Judy, "women's psyches..." *The Rag* 3, no. 24, (July 1969), 6.

In another issue of *The Rag*, two pages were dedicated to a discussion on how women felt in their domestic roles: trapped. The article also discussed some simple solutions for these women to try to improve their lives and get their husbands to begin respecting them.³² *EVO* ran a full-page article in July of 1969 that explained many different aspects about women's issues and women's liberation. First, it explained how other countries were also beginning to change socially and legislatively for the benefit of women. Then the article went on to describe how the movements of the Sixties so far had been sexist even though they claimed to be progressive and forward thinking. They also said that anthropologically speaking, polarized gender roles were generally present only in aggressive societies. Later the article explains how women are the oldest oppressed group on the planet even though they make up half of the population.³³

The article went on to describe a protest at the Miss America pageant and explained how pageants were detrimental to women because they exploit women's bodies and make millions off of doing so. They also provide information on where to send money to help with a "Legal Defense Fund for those busted in Atlantic City," for protesting the Miss America pageant.³⁴ Here the paper gives readers an opportunity to literally help with the Women's Liberation Movement either monetarily or contacting them to find other ways to help. They provide readers with information on many different topics within the Women's Liberation. Their discussion of the Miss America pageant protest also provides readers with a different perspective on something that may have

³² Bea, "Role-Away," *The Rag* 3, no. 21, (July 1969), 6-7.

³³ Robin Morgan, "Women's Liberation," *EVO* 4, no. 34, (July 1969), 8.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

seemed normal to them. Pageants were and still are fairly common and its likely many never consider the kind of harm it has on women on a small and large scale.

The *Barb*, like *EVO*, offered readers opportunities to get involved in women's Liberation. One issue of the *Barb* included an article called, "Mothers Protest." In the article the author provides information on an upcoming march in San Francisco to protest legislators pausing welfare, which the article explains briefly, mostly hurts women and children.³⁵ These newspapers were touching on a variety of issues that women were facing at the time. Young college students, who typically come from wealthier backgrounds, were probably not staying up at night in their dorms pondering how a pause on welfare would hurt women and their children or considering a strike to raise awareness for legal, financial and social inequality of women. *The Rag* also offered its support to the Women's Liberation with a small paragraph with information for a "Women's National Strike." The strike was intended "to protest legal, financial and social inequality of American women."³⁶ The paragraph included information on who to contact to help organize the strike that was expected to take place at the end of the following month.³⁷ These newspapers were directly asking readers to help with these protests and demonstrations and they readily provided information about why these events were even needed in the first place.

In January of 1970, women protested outside a building on campus at the University of California. They were protesting that the karate class on campus did not allow women. This article points out gender discrimination on campus and mentions that

³⁵ "Mothers Protest," *Berkeley Barb* 8, no. 19, (May 1969), 12.

³⁶ "Women's National Strike Proposed," *The Rag* 4, no. 32, (July 1970), 9.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

these women were willing to fight to end this if they had to. The *Barb* released a condensed list of demands these women made for UC:

An end to male chauvinist attitudes in courses; courses on women in history, suffrage, the family; removal of housing and dormitory regulations regarding women employees; no more discrimination in hiring practices; and UC implementation of AFSME's proposal for a child care center. They also ask that 50 percent of the faculty and graduate student rolls be female, and ask amnesty for all those involved in the demonstrations.³⁸

The article also gave information on where the next demonstration would be and when.³⁹

EVO featured several articles about women not being allowed in certain bars and restaurants simply because they were women as well. In a June 1970 issue, an article featured several different restaurants and bars that would not serve unaccompanied women because they feared they were prostitutes. The author points out that this is not to help women or protect them or to protect these businesses from losing liquor licenses or whatever else. It was really about keeping men elevated above women.⁴⁰

The *Barb* and *EVO*'s inclusion of these articles shows they supported women's rights and were trying to show readers that there really was a problem. Many male readers may have never considered how women were barred from doing things they could so easily do. This may have made some New Left men, who were characteristically in support of the Civil Rights Movement, realize that there were parallels between this and racial segregation. How could the New Left promote racial equality but not gender equality? These articles may have made some people grapple with this concept in their minds.

³⁸ "Womens Lib Not Just Seekin' Few Karate Chops," *Berkeley Barb* 10, no. 2, (Jan. 1970), 8.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁴⁰ Claudia Dreyfus, "Women's Lib Goes Stomping at the Savoy," *EVO* 5, no. 27, (June 1970), 9.

Political action was often something the underground press advocated for, but they also helped advertise for political candidates that aligned with their political views. In March of 1970, the *Barb* printed an article about a female attorney who was running for Congress whose primary concern was to fight for women's rights. One of her goals highlighted in the article was to work towards establishing "low-cost full -day childcare centers for working mothers."⁴¹ It also mentions that she is in support of the equal rights amendment to the Constitution. The article actually goes on to briefly explain what that amendment entails and how it had been introduced in every session of Congress since 1923.⁴² Here, the *Barb* positively supported a pro-women's liberation candidate in California. Two months later, the *Barb* published another article describing some issues Feminists in the area were concerned about, like childcare, welfare, abortions and just receiving respect in general. The end of the article gives several numbers to call to get in contact with different groups to help with the movement and help women in need of assistance.⁴³ This could have inspired readers to get out and vote for a candidate that would actually try to alleviate some of the pressures that women faced. It also helped women organize their own civil rights groups and gave them an outlet to discuss their issues.

Voting is something many women realized was privilege not so easily granted in this country, something many white men did not understand. One issue of *The Rag* included a piece where a woman discussed a line from the campus sponsored student newspaper at Georgia State University that said, "the trouble is that women are just

⁴¹ "Lib Woman Seeks Office," *Berkeley Barb* 10, no. 12, (March 1970), 8.

⁴² "Lib Woman Seeks Office," *Berkeley Barb* 10, no. 12, (March 1970), 8.

⁴³ Sandra, "Mad Mothers," *Berkeley Barb* 10, no. 20, (May 1970), 9.

spoiled.”⁴⁴ The author was especially angry and this particular paragraph explains perfectly why women would be upset with that line:

Right! Some of us won the vote. For us, everything is just fine and exactly the way it’s been for thousands of years. If you’re one of us, you know. Try to get a job. Ours are the first to be wiped out. Then you might be lucky enough to one. The Labor Department says that the 1960 median income for a white working woman was \$1,438 and for non-white sisters \$660. If you’ve got kids, trying to figure out where to take them when you work or want to get out of the house. If you don’t intend to raise a family now, try killing yourself with the pill, or get butchered by an abortionist – while men who own the drug companies make millions. Try living on a welfare diet of less than fourteen cents a day. We’ve been spoiled alright.⁴⁵

The article continues to explain how women are being oppressed, why they are upset, and then what they can do about it. The article ends with information to get in contact with the Women’s Liberation Movement.⁴⁶ This article points out that simply having the right to vote did not alleviate the struggles of women. There was still a lot of change that needed to happen before women could be relatively equal to men within society, politics and the economy. This is also an example of how the mainstream press, in this case a campus newspaper, failed women. *The Rag* criticized this newspaper for saying this and this would have shown readers why the alternative press was the better advocate for women.

One issue of the *Barb* included a large and distracting illustration at the top of the twelfth page that accompanied a movie review which went on to touch on some women’s rights issues in relation to the film. The film was, *The Secret Life of the American Wife*, which the author describes as a “low budget attempt to present S*E*X from a women’s

⁴⁴ “Celebrate a Woman,” *The Rag* 4, no. 17, (March 1970), 12.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

point of view.”⁴⁷ The author explains that it was the most accurate portrayal she had ever seen and that it had all the men in the theater constantly making remarks to each other about it. She claimed she struggled to hear the movie from all the chatter coming from the men who were shocked to see what they were seeing. She thought the men felt threatened by the female protagonist because she would talk directly to the camera about her sex life.⁴⁸ Below is the illustration that accompanied the article, which seems to be a representation of the how the author saw the men felt about the movie.



Figure 5: Photograph from *Berkeley Barb* (Berkeley, California), May 1969.

This illustration does technically sexualize the woman, but it says much more than that. It shows the man as being subordinate in this case. It seems it’s a metaphor for what many men thought the Women’s Liberation Movement was trying to achieve. The author and illustrator seem to be making fun of men’s paranoia.

Another issue the underground press did address from time to time was

women’s representation in history. Schools in the United States did not always teach women’s histories, many people were unaware of what they were not being told in

⁴⁷ Ellen Medicino, “Little Men, What Now?” *Berkeley Barb* 8, no. 19, (May 1969), 12.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

schools.⁴⁹ The writers for these underground papers often wrote about women's history in these newspapers. They gave readers past and present examples of discrimination against women in professional and private settings, sexual assault and harassment, and the sexual exploitation of women going on at a societal level.

One example of this is present in an issue from *The Rag* from September 1973. It was a full-page article that covered the history of women being slowly exiled from the medical world, starting back in the fifteenth century. They theorize that witch hunts were men's way of getting women out of control of medicine. Then they discuss how the professional world of medicine is today. They said that well over half of medical workers are women, but over 90% of doctors are men. They state that women are often excluded from medical schools strictly on the basis of being a woman.⁵⁰ Other than this, the underground press was constantly shedding light history's lack of focus on women, even when they played major roles in historical events. They also frequently shed light on historical

Another example of the underground press trying to educate its readers on women's history is in a February 1973 issue of the *Great Speckled Bird*. This issue had two full pages devoted to women's history. The article detailed the work of early feminists like Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. The article detailed the work of their entire lives and what sort of legal victories them and women later accomplished. At the end of the article, they also provided information on four different informational meetings and classes about women's history and rights that were coming

⁴⁹ Abe Peck, *Uncovering the Sixties: The Life and Times of the Underground Press* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 4.

⁵⁰ Susanne, "Witches, Midwives, and Nurses," *The Rag* 7, no. 38, (Sep. 1973), 7.

up that month.⁵¹ A small article from *GSB* from a year before this one was a woman explaining how she had never learned about women's history in all her years of school (she even went to grad school). She finally read her first book on women's history and could not stop her research. She recommended others do the same, but the article focused on reviewing Elizabeth Cady Stanton's book. She gave her review of the book and provided some information about the history contained within the book.⁵² This article was featured at the top of the sixth page of that issue. The fact the *Great Speckled Bird* was giving women two full pages towards the beginning of the paper says they were trying to support women. Providing such a large and noticeable chunk of that issue to women's history was more than what many American textbooks would have been doing.

In a January 1973 issue, the *Barb* dedicated several pages to various women's rights topics. They discuss abortion of course, but also sexual liberation and sexual assault. One of these articles is titled, "RAPE." This article title takes up nearly a quarter of the page. It would be hard to miss it. The author explains that rape has been normalized in American society, and even across the globe, and gives reasons for why this is and why this needs to change.⁵³ It is the first thing the reader would see when they flipped to that page. This article may have helped many teenagers and young adults reading understand why rape culture in the United States is something that is very real and very damaging to women. Many may have not even realized that sexual assault was as big of a problem as it really was.

⁵¹ No author, "Failure Is Impossible!" *Great Speckled Bird* 6, no. 6, (Feb., 1973), 14-15.

⁵² Vicki, "Book Review: Eighty Years and More," *Great Speckled Bird* 5, no. 36, (Sep., 1972), 6.

