



Police restrain Mario Savio, leader of the Berkeley Free Speech Movement, at the University of California, Berkeley, on December 7, 1964.

Photo Credit: Robert W. Klein, AP

Young Americans for Freedom

In the nation's public memory, the 1960s seem dominated by protesting students associated with the New Left. Yet, young conservatives had their own movement that often matched the size of the New Left. Feeling shunned during the years of Roosevelt and Truman and overlooked by the moderate Eisenhower administration, a new cadre of conservatives under the intellectual leadership of William F. Buckley spoke out forcefully against the expanded federal government and in favor of a radical anti-communism. They passionately championed the notion of individual liberty and smaller government (whereas their liberal counterparts believed that individual liberty—such as that of workers and African Americans—was protected by a powerful federal government). These conservatives viewed Arizona Senator and Republican Barry Goldwater as their political hero. Goldwater was an outspoken critic of domestic federal powers, ranging from New Deal legislation to civil rights reform, but he favored a more aggressive federal foreign policy, especially against communist countries.

Young conservatives formed their own organization at

universities, the **Young Americans for Freedom (YAF)**. The organization issued its manifesto at William F. Buckley's home in Connecticut in 1960, which became known as the Sharon Statement. By the spring of 1962, a YAF rally at New York City's Madison Square Garden drew a crowd of 18,000 people—at a time when the SDS counted a membership of 2,500.⁷⁸



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