



A Police State of Mind: How Police Professionalization Changed Public Opinion and Helped Ronald Reagan win California in 1966

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A Police State of Mind: How Police Professionalization Changed Public Opinion and Helped

Ronald Reagan win California in 1966

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A Thesis in the Field of History

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Abstract

Since the 1960s, punitive crime laws with bipartisan support have increased the presence of law enforcement in American society while diverting ever more tax dollars to the benefit of police organizations. At the same time, domestic policing has begun to resemble foreign counterinsurgency efforts more and more. While researchers have deftly outlined the political machinations that led to the rise of the American carceral state, few of them have identified the political effect of that development. The aim of my thesis is to explore the potential effects of these changes on politics and public opinion. To better understand those effects, I attempted to situate my project outside of the political context that led to the Omnibus Crime Bill of 1968 and the beginning of the carceral period by focusing on California, the epicenter of police professionalization. By analyzing the 1966 gubernatorial election, I argue that police professionalizers standardized tactics during the 1960s that were explicitly designed to manipulate public opinion by leveraging media sources and political influence. Further, implicit racial and political biases were codified in standard procedures by basing policing strategy on empirical data produced by police departments who engaged in racially and politically motivated behavior without compunction.

By analyzing government documents, campaign materials, media sources, and internal documents from the University of California Berkeley, I show that both local law enforcement in California and federal law enforcement agencies in the FBI used tactics prescribed by police professionalization efforts to manipulate the opinions of elected

officials and the public, particularly regarding crime and the student protests at the University of California Berkeley. They used events such as those student protests and the Watts Rebellion to craft a narrative that suggested that permissive liberalism created a permission structure around crime that threatened to send American society into anarchy and chaos. Police interlocutors used this narrative to aid the campaign of Ronald Reagan both directly and indirectly and helped bring about his victory in 1966.

Dedication

To my wife Lauren, for the love, support, and motivation and to Wesley, in hopes that you inherit a better world than this.

Acknowledgments

This project owes quite a bit to the excellent scholars who have begun to reveal the relationship between counterinsurgency and domestic policing in the United States. Foremost among those scholars is Stuart Schrader, whose book, *Badges Without Borders*, inspired a great deal of my thinking at the outset of my research. Other scholars who sparked my interest or connected some dots for me are Alfred McCoy, who opened my eyes to the idea that the foundations of the present can be very deep in the ground indeed. I read Vesla Weaver's article "Frontlash" in the first class of my master's coursework and didn't stop thinking about it until I wrote the last word of my thesis. Elizabeth Hinton forced me to adjust my perspective on the rise of the carceral state and allowed me to conceive of the notion that the police were political actors in their own right. Kathleen Belew's incredible work on white nationalist paramilitary groups reinforced David Cunningham's work on the FBI and clarified for me that the inherent biases with which law enforcement officials saw the world could seep into their behavior. My thesis would not have been remotely possible without the work of these tremendous scholars, and I extend my thanks to them.

My professors and mentors at the Harvard Extension school provided invaluable advice and feedback throughout my education and this project. Special thanks to John Boonstra, whose assignment provided the connection I needed to conceive of this project at the outset. Ariane Liazos provided expert guidance from the very beginning. Her assigned readings during the Proseminar formed the backbone of the scholarship that

underpinned this project and her guidance and feedback during the proposal phase helped me see this project clearly and organize my success from day one. Finally, thank you to Aaron Bekemeyer for listening to me ramble about every morsel of research and moment of doubt along the way. Without his patience and his incredibly useful feedback, this project would not have been anywhere near as successful as it is.

Many tremendous archivists are responsible for providing incredible documents and evidence that I could not have possibly unearthed on my own. Thank you to Ray Wilson at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Archives for helping me find literally every document that might include information about Reagan's 1966 campaign. Thank you also to Michael Holland for his inexhaustible knowledge about the City of Los Angeles and his help uncovering Sam Yorty's role in the 1966 campaign. I'd also like to thank the archivists and research assistants at The Bancroft Library at the University of California Berkeley and the California State Archives in Sacramento.

There were many important mentors throughout my life that were essential to my achievements along the way. Roseanne Ducey helped me realize just how much potential I might be squandering by loafing my way through high school. Without that wake-up call, who knows where I'd be today, but I almost certainly wouldn't be writing this. Thank you to Professor Mark Donan for helping me unlock the revision process and become a far better writer than I ever could have hoped to be under my own power. Thank you to Dan Davis, for believing in me and giving me a second chance I'm not sure I deserved. I believe that you were the platonic ideal of an educator and I carry your memory with me always. Jon Roberts of Boston University helped me realize my love for original research and encouraged me to explore the idea of pursuing it as a profession. I'll

circle back in ten years and decide if I should extend my thanks for that particular moment of inspiration or not.

Finally, I could not have achieved anything at all without my loving family. Thanks to my father, Robert, who instilled a love for history within me at an early age through World War II histories and map games. Thank you to my mother, Denise, for always believing in me and supporting me no matter what I was doing. Most importantly, thank you to my loving wife Lauren, for reading literally everything I wrote during my master's coursework. Thank you for all of your love and support, for sacrificing so much to provide that support, and for being willing to go along for the ride wherever it might take us. I hope that someday I can repay you for everything you've done for me and our family, but I fear that debt might already be insurmountable. Lastly, thank you to Wesley, my son, for turning up the difficulty on this thesis from normal to hard. I hope that you are sleeping significantly more next time I write something like this.

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Chapter I

Introduction

“We lead as a state in many things; we’re going to stop leading in crime.” So proclaimed Governor-elect Ronald Reagan in his first inaugural address in 1967, having defeated incumbent Pat Brown by almost a million votes. His inaugural included an extended section on crime with promises to pass legislation to “enable the police to more adequately protect” Californians, to give “the law abiding...at least as much protection as the law breaker,” and “act firmly and quickly to put down riot or insurrection wherever and whenever the situation requires.”¹ This rhetoric is not surprising coming from Reagan, who would go on to initiate the War on Drugs of the 1980s, nor is it surprising coming from an American politician, given the bipartisan fealty to law-and-order politics that has existed since the administration of President Lyndon Johnson. There are a few surprising things about Reagan’s inaugural, however. His speech took place in 1967, before the passage of the 1968 Omnibus Crime Bill that created the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, a benchmark that many scholars consider the beginning of the era of law-and-order politics and the rise of the American carceral state. The speech took place in a political context in which law-and-order politics had been a losing strategy for the better part of the decade, considering the defeat of Richard Nixon in the previous gubernatorial election in California and the abject failure of the presidential bid of Barry

¹ Ronald Reagan, “January 5, 1967: Inaugural Address (Public Ceremony), Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives, January 5, 1967, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/january-5-1967-inaugural-address-public-ceremony>.

Goldwater. In the year before Reagan gave this speech, most political prognosticators thought that the Republican Party was in the wilderness, led into the abyss by its right wing, and in need of a pivot back to center. Reagan's victory upended prevailing conventional wisdom about politics and presaged the success of Nixon's campaign against Johnson in the next election.

Previous scholarship attributes the newfound success of Republican conservatives at the end of the 1960s to a rightward shift in American politics brought on by a white backlash against civil rights legislation. The effects of this are observable in California in the mid-1960s as well, including the repeal via referendum of the Rumford Fair Housing Act in 1964, which forbade discrimination based on race in real estate practices. Much of Reagan's language in his campaign and in his inaugural were effective dog whistles to anti-Civil Rights voters. Winning California by a million votes, though, required Reagan to win a lot of voters who were perfectly fine with the progress of the Civil Rights movement. Further, anti-Rumford voters voted overwhelmingly to reject Barry Goldwater in the very same election, which suggests that the connection between the Rumford Act and a "white backlash" is tenuous enough that it did not represent a widespread exodus from the rolls of the Democratic party to those of the GOP. Outside of racial factors, other issues that complicated politics for incumbent Democrats in the 1960s were absent as well. For instance, Vietnam, which became a particular albatross for President Johnson had not yet begun to dominate American politics the way it would by 1968. The economy in California and in the country at large was also quite good.