⁵³ Karen Lindsey, Holly Newman, Fran Taylor, "RAPE," *Berkeley Barb* 17, no. 4, (January 1973), 7.

The Miami Women's Coalition reserved a large space on the third page of the *Barb* in an issue from August 1972. The article describes what they are doing in Miami to raise awareness for women's rights. They also discuss how they were trying to receive better representation for women and one way was within the Republican party.⁵⁴ The fact that a women's group in Miami reserved space in the *Berkeley Barb* shows that this paper was not just being read by Californians. These women in Miami knew that the *Berkeley Barb* in California would be a good place to raise awareness for their cause. This makes it clear the *Barb* was known all over the country and was being utilized for advertising for different women's organizations across the country.

One women's organization the underground press did a lot of advertisement for was NOW. At the end of August 1972, the *Barb* published an article titled, "Women's Day: How Local Groups Will Celebrate." In this large article, the author describes recent activities by NOW, and upcoming events for Women's Day. They point out that a local radio station will broadcast women's programs the whole day, demonstrations to go to and where to get more information about NOW and women's rights issues.⁵⁵ This would have been very helpful for advertising for these events for Women's Day. It is likely that a lot of people reading these papers would have tried to participate in the festivities or get involved in some way. Had the *Barb* not advertised for it, many would have not known it was even happening.

The mainstream media was guilty of perpetuating sexism and restrictive gender roles. While the mainstream would eventually become more inclusive towards women, it

⁵⁴ "Miami Women's Coalition," *Berkeley Barb* 15, no. 4, (August 1972), 3.

⁵⁵ AMW, "Women's Day: How Local Groups Will Celebrate," *Berkeley Barb* 15, no. 8, (August 1972), 11.

would take a lot of scrutiny for that to happen. In a book from 1978 titled, *Hearth and Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media*, Gaye Tuchman says the *New York Times* usually delegated the Women's Liberation topics to the women's page where it would get ignored by everyone except women. She also criticizes a former editor of the women's page for "mocking" participants in Women's Liberation and spending more time focusing on food and fashion rather than the movement.⁵⁶ In August of 1967, the New York chapter for NOW protested outside of the *New York Times* office because of the sex-segregated job section.⁵⁷ Overall, the mainstream press was not all that sympathetic to the women's movement, but even when it was, it still perpetuated sex-segregation, belittled women, held them to strict beauty and life standards and sexualized them.

The underground press did a lot to inform readers of how society and politics in the United States perpetuated the unequal treatment of women in many ways. Through their many articles about sexual harassment and assault, women's history, mistreatment of women in the workforce, unreasonable expectations for women, and sexual exploitation, the underground press shows the readers that conditions for women in American society are not where they should be and women were asking for things to change. The underground press not only helped raise awareness, but also asked its readers to join the conversation and aid in the movements. They provided meeting times, ways to get involved and offered solutions they could implement in their own lives to help women. Another issue the underground press had heavy coverage of was abortion.

⁵⁶ Gaye Tuchman, Arlene Kaplan, James Benet, *Hearth and Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 146.

⁵⁷ Berkeley, *The Women's Liberation Movement in America*, 32.

Coverage of Abortion Rights

Easy access to abortion was something many in the Women's Liberation Movement saw as a fundamental right. Granting access to education on birth control, safe-sex practices and abortion became a major part of the movement. Women wanted control over their own bodies and their lives, and many were tired of men being the ones who made these kinds of decisions for them. The medical profession had been having these kinds of debates for the last couple of decades, but their center of the issue was on the doctors having the right to practice their own safe medical procedures without the state or federal government intervening. But as the feminist movement gained traction they began advocating for change with abortion laws based on women being able to have control over their bodies and lives. Abortions were quite restrictive at the time. Federally speaking, abortion had never been outlawed and it was only outlawed at the state level.⁵⁸ The 1960s would see a wave of women advocating for repeals on abortion laws and one supporter they had in this fight was the underground press.

"SF Women Welcome Info on Abortion," was an article published in the *Barb* from June 1966. This article discussed a woman who had feared getting arrested in San Francisco for passing out pamphlets for information on where women can go get an abortion at that time. The article criticizes California state laws prohibiting abortions. But they point out that this woman was not arrested, even though it was presumed she would be.⁵⁹ In another issue from October 1966, there is an article where the author interviews a woman advocating for abortion reform in California. They discuss a new bill that was

⁵⁸ Ibid.,63-65.

⁵⁹ "SF Women Welcome Info on Abortion," *Berkeley Barb* 2, no. 25, (June 1966), 3.

proposed in the California state legislature and the interviewee complains it does not actually help any women seeking an abortion, even in cases of rape.⁶⁰ This article does not call for readers to take any action, but may have made readers aware of the proposed bill and could have led to some public outcry about the bill.

The Barb provided readers on multiple occasions over the years with phone numbers to safe abortion associations and how to get in contact with people to learn more about abortions. The back pages almost always contained a number for a safe abortion organization. One example of this was when they ran an article that gave details about a class to learn about abortions on the second page of that issue.⁶¹ *The Barb* also warned women that border guards in El Paso were vaginally searching women without anyone else present, many of them had just undergone abortions in Mexico.⁶² *The Barb* offered women valuable information about abortions and were helping possibly thousands of women find safe abortions and avoid traumatizing circumstances. They were also making others aware of the struggle's women had to face when it came to their reproductive health, something men did not have to deal with. Since the abortion topic was taboo, it is likely men knew little to nothing about it and even many women may have also been in the dark about abortions.

A December 1968 issue of the *Barb* included a half-page article about the dos and don'ts of seeking and receiving an abortion. They warn to not just go to anyone who says they can provide them and to be weary of lists of numbers to call for an abortion. They also provide a statistic on abortions in the United States: "Records show that from two to

⁶⁰ Mary Sue Slatkin, "Abortion Laws Seen as Hassle," *Berkeley Barb* 3, no. 15, (Oct. 1966), 3.

⁶¹ "Plan CD to Show Hoax," *Berkeley Barb* 4, no 18, (May 1967), 2.

⁶² "Pigs in the Poke," *Berkeley Barb* 7, no. 14, (Oct., 1968), 14.

three hundred women died in the U.S. last year as a result of botched abortions and thirty of these were in California. Fifty percent of the maternal deaths in this country result from poor abortions. A medically competent abortion is three times as safe as gestation and childbirth.”⁶³ They also advise that women go see a doctor after any abortion and provide a phone number to call for information on abortions and other resources for pregnant women.⁶⁴ This article gave readers a lot of information about a topic that was probably never discussed at the dinner table or in schools at the time. Even women themselves were probably uninformed about abortions and how safe access to them affected women negatively. Another issue of the *Barb* from January 1969 had an article on the second page with information for a workshop for women that would “discuss such problems as: marriage, abortion, working women, raising children under capitalism, and women in education.”⁶⁵ They gave the meeting time and location and phone numbers to call for more information.

At the top of the eighth page of a *Barb* issue from February 1969, was a half-page article titled with the large words, “Abortion: What Money Can Buy.” The article contains an interview from a woman, Patricia Maginnis, running the Society for Human Abortions, she explains how difficult and expensive it is to get a legal abortion in California. Women would have to get approval from two physicians and a medical board, then after that, pay anywhere from \$700 to \$1000. She also says it is actually cheaper to receive an illegal abortion from doctors in Mexico. They frequently updated their list of doctors to get abortions from and checked in with the doctors often and asked women

⁶³ Wray Morehouse, “Pregnant? Need Help?” *Berkeley Barb* 7, no. 23, (Dec., 1968), 14.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁶⁵ “Bay Women to Get It Together,” *Berkeley Barb* 8, no. 3, (Jan., 1969), 2.

who went there for reviews. She claimed her organization had around 100 women a week calling about abortions. The article provided the phone number for the organization and an address as well.⁶⁶ This article would have provided readers with how access to abortion was very discriminatory on the basis of class. This would have helped many readers understand how this would perpetuate a cycle of poverty for poor women, while not really affecting men.

Great Speckled Bird ran a full-page article in an issue from December 1969. The article, accompanied with bohemian style artwork, gave a lot of information about abortions. They gave statistics about safety of legal and illegal abortions, cost of abortions, and how many women get abortions. They also listed out the different procedures doctors use and at what stages they perform them. They then went into states who have more liberal laws on abortions. They also provided at the end the location of a place in Georgia where women could go to get help and receive more information.⁶⁷ Georgia has and still does have a reputation for restrictive abortion policies. This kind of information being provided to women in this area was quite possibly the only place many young women reading these papers could have found this information.

Having access to safe abortions was difficult for many women and finding out where to get one could be difficult. The *Barb* published an article on the second page of a January 1970 issue with information on an abortion handbook women could get that provided information about abortions and places to receive safe ones. The article also points out that tens of thousands of women (especially poor women) are preyed upon

⁶⁶ Ellen Mendicino, "Abortions: What Money Can Buy," *Berkeley Barb* 8, no. 6, (Feb., 1969), 8.

⁶⁷ Aquarius, "Dr. Aquarius: Abortion," *Great Speckled Bird* 2, no. 39, (Dec., 1969), 8.

each year by America's "number 3 underworld racket, the criminal abortion mill."⁶⁸

Giving a number to the information makes it more palpable to the reader. The statistics in this article and the many other featured in this thesis would have shocked most readers.

This article would have shown readers how having legalized and easy, affordable access to abortions would have benefitted women and society as a whole.

Great Speckled Bird also provided these shocking statistics to its readers. A full-page article about abortions in February 1970 issue. The beginning of the article gave statistics like, "Illegal abortions are the greatest single cause of maternal death. One fifth of all women who die in pregnancy die because of illegal abortions. If every woman of child-bearing age took contraceptive precautions, there would still be 250,000 unwanted births."⁶⁹ The inclusion of these shocking statistics could have persuaded many readers that safe access to abortions is a serious issue that not only effect women, but men as well because so many women are dying from unsafe abortions. The author goes on to explain that Georgia legislators on the Hygiene & Sanitation Committee in the Georgia House of Representatives, which was entirely comprised of men, spent five minutes on a bill that would grant safe legal abortions to 2.5 million women in Georgia. They of course denied the bill and rushed home for supper.⁷⁰ This may have made some male readers realize how little legislators cared about an issue that directly effects women. An issue from March of that year also contained information on meeting times and locations for a

⁶⁸ "Abortion Handbook: Read It, Don't Weep," *Berkeley Barb* 9, no. 26, (Jan., 1970), 2.

⁶⁹ Becky Hamilton, "Five Goddam Minutes," *Great Speckled Bird* 3, no. 7, (Feb., 1970), 10.

⁷⁰ Becky Hamilton, "Five Goddam Minutes," *Great Speckled Bird* 3, no. 7, (Feb., 1970), 10.

Women's Liberation Group and the number for an abortion counselling service.⁷¹ So *GSB* not only spread awareness, but also provided women with help.

The birth control pill was another subject the underground press was concerned with. *The Rag* printed an article called "The Pill: Problem or Promise?" in February of 1970. In this article the author discusses how irrational fears of birth control pills are. They give statistics on how pregnancy can lead to cancer or other life-threatening conditions at much higher rates than just taking birth control does. The author explains that not taking birth control pills could be worse than just taking it.⁷² In another article below this one titled, "Male Supremacy," the author talks about how it would be safer for men to have to take an oral contraceptive because their hormones are not as complex as a woman's is. The author also points out that not much research is done on finding safer modes of contraceptives for women because they are women.⁷³ Men would have likely not considered how birth control would effect women or how pharmaceutical companies were likely negligent in their care for women's health. These newspapers provided men and women who may not have known as much about his with valuable information.

One of *EVO*'s May 1970 issues featured a full page of information on women's rights to an abortion and just what that looked like for certain women. They describe a woman, Dianne Donghi, who was arrested on trumped up charges, who was three months pregnant now and in prison. Donghi wanted to get an abortion, but the state was not going to allow her to do so while in jail, but she did not have enough money to raise her bail. They also explain some of the process to getting an abortion in the United States at

⁷¹ "Calendar," *Great Speckled Bird* 3, no. 10, (March 1970), 24.

⁷² "The Pill: Problem or Promise?" *The Rag* 4, no. 14, (Feb. 1970), 18.

⁷³ "Male Supremacy," *The Rag* 4, no. 14, (Feb. 1970), 18.

that time and difficult it could be. The author also points out that in New York at least three hundred women had filed lawsuits against the state for barring them from getting an abortion.⁷⁴ The article ends with, "...Dianne Donghi is a symbol of victimization that women's liberation is fighting against: let no woman be a prisoner of her body."⁷⁵ This kind of sentiment seems to be fairly common for these underground papers and would have helped gain support for women to eventually gain abortion rights.

The underground press helped advertise for events about abortion awareness. In April of 1972, the *Barb* featured a large article called, "Abortion Week Jam-Packed with Actions," which described how California abortion laws prevent women from having access to safe abortions. This forces these women to seek alternative and often unsafe abortions. It gave information on talks to go to all week to learn more about the myths of abortions, demonstrations coming up in the Bay Area to protest California abortion laws, and even information on a candlelight vigil being held for women who died because they were forced to seek unsafe, illegal abortions. They also provide information on an abortion rally in Sacramento at the capitol building and what bus to take to get there and who to call for more information on the rally.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Claudia Dreifus, "Freeing Dianne Donghi," *EVO* 5, no. 25, (May 1970), 13.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁷⁶ "Abortion Week Jam-Packed with Actions," *Berkeley Barb* 14, no. 17, (April 1972), 10.

Next to this article was this illustration located to the right. It depicts a depressing scene of a pregnant woman, with two children clinging to her, cooking a full meal while the man sits there and reads the paper. This image gives the readers a clear understanding of the burden children are to women. The man sits there reading his paper while the mother raises his children and cooks for him. Having access to birth control and abortions would be beneficial to women and this image makes that clear. This image would have forced readers to think about how these “political” issues were directly affecting the lives of millions of women. Without birth control and access to safe abortions, many women were doomed to live the life depicted in the picture.



Figure 6: Photograph from *Berkeley Barb* (Berkeley, California), April 1972.

The week of the *Roe v. Wade* decision, the *Barb* published an article on page five that took up the entire page. It was titled, “Why They Did It: Abortion Made Easy,” and was accompanied by this illustration below. This image would have definitely attracted many eyes to the article that accompanied it which contained important information about



Figure 7: Photograph from *Berkeley Barb* (Berkeley, California), January 1973.

abortions. It also forces the readers to think about how such a private piece of women’s bodies were up for debate by random men. The image symbolizes how women did not have control over their own bodies. This article told the stories of multiple women interviewed at an abortion clinic and described their experiences and reasons for wanting an abortion.⁷⁷ An article like this would scarcely be found in mainstream newspapers and would not feature an image as powerful as the one they

attached with this article. The article provides useful information about multiple aspects of abortions at the time. Many women unaware of how to go about getting an abortion and what all it entails would have been enlightened by this article. Many of the men reading the *Barb* likely had little to no information on abortions at that time, this may

⁷⁷ AMW, “Why They Did It: Abortion Made Easy,” *Berkeley Barb* 17, no. 3, (January 1973), 5.

have been their first detailed exposure to the many challenges faced by women getting abortions.

Mainstream media varied on its treatment of abortion. As with every issue, the treatment of abortion would vary depending on the newspaper. The *New York Times*, for example, treated abortion quite positively. They did not cover it as frequently as the underground press did, but usually covered it with either objectivity or would actually side with women on the issue. In an article from June 1970, they point out how the new abortion law going into effect would save thousands of women from botched abortions but would cost \$500 or more. They point out how this would negatively affect the poor, who would still have to resort to cheaper, less safe means of getting an abortion.⁷⁸ The *NYTs* did cover the issue but were not as supportive as the underground press was in actually helping women and changing public attitude. As discussed earlier, they delegated women's issues like abortions to the women's section of the paper.⁷⁹

These underground newspapers frequently discussed women's rights and issues and were not shy about it. They did not shy away from making it apparent that there was a problem. And they did not hide this information on a "woman's page" like the *New York Times*. They provided information on how men and women could start making a change. They provided information for women who needed help getting out of abusive relationships, how to get birth control, where to get abortions safely. They also gave information on how to become active with groups fighting for women's rights. These newspapers were read by thousands of young women who may have had no other

⁷⁸ Linda Greenhouse, "After July 1, an abortion should be as simple to have as a tonsillectomy..." *New York Times* (1923-Current File), (June 1970), 176.

⁷⁹ Tuchman, Kaplan, and Benet, *Hearth and Home*, 146.

exposure to this kind of information, and this may have helped many young women find help they needed. These newspapers even made men more aware of issues facing women and how they could help make things better. These alternative newspapers with audiences all over the country gave youths a way to organize themselves so they could make changes in society and politics. These newspapers gave women opportunities to meet with each other and come up with solutions together. The underground press helped change public attitude towards Women's Liberation and helped the movement organize and gain support.

CHAPTER IV

“Gay is Good – Gay is Beautiful.”: The Underground Press and the Gay Liberation Movement

On April 4, 1969, another issue of the *Berkeley Barb* was published in Berkeley, California. On the fifth page of that issue, the picture located on the next page was featured below the article titled, “Homo Revolt: Don’t Hide It.” Leo Laurence is the man in the back of the picture, embracing the young man. He was the editor of *Vector* magazine, an underground magazine for gay men, published in San Francisco in the late 1960s.¹ Laurence also wrote articles for the *Berkeley Barb* quite often as well. Laurence was a fairly well-known member of the gay community in the Bay Area and a leader of their budding gay rights movement. In the *Barb* article, he criticized leaders and members of the gay community for not being persistent enough in demanding their rights and freedom to express their sexuality. It was society that told them they were “perverts” and society is wrong. He feels they should not be ashamed of themselves because of the harm it brings to their mental health. He also explains how this is going to be difficult for many within the community because they were not particularly vocal about being gay because

¹ There were many underground newspapers specifically by and for gay men and lesbian women. These were much more niche and did not reach as wide of audiences as the ones featured in this thesis.

of how long these men were forced to hide it from the world around them out of fear of persecution. He draws parallels between their movement and the Black Civil Rights Movement and calls for their movement to take on similar practices for achieving social, political, and legal liberation.¹ This article in this issue of the *Barb* would spark a chain of events that would lead to heavily increased activism in the Bay Area over gay liberation.



Figure 8: Photograph by Hoffman from *Berkeley Barb* (Berkeley, California), April 1969.

This photograph being present in the *Barb* could have made some readers think that same sex couples were normal, just like heterosexual ones. The younger man featured in the photograph was fired from his job just four days after this *Barb* issue was published. His name is Gale Whittington, he was 21 years old and working as an accounting clerk for the States Steamship Company in

San Francisco. He was

regularly promoted and

regarded highly at his job, until after the *Barb*'s publication of this photograph of him

¹ "Homo Revolt: 'Don't Hide It,'" *Berkeley Barb* 8, no. 13, (April 1969), 5.

embracing Leo Laurence.² Thousands of gay men and women across the United States at this time were being let go from the jobs for the sole reason of their sexual identity. The federal government even had a ban on employing homosexuals because they were seen as a security threat.³ This was one of the many things that brought on the movement. Many, like Whittington and Laurence, were tired of being treated subhuman because of how they sexually identified. They were tired of the persecution and the hatred. It would take a while before enough gay men and women finally stood up to their oppressors and made a big enough of a fuss that the heterosexuals in the United States began to feel sympathetic and lend a hand. But how did this movement come to happen and why did much of the American population change their minds about how they thought about gay people? The underground press could be one answer to that question.

Gay men and women in the United States did not receive the greatest treatment from society or the government in the decades preceding the 1960s. They lived their lives in hiding out of fear of what would happen to them for their sexuality. WWII brought a lot of these problems into the light because of sex-segregation in the military and many being forced to leave their native communities to work or fight in the war. A study released in 1948 by Alfred Kinsey revealed to millions of Americans how prevalent homosexuality was within American society. The study revealed that a much higher than expected percentage of Americans had homosexual tendencies. Kinsey found that 50% of

² "Gay Rebel Gets Shafted by Uptight Boss," *Berkeley Barb* 8, no. 14, (April 1969), 11.

³ Rodger Streitmatter, *Unspeakable: The Rise of the Gay and Lesbian Press in America* (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1995), 52-53.

males had experienced erotic responses to their own sex and 28% of women had also experienced erotic responses to their own sex.⁴

This report led Kinsey to believe that it would actually be detrimental to discriminate against homosexuality and homosexual tendencies because the data was too large a piece of the population. While this data made men gay men and women feel less alone, Kinsey's data also led to more paranoia about homosexuals.⁵ The 1950s saw an increase in persecution of homosexuals on the basis of its "immorality" and their "threat to national security." The paranoid society of the 1950s, dominated by McCarthyism made life for homosexuals difficult. Hundreds of men and women were fired from their government positions on suspicions of homosexuality. The military did the same as well, they discharge hundreds for suspicions of homosexuality. State entities and private companies also began their hunt for their own "perverts" working within their ranks.⁶ This also gave police across the country the power to harass tens of thousands of people on suspicion of homosexuality. They would frequent areas where gay men and women would frequent like bars and many other places. When people were arrested for this their information, like their address, was often printed in the newspapers allowing any citizen to come by and harass them if they felt like it.⁷ Overall, the 1950s became a very hostile environment for gay men and women living in the United States, so after the Civil Rights Movement and many became inspired to do the same and start their own movement for their civil rights. One of their allies in this fight was the underground press.

⁴ John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 30-35.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 44-47.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 49.

This chapter examines how the underground press treated issues facing gay and lesbian people in the United States in the late 1960s. It also focuses on how they interpreted the Stonewall Riots of 1969 in New York City. The chapter is organized into two sections: pre-Stonewall and post-Stonewall. This organization helps show how the underground press was reporting positively about gay issues before Stonewall even happened and they continued their support during and after the event. Mainstream media was mostly unsupportive before Stonewall. After the Gay Liberation Movement gained national attention with the Stonewall Riots, mainstream and underground sources began publishing more about gay rights. However, the underground press still out published most mainstream sources on gay rights issues while also displaying sympathy towards the movement.