Why, then, would voters who so soundly rejected Goldwater in 1964 be so eager to vote for Reagan in 1966?²

One campaign issue from the 1966 race offers some clues as to what changed California public opinion so drastically: the student protests at the University of California Berkeley in 1964. When California voters were asked to list the biggest issues facing their state during the 1966 campaign, most responses included issues typical to most elections - crime, race relations, and some combination of taxes and welfare. The outlier was the Berkeley protests, which were mentioned at the same rate. The Berkeley protests have the helpful benefit of not being obviously tied to race in a way that easily categorizes the issue as a product of white backlash. Why would voters who were made uncomfortable or upset by the rapid societal change brought on by the Civil Rights Act of 1965 be so obsessed with the Berkeley protests? It's clear that something else was motivating voters to fret about intrauniversity free speech disputes.³

My investigation of the Berkeley Free Speech Movement (FSM) phenomenon reveals law enforcement officials directly shaped much of the narrative surrounding the FSM and its offshoot, the Vietnam Day Committee (VDC). The initial controversy was sparked by a conversation between law enforcement and Governor Brown that resulted in the arrest of hundreds of protesters at Sproul Hall. The police used their media connections to convince the public that the civil disobedience tactics used by the FSM represented a slippery slope to chaos and anarchy, and the tolerance of protesters using

² Mark Brilliant, *The Color of America Has Changed: How Racial Diversity Shaped Civil Rights Reform in California, 1941-1978* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 222; "State Prosperity Never Greater, Brown Reports," *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), March 11, 1966, <http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/historical-newspapers/state-prosperity-never-greater-brown-reports/docview/155395476/se-2>.

³ California poll 66-04, June 16-20, 1966, <https://sda.berkeley.edu/sdaweb/analysis/?dataset=cal6604&selectedvar=Q9>.

those tactics was partially responsible for the rising crime rates experienced in California. At every turn of the Berkeley saga there was a law enforcement official steering the narrative or else influencing politicians to do so on their behalf. The police even used tactics that exaggerated the threat posed by student protesters. It is fair to say that Berkeley would not have been on the mind of voters at all if it hadn't been for the efforts of law enforcement to sway public opinion.

This finding suggests that the force that moved California voters away from Pat Brown and toward Ronald Reagan was not the success of the Civil Rights Movement but instead police professionalization. Police professionalization was an effort by law enforcement officials to standardize police practices in order to make policing more effective and less susceptible to political corruption. These police practices were standardized by stridently anticommunist counterinsurgency experts and disseminated in training programs initially run by the FBI and later run by the LEAA. These experts codified standard practices that identified any group or individual that threatened the status quo as a potential threat and incentivized making arrests rather than solving crimes. The ensuing uptick in arrest rates created a positive feedback effect that suggested an increase in crime originating from minority communities. This effect mostly explains the crime statistics Reagan and future politicians used to make the case that an increase in law enforcement presence was needed.⁴

⁴ Stuart Schrader, *Badges without Borders: How Global Counterinsurgency Transformed American Policing*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2019), 62-71; O.W. Wilson, *Police Administration* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1963), 258-264; Vesla Weaver, "Frontlash: Race and the Development of Punitive Crime Policy," *Studies in American Political Development* 21, no. 2 (2007): 230-65, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0898588X07000211>, 233-234.

The effects of police professionalization might have emerged in California first because California was on the cutting edge of the professionalization movement. As the Chief of California's Bureau of Criminal Statistics Ronald H. Beattie wrote in the *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* in 1960, California had a unique "history of police development over the past forty years, stemming from the leadership of August Vollmer" and that California had probably felt the influence of what we now label police professionalization "more strongly...than any other state." Vollmer had founded the first School of Criminology in the United States at the University of California Berkeley and his protégé, O.W. Wilson, wrote the leading police textbook of the era. The precepts of the professionalization movement took root in California before most of the rest of the country. Any political effects caused by the professionalization movement undoubtedly would have been as well.⁵

Scholars have not yet adequately studied these political effects. Most research into policing in America focuses on either its role in the rise of the carceral state or the origins of its philosophy. Some research does attempt to connect policing and public opinion, but this body of work mostly focuses on the FBI. Scholars that focus on the origins of the carceral state identify the source of punitive crime policy as politicians who influence the public from the top, whether they pushed their own anti-civil rights agenda or else followed the advice of experts. Researchers that focused on the effects of FBI programs such as COINTELPRO on the public illustrate a modest effect on the larger public that mostly created an anticommunist political consensus.⁶ I argue that the police initiated

⁵ Ronald H. Beattie, "Criminal Statistics in the United States – 1960," *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 51, no. 1 (1960): 49-6,5 <https://doi.org/10.2307/1140804>, 53-54; Schrader, *Badges*, 62-71.

⁶ See historiographical essay below for examples.

much of the political shift toward tough-on-crime policies in the 1960s by actively shaping public narratives and often directly influencing the views of politicians.

Researchers into the California Gubernatorial election of 1966 have found that a burgeoning far right movement eventually helmed by Ronald Reagan was able to take advantage of two major issues to win the governorship: Watts and Berkeley. While these researchers were able to show the grassroots political activism that provided the base of the conservative movement and show how Reagan's campaign provided a blueprint for later Republican campaigns, they did not explain why the public became so fixated on the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley.⁷ Multiple researchers indicated that the focus on Berkeley came not from the Reagan campaign but instead emerged from questions posed to Reagan himself at Q&A sessions throughout California.⁸ This indicates that Berkeley became a campaign issue not because the Reagan campaign took advantage of an event and framed it in a politically effective way, but because law enforcement had already amplified the issue in the minds of the public.

Using newspaper accounts of the FSM protests, the Watts Rebellion,⁹ and the 1966 California Gubernatorial Campaign, along with polling and internal documents

⁷ Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

⁸ Matthew Dallek, *The Right Moment: Ronald Reagan's First Victory and the Decisive Turning Point in American Politics* (New York: Free Press, 2000), 190; Kurt Schuparra, *Triumph of the Right: The Rise of the California Conservative Movement, 1945-1966* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), 117.

⁹ I use the term "Watts Rebellion" to describe the six days of violent confrontation between the citizens of the Watts neighborhood in Los Angeles and the Los Angeles Police Department and California National Guard. It was sparked by an incident of police brutality on August 11, 1965. It resulted in thirty-four deaths, over 1,000 injuries, and millions of dollars of property damage. I use the term "rebellion" rather than "riot" or "uprising" throughout this proposal for a few reasons. First, the State of California officially uses the term "Watts Rebellion" and remaining consistent with their nomenclature will help prevent confusion. Second, the term "riot" connotes random and meaningless violence that fails to describe the events in question. Some historians, such as Horne, have opted to use the term "uprising" to imbue the Watts Rebellion with political meaning. While I agree that Watts contained such ideals, the term "uprising" in my estimation involves goal-oriented actions, specifically regarding a shift in political power. It is not

from the papers of Pat Brown, Ronald Reagan, and Los Angeles Mayor Sam Yorty, I will illustrate that the way law enforcement approached crime prevention and public relations convinced California voters that crime was rising and that societal permissiveness to lawbreaking was the major cause of that increase. The characterization of the student protests originating from the University of California Berkeley by the Alameda County District Attorney's office, the California Highway Patrol, and local police departments changed public opinion about each political party, helping the Republican party shed its distinction as a party of extremists led by the John Birch society and depicting Democrats as being led by their noses by the most extreme and subversive members of their party. The approach to crime prevention adopted by police departments throughout California created the illusion that crime was rising to fever pitch throughout California, particularly in urban areas predominantly inhabited by people of color. These efforts also created a positive feedback effect that incarcerated a disproportionate amount of people of color in California, decimating their communities culturally and economically. Policing in this way increased racial strife that culminated in rebellions such as Watts. The narrative crafted by law enforcement surrounding the Berkeley protests and Watts Rebellion helped these events become the two most salient events in the election of 1966. It also created a political consensus that civil disobedience was an illegitimate means to seek political change and created a slippery slope toward a breakdown of law and order. These developments created a political climate in which law and order messaging, used to little

clear that the citizens of Watts ever formed a coalition who intended on wresting power from the state. Rather, the Rebellion was an impassioned and violent response to an injustice perpetrated by the state from an underprivileged community who had few levers of political power. I feel that using the term "rebellion" in this context makes political meaning clear without ascribing intention that is absent from the historical record.

effect by Republicans such as Richard Nixon and Barry Goldwater as recently as 1964, was increasingly effective and culminated in Ronald Reagan's defeat of Pat Brown in the election of 1966.

Historical Background and Historiography

The 1960s witnessed seismic shifts in the social and political context of the United States. The advent of the Cold War led to American global hegemony in the west and pitted the US in an ideological war with the USSR that spilled over into the domestic realm. The largest generation in American history came of age at the height of these tensions and responded by redefining liberal politics in the face of unfettered domestic intelligence operations and increased involvement in Vietnam. Meanwhile, the Civil Rights Movement reached its crescendo with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. As the momentous Civil Rights bill passed, many other forces began pushing in a different direction. A nascent conservative movement began to question the wisdom of New Deal style legislation, particularly President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society, pointing to a rising tide of urban crime and poverty that remained unresolved and, according to them, exacerbated by legislation designed to alleviate its underlying causes. Anticrime legislation passed in response to the perceived failure of the Great Society initiative sparked the rise of the carceral state, which undermined efforts to reform structural disadvantages installed by racist policy and remains a scourge on the black community.¹⁰

¹⁰ Elizabeth Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017), 1-3.