The underground press, in general, was sympathetic to the gay and lesbian community during the late 1960s and 1970s. They frequently featured articles concerning gay and lesbian rights and issues that they were facing. Even before Stonewall, which is often considered the beginning for the gay and lesbian liberation movement in the United States, the underground press was filled with articles and ads for and about gay and lesbian people. There were groups across the United States that advocated for gay men and lesbian women, but membership within these groups was small, totaling at around 5,000 before July of 1969.⁸ This chapter uses the *Berkeley Barb* and *EVO* more heavily than the other two because they were more actively involved in the Gay Liberation Movement. This is because of their geographic locations, which happened to be in the

⁸ Margaret Cruikshank, *The Gay and Lesbian Liberation Movement* (Routledge, Chapman & Hall Inc., 1992), 69.

two major epicenters for gay and lesbian populations and activism, especially San Francisco, which was considered a safe haven for gay men long before the Sixties. This can partly be explained because many gay men who were sent home from the Pacific front during WWII for being gay stayed in San Francisco rather than go back home and explain to everyone why they were kicked out of the military. Then, as more and more gay men accumulated there, more and more moved there because it was a safe place to go, especially since many were being purged from rural areas.⁹

It seems that many gay men and lesbian women were afraid to advocate for equal rights before Stonewall, most likely out of fear of what might happen to them if they did. Many chose to stay hidden out of fear of losing everything. As the 1960s came to a close, tensions were rising, more gay men and lesbian women were becoming increasingly upset with their ill-treatment from society and government. After watching the successes of the Civil Rights Movement and watching the rise of the New Left and their anti-war protest movement, many began to wonder why they themselves could not do the same.¹⁰ The underground press made heterosexual readers aware of the problems facing these people and aware of their own misunderstandings of homosexuals that was propagated by the mainstream media and society for decades before the 1960s.

These underground publications helped spread awareness for Gay Liberation at the time and were often used to organize and advertise for the movement. These papers also assisted many of America's youth in understanding issues they may have never been aware of and may have never been made aware of without these newspapers. One crucial

⁹ Ibid., 134.

¹⁰ Ibid., 2-4.

way these newspapers helped the gay and lesbian liberation movement is by just making many young heterosexual Americans realize that these people actually existed. They were people and they were not the evil figures that they had been portrayed as for decades in the United States by the mainstream media and society. The underground press was an ally to the Gay Liberation Movement before Stonewall even happened and before the mainstream media eventually began to support as well.

It is important to note that the movement was male-dominated and gay men were featured more heavily than lesbian women within the underground press. As lesbian women were fighting for their right to decide their own sexual identity, they also fought for their rights as women simultaneously in the 1960s and 1970s. Margaret Cruikshank wrote in her book, *The Gay and Lesbian Liberation Movement* (1992), “The ambiguities of language here reflect an important fact about the gay and lesbian liberation movement: it has been male-dominated. Lesbians have participated since the beginning, but they have often had the secondary role that characterizes their position in mainstream society.”¹¹

In Cruikshank’s book, she lays out five goals of the gay and lesbian liberation movement:

- 1) an end to all forms of social control of homosexuals;
- 2) civil rights legislation to prevent housing and job discrimination;
- 3) repeal of sodomy laws;
- 4) acceptance of lesbian and gay relationships;
- 5) accurate portrayal in the mass media.¹²

The fifth and final goal was helped to be achieved by the underground press during the late 1960s and 1970s. Underground newspapers at this time helped the gay and lesbian

¹¹ Ibid., 4.

¹² Ibid., 9.

liberation movement by not doing what mass media was often doing: either painting homosexuality as bad or just ignoring their movement altogether.

Over the past three decades, historians have drawn increasing attention to the multiple dimensions of the Gay Liberation Movement – its roots, its connections to other movements, and its legacies. For example, David Carter’s book, *Stonewall: The Riots That Sparked the Gay Revolution* (2004), gives readers a detailed examination of what exactly happened with the Gay Liberation Movement in the 1960s and ‘70s and tries to explain the causes for the movement.¹³ He addresses the story of Gale and Leo and other stories covered in the underground press in his book but does not analyze how the underground press impacted the movement. Carter does utilize the underground press more so than many authors of the Sixties have previously.

The book, *Imagine Nation*, addresses the underground press as well. The book includes a chapter on how the counterculture movement effected the gay liberation movement and vice versa. This chapter pays special attention to gay communities and communes of the time. It does not mention directly how the underground press was involved in this but could be implied since the counterculture’s means of organization was primarily through the underground press.¹⁴ John McMillian’s book, *Smoking Typewriters*, vaguely addresses the underground press and its relationship with the Gay Liberation Movement. One notable mention within his book is that one newspaper, the Village Voice, was the most reliable source for information on the AIDs epidemic while

¹³ David Carter, *Stonewall: The Riots that Sparked the Gay Revolution* (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 2004), 2.

¹⁴ Lauren Onkey, “Voodoo Child: Jimi Hendrix and the Politics of Race in the Sixties,” in *Imagine Nation: the American Counterculture of the 1960s and ’70s*, ed. Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle (New York: Routledge, 2002).

it was happening.¹⁵ Ruth Rosen's book, *The World Split Open*, has a section about lesbians in the women's movement and their relationship with it and the Gay Liberation Movement. She points out, they found themselves isolated from both groups at times and forgotten by both as well.¹⁶ This is a common issue with the Gay Liberation. Lesbians were often left out of it because the men either forgot them and/or they did not want to be involved with the men. Lesbian scholarship in relationship to the underground press is basically nonexistent. The underground press did not talk about lesbian women as exclusively as they did gay men. This is partially because it seemed to just be implied that discussions of gay issues would include lesbians.

One book that examines specifically the gay and lesbian underground press is Rodger Streitmatter's book, *Unspeakable: The Rise of the Gay and Lesbian Press in America*. In his book, Streitmatter states, "For five decades, the lesbian and gay press has published a distinctive brand of journalism committed to affirming the values of the community it serves, while documenting a shocking record of society's homophobia. This particular genre of journalism is not mentioned in the standard histories of mainstream media, and only in recent years has it begun to receive a paragraph or two in the histories of alternative media."¹⁷ His book provides an extensive and detailed analysis of the gay and lesbian underground press.

Before 1969 gay and lesbian liberation was featured in the underground press but did not receive extensive coverage until that year. The underground press definitely

¹⁵ John Campbell McMillian, *Smoking Typewriters: The Sixties Underground Press and the Rise of Alternative Media in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 178.

¹⁶ Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America* (New York: Penguin Group, 2000), 166.

¹⁷ Streitmatter, *Unspeakable*, x.

discussed homosexuality more so than the mainstream press did before Stonewall. Stonewall would increase the underground's coverage by quite a lot. The year 1969 seemed to change everything. In the months leading up to Stonewall, one can literally see it coming in these newspapers. Tensions were rising, more and more gay men and women were being fired unjustly and more people were becoming aware of the issue and becoming angry about it. Many gay people were becoming tired of the harassment they received by police for no reason other than their sexuality and the way society looked down on them.

Pre-Stonewall

One place where gay men and women were not looked down on was the underground press. The *Berkeley Barb* included gay and/or lesbian sex ads frequently throughout its publication, as did most other underground press publications. There were often multiple ads within one issue of men and women seeking romantic companionship from like-minded people. There were also several ads featured for meeting places for “gay brothers and sisters” to discuss their lives and find friends like them.¹⁸ The underground press and the many gay and lesbian sex ads at the back of each issue could be attributed with desensitizing many American youth about homosexuality. Putting gay and lesbian sex ads with heterosexual ones made it seem less “taboo” and put homosexuality on the same level as heterosexuality within the newspaper. While these sex ads could be seen as somewhat exploitative, much like the heterosexual ones, it could have had this subconscious effect on readers. The readers who may have only been

¹⁸ *Berkeley Barb* 4, no. 11, (March 1967), 10.

buying the newspapers for the sex ads would had to have seen these gay and lesbian ads as well. So even if they were heterosexual and not actually reading the newspapers, they were still being exposed to homosexuality, which over time, may have made some people more accepting of it.

The underground press also did a lot of advertising for gay and lesbian people. The *Barb* featured many ads for gay bars in the area, and not just in the back with all the ads, but gay bar ads were featured next to articles on many publications at the front of the newspapers.¹⁹ There were also many ads for helping gay people find jobs where they would not be discriminated against for their sexuality. One article, which took up about a quarter of page, discussed how a church in the area was assisting homosexuals with finding jobs after being fired from theirs, solely for being gay. They also discussed how the “War on Poverty officials in San Francisco are preparing to fight the Armed Services on behalf of homosexuals,” for the same thing.²⁰ In an issue a couple months later, there was an article featured about a gay marine to potentially have his job protected by a US Senator who was mounting an inquiry about his situation.²¹ This article was featured on the second page of that issue.

The *Berkeley Barb* featured many ads for gay balls and parties as well. This showed support for gay and lesbian people from the newspaper and offered these people a safe space to get together. In April of 1968, *Berkeley Barb* and the Society of Individual Rights (SIR), hosted a ball. The *Barb* featured an article about the ball and SIR. It described the ball as a safe place for these people to meet each other and be comfortable

¹⁹ *Berkeley Barb* 5, no. 2, (July 1967), 7.

²⁰ Leo E. Laurence, “Church Helps Homos Jobhunt,” *Berkeley Barb* 5, no. 16, (Oct. 1967), 7.

²¹ “Gay Marine to Get Aid,” *Berkeley Barb* 5, no. 25, (Dec. 1967), 2.

since they were not allowed to do so out in regular society.²² Later that year the *Barb* published an article about SIR hosting a ball with the Sexual Freedom League (SFL), a straight sexual advocacy group. The author describes how many SFL members were hesitant, but many realized at the ball that they wanted the same thing their homosexual counterparts did, sexual freedom. A leader of the SFL who was interviewed described how many in the SFL had backwards thinking about homosexuals but went on to say, "...until we get both groups to mix freely, these distorted ideas won't change."²³ The *Barb* also featured an article in September about a gay dance hall that grew from just a small gathering to a private membership club with a pool. It also describes how unsafe these kinds of gatherings have been in the past but have recently been more acceptable and more gay balls were being held and more bars being open to gay dancing. It describes them as being underground, but slowly becoming more acceptable.²⁴ The *Barb* was providing the gay community there with a safe space to meet and an opportunity to gain straight allies.

The *Great Speckled Bird* ran a half page article in October of 1968 that featured an informative movie review about the movie *The Queen*. The movie was a documentary film about the Miss All-American Camp Beauty Pageant that took place in NYC in 1967, a beauty pageant designed for drag queens. The author of the review explained that movie was eye opening to the struggles that gay and trans people face every day for being who they are. He said, "If you are not gay and you see *The Queen*, your experience will illuminate some of the darkness of life in America; it will show you things – about

²² Gary Patterson, "Berkeley Barb 6, no. 16, (April 1968), 7.

²³ Ibid., 9.

²⁴ Ibid., 8.

yourself and the country in which you live – that you probably never would have seen otherwise.²⁵ The article was accompanied by two photographs from the movie of the pageant contestants in drag and getting ready before the pageant. This article could have inspired many to go and watch this movie and develop a better understanding of these people they likely knew nothing about.

The underground press was a major means of organizing and advertising for Gay Liberation protests and marches. For example, *EVO* frequently included ads for different political and social groups for gay rights. These ads included meeting times and phone numbers to call to get more information.²⁶ In one issue, on page three of an issue of the *Barb*, towards the bottom, there is a snippet of an article titled, “GAY MARCH ON CAPITAL.” Which describes a march being organized by “gay leaders” to march on the capital for their civil rights.²⁷ This was two years before Stonewall and *EVO* was helping the Gay Liberation Movement organize before they really had a concrete movement. “GAY VOTE SCRAMBLE,” was the title of one article at the bottom of the second page of an October issue from 1967, which discusses how a local election in the area was reportedly lost because the candidate did not appeal to the gay vote.²⁸ This could have helped readers understand that there were more gay men and women than they thought and that they should not be forgotten in politics.

After the *Barb* issue that featured the photograph of Gale Whittington and Leo Laurence embracing resulted in being Gale fired, the underground community of San

²⁵ Miller Francis Jr., “The Queen,” *Great Speckled Bird* 1, no. 18, (Oct., 1968), 9.

²⁶ “Homosexual Probe Group Encounter,” *EVO* 4, no. 42, (Sep. 1969), 22.

²⁷ “GAY MARCH ON CAPITAL,” *Berkeley Barb* 5, no. 6, (Aug. 1967), 3.

²⁸ “GAY VOTE SCRAMBLE,” *Berkeley Barb* 5, no. 4, (Oct. 1967), 2.

Francisco began to notice there was an issue. Leo and Gale began a campaign of increased activism in the Bay Area to protest discrimination carried out on the gay community. Leo was being urged to resign from his editorial position at *Vector* magazine for urging the gay community to finally fight for their right to exist freely, and he refused to resign. In the issue after the photograph was published, two articles were featured on the eleventh page that updated readers on what was happening. Informing them of Gale being fired and Leo being urged to quit, but both articles urged that neither of them would quit until things improved. At the end of the article about Gale's firing, they left information about where to send money to help Gale pay his bills for the next month and begin protesting his former employers.²⁹

In the next issue of the *Barb* readers were informed of Leo and Gale founding a new gay activist group in San Francisco called, the Committee for Homosexual Freedom (CHF). They also began organizing a strike against the company that fired Gale for being gay. The article began with the words, "The Homosexual Revolution of '69 started this week in San Francisco as militant homosexuals



Figure 9: Photography by Riley from *Berkeley Barb* (Berkeley, California), April 1969.

²⁹ "Gay Rebel Gets Shafted by Uptight Boss," *Berkeley Barb* 8, no 14, (April 1969), 11.

made war on both gay and straight Establishments.”³⁰ The article discussed Leo being fired from his position as editor of *Vector*, and it also described the protest he and Gale organized against Gale’s former employer. They gave the address of where the protest was taking place and gave a time for another one next week. It also gave the time and place of a meeting for their new activist group.³¹ In the following issue, the eleventh page was devoted once again to CHF and their protest of Gale’s former employer. More people showed up to protest because of the *Barb*’s coverage the first one. The article gave information on how to help by either joining the protest, calling the company, or donating to CHF.³² There was also an article accompanying this one that discussed a gay wedding and how some ministers and preachers in the were willing to marry same-sex couples.³³ They also included a photograph of the wedding featured above. This photograph is quite significant since printing a gay kiss was very taboo at the time. This picture is provocative and forces the reader to rethink their own prejudices.

On the following issue of the *Barb*, they dedicated the entire seventh page to everything related to the budding gay rights movement. The largest article once again discussed the protests of Gale’s former employers, States Steamship Company. They were expanding their protests to their offices in Los Angeles and were asking for help from other activist groups who may also have interests in protesting them. Anti-war groups would have been interested in protesting the company because they shipped weapons to Vietnam. African American rights groups would have also been interested in

³⁰ “Homo Revolt Blasting Off on Two Fronts,” *Berkeley Barb* 8, no. 15, (April 1969), 11.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

³² “Pink Panthers Gay Revolution Toughening Up,” *Berkeley Barb* 8, no. 16, (April 1969), 11.

³³ “Wedding Rights,” *Berkeley Barb* 8, no. 16, (April 1969), 11.

picketing them because they apparently discriminated against African Americans as well. They described how more people were showing up each day to protest the company's history of discrimination that they refused to acknowledge was an issue. This article once again provided information on how to get involved and help in multiple different ways.³⁴

This page of the *Barb* also included an article called, "How U.S. Homos are Hassled." The article details the ill-treatment of homosexuals in America, such as sodomy laws being present in nearly every state. They describe how they could be sentenced to life in prison in many states for it or shorter, but decade long sentences. They discuss discrimination of gay people by employers, such as the U.S. Armed Forces and other government jobs. They also detail how psychiatry still defined homosexuality as a mental disorder and how society continues to perpetuate this as well. This article was submitted by a reader, who also provided information on another activist group with branches at Columbia, Cornell and NYU. They provided information on how to reach them.³⁵ This article was one of the more eloquently written depictions of problems facing gay men and women in the United States. A heterosexual Berkeley student may have not even been aware of any of these issues until reading this article or the last few issues of the *Barb*. It is quite likely they were not aware of it at all.

The following issue of the *Barb* covered an ongoing story about a gay man killed by cops in Berkeley during an arrest for sexual charges. The police department refused to open an investigation, but CHF and SIR were determined to have justice served to the cops who killed the man in what seemed to be an unwarranted shooting.³⁶ Next to this

³⁴ "Gay Strike Turns Grim," *Berkeley Barb* 8, no. 17, (May 1969), 7.

³⁵ "How Homos are Hassled," *Berkeley Barb* 8, no 17, (May 1969), 7.

³⁶ "Homo Death: Group Will Act," *Berkeley Barb* 8, no. 18, (May 1969), 11.

article was another one detailing the protests taking place in San Francisco and L.A. against the States Line company. Thanks to the *Barb*, the LA protests had grown significantly and were now seeing about 200 people in attendance. The article also went on to briefly discuss different discrimination practices against gay people in California. This issue shows that the *Barb* was affecting real life protests. The article does claim that because of the *Barb's* advertisement of protests, people in LA were showing up.³⁷

The *Barb* continued their coverage of the States lines company protests in the next issue. They gave information for an occupation of the States Line company that they were planning for the following week. They gave information on who to contact to join the occupation. They were going to stay until their demands were met. Their demands were that Gale would get his position back, he would receive backpay for time lost, and that they would sign a pledge to no longer discriminate on the basis of sexuality or anyone's involvement in the protests.³⁸ In the issue after this one they once again kept readers updated on the protests and informed readers of the growing support from the community, gay and not gay. It also included a section for heterosexual women to call a number to speak with someone to help them understand how to accept and support their gay sons and brothers.³⁹

Police brutality against gay people was also a regular feature in the underground press. In another issue the *Barb* detailed how a group of men attacked the protesters with baseball bats, and of course the police did not intervene. The article goes on to describe the police harassment of the protest and go into detail of the brutality one officer

³⁷ "Gay Strike Hits Southern Front," *Berkeley Barb* 8, no. 18 (May 1969), 11.

³⁸ "Gays to Sit," *Berkeley Barb* 8, no. 19, (May 1969), 12.

³⁹ "Winker Finked On – Fired," *Berkeley Barb* 8, no. 20, (May 1969), 9.

threatened to give to Catholic priest who was at the protest.⁴⁰ Police brutality was a real issue for gay men at this time and the *Barb* helped shed light on how terribly these men were being treated by the people who were supposed to “serve and protect.” This may have made many people feel bad for gay men and could have helped change people’s attitudes.

EVO had many ads for a gay magazine called *GAY POWER*. The picture to the right was a clip from a full-page ad about the newspaper. There is frequent advertising for this other underground newspapers also shows support for the movement. They were explicitly informing readers on other underground papers that exclusively covered Gay Lib. The inclusion of this large image would draw attention to the article but also make readers realize that the newspaper was allegiant to the Gay Liberation Movement. It also helps to normalize the Gay Liberation Movement.



Figure 10: Photograph from *East Village Other* (New York City, New York), September 1969.

The Rag was also supportive of Gay Liberation and made readers aware of this. In March of 1970, *The Rag* published a half-page article about gay liberation. The author,

⁴⁰ “Gays Hold Tight as Hoods Attack,” *Berkeley Barb* 8, no. 22, (June 1969), 13.

who identifies as gay, began by criticizing leftist groups in the United States for not allowing homosexuals to be members or to keep their sexuality a secret. The author asks how these groups could fight for freedom and equality and then turn around and be oppressive to gay people.⁴¹ This would be significant because many New Leftists read this newspaper and this article would have made them think about how hypocritical they could be. This may have led to some readers becoming more tolerant of gay and lesbian people because their own hypocrisy was pointed out to them.

It is important to note, underground newspapers were, at times, offensive towards gay people as well. They would sometimes use language that was offensive or reprint things that were offensive. After Stonewall, many of them began to fully realize that they were also part of the problem. For example, *Great Speckled Bird* ran an article, mentioned in the previous chapter, where they apologized for their own shortcomings. In this article, they also addressed how they were sometimes insensitive towards Gay Liberation and apologized to their readers for this. They explained that they were growing and changing to become more inclusive towards gay people and their fight for the civil rights they deserved.⁴² In one issue from March 1970, *EVO* featured an article called, "GAY IS GOOD." The article began with the line, "Gay is good – gay is beautiful."⁴³ This is a prime example of the complexity of the underground press. While they were sometimes insensitive, they were also one of the biggest allies.

The underground press in general seemed to be moving in this positive direction, especially after Stonewall. It is important to remember the people working at these

⁴¹ "Homosexual & Movement," *The Rag* 4, no. 19, (March 1970), 14.

⁴² "Rap," *Great Speckled Bird* 3, no. 45, (Nov., 1970), 14.

⁴³ "Gay is Good," *EVO* 5, no. 15, (March 1970), 10.

newspapers were not well aware of what kind of harm they could have been doing by using certain kinds of language until these civil rights movements began making people aware of the harm it could cause. They were growing with the United States as well, they were not always perfect. After Stonewall, people were becoming more aware of things they could do to be better and overall, the underground press seemed to be supportive of changing society while changing themselves.

Post-Stonewall

The night that the Stonewall Inn in New York City was busted was a night that would change everything for the Gay Liberation Movement. It began like any other, people enjoying their time at the bar, when police showed to raid the place. This was not the first time the bar had been raided, but this time would be different. Many were very upset about it initially and gave police a lot of attitude or refused to show their ID's.⁴⁴ As police began arresting people and loading them up, one shoved a trans woman and then the crowd went wild. People began booing the police, harassing them and then many ran to payphones to call their friends to come down and went into other businesses nearby to say the same. More people showed up to watch and eventually as one lesbian woman was being loaded into a car she resisted arrest and the crowd went wild.⁴⁵ A full riot ensued that lasted several days. By the end of the riot, the Gay Liberation Movement had begun, and many were not as afraid to stand up for themselves. The underground press had a very special relationship with Gay Liberation Movement. They were the primary reporters for the movement, before and after Stonewall and many historians, including

⁴⁴ Carter, *Stonewall*, 130-137.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 149-152.

David Carter, heavily use the underground newspapers for official accounts of the riot. The underground press was one of Gay Lib's biggest supporters.

The first article the *Barb* ran about the Stonewall Uprising was a large article taking up about half of the fifth page of that issue. It described what happened and then goes on to say that one of the men present at Stonewall who was interviewed over the phone said, "The gay community in New York City has been inspired by your homosexual liberation stories in the *Barb*."⁴⁶ So readers in New York City following the stories about Gale and Leo and others picketing in San Francisco inspired those in New York to demand their own change. This shows the impact these newspapers really had. Because the *Barb* reported on Gale and Leo's activism, which not only helped their own movement in San Francisco, those in New York felt inspired enough to begin demanding their own justice.