There has been much recent research done on these political shifts and their origins and impacts. Researchers have done an exceptional job investigating the role of elite political entrepreneurs and grassroots activism in the rise of the political movements that defined the second half of the twentieth century. Still more have explored how initiatives spawned by these political movements have resulted in the exponential rise of the carceral state. In many cases, the question that remains unanswered is how the policies that provide the focus of these studies, such as police professionalization and the increased federal funding that came with it, affected public opinion and politics. Researchers that do consider these factors tend to view the topic in the opposite direction and ask, “how did political shifts and shifts in public opinion affect policing?”

Elizabeth Hinton and Vesla Weaver, for instance, examine the origins of the carceral state and conclude that the actions of elected politicians are the main cause. Weaver asks how the most punitive crime laws in US history could pass while the largest civil rights gains since Reconstruction pass simultaneously. She concludes that politicians used rising crime and inner city protests as “focusing events” to “articulate a problem in a new, ostensibly related domain – the problem of crime.” Her argument is that anti-Civil Rights politicians used crime and civil unrest to tie legitimate protest to criminal activity and undermined gains experienced by the Civil Rights movement with a string of punitive crime laws. Furthermore, their messaging captured the issue and forced Democrats to move to the right on issues they once dominated. She cites the professionalization of police as a precipitating event in this sequence, showing that

professionalization increased police efficiency, resulting in more crimes addressed.¹¹

Therefore, it was not necessarily the occurrence of crime that increased but rather the resolution of criminal acts that increased. There is no indication that she considered the possibility that changes in police activity resulting from professionalization efforts might have influenced those politicians or the public. Instead, causality flows downward from political elites, who subsequently influence the public. The motivation of police interlocutors to exaggerate crime is simply to win more funding and has no political element.

Hinton also shows that crime policy was shaped by racist ideas embedded in the leading sociological research of the period. Because of this, crime was interpreted as a problem particular to African Americans and experts called upon to formulate crime policy acted with that assumption in place. Hinton highlights the problem of police funding being tied to self-reported crime statistics and shows that this incentive inflated a crime problem that, when properly contextualized, had grown smaller over time. Again, the compilation of exaggerated statistics is merely a mechanism through which law enforcement organizations secured more funding, not an effort to create political messaging that increased their influence. Both studies are limited by the causal direction they establish. In Weaver's estimation, crime becomes an issue because of a shift in Republican messaging that takes advantage of the results of police professionalization. In Hinton's estimation, it is the bipartisan focus on law and order in the face of civil unrest that begins with the Johnson administration that leads to crime policies that compound

¹¹ Vesla M. Weaver, "Frontlash: Race and the Development of Punitive Crime Policy," *Studies in American Political Development* 21, no. 2 (2007): 230-65, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0898588X07000211>.

the problem they sought to alleviate. It is equally likely that police officials used their own political messaging to sway politicians and the public to a more police-oriented worldview.¹²

Developments in domestic policing during this period in the United States further support this potentiality. Stuart Schrader and Alfred McCoy both analyzed the connection between American foreign policy and domestic policing. McCoy focuses on the American counterinsurgency efforts in the Philippines at the turn of the twentieth century and noted that both tactics and personnel flowed freely between police organizations in the Philippines and at home. Schrader uses a similar lens but focuses on the counterinsurgency efforts at the outset of the Cold War. Both researchers found that counterinsurgency experts whose police experience mostly consisted of policing enemies in foreign lands were entrusted with efforts to professionalize the domestic security apparatus at home. McCoy's research shows that counterinsurgency experts from the Philippines became the father of organizations like the FBI and military intelligence services.¹³ Schrader shows that similarly trained experts started police professionalization movements in the US. All of these counterinsurgency experts were virulently anticommunist, and most were toward the far right of the political spectrum.¹⁴ The professionalization efforts led by these men began in the early 1960s and trained thousands of members of police leadership nationwide each year, lending credence to the

¹² Hinton, *Mass Incarceration*; Weaver, "Frontlash."

¹³ Alfred W. McCoy, *Policing America's Empire: The United States, the Philippines, and the Rise of the Surveillance State* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009).

¹⁴ Schrader, *Badges*.

idea that these shifts in police behavior could produce novel results that changed people's minds about what was happening in their communities.

Unfortunately, studies concerning the effects of police activity on public opinion and politics tend to focus exclusively on the FBI. For instance, Cunningham compares the activities of the FBI's COINTELPRO when policing far left groups and far right groups by cataloguing them according to the action taken and the goal of each action. He finds that the FBI tended to seek the complete destruction of far-left groups and the total discreditation of far-left leadership. By contrast, in the case of far-right groups, the FBI sought to steer members to less violent far right organizations while destroying the most publicly onerous groups such as the KKK. Cunningham concludes that the FBI viewed far left ideologies as inherently subversive while viewing only the violence of far-right groups as subversive.¹⁵ This analysis stops short of measuring its effect on the public's view of these organizations.

Other researchers took a broader approach. Keller, for instance, examines oversight mechanisms of the FBI in the Johnson era and shows that liberal deference to expertise in the 1960s created a political context in which the FBI was almost completely autonomous, allowing them to use whatever means they saw fit to address communist threats at home. By the time Democrats attempt to reign in the FBI, the political shift to the right that this project targets has already happened.¹⁶ John Drabble more closely examines FBI actions in COINTELPRO White Hate and its relationship to the political

¹⁵ David Cunningham, *There's Something Happening Here: The New Left, the Klan, and FBI Counterintelligence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

¹⁶ William W. Keller, *The Liberals and J. Edgar Hoover: Rise and Fall of a Domestic Intelligence State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

consensus surrounding what constituted subversive ideologies or behaviors. His study found that FBI COINTELPRO efforts changed the way politicians viewed the Klan, particularly in the south. Their efforts in other COINTELPROs changed the way politicians viewed civil rights, liberal, and antiwar groups as well. Essentially, by equating the Klan with groups such as SDS and VDC they created an “emerging ‘consensus’ in American political discourse” that centered around ensuring “domestic tranquility.”¹⁷ While these researchers focus solely on the FBI, similar forces applied to the politics around police professionalization. The drive for professionalization and the selection of counterinsurgency experts was driven largely by the Kennedy and Johnson administrations’ reliance on experts in their field to shape policy. Further, FBI officials and policing experts shared similar worldviews, making it likely that the patterns researchers found with the FBI here would also extend to policing as a whole. Lastly, FBI efforts to suppress subversion resemble counterinsurgency efforts abroad and mirror training given to police during the early 1960s. In fact, the FBI provided much of that training in the beginning of the movement.¹⁸ Thus, it’s reasonable to wonder if changes in policing would have had similar effects on the political environment that these researchers identified because of COINTELPRO.

Two major events in California during this period, the Berkeley Free Speech Movement and the Watts Rebellion, suggest that local and state law enforcement officials were engaged in tactics similar to the ones shown by researchers who looked at the FBI. While studies of the Berkeley movements of the 1960s and the Watts Rebellion in 1965

¹⁷ John Drabble, “To Ensure Domestic Tranquility: The FBI, COINTELPRO-WHITE HATE and Political Discourse, 1964-1971,” *Journal of American Studies*, 2004-2008, vol. 38, no. 2, 297-328
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S002187580400845X>

¹⁸ Schrader, *Badges*, 172-173

tend to focus on the political implications of the respective movements rather than their immediate impact on California politics or their salience as issues in the minds of voters, they do reveal police efforts to influence politicians and the public. W. J. Rorabaugh's seminal work on Berkeley in the 1960s is a narrative about new social and political movements that converged on the Berkeley campus and reimagined power structures in politics and society. His focus on the grassroots is an attempt to identify points of intersection and divergence among New Left groups and project them into the future of the Counterculture movement writ large.¹⁹ His study reveals that on multiple occasions, police officials fabricated details about the Berkeley movements when talking to Pat Brown. These fabrications encouraged Brown to call on the police to resolve situations in which there was no imminent danger. Police then testified in court or planted narratives in the media that suggested that student behavior was more radical and criminal than official observers reported.²⁰

Gerald Horne looks at Watts through the lens of "broader questions of political economy." He specifically places Watts in the context of Cold War foreign policy, identifying an "apparent paradox that as Jim Crow subsided, black nationalism grew; and, concomitantly, that as the presumed liberalizing influence of anti-Jim Crow measures were exerted, conservatism began to grow." He identifies Watts as the culmination of the fierce suppression of the Left brought on by anticommunist forces like the FBI and the rise of black nationalism after Watts as a response to having fewer normal political avenues available to Black residents of Los Angeles. In the course of establishing this

¹⁹ W. J. Rorabaugh, *Berkeley at War: The 1960s* (Cary: Oxford University Press, 1989).

²⁰ Rorabaugh, *Berkeley*, 16, 32.

narrative, Horne asserts that the Reagan campaign is able to capitalize on White backlash by banging the anticommunist drum used to stamp out the communist party and labor between 1930 and 1950.²¹ However, studies of the Reagan campaign in 1966 show that the Reagan campaign self-consciously distanced itself from the anticommunist messaging that had failed in previous campaigns and reimagined its political messaging around law and order and morality issues. Horne's work, again, reveals police activity that had the potential to increase the severity of the violence during the Watts Rebellion in the mind of the public. He shows that police testimony regarding events of the Watts Rebellion does not line up with forensic evidence gathered by the police themselves. Inconsistencies were mostly ignored by grand juries, but this false testimony, coupled with political messaging from both LAPD police chief William Parker and Los Angeles Mayor Sam Yorty led to a media narrative that exaggerated the violence of the Watts Rebellion and hid the culpability of the police.²²

Perhaps not coincidentally, California underwent a similar shift in public opinion during this era as the rest of the country. The larger shift at the national level became apparent in the 1968 election. In California it was evident earlier, during the 1966 Gubernatorial campaign. In fact, many historians have already begun to study California in the 1960s as a harbinger of national politics to come later in the decade. Lisa McGirr explores the grassroots conservative movement in Orange County, California, and its role in catapulting Ronald Reagan to the governorship in 1966 and his brand of conservative politics to the national stage shortly after. Her work helps to define the ideological shift

²¹ Gerald Horne, *Fire This Time: The Watts Uprising and the 1960s* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995).

²² Horne, *Fire*, 72-97.

the Republican party underwent after the 1964 presidential election but does not focus on the larger political shift in California that led to Reagan's gubernatorial victory.²³

Matthew Dallek attempts to find the seeds of Reagan's success at the national level in his 1966 victory and finds that Reagan is able to create a positive vision for the future during both campaigns. He also identifies Watts and Berkeley as the pivotal issues of the election of 1966.²⁴ Ethan Rarick adds another piece to the puzzle, showing that Berkeley became an issue in the campaign not because of Reagan's initiative but because the public continually asked him about it.²⁵ Why was Berkeley such an imposing issue for California voters at the outset of Reagan's campaign in 1966 and not during earlier protest movements centered there?

While no study explicitly links police activity to the political shifts evident during the 1966 election, journalist Seth Rosenfeld found that the FBI directly influenced it. Rosenfeld found that Ronald Reagan had an intermittent relationship with the FBI beginning with the HUAC hearings in California surrounding communist influence in Hollywood and extending through his gubernatorial campaign in California. But his documents also show that the FBI provided information to his opponent, Pat Brown, and other politicians to convince politicians of potential communist threats and sway them to policies that fit the FBI's prescriptive worldview. Furthermore, almost all efforts uncovered by Rosenfeld by the FBI to connect Berkeley and Watts to communism were unsuccessful in the public eye.²⁶ While Reagan was totally convinced, his messaging

²³ McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*.

²⁴ Dallek, *The Right Moment*.

²⁵ Ethan Rarick, *California Rising: The Life and Times of Pat Brown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

²⁶ Seth Rosenfeld, *Subversives: The FBI's War on Student Radicals and Reagan's Rise to Power*, (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2012).

during the 1966 campaign contained very little of the FBI's information. The most damaging information provided to the Reagan campaign came not from the FBI but instead from police organizations such as the California state police and the Alameda county sheriff and DA.

Researchers have focused on the 1960s as a critical juncture in the political and social history of the United States, one whose reverberations are still felt today. The carceral state remains a leviathan that dominates the fabric of US society. The rise of the far right in the last decade has its roots in the Reagan Revolution that began in the 1960s in California. This research does not fully explain why public opinion shifted to the right in the mid-1960s. Effective political messaging on the part of conservative politicians is certainly part of the explanation. However, changes in public opinion appear before political messaging shifts in many cases, including the 1966 gubernatorial race in California. I argue that increased crime resolution by police along with an active political messaging campaign of their own contributed to that shift.

Methods and Sources

I examined police textbooks and training manuals, media coverage of Watts and Berkeley, and internal documents from Ronald Reagan, Pat Brown, Edwin Meese, and the University of California at Berkeley. The prevailing police textbook in use during the 1960s, O.W. Wilson's *Police Administration* outlined staffing strategies that emphasized increased police presence in areas in which crime rates had been high in the past, essentially codifying the very racial biases that police professionalizers ostensibly were

trying to eradicate. Further, his textbook recommended police officer evaluation methods that incentivized volume of arrests over convictions. In practice, this methodology would almost certainly inflate the crime rate by increasing the number of reported arrests. Lastly, the textbook included a whole chapter dedicated to public relations, including how to ensure that the press relied on police departments for information and how to influence politicians by ensuring they received information sourced by law enforcement. All of these instructions, if implemented as intended, would have allowed law enforcement to control the narrative around any event in which they were involved.²⁷

To determine whether these strategies were implemented, I examined newspaper records from San Francisco and Los Angeles that concerned the student protests at Berkeley and the Watts Rebellion to see if there was evidence of police influence or police sourcing. I found that in many cases, journalists sourced information from police informants and often printed police sourced information first. In some cases, journalists would disparage counternarratives and suggest that the police narrative was fact. The police often gave information to the press to set outsized expectations for an event. For example, they implied that they were preparing for a parade by the Vietnam Day Committee as though they expected high levels of violence and destruction in order to make the VDC more menacing than they might have appeared otherwise.

I also examined the records of Governor Pat Brown, Ronald Reagan, Sam Yorty, the University of California at Berkeley, President of UC Berkeley Clark Kerr, Assistant Alameda County DA Edwin Meese, and the California Unamerican Activities Committee to ascertain to what extent law enforcement influenced politicians directly. I found

²⁷ Wilson, *Administration*.

multiple cases in which law enforcement sent information to politicians to change their mind about a subject or to suggest a certain conclusion should be reached. Further, it seemed that in many cases law enforcement gave information to a preferred candidate in order to give them an advantage over another candidate.

Lastly, I examined public opinion polling, letters to the editor, constituent letters, and opinion columns to measure the effect police activity had on public opinion. I found that law enforcement's public relations efforts catapulted the student protests at Berkeley to the top of voters' minds as the election of 1966 approached. Politicians such as Ronald Reagan then were able to craft an effective narrative that suggested a leadership gap had created chaos and anarchy in California that helped defeat Governor Brown despite his best efforts to position himself as a law-and-order candidate.

Overview

Changes caused by the professionalization movement in law enforcement affected the way the public in California perceived the governor's race in 1966. Changes in how law enforcement policed the public caused an increase in crime that law enforcement officials leveraged to gain more funding and influence politicians to pass legislation that made their jobs easier. These efforts were successful and created a political consensus that crime was rising, and increased law enforcement was needed to fight the increase. By using their influence with the media and politicians to craft law enforcement friendly narratives, the police in California successfully connected the student protests at Berkeley with the Watts Rebellion through the concept of civil disobedience, delegitimizing the tactic and successfully convincing the public and politicians that tolerance of civil disobedience as political speech created a permission structure around crime that led to a

breakdown of law and order. The chaos created by these events were emphasized by law enforcement through political interlocutors such as Mayor Sam Yorty of Los Angeles and Ronald Reagan to undermine Governor Pat Brown's campaign to be reelected for a third term as governor.

In chapter one, I show how the police used tactics recommended by Wilson in the public relations chapter of *Police Administration* to influence Governor Pat Brown to allow the police to arrest protesters at Sproul Hall at the University of California Berkeley in 1964. I then follow the continued efforts of the police and Governor Brown over the coming months and years to discredit both the student protest movement and the concept of civil disobedience by suggesting that no protest that broke any law remained legitimate political speech. This emerging political consensus would have disastrous results for the right to protest in California and Governor Brown's own reelection efforts later in the decade.

In chapter two, I show how police professionalization exaggerated the crime rates in communities of color and responded by increasing arrest rates, exacerbating the socioeconomic problems already experienced in many of those communities. This law enforcement approach eventually sparked the Watts Rebellion, although law enforcement officials such as Chief William Parker of the LAPD were able to use their influence over the media and politicians such as Mayor Sam Yorty to counter criticisms of police brutality levied at LAPD. In the end, law enforcement convinced Governor Brown and Mayor Yorty that increased law enforcement funding coupled with a crackdown on protests that broke the law was the only way to prevent more "rioting" in the future.

Chapter three follows the 1966 gubernatorial campaign itself, wherein years of law enforcement efforts to shape public narratives bore their greatest fruit yet. I show that law enforcement influenced Mayor Sam Yorty to run for governor against Pat Brown to ensure that a candidate that was committed to appointing police friendly supreme court justices and passing police friendly legislation would ascend to the governorship. Yorty's messaging was couched in police terminology and perspective, and much of it was repurposed by the Reagan campaign in the general election to great effect. Law enforcement officials revived Berkeley as a campaign issue by releasing exaggerated details of a dance that took place at Berkeley that included rampant drug use and sexual deviance. In the end, Ronald Reagan was able to capitalize on information provided to him by FBI informants on the Berkeley campus and the public relations efforts of police officials to craft a salient narrative that convinced voters in California that Governor Brown's failures in leadership had caused a breakdown of law and order.