In the same issue the *Barb* also published a movie review of "Gay Deceivers." In this critique by Leo Laurence, he explains how the movie was exploitative. It misrepresented gay people in the United States by just showing stereotypes in an unconstructive way. He criticizes Hollywood for selling a harmful stereotype of gay people for money. He compares it to when "white masters used to laugh at 'Little Black Sambo.'"⁴⁷ He also points out that mainstream press, radio and television are mostly refusing to advertise for the movie because it is about gay people, but he does say, in this case it is a good thing they are doing that for once.⁴⁸ This comparison that Laurence

⁴⁶ Leo Laurence, "Gays Hit NY Cops," *Berkeley Barb* 9, no. 1, (July 1969), 5.

⁴⁷ Leo Laurence, "One-Word Critique – 'Shucks'" *Berkeley Barb* 9, no. 1, (July 1969), 12.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

makes may have been striking to many readers. This would have made many consider how harmful gay stereotypes could be.

A few months later the *Barb* ran an article discussing how the American Sociological Association found that the “homosexual minority constitute an oppressed people in academic as well as non-academic environments,” and goes on to say, “the American Sociological Association condemns the firing, taking economic sanctions and other oppressive action against any persons for reasons of sexual preference.”⁴⁹ This article was featured on the fourth page of the issue and goes on to agree with the ASA and provide examples of homosexual oppression taking place across the country, but also in their own community. They see this statement by the ASA as a huge step forward for society.⁵⁰ The *Barb*'s display of this information could have convinced many readers that gay people were oppressed and that maybe they should do something about it.

Then one month later, after the *Barb* had been reporting on Gale and Leo's situation for months, they covered rally they had in Berkeley with 2,000 people in attendance.⁵¹ In the next issue they reported how the movement had grown so much within just a few months. Now hundreds of people were showing up to support the protest, and their parties and meetings were getting larger as well. Gale Whittington was even expanding their organization to Los Angeles. It also explains how they were getting attention from mainstream media. Gale had an upcoming interview with NBC News in L.A.⁵² With each issue, the attendance at their pickets and rallies increased. While many

⁴⁹ “Homosexual Rights,” *Berkeley Barb* 9, no. 11, (Sep. 1969), 4.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁵¹ Don Jackson, “Gay Liberation Movement,” *Berkeley Barb* 9, no. 14, (Oct. 1969), 12.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 5.

factors contributed to the rise in attendance, the *Berkeley Barb*'s weekly coverage, for months, of their movement was likely a factor in their increase in support. Nearly every issue contained information about how to get involved in multiple different ways and it would be impossible to deny that at least some of the tens of thousands of readers the *Barb* had the time would have been getting involved because of what they saw in the *Barb*.

That November, the *Barb* featured an article discussing a local, long-standing San Francisco newspaper. The *San Francisco Examiner* was regularly publishing negative articles about the gay liberation movement happening in the Bay Area. They say that an article published recently was, "willfully malicious, erroneous,⁵³ and irresponsible journalism."⁵⁴ The newspaper also refused to meet with representatives of homosexual organizations in the area to discuss the issue of gay liberation. They then provide information for a protest to be held outside the *Examiner*'s office building in San Francisco and they also provide how to contact the *Examiner* to demand justice.⁵⁵ A San Francisco radio station was also criticized by the *Barb* and CHF for reporting slanderously as well. CHF had a Thanksgiving Day march across the city, and they protested outside the radio stations building. The station eventually agreed to allow some representatives from the gay community to rebuttal. Local mainstream sources in San Francisco were unsupportive of the Gay Liberation Movement so anyone wanting good coverage of the movement would have had to turn to the *Barb* or other underground sources.

⁵³ "Gays Not Thankful," *Berkeley Barb* 9, no. 22 (Dec. 1969), 5.

⁵⁴ "Gay Liberation Front," *Berkeley Barb* 9, no. 17, (Nov. 1969), 6.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

Not all mainstream media and newspapers were vehemently opposed to the gay liberation movement. In one issue of the *New York Times* with an article briefly explaining Stonewall. They just casually reported about the police raid but did say the young men went on a “rampage.”⁵⁶ The article was also titled “4 Policeman Hurt in Village” which shows more sympathy towards the police rather than the protesters. The *New York Times* did not explain the situation fully, but also did not say anything offensive. Another *New York Times* article from a few days later called the protesters “hostile.”⁵⁷ The article in the *New York Times* that discussed the Stonewall Riots did not describe why there were protestors or what they were protesting. They just said that people were protesting and that they were aggressive. The *Barb*, *EVO*, *Rag*, *GSB* and others were in full support of the movement, whereas the mainstream media stayed objective or brushed past it.

Something similar to this that John McMillian points out in his book, *Smoking Typewriters*, was not about Gay Lib, but another example of mainstream newspapers subtly taking sides. The Liberation News Service came out directly against mainstream press’s coverage of the Battle of the Pentagon.⁵⁸ The Battle of the Pentagon or March on the Pentagon was anti-war protest that began with a rally at the Lincoln Memorial and then the protestors marched to the Pentagon and shouted their frustrations with the Vietnam War outside the building.⁵⁹ The LNS saw that mainstream sources focused on violence at the protest instead of why 100,000 people were there protesting and

⁵⁶ "4 POLICEMEN HURT IN 'VILLAGE' RAID: MELEE NEAR SHERIDAN SQUARE FOLLOWS ACTION AT BAR." *New York Times* (1923-Current File), (June 1969), 33.

⁵⁷ "Hostile Crowd Dispersed Near Sheridan Square." *New York Times* (1923-Current File), (July 1969), 19.

⁵⁸ McMillian, *Smoking Typewriters*, 100.

⁵⁹ Maurice Isserman, Michael Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 177-78.

marching in the first place.⁶⁰ This is very similar to the way they presented the previous article about Stonewall. Mainstream media, especially larger sources like the *New York Times*, would not be aggressively opposed, but rather showed a subconscious bias in many cases in their reporting against these social movements and the Counterculture in general. This is why the underground press even came into existence, these sociopolitical movements, in many cases, were not being treated with the respect and dignity they deserved by the mainstream press.

An article from *EVO* in July of 1970, it was the transcript of an interview with a man named Jim Fotratt about gay representation in the media, mainstream and underground. Fotratt discussed how mainstream media basically just ignores the gay liberation movement and their existence in general now. Then says how underground does cover, but often still uses some offensive language, which they see them doing for basically every political movement, but especially for women's liberation and gay liberation. He goes on to elaborate on how growing up the only images gay men saw of themselves in the media were brutally negative and how that effects them negatively.⁶¹ Later, the interviewer asks him what overall statements he has about their representation in mainstream and underground media. Jim replies, "Yeh. My interest at this point is not in the above ground media, because it is exploitative, and it also is done for profit. And I don't think we should deal there. I think we should really concentrate our energies on the underground press."⁶² This shows that people at this time reading these newspapers trusted the underground press more than they did the mainstream media because of the

⁶⁰ McMillian, *Smoking Typewriters*, 100.

⁶¹ John Reilly, "Gay Lib and the Media," *EVO* 5, no. 34, (July 1970), 11.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 24.

mainstream's focus on profit over everything else. They saw more value in the underground press because it was not afraid to show support to a movement that had previously been seen as taboo.

The *New York Times* was usually objective in its reporting about gay people. However, there is one case, where a gay journalist did a six-page article titled, "What it Means to be a Homosexual." In this article he discussed his own life experiences and other things that were relevant. This is a very positive look at a gay man, but the *New York Times* did not run this article until January of 1971.⁶³ The underground press was doing much more, much sooner to try to show people that gay people were just people too. The underground press gave gay people a voice, something the mainstream media would not do for much longer or as openly.

In the Deep South, where being gay would have been a little more taboo than New York San Francisco, the *Great Speckled Bird* did their best to represent the gay community. In February of 1970, *GSB* published a full-page article on the sixth page titled, "Atlanta Gay Liberation Uncaged." The article discussed Atlanta's first Gay Lib meeting that took place the week before. The article laid out the basics of what was discussed at the meeting and then gave readers information on how to help the movement. They also provided a phone number to call if someone is in legal trouble over sodomy laws.⁶⁴ This advertisement for the Gay Liberation Movement and for legal help

⁶³ Merle Miller, "What it Means to be a Homosexual: A 'Fag' is a Homosexual Gentleman Who has just Left the Room what it Means to be a Homosexual." *New York Times* (1923-Current File), (Jan 1971), 9.

⁶⁴ Steve Abbott, "Atlanta Gay Liberation Uncaged," *Great Speckled Bird* 4, no. 7, (Feb., 1971), 6.

may have given many gay men and women an opportunity to find more people like them and help the movement grow.

The underground press consistently wanted to get readers involved or better inform them. *The Rag* showed their support, on the fourth page of an issue from April 1970, there was a small article with information about how to receive a Gay Liberation pamphlet that served as an introduction for both gay and straight readers.⁶⁵ Later on in that same issue, a full-page article was dedicated to a discussion about homosexuality. The article discusses views from an anthropologist who believes the idea of homosexuality being unnatural and wrong is a product of cultural conditioning. The author of the article criticizes the United States for being so restrictive on homosexuality.⁶⁶ At the center of the article and center of the page were underlined words that grab the readers eye immediately: "...homosexual acts represent natural, completely human forms of behavior."⁶⁷ The following page of that issue contained an ad with information for a "Gay Lib organizational meeting" being held the next Monday.⁶⁸ An issue in May included a full-page article about gay liberation groups and movements in other cities other than Austin. It details how to contact some of them as well. The article also discusses the scene in Austin, "Here in the hypermasculine and hyper repressive Texas environment, gay lib can serve as a forceful and effective element of radical change."⁶⁹ The "hyper repressive" environment in Texas would have not had a lot of local mainstream newspapers printing articles in support of Gay Liberation and

⁶⁵ "Gay Liberation Pamphlet Available," *The Rag* 4, no. 23, (April 1970), 4.

⁶⁶ "Gay Lib: Come Together," *The Rag* 4, no. 23, (April 1970), 18.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁶⁹ "Gay Lib: Other Places," *The Rag* 4, no. 26, (May 1970), 13.

providing information on how to get involved. *The Rag* and other underground papers were some of the few sources to get this kind of information at the time.

A *Rag* article from June 1970 discussed an upcoming celebration to celebrate the first anniversary of Stonewall. It provided information on multiple different celebration marches taking place in cities on the east and west coasts. The article also explained what Stonewall was, which according to the article, "...the story did not appear in any establishment or underground publication outside New York City due to news suppression."⁷⁰ The article also includes how to find information for an upcoming camp-in in California for gay liberationists from across the country to come and meet each other.⁷¹ Three weeks later, *The Rag* reported that US Forest Service in California cancelled the camping permit for the gay liberation camp-in and that gay liberation groups on the West Coast were going to take the matter to the courts.⁷² *The Rag* was a consistent voice of support for the movement in a place where there was likely not a lot of support.