Chapter II

Berkeley

Unbeknownst to California Democrats at the time, 1964 would include both the zenith of their political success in the Cold War era, with the defeat of Barry Goldwater, and the harbinger of their political downfall, with the beginning of the student protests at the University of California Berkeley. The arrest of Jack Weinberg for giving out information about CORE on campus on October 1, 1964 sparked a protest of university limits on political speech that would coalesce into the Free Speech Movement (FSM). FSM protests, led by Civil Rights Movement veterans like Mario Savio, incorporated non-violent civil disobedience tactics learned in Mississippi to draw attention to the injustice they perceived in the university rules. The FSM organized a sit-in at Sproul Hall to halt university business and force administrators to negotiate with students on the issue. Instead, police arrested 801 students on charges of criminal trespass. On the face of it, these events represented a minor but dramatic intra-university issue that had little connection to outside society. However, political operatives from both gubernatorial campaigns in the 1966 election cited these events and their aftermath as the most important issue of the entire campaign.²⁸

How these protests became such a salient statewide issue has much to do with the actions of law enforcement. Law enforcement in California were on the cutting edge of a nascent effort to professionalize police departments throughout the US.

²⁸ Schuparra, *Triumph*, 117.

Professionalization was designed to shed the reputation that American police were corrupt and racist organizations mostly controlled by local power brokers. These efforts were led by counterinsurgency experts who spent their careers quashing popular uprisings in the colonial Philippines and occupied Axis territory in WWII. The training they developed for domestic police codified an intrinsic bias that stemmed from a shared anticommunist and racial worldview. They also ensured that information disseminated by politicians and the media served the interests of law enforcement by implementing public relations strategies that took advantage of politicians' and journalists' overreliance on law enforcement sources. California law enforcement used these strategies to misrepresent the Free Speech Movement and the Berkeley student body at large as immoral, anti-American, and, in some cases, violent. The influence of law enforcement on politicians and the media helped create a political consensus around the idea that civil disobedience was no longer an acceptable form of political protest. Instead, they argued, tolerance of civil disobedience emboldened other criminals and caused a breakdown of law and order that led to anarchy and chaos.²⁹

Informing the Public

Law enforcement tactics that helped bring about these political shifts were prescribed in textbooks used by training programs throughout the US. The most widely used textbook at the time, *Police Administration*, penned by O.W. Wilson of the Criminology department at the University of California Berkeley, compiled best practices used by police departments throughout the country.³⁰ These included public relations

²⁹ McCoy, *Policing*, 294-296; Schrader, *Badges*, 62-71.

³⁰ Schrader, *Badges*, 70.

strategies designed to leverage media contacts and influence politicians to craft law enforcement-friendly narratives around issues related to their interest. “Press representatives must rely on police sources for their news,” cautioned Wilson, who went on to recommend easing access to controlled flows of information for journalists. Unfriendly media could be swayed by speaking to their publisher or perhaps by leaning on their advertisers.³¹ Politicians and prominent citizens could be captured with a consistent flow of information as well. Wilson recommended publishing departmental bulletins that could be mailed to a “selected list of prominent citizens...city officials and community leaders.” Additionally, an annual report would organize crime statistics and police data in a way that showed police were fighting crime more effectively than ever before. However, they also hoped to convey that crime was constantly increasing, and law enforcement needed more resources to keep the community safe. When implemented successfully, these strategies would allow the police to set the narrative by ensuring their perspective was first in print and that decision makers viewed salient issues through the same worldview as law enforcement. This decreased the likelihood that any later correction to the record would affect the public’s perspective of the incident in question and ensured that if there was any debate on the facts of a given issue, political leaders and the community at large would back the blue. If the media reported information provided to them by law enforcement and politicians made decisions based on the same narrative, then the public would naturally begin to think along the same lines.³²

These law enforcement strategies often fundamentally changed the way the public thought about important issues. Although the counterinsurgency experts put in charge of

³¹ O.W. Wilson, *Police Administration* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1963), 204.

³² Wilson, *Administration*, 211.

professionalization efforts came from different parts of the political spectrum, they all understood the role of law enforcement to be to control the population and their environment to prevent even the opportunity for crime or subversion. They also tended to be virulently anticommunist and as such viewed political activism from the left wing as far more dangerous and insidious than that of the right. Further, because of the colonial roots of their shared experience, they tended to view potential threats through a racial lens.³³ By filtering sources of trusted information through this worldview, law enforcement began shifting public opinion away from government driven efforts to solve the root causes of crime and delinquency and instead toward the notion that increasing police budgets and rooting out crime was the key to social and economic uplift.

These strategies had already taken hold in California, who found itself on the cutting edge of police professionalization. The first criminology department was founded at Berkeley by August Vollmer in 1916. Vollmer went on to become police chief of the Los Angeles Police Department in 1923. His protégé was the aforementioned Wilson, who wrote *Police Administration* while dean of the Berkeley School of Criminology. Ironically, Berkeley would find itself in the crosshairs of the very strategies it helped disseminate as high-profile student protests emerged from the university in the early 1960s. These protests represented a major threat to the sensibilities of law enforcement because they ran in direct opposition to the police's objective to "control people and their environment in such a manner as to win compliance with laws and regulations."³⁴ The *modus operandi* of organizations such as the Free Speech Movement was akin to the Civil Rights Movement, as many of its members had worked with organizations such as

³³ Schrader, *Badges*, 4-25.

³⁴ Wilson, *Administration*, 22.

CORE in Mississippi the previous summer. They aimed to force changes to unjust laws and regulations through noncompliance. Civil disobedience, to law enforcement officials, was an illegitimate form of political speech and tolerance of it was a slippery slope to increased criminality, chaos, and anarchy.³⁵

The HUAC Hearings

The first student protests to draw the ire of police took place at hearings conducted by the House Unamerican Activities Committee in San Francisco on May 12, 1960. The House Unamerican Activities Committee was a cadre of congressmen who investigated American citizens suspected of ties to communist organizations. Berkeley students had come to city hall to show support for a student who had been subpoenaed for his political activism only to find that the hall had been filled with HUAC supporters and the doors were closed to entry. The students filled the rotunda instead and chanted slogans that disrupted the proceedings. In the end, local police used firehoses to wash the students down the steps of the rotunda where they were arrested.³⁶

Law enforcement then put their public relations strategies to work. Ed Montgomery, a columnist for the *San Francisco Examiner*, had long been a media contact for the FBI that wrote articles that advanced the interests of the bureau. He was often seen “wandering around the San Francisco FBI office, chatting with agents at their desks.”³⁷ He was the correspondent that invented the student that “grabbed a policeman’s nightstick and hit him over the head with it” before the police washed the protesters down

³⁵ Rorabaugh, *Berkeley*, 19.

³⁶ Ed Montgomery, “Cops Battle Student Mob at City Hall,” *San Francisco Examiner* (San Francisco, CA), May 14, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/458839711>.

³⁷ Rosenfeld, *Subversives*, 109.

the steps of the rotunda. He also claimed that many “communist agitators” were seen fleeing the scene or else blending into the chaos by occupying spectator seats once their work was done. These details reported by Montgomery became the backbone of the narrative pushed by the FBI and HUAC throughout the controversy surrounding these protests. He later admitted to FBI special agent Richard Auerbach that he had falsified his account based on an embellishment of a struggle he witnessed between a police officer and a protester. He never saw the protester leap over a barricade and could not identify who the person was. While Montgomery was not willing to testify under oath during the trial, he did offer to provide “a sworn statement that would support Hoover’s claims” in a report that tied the protests to communist agitators.³⁸

On top of Montgomery’s false claims surrounding the assault, he also took a pro-police slant on details verified by other outlets. His story appeared under the headline “Cops Battle Student Mob at City Hall,” and he wrote that it represented the “most violent incident in the incident-studded history of congressional investigations.” He also disparaged the counternarrative from protestors, writing that their version of events “somehow...failed to jibe with the events observed.” Montgomery also described the protesters using unflattering terms such as “bearded ones” or “beatnik-like youths” while citing their arrest record from previous protests and insinuating they were professional agitators.³⁹ Other news outlets also played up the violence. The *Los Angeles Times* included that one officer was bitten on the hand and that one “rioter” was observed being restrained by four policemen while kicking “so wildly that he shattered the glass of a

³⁸ Rosenfeld, *Subversives*, 110.

³⁹ Ed Montgomery, “Cops Battle Student Mob at City Hall,” *San Francisco Examiner* (San Francisco, CA), May 14, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/458839711>.

revolving door.”⁴⁰ The *San Francisco Chronicle* led with the similarly hysterical headline “400 Cops Battle Mob at City Hall” and covered the whole front page with a photo of the aftermath on the rotunda.⁴¹

HUAC helped solidify the narrative by producing a film entitled “Operation Abolition” that used misleadingly edited footage from the protest to increase the sense of violence in the case of the protestors and the desperation in the case of the police.⁴² Politicians such as Republican Mayor of San Francisco George Christopher and head of the FBI J. Edgar Hoover personally vouched for the veracity of the film.⁴³ In short, each part of the strategy laid out by Wilson in his seminal text was on display. Friendly members of the media were deployed to alter the narrative to suggest that the police had simply done what they needed to do in the face of a violent mob. The press printed the police narrative as the truth and assumed out of hand that the view of the protesters was unworthy of consideration. They then sent that signal out to the public in the tenor of their reporting. Lastly, politicians spoke out in support of the police with no firsthand knowledge of their own. Instead, they parroted information fed to them by law enforcement.

In the case of the HUAC protests, police efforts to craft a law enforcement friendly narrative had mixed results. On one hand, their claim that a student had beaten an officer with a nightstick and precipitated the police’s use of the firehose to clear the

⁴⁰ “Fire Hoses Douse 200 S.F. Rioters,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), May 14, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/381330697>.

⁴¹ “400 Cops Battle Mob at City Hall,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (San Francisco, CA), May 14, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/381330697>.

⁴² *Operation Abolition*, directed by Fulton Lewis III, 1960, <https://www.docsteach.org/documents/document/operation-abolition-communism>.

⁴³ “Riot Film True, Mayor Says,” *San Francisco Examiner* (San Francisco, CA), February 9, 1961, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/458656872>.

rotunda was proven false. Footage from “Operation Abolition,” along with eyewitness accounts, proved that the accused student, Robert Meisenbach, was nowhere near where he would have had to have been to assault the officer in question. Montgomery, who admitted embellishing his story, refused to testify at the trial and Meisenbach was acquitted.⁴⁴ To add to the problem, not all politicians went along with the narrative provided by law enforcement. Democrats such as Governor Edmund G. “Pat” Brown were comfortable refuting red scare tactics from conservatives after the downfall of Senator McCarthy, and Brown and other Democrats publicly doubted the involvement of communists. After the trial, Brown gave what amounted to a strong endorsement of the HUAC protests, saying “thank God for the spectacle of picketing students – even when they are picketing me at Sacramento and I think they are wrong – for students protesting and freedom riding” and “listening to society’s dissidents” because it is a sign that, “at last, we are getting somewhere.”⁴⁵ The fact that liberal politicians such as Brown were willing to come out in defense of the protesters prevented the sort of political consensus required to manufacture a political issue and disarmed the protests as a potential link between anti-HUAC protest and communism. In fact, the continued existence of HUAC would continue to be a political debate for the next several years.

On the other hand, the trial did not occur until almost a year had elapsed, solidifying the narrative in the minds of many casual observers. In fact, many of those who accepted that Meisenbach was innocent of the charges brought against him still believed the rest of the narrative. For instance, an editorial published in the *San*

⁴⁴ William L. Mackey, “Verdict is Reached in Less Than Three Hours,” *San Francisco Examiner* (San Francisco, CA), May 4, 1961, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/458198856>.

⁴⁵ Letter from Berkeley civil rights group to Governor Edmund G. Brown, January 7, 1965, Carton 499, Folder 6, Edmund G. Brown Papers, 1907-1996, The Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley.

San Francisco Examiner after the trial claimed that “the acquittal of this one individual on this specific assault should not be construed as a jury finding as to the nature of the riot itself.” The author reminded readers that a judge had found “ample grounds” to convict some of the “rioters” and that they had also been “duped by Communists who profited from the disorder.” His final analysis was that the “riots” were “a challenge to the established order and an attempt to resolve political issues by violence.”⁴⁶ Letters to the editor in local newspapers echoed these sentiments. One San Franciscan wrote the *Examiner* to express “sympathy” for the “city of San Francisco” because the verdict proved that “juries need more instruction and should be more carefully chosen.” Another Californian wrote in to say that “the police force in San Francisco has a tremendous responsibility dealing with police business and should not have to answer to crackpot rioters who produce nothing but derision and stimulate anti-government thinking.”⁴⁷ Even writers who supported the verdict shared similar opinions regarding the HUAC protests. A letter to the editors of the *Oakland Tribune* expressed that the verdict illustrated that “free men, in a free society” such as America could “speak out loudly and clearly when accused of a violation of the law.” However, he also opined that “the misguided students who participated in the city hall riots were at least guilty of disorderly conduct and disturbing the peace.”⁴⁸ Despite the fact that most of the evidence at the crux of the narrative crafted by law enforcement the day after the HUAC protests were proven false under oath, the view that the protesters were communist-influenced rabblers was

⁴⁶ “Meisenbach Trial,” *San Francisco Examiner* (San Francisco, CA), May 4, 1961, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/458201195>.

⁴⁷ “More on Meisenbach,” *San Francisco Examiner* (San Francisco, CA), May 10, 1961, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/458259636>.

⁴⁸ “The Real Aspect,” *Oakland Tribune* (Oakland, CA), May 13, 1961, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/342959339>.

lived on in the minds of many observers, mostly unaltered by revelatory facts uncovered months later. These details would contribute to more controversy around Berkeley later in the decade.

Sproul Hall

A similar pattern emerged from student protests at Berkeley that began in the fall of 1964. The University of California had long standing restrictions against political speech on campus that had gone unenforced in an area on the border of University land and city property. Students from all political persuasions had set up tables and handed out materials there with no repercussions. Administrators decided to start enforcing these regulations in 1964, fearing that growing student activism would lead to unflattering connections between the university and radical political movements.⁴⁹ Berkeley students began to protest this change. Many of them were veterans of the Civil Rights Movement's efforts to win voting rights for black citizens in Mississippi and imported tactics from those experiences, such as sit-ins and going limp when being arrested, to the struggle against these newly enforced limitations on their political speech. One of these students, Jack Weinberg, set up a table and canvassed for CORE right in front of Sproul Hall, a classroom building on the campus of the University of California. University officials accompanied campus police to his table where he was arrested and placed in a police car. Other students surrounded the police car and held an impromptu rally against free speech limitations on campus that resulted in negotiations between students and

⁴⁹ Rorabaugh, *Berkeley*, 19.

administration. Administrators promised future meetings and made small concessions to allow more latitude when it came to political speech.⁵⁰

Police officers such as Daniel O’Connell of the California Highway Patrol were not happy with how administration handled the event. In an interview given decades later, he reported that he felt like the police had been sold down the river while university officials “haggled with a mob.” In fact, O’Connell believed that they now found themselves on a slippery slope as “the failure to haul away the protestors and free the police car by force had only encouraged more brazen demonstrations later.” O’Connell was in a unique position to make his feelings known to decision makers who could change this approach and put the university back on the right track. O’Connell had known the governor from Brown’s days as an attorney general and spoke with him fairly frequently. He would use this position of privilege to not only change the trajectory of the Free Speech Movement and the University of California, but of California politics as well.⁵¹

On December 2, 1964, the newly coined Free Speech Movement decided to stage a sit-in in Sproul Hall, grinding the university to a halt and forcing the administration to honor their pledge to meet with students about their free speech concerns. By December 4, students were still in the building and university administrators had not yet decided what to do to solve the problem. The Sproul Hall sit-ins seemed to confirm O’Connell’s suspicions about how slippery the slope on which they found themselves was. In O’Connell’s mind, allowing student protestors to bring the university to its knees without consequence yet again would be a fatal mistake that would lead to even more trouble

⁵⁰ Rorabaugh, *Berkeley*, 23.

⁵¹ Rarick, *California Rising*, 300.

down the road. However, the governor had already signaled his willingness to let university administrators handle this issue themselves and was incredibly reluctant to send in the police, fearing that scenes like those coming out of the Civil Rights protests in Mississippi would suddenly find themselves on the front page of every newspaper in California.⁵²

After midnight on December 4, 1964, more than 48 hours after the Sproul Hall protest began, the governor received a call from Edwin Meese, an assistant in the Alameda County District Attorney's office who would go on to feature prominently in the Reagan campaign in 1966. Meese relayed a summary of the Sproul Hall incident that Brown would later describe as "anarchy." Meese, joined by Inspector O'Connell, claimed that students had begun breaking into administrative offices in the building and burning records. O'Connell suggested a plan of action in which CHP could assist local law enforcement in clearing the building. Armed with that information, Brown decided to override the wishes of UC president Clark Kerr and send the police in to Sproul Hall to arrest any students that remained in the building after they were asked to vacate. By the afternoon of the next day, 801 students had been arrested.⁵³

The Free Speech Movement, whose members largely comprised the student protesters arrested at Sproul Hall, disputed this version of events. They described the nights events as "orderly," claiming that students were studying, watching movies, singing, or teaching "freedom classes."⁵⁴ Interestingly, the police report issued by Berkeley Chief of Police A.H. Fording also disputed Meese's claims. The report

⁵² Rarick, *California Rising*, 300.

⁵³ Rarick, *California*, 304-307.

⁵⁴ Free Speech Movement, Summary of the Sproul Hall Sit-in and Arrests, Calisphere, University of California, <https://oac.cdlib.org/view?docId=kt1v19p3vr&brand=calisphere>.

completely omits any acts of vandalism or break-ins by the student protesters and reports that Governor Brown called the police rather than the other way around to give the arrest order.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, these charges ended up in media reports through UC President Clark Kerr, who explained that while students thus far had only been charged with failure to disperse, failure to leave a closed public building, and resisting arrest, there could be additional charges forthcoming as “the sit-iners had broken into the office of UC President Emeritus Robert Gordon Sproul and scattered his files.”⁵⁶ These details would finally be rebutted by Sproul himself, who told the *Examiner* that students had not in fact broken into his office, “[his] office always looks like that.”⁵⁷ The correction was printed as a miniscule item three days later under a headline that read “Students Face Six Penalties.” The version of the events proffered by police and their political interlocutors obfuscates any influence by law enforcement and suggests that the details they fabricated to make the protests seem violent and out of control had little effect on Brown’s decision. That version was firmly established in the press and any corrections to that narrative were made in such a way as to diminish their impact on the public’s understanding of the incidents in question.

Brown’s handling of the Berkeley issue represented a marked change from his approach to the HUAC protests of 1960, a departure that would have disastrous ramifications for his reelection efforts in 1966. Throughout the next two years, Brown would stand steadfast behind his decision to send in the police and restore order to the

⁵⁵ A.H. Fording, “Berkeley Police Department Involvement in Student Disturbances on U.C. Campus, December 2 and 3, 1964,” Carton 4, Folder 51, Series 8: University of California Administration, 1936-1966, The Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley.

⁵⁶ “A Statement by UC President Clark Kerr,” *San Francisco Examiner* (San Francisco, CA), December 4, 1964, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/460952829>.

⁵⁷ “Students Face Six Penalties,” *San Francisco Examiner* (San Francisco, CA), December 6, 1964, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/460962000>.

Berkeley campus on the night of December 4. He claimed that his job as Governor was to uphold the law and failure to act was tantamount to an abdication of that duty.⁵⁸

Previously, Brown had supported student protests even when they were protesting his own actions. Speaking about that event in 1961, Brown not only praised picketing by students but also presciently stated that administrators will have a hard time because “some students will be wrong, and some people will want to deny them the right to make mistakes.” Despite this, he opined, Californians should “stand up for our students and be proud of them.” Brown now faced the exact circumstance he predicted but found himself among those who wished to deny them the rights he wanted to preserve just three years previously. When reminded of these words in a letter from a Berkeley civil rights group after his Sproul Hall crackdown, Brown responded, “I believe this very much, but I also believe *that the law must be obeyed* (emphasis in the original).”⁵⁹ Brown’s comments on the Sproul Hall incident were more like those of his erstwhile political opponents than his previous position on student protests during the HUAC hearings. When asked about his decision to send police in to arrest students, Brown explained that “the rule of law must be honored in California,” and that he believed that students should “take lawful means to present their cases.”⁶⁰ In response to charges of police brutality, Brown stated that “things could have been worse, we could have used tear gas.”⁶¹ He also took aim at civil disobedience as a legitimate form of political discourse, telling attendees of a speech he

⁵⁸ James Schermerhorn, “801 Rebels Jailed – Profs Ask Amnesty,” *San Francisco Examiner* (San Francisco, CA), December 4, 1964, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/460952829>.

⁵⁹ Letter from Berkeley civil rights group to Governor Edmund G. Brown, January 7, 1965, Carton 499, Folder 6, Edmund G. Brown Papers, 1907-1996, The Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley

⁶⁰ “Brown Scores UC ‘Anarchy,’” *San Francisco Examiner* (San Francisco, CA), December 4, 1964, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/460952708>.

⁶¹ Schermerhorn, “801 Rebels Jailed,” *Examiner*, December 4, 1964, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/460952829>.

gave at UC Riverside that “we must encourage our students to remember that the citizens’ right – and even duty – to dissent must be expressed within the rules of law.”⁶²

The difference between Brown’s support of student protesters in 1960 and his animosity toward them in 1964 was undoubtedly influenced by the way the events at Sproul Hall were presented by law enforcement officials. In 1982, with the benefit of hindsight, Governor Brown said “if I had to do it all over again, I don’t think I would have sent them in although it was a tough job when local law enforcement officers tell you it was a clear violation of the law.”⁶³ His capitulation to the influence of people such as Edwin Meese and Daniel O’Connell precluded Brown and other Democrats from mounting a counternarrative like they did in 1960. This was an incredibly damaging missed opportunity considering the media environment after Sproul Hall was more favorable to the student protests than the initial coverage of the HUAC hearings. While the sit-ins were still reported from the point of view of the police first, the press failed to engage in the ridicule of protestors seen during the HUAC protests. In this case, the worst descriptors used were “rebels” and “disorders,” rather than “beatniks” and “bearded ones.” In a reality in which the Free Speech Movement had political support from the governor and other elected Democrats, the events at Berkeley might have devolved into a debate over the merits of their argument rather than a referendum on their actions, much like the events at the HUAC protest did. They were given no political quarter, though, as Brown accepted and disseminated the narrative put forth by law enforcement and

⁶² “‘Face Up to Change,’ Brown Tells UC,” *San Francisco Examiner* (San Francisco, CA), May 22, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/458734608>.

⁶³ Edmund G. Brown Sr., “Years of Growth, 1939-1966; Law Enforcement, Politics, and the Governor’s Office,” by Malca Chall, Amelia R. Fry, Gabrielle Morris, and James Rowland, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 554.

conservative politicians rather than providing a viable alternative. This resulted in a media environment in which FSM leaders were the lone voices providing a counternarrative which was eventually drowned out by the messaging of law enforcement and politicians.

Brown was undoubtedly emboldened by the mostly positive feedback from constituent letters and editorials that credited him for taking a hard line against the “disgraceful activity” of a “vicious minority” of “anarchists,” “nonconformists,” and “commies.”⁶⁴ Letters from constituents flooded in at a four-to-one ratio to express their support for his crackdown on the student protests at Sproul Hall. Even politicians from the other side of the aisle, such as Assemblyman Don Mulford of Oakland, sent their support and a sampling of praise from their own constituents. The problem for Brown, though, was most succinctly summarized by his own political analysis decades later. In an interview in 1982, Brown reflected that he “lost both sides” with his decision. He said that “the young people who were with [him] because of [his] support of the university and free speech...walked away... and became reactionary” while at the same time he failed to “gain the conservatives” because of his previous record as governor.⁶⁵

While little of the criticism levied at Brown for his approach to Sproul Hall made the newspapers, many constituents wrote in with a clear-eyed analysis of why his actions were such a colossal political mistake. To a constituent who pointed out that the freedom riders he supported previously were also breaking the law, Brown responded that “the circumstances are completely different” because those people are being “denied their

⁶⁴ “The UC Campus Conflict,” *San Francisco Examiner* (San Francisco, CA), December 8, 1964, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/461003851>.

⁶⁵ Brown, “Years of Growth,” 554.

rights even though the courts have already ruled that they are entitled to those rights” while the Berkeley protestors “bypassed the courts” and went immediately to “direct action.”⁶⁶ This useful distinction was never publicly stated by Brown, who chose to emphasize his commitment to law and order rather than take a more nuanced position. A Berkeley graduate wrote to Brown and pointed out that his “continual references to ‘law and order’ and ‘anarchy’ are beginning to sound like those of some public officials in the South.” He asked the governor to consider if his statements had made him more popular with those who “oppose the civil rights movement, or those who befriend it?” He went on to presciently observe that “the first are your enemies already, and the second are viewing your actions and statements with much disappointment.”⁶⁷ Dr. Harry Cimring of Beverly Hills quipped to Brown in a letter that “for the first time since you took office (that I can remember) you have had the solid support of the reactionaries and right-wingers. The issue? The jailing of students. Quite a feather in one’s cap.” He finished with a flourish, imploring Brown to not “write off Martin Luther King and Gandhi and Tolstoy and the suffragettes and Thoreau and Jesus Christ in the pious name of law and order.”⁶⁸ Brown’s decision to crack down on the Berkeley protests presented him an impossible political choice: remain steadfast in his position and alienate his most motivated voters in the run up to an election or retreat to a position of measured support for the Berkeley protests and risk playing to past criticisms of his indecisiveness as a leader.

⁶⁶ Letter from Edmund G. Brown to Richard Brown, February 5, 1965, Carton 499, Folder 10, Edmund G. Brown Papers 1907-1996, The Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley.