EVO also continued their efforts to help the movement in New York. In a November 1970 issue of *EVO*, they dedicated an entire page to a man talking about society and gay oppression. It outlined many issues facing gay men, and the negative ways society treats them. It also specifically calls out the ill treatment they receive from straight men and how that needs to stop.⁷³ In an issue from later that month, a woman was asking for donations or help with developing a community center for gay men and

⁷⁰ Don Jackson, "Gays to Celebrate Stonewall Revolt," *The Rag* 4, no. 29, (June 1970), 11.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁷² *The Rag* 4, no. 32, (July 1970), 9.

⁷³ Ralph Hall, "Rising Up Gay," *EVO* 5, no. 49, (Nov. 1970), 6.

women in the NYC area. The article provides information on how to help and who to contact.⁷⁴ Here is yet another example of how the underground press was crucial for helping these movements organize and gain outside support.

That same month, the *Great Speckled Bird* began one of their issues with a two-page article (also had a third page in the back) titled, “A Gay Manifesto.” It was mostly excerpts from Carl Wittman’s “A Gay Manifesto,” that was originally published in the *Seed* another underground paper. Wittman’s manifesto became “one of the defining documents of the Gay Liberation Movement.”⁷⁵ One of the first topics addressed in the article is about women and the Gay Liberation Movement. First, Wittman points out how male chauvinism is present just as often with gay men as it is with straight because they were brought up thinking women were inferior to them. He explains this is most likely why so few lesbian women want to be involved in the Gay Liberation Movement. He goes on to say that gay men should work on eradicating their own chauvinistic views, so they gain more allies for their cause and not be hypocrites.⁷⁶ This could have helped many gay men reading these papers realize their movements own hypocrisy with how they often excluded women. This may have made many more accepting.

The manifesto also addressed other topics relating to Gay Liberation, but one that would have been more impactful for many straight readers was about oppression. In this section, Wittman explained the many ways in which gay men and women are oppressed every day in the United States. Physical attacks, psychological warfare, self-oppression, and institutional oppression were the ways Wittman described gay people as being

⁷⁴ “Dear EVO,” *EVO* 5, no. 52, (Nov. 1970), 10.

⁷⁵ Carter, *Stonewall*, 118.

⁷⁶ Carl Wittman, Miller Francis, “A Gay Manifesto,” *Great Speckled Bird* 3, no. 47, (Nov., 1970), 2.

oppressed.⁷⁷ The article also provided information on how to get in touch with the Gay Liberation Group in Atlanta.⁷⁸ This information would have likely been a new perspective to many readers of *GSB* in Atlanta.

The following month, *The Rag* included an article about a Gay Liberation student group on campus at the University of Texas who was being denied recognition by the university. The second article they ran about the situation states the university's reasoning for this was it "would encourage persons to accept homosexuality rather than to seek professional assistance."⁷⁹ The article goes on to address how this view of homosexuality is still being debated within the world of psychology and is not something the university should stick by, especially considering the administration was not allowed to deny organizations based on their purpose.⁸⁰ Later in that issue, *The Rag* included a two-page article about a speech, Kate Millet, a feminist writer and activist, gave in town. In the speech she talked about women's rights but discussed how the greatest threat to the patriarchy was Gay Liberation. She claimed that gay men had it probably the worst in American society at the time. The way they were treated was with absolutely no tolerance. So, her argument was that if they could be free to be how they wanted, then women could be free as well. Gender roles not being so rigid and oppressive would help both sexes and gay men and women.⁸¹ This may have helped many female readers in Texas, who were likely from conservative white middle class backgrounds, realize one of their biggest allies in their own fight for equal rights was the gay community.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 18.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 2.

⁷⁹ "What Pride Liberation?" *The Rag* 5, no. 4, (Nov. 1970), 13.

⁸⁰ "What Pride Liberation?" *The Rag* 5, no. 4, (Nov. 1970), 13.

⁸¹ "Sexual Politics – Gay Liberation," *The Rag* 5, no. 4, (Nov. 1970), 11-12.

One of the more shocking articles about gay liberation was in a December 1970 of *EVO*. This article discussed a gay rights protest that took place outside of a church. They were going to electro-shock a puppy to show how inhumane gay men and women were being treated but decided to just picket instead when they realized they could go to jail for animal cruelty. A group of men in drag also showed up and had a mini parade while many sat and watched in awe at what was happening outside the church. The author claimed it was another win for the gay liberation movement.⁸² This was obviously a terrible way of trying to show people how terribly gay men and women were treated, but the idea of it was probably very thought provoking for many readers at the time. If it is considered animal cruelty with a puppy why is it legal to do to humans?

Gay men and the military was also a frequent topic for these underground newspapers. *EVO* ran a two-page article about gay men and women in the military and what kind of oppression they endure through there. It also included this large drawing, featured to the right. This highly provocative illustration

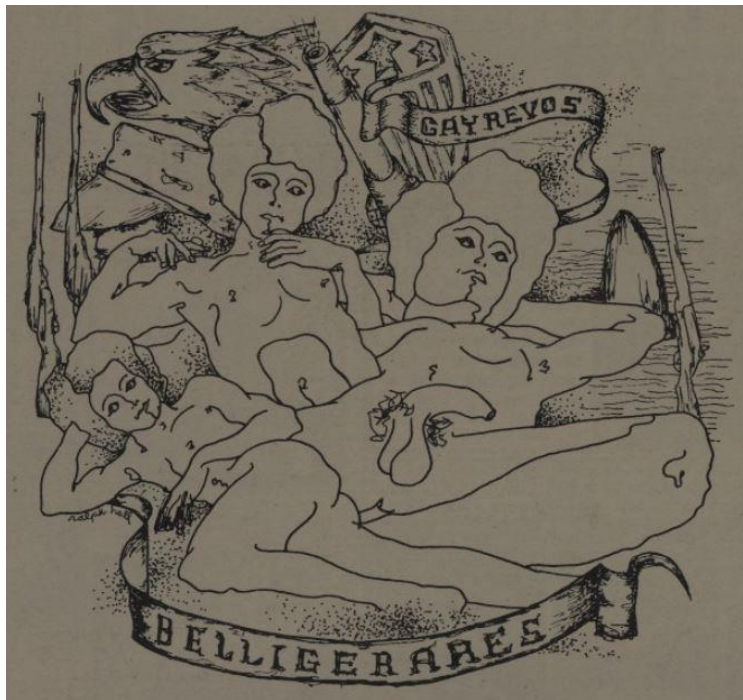


Figure 11: Photograph from *East Village Other* (New York City, New York), January 1971.

would draw the readers eyes to the article but could have also got many readers

⁸² Dean Hannotte, "Hospital Workers Come Out," *EVO* 6, no. 3, (Dec. 1970), 11.

considering the symbols of the image. The inclusion of naked men laying together with a bald eagle and other patriotic symbols makes the reader realize that many men who have fought and died for their country were likely gay men. These people have always existed, and this may have made many readers realize this. This kind of artwork is what makes the underground press unique. Mainstream publications would not have pictures of penises in their issues. The images in these newspapers were intriguing and thought provoking. Something that made the underground press special.

The article accompanied with this image discusses how gay men are being drafted and when they sign their paperwork they often did not mark the box that said they were a homosexual out of fear of what may happen to them for publicly stating they are gay. They also discuss how checking that box was often a way straight men got out of being drafted and how that made the military stop excluding people for answering that on the paperwork. The military said they would be able to figure out who was gay and who was not later. Because of this, many gay men were still being forced to stay in the military even though they felt uncomfortable doing so because of their sexuality.⁸³ This forced a lot of gay men to be put into an environment where they were not at all tolerated or put them in situations where they were abused.

The article goes on to discuss instances of rape within the military because other service men found out or assumed they were gay and raped them out of sexual frustration. They then provide one instance where two service men were caught having oral sex, the allegedly straight man claimed the gay service man had forced him to do

⁸³ Ralph Hall, "Gay Revolutionaries Waging War," *EVO* 6, no. 6, (Jan. 1971), 10.

this, but the gay service man claimed it was the other way around. In almost all cases the one claiming to be straight was the one they believed, according to the article. Because he claimed he was attacked he received no punishment and the gay man was then locked in the brig for days, starved and beaten almost daily. He was also orally and anally raped frequently by multiple men on the ship. This went on for three months and when he was finally discharged, they notified his parents that he was gay and they sent him to a mental hospital where he received electro-shock therapy. They disowned him and left him there to die. Gay liberation groups got word and got him released and were trying to rehabilitate him.⁸⁴ These kinds of horror stories were not uncommon for gay men and women and the underground press did not shy away from reporting on them.

An issue published the next month by *EVO* also discussed gay men and the military. They ran a full-page article called, "Gay Draft Guide." It detailed what gay men should do to avoid the draft and what to put on paperwork and what to say during physical exams to not be inducted into the military. It also explained to readers that they should not feel guilty for utilizing this because the military outlawed homosexuality within their ranks.⁸⁵ *EVO* continued to revisit the topic of gay men in the military and the draft over the next few months. They also advertised for upcoming demonstrations for gay liberation, including a Pride Week March. It gave the time and place for the meeting and who to contact if they wanted to help prepare for it.⁸⁶ The issue after the march

⁸⁴ Ralph Hall, "Gay Revolutionaries Waging War," *EVO* 6, no. 6, (Jan. 1971), 11.

⁸⁵ "Gay Draft Guide," *EVO* 6, no. 10, (Feb. 1971), 17.

⁸⁶ "Christopher St. Liberation March: June 27," *EVO* 6, no 29, (June 1971), 9.

discussed how it went. The author thought that the movement was not united enough and called for a stronger presence at next year's march.⁸⁷

The Rag gave readers a recommendation for a gay literary magazine in Austin in January 1971. Above this recommendation there was also information for a gay liberation group meeting taking place that week.⁸⁸ Many issues included information on meeting times and places for this group. In March they also included information to obtain "a packet of Gay Liberation literature" made by men in the Gay Liberation Front in New York.⁸⁹ Offering this information and support for gay men displays how the underground press aligned itself with Gay Liberation. It seems they were consistently used to spread information for Gay Liberation.

The Rag did not just advertise literature for Gay Liberation. They also published a half-page article about a gay liberation conference to be held in Austin later that month. They describe the agenda of the conference as, "planned by and for gays, can be an opportunity to talk openly about how we are oppressed by our traditional lifestyle."⁹⁰ The article provides information on the schedule of the conference and how to register for it and where it will be. In a later issue, on the second page of *The Rag*, they invite women and gay women who want to support to also attend the conference. They thought their last advertisement made it seem like it was for gay men only, but that was not their intention. Below this invitation was another small piece explaining how gay liberation groups are male dominated and seem to accidentally, if not purposefully, exclude women.

⁸⁷ Ralph Hall, "From Stonewall to the Sheep Meadow," *EVO* 6, no. 32, (July 1971), 6.

⁸⁸ "Rag Bag," *The Rag* 5, no. 12, (Jan. 1971), 16.

⁸⁹ "Gay Liberation Available," *The Rag* 5, no. 19, (March 1971), 8.

⁹⁰ "Gay Liberation Conference," *The Rag* 5, no. 19, (March 1971), 13.

The author of this article was trying to make women, lesbian or straight women, feel more invited to join the cause. They explained they did not want to exclude anyone who was a friend of the movement.⁹¹ The advertisement for this conference could have led to hundreds of readers attending it.

Some activists decided to protest the American Psychiatric Association convention in Washington D.C. in August of 1971. *EVO* published a full-page article about it. It detailed some of the extremely violent remarks made by psychiatrists there and then gave examples of the “treatment” many of the men at the convention had developed for homosexuality. Glorified lobotomies, electro-shock, castration, chemical castration and other things were detailed in the article.⁹² They had this to say after describing these “treatments”:

Gay Liberationists take all this as evidence of a monstrous conspiracy for the genocide of homosexuals. Gays feel that the shrinks are angry because of the disruptions, and because Gay Liberation has exposed anti-homosexual psychiatry as a hoax – nothing more than a semantic device to veil the religious beliefs of shrinks with the respectability of scientific terms.⁹³

The way this article calls out psychiatrists’ treatment of gay men and women is aggressive but probably made sense to a lot of readers. Readers may have never considered the implications of psychiatrists treating homosexuality as a disease. The article said that since the gay men interrupted their convention, there were multiple occurrences of these psychiatrists trying to push lawmakers in Nebraska to rule that homosexual men could be put in mental hospitals for life. The author also goes on to call

⁹¹ “Special Invitation to All Women,” *The Rag* 5, no. 21, (April 1971), 2.

⁹² Don Jackson, “Kill the Queers or the Queers Run Free!” *EVO* 6, no. 36, (Aug. 1971), 7.

⁹³ Don Jackson, “Kill the Queers or the Queers Run Free!” *EVO* 6, no. 36, (Aug. 1971), 7.

them neo-eugenicists.⁹⁴ *The Rag* also seemed to have reported about the same thing, but a few months later. The author of the small article pointed out how psychiatry and the Catholic church were oppressive to gay men and women.⁹⁵ These newspapers coverage of these issues may have led many to question these institutions because of their unnecessary crusade against gay men and women.

Another article from *The Rag* contained information about another Gay Liberation Conference taking place in Houston that month. It provided information on where and when it would be.⁹⁶ The other article on these two pages featured information about a Mayday march in D.C. but went on to discuss briefly how, “gay people are systematically tortured, persecuted, driven to mental hospitals and suicide by the psychiatric establishment.”⁹⁷ This article also included information for a Gay Women’s West Coast Conference in L.A. later that month and information for another Gay Liberation Front meeting in Austin that week.⁹⁸ On the sixth page of the next issue of *The Rag* was a half a page article about the upcoming Gay Pride Week celebration in Austin. It detailed the schedule for the week and invited all who were friendly to the movement to join in the celebration. The article also explained the origins of the Gay Pride Week, which was to commemorate the anniversary of the Stonewall Riots. It gives a brief description of the events at Stonewall, two year earlier. They also offer information on how to help set up

⁹⁴ Ibid., 7.

⁹⁵ “Gay Power,” *The Rag* 5, no. 9, (Dec. 1970), 14.

⁹⁶ “Gay Conf.” *The Rag* 5, no. 27, (June 1971), 8.

⁹⁷ “Sexist Mayday,” *The Rag* 5, no. 27, (June 1971), 8.

⁹⁸ “Gay Liberation,” *The Rag* 5, no. 27, (June 1971), 16.

and get involved.⁹⁹ This advertisement could have led many people to the event and helped increased support for the movement.

The underground press was a significant help for organizing the Gay Liberation Movement. They provided them with a means to spread awareness to hundreds of thousands of people and encourage them to get involved in multiple different ways. Had the underground press not existed, it is likely that Gale and Leo would have never been able to organize their protests and activists' groups and they may have never been able to inspire those in New York to stand up to their oppressors at Stonewall. Had Stonewall not happened, the mainstream media and American society would still be decades behind where it is now for gay and lesbian support. The underground press helped Gay Liberation inform those outside the movement of how their perceptions of gay people were often warped by society and the mainstream media. Many readers may have come to realize that there were more gay people than they thought and that there was really nothing wrong with them. These papers helped to desensitize American youth and get them use to seeing gay men and women. These newspapers gave gay people the same attention they did everyone else and that had subconscious message for readers: being gay is normal.

⁹⁹ "Gay Pride Week," *The Rag* 5, no. 28, (June 1971), 6.

CHAPTER V

Conclusion

The writers of the underground press focused their energy on activism over objectivity in their newspapers and this is what drew in many of their readers. The people who wrote these newspapers helped to change the world, but the world also changed them. Abe Peck noticed that while the people making the underground press were stylistically different from their parents, they ended up being the same as them in many ways. One of those ways was their full adoption of capitalism even though many of them considered capitalism as the root of all evil in American society as was evident in these newspapers.¹ In the end they became almost the same as their parents by getting jobs and becoming productive members of society.

These underground newspapers began to look more like their mainstream counterparts and began prioritizing profits over activism. The quality of the papers also depended on the writers, since these papers were anti-elitist, they did not demand the

¹ Abe Peck, *Uncovering the Sixties: The Life and Times of the Underground Press*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 167.

same standards that mainstream sources did so, over time, the papers lost their zing. The death of the Sixties could also be attributed to the underground press' decline. After the Manson murders, the violence at Altamont and some New Left groups turning to terrorism, the Sixties began to slowly fade away and with it, the underground press.¹ The underground press sort of morphed into a new era of alternative publishing that lasted through the 1990s, but this was not as politically charged as its predecessor and were not as closely aligned with any political movements. They also became corporatized and began to look almost exactly the mainstream media.² Then everything changed once the internet became a household thing. Young people slowly stopped reading print-press and switched to online sources. Millions of people began their own blogs and like the printing revolution that happened in the Sixties, the internet gave millions easier access to publishing their own work easily and cheap.³

Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin wrote in the introduction to their book, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s*, "New York Times columnist James Reston would muse in the early 1970s that over the past decade the United States had witnessed, 'the longest and most divisive conflict since the War between the States.'"⁴ As made obvious by the title, they draw parallels to the divisiveness experienced in the 1860s and 1960s. One of those parallels, THE parallel, was the Civil Rights Movement. They mention how historians have

¹ John Campbell McMillian, *Smoking Typewriters: The Sixties Underground Press and the Rise of Alternative Media in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 174-175.

² Ibid., 178-182.

³ Ibid., 187.

⁴ Maurice Isserman, Michael Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 4.

considered it to be the “second Civil War” or a “Second Reconstruction.”⁵ By looking at the Sixties like this, historians can literally see how history repeats itself or how it rhymes, whichever anecdote is preferred. The reason history repeats, or rhymes, is because people often ignore the real root of society’s problems and sweep them under the rug. Eventually someone lifts up the rug and people have to deal with what their ancestors did not cleanup for them. Many elements of the Sixties show us this. Had the leaders of Reconstruction done a better job at rebuilding the South giving and protecting rights to freed slaves, the Civil Rights Movement would not have necessarily needed to happen or would not have been quite as divisive.

David Farber said in his instrumental work, *The Age of Great Dreams*, “In the 1960s – a long time ago – Americans wrestled, as we do today, with fundamental issues of critical national importance. In part we need to understand their struggles because their acts continue to shape our world.”⁶ Understanding the underground press and its role is crucial for understanding the Sixties era as a whole. Understanding the Sixties is more important than many people think it is. The United States is still dealing with the exact same issues that were discussed in this thesis. Things have gotten better yes, but still the same arguments are being fought about. Sovereignty and land rights are a frequent issue still being dealt with today for Native Americans. Women are still underpaid, sexually assaulted, sexually exploited and are still often being denied the right to a safe and cheap

⁵ Ibid., 3.

⁶ David Farber, *The Age of Great Dreams: America in the 1960s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994), 6.

abortion. *Roe v. Wade* could possibly get overturned in the near future even. Gay men and women are still fighting for their right to exist safely in the United States and only just achieved the ability to marry legally across the country. The United States is still battling with the many issues that began to emerge in the Sixties, so it is important that historians, and non-historians, not underplay or ignore the value of these kinds of studies have for understanding the world we live in today.

One easy way educators can help students understand these movements is by putting more emphasis on the underground press. Showing how these sociopolitical movements formed, organized and gained supporters makes them seem more real and more serious. The underground press told the story from the side of the movements. It painted readers the real picture of why people were upset and did not shy away from publishing the dirty details. There are always two sides to every story, and one way to get these civil rights groups real story was to read the underground press. They informed readers about women's rights, gay rights and Native American rights from their side. They encouraged readers to support these movements in many ways. By either showing up to protests, sending money or food, calling and writing to legislators and business owners and urging them to do something. The underground press helped these movements gain allies and grow to the point that they could create real change either socially, legislatively, or economically.

The success and impact of the underground press can be measured in how large the youth and civil rights movements of the late '60s and early '70s became. Abe Peck saw that the underground press popularized drugs and the music of the

Sixties.⁷ We are living in a world forever changed by these newspapers and the causes they helped organize and gain supporters for. Had the underground press not existed these movements would have gone without a valuable partner in their mission to organize their movements and spread awareness. The mainstream media may have never realized that showing some empathy towards minority groups could actually help them increase profits. Laurence Leamer characterized the mainstream media of the time period as a failure because they refused to properly address issues that many Americans faced.⁸ The underground press became popular because the mainstream media would not do its democratic duty of giving *everyone* a voice, an equal voice. The underground press taught the mainstream media that helping people was not against the rules. The underground press also showed the mainstream media that if they did not do it right, someone else would. Giving people other than straight, white, wealthy men a voice would actually help them sell more newspapers and people would have a more positive opinion of them.

The underground press did a lot for the United States. It did a lot to help different sociopolitical movements from this time, including the Red Power Movement, the Women's Liberation Movement, and the Gay Liberation Movement. It helped spread awareness for these movements and helped them organized meetings and protests. It was important for these movements gaining sympathy from those outside of their movements and these underground

⁷ Peck, *Uncovering the Sixties*, 181.

⁸ Laurence Leamer, *The Paper Revolutionaries: The Rise of the Underground Press* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), 182.

newspapers helped many movements find more people to help them. Historians have not paid much in-depth attention to the underground press so far, but it is likely it will become a more popular topic to study for many historians of this era. Not only does it showcase the style and design of the era, but understanding its role in creating, organizing and gaining support for the Counterculture, civil rights movements, the anti-war movement and the New Left is extremely important. There is so much to be unpacked in these alternative newspapers and compared to many other types of primary sources that historians of all eras deal with, they are very interesting and funny. This could really help a lot of high school and college students get more interested in learning about history and this could also help them relate to people of past. These underground papers showed me that these people who were about my age fifty years ago were very similar to me in more ways than I had fully realized before writing this thesis.

The world has come a long way since the *Drummer* at Oklahoma State began complaining about administration in 1967. In my own days of undergrad at Oklahoma State University in the late 2010's, I saw a modernized version of the underground press through the internet. Social media websites like Twitter and Instagram are filled with student made accounts that "roast" administration and make hilarious memes about their school. I followed accounts called Okstate Probs, Squirrels of OKState and The Rowdy OkState. These accounts made jokes about administration, sports, parties, the bars, fraternities and sororities, professors, the world, and of course the campus squirrels. I follow other accounts that discuss serious political issues that are not affiliated with any sort of

government or political party or news company. I see random tweets about sociopolitical issues and economic issues that went viral and can get over one million likes. The world looks different, but our habits stay the same. The underground press still lives on, but it has taken a new shape with the Internet. It is hard to say what will happen to underground media and mainstream media in the years to come, but things are definitely changing.

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