⁶⁷ Letter from Howard D. Cherniack to Edmund G. Brown, December 12, 1964, Carton 461, Folder 8, Edmund G. Brown Papers 1907-1996, The Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley.

⁶⁸ Letter from Harry Cimring to Edmund G. Brown, December 15, 1964, Carton 461, Folder 8, Edmund G. Brown Papers 1907-1996, The Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley.

Brown's reluctance to show full throated support for anything related to the Berkeley controversy allowed law enforcement officials and pro-police politicians to undermine counternarratives from other political actors. One prominent example of this was a report commissioned by the University Regents to investigate the root causes of the student protests. This report was compiled by a Los Angeles attorney named Jerome Byrne. Byrne's efforts produced a rather levelheaded view of the protests that argued that students' dissatisfaction with society was projected onto an administration that had engaged in poor decision making regarding its approach to political speech on campus. Byrne's overarching impression was that Berkeley students were hot-headed kids reacting to bumbling administrators rather than dangerous subversives.⁶⁹ The day the Byrne report was released, Speaker of the Assembly Jesse Unruh, a Democrat who feuded openly with Governor Brown, and State Senator Hugh Burns, who headed the California Unamerican Activities Committee, hinted that a full congressional inquiry into Berkeley was forthcoming. Five days later, J. Edgar Hoover of the FBI released a report that communists were behind the Sproul Hall sit-ins, citing "five faculty members and 38 other persons with 'subversive backgrounds'" who participated.⁷⁰ While charges of communist involvement were experiencing diminishing political returns by the mid-1960s, they were still enough to raise the hackles of California's most conservative voters. It also provided cover for a congressional inquiry that would keep Berkeley in the news throughout the election, creating a sense of issue fatigue among voters.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Jerome C. Byrne, "Report on the University of California and Recommendations to the Special Committee of the Regents of the University of California," (University of California, 1965).

⁷⁰ "Reds Involved – FBI's Hoover," *San Francisco Examiner* (San Francisco, CA), May 18, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/458704411>.

⁷¹ Ed Montgomery, "Probers Blame Kerr and Reds," *San Francisco Examiner* (San Francisco, CA), June 19, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/458572221/>.

A quick sampling of letters to the editor from concerned members of the public show their increasing dismay at the Berkeley controversy. One letter writer professed that they had watched “with increasing alarm the FSM on the Berkeley campus” and claimed that the “self-styled extremists...seem intent to prove they can and will defy the laws of the land.”⁷² Another wrote in to lament that college students had become people who get their “inspiration from epithets written on washroom walls...who bathe and shave at least once a month” and who associate themselves with “something called a Free Speech Movement” and “rebels against the law of the land.” Yet another wrote in to caution that the FSM “and the Left-Wing Extremists are preparing to again create dissension and trouble” and hoped that “the new leadership of UC at Berkeley will protect the interest of all freedom loving and law abiding citizens by dealing with them with firmness and expediency.”⁷³ As the controversy dragged on, fewer and fewer people wrote in to counter these anti-FSM views and Berkeley solidified in the mind of the public as a source of anarchy and criminality.

The Vietnam Day Committee

As the Free Speech Movement fizzled out at Berkeley, a new student group emerged onto the scene: the Vietnam Day Committee. This group dedicated itself to protesting the war in Vietnam and began organizing protests that involved attempting to obstruct the tracks in front of trains transporting troops to entrepots at which they would be shipped to the front lines. These protests were largely unsuccessful, as troop trains

⁷² “The Turmoil at Berkeley,” *San Francisco Examiner* (San Francisco, CA), December 10, 1964, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/461017704>.

⁷³ “UC Campus Reflections,” *San Francisco Examiner* (San Francisco, CA), April 1, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/458179737>.

failed to stop for protesters, who had to jump out of the way to avoid a fatal collision. As law enforcement got wind of further protests of this kind, they began protecting rail lines with wedges of officers that dispersed protesters before trains arrived. Realizing that stopping troop trains was not only impossible, but that their attempts to do so failed to capture the public consciousness, the VDC decided to pivot to more traditional tactics such as marches, teach-ins, and sit-ins.⁷⁴

As the VDC began to plan marches from Berkeley to the port of Oakland, where soldiers embarked for Vietnam, law enforcement again combatted the VDC with Wilson's public relations strategies. State Attorney General Thomas C. Lynch warned potential protesters that "civil disobedience on their part could result in heavy criminal penalties" and explained that, in his opinion, "the issue is whether we submit to the tyranny of any transient minority which seeks by force or by unlawful activity to impose its will on the majority."⁷⁵ Law enforcement began performative preparations designed to make the VDC seem more dangerous than it was, and let each detail trickle out over the course of the week preceding a planned parade from Berkeley to the Oakland Army Terminal. After all, as Wilson explained in his textbook, "one story each day is better than three stories every third day."⁷⁶ On October 13, the *Examiner* reported that Lynch, placed in charge of law enforcement preparations surrounding planned VDC marches by Governor Brown, ordered 600 "Combat-ready" National Guard troops to standby in case "Vietnam Day Committee peace demonstrations...got out of hand."⁷⁷ The next day, the

⁷⁴ Ed Montgomery, "How Pickets Keep Tab on Troop Trains," *San Francisco Examiner* (San Francisco, CA), August 14, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/458328357>.

⁷⁵ "Vietnam War Objectors Get Prison Threat," *Stockton Bee* (Stockton, CA), October 8, 1965.

⁷⁶ Wilson, *Administration*, 207, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/845249782>.

⁷⁷ "Army of Lawmen Ready – Not Needed," *San Francisco Examiner* (San Francisco, CA), October 16, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/458379191>.

Examiner reported that the “police and FBI” had been “alerted for the big Viet march” and that “250 sheriff’s deputies” would also be available. On October 15, the *Oakland Tribune* ran an article headlined “Law Girds for Viet Day March” that described law enforcement preparations that included all 650 of Oakland’s police officers and “between 400 and 500 California Highway Patrol officers.” It also reported that Republican Senator George Murphy had written Governor Brown “urging steps be taken to prevent destruction, violence, disregard for law and order and to make clear that civil disobedience and obstruction of military activities would not be tolerated.” Lastly, it included quotes from a joint letter to the Chancellor of the University of California from District Attorney of Alameda County Frank Coakley, Sheriff Frank Madigan, Police Chief of Berkeley Police Addison Fording and Chief of Oakland Police Edward Toothman that implored Chancellor Heyns to “urge students not to march” due to the potential “disruption of the community which would result in danger to lives and property.” The undersigned also warned the Chancellor that the VDC had announced that planned demonstrations may include “criminal conduct” and use “university facilities and equipment” to stage those activities.⁷⁸

The march itself, however, proved anticlimactic. The ground invasion state and local law enforcement had been preparing for all week failed to develop. The *Examiner* led October 16th’s coverage with a headline that read “Army of Lawmen Ready – Not Needed.” However, the content of the article recounted massive mobilization efforts by law enforcement to make clear that if they weren’t needed, it was because of their exhaustive preparations. The reporter noted that “375 officers...arranged in a V-shaped

⁷⁸ “Law Girds for Viet Day March,” *Oakland Tribune* (Oakland, CA), October 15, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/354626361>.

formation across Telegraph avenue” awaited protesters as though “the Viet Cong were swarming” down the street. By his final count, “the number of lawmen and National Guard soldiers on call amounted to at least 2,000. Also present at the demonstrations were Oakland’s Chief of Police, Attorney General Coakley, Alameda County Sherriff Frank Madigan, State Attorney General Lynch, Raymond Momboisse, author of a textbook on riot control, and Daniel O’Connell of the California Highway Patrol, who had previously convinced Governor Brown to send the police into Sproul Hall.”⁷⁹ The next day, the *Examiner* published even more details about law enforcement’s preparations for the VDC rally at the behest of Governor Brown, who worried that attacks on his preparedness by Republicans such as Senator Murphy would be politically damaging. The article included the previously reported details on local law enforcement and National Guard numbers but also added “two hundred United States marshals, deputies, and other Federal officers “and the fact that every law enforcement official in California was on 24-hour notice with clear communication lines to the State Attorney General and the Governor.”⁸⁰

Despite the presence of so many officers of the law, violence finally did break out on day two of the VDC rally. It did not originate from the protesters, but instead from a small group of Hell’s Angels who attended as counter protesters. Although the Hell’s Angels were a notoriously violent gang, Oakland Police left them “unguarded” at the border of Berkeley and Oakland. The Angels rushed into the marching protesters and begun assaulting them, only stopped by Berkeley police as Oakland police stood and

⁷⁹ “Army of Lawmen Ready – Not Needed,” *San Francisco Examiner* (San Francisco, CA), October 16, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/458379191>.

⁸⁰ Jack F. McDowell, “3,600 Cops Stood By For March,” *San Francisco Examiner* (San Francisco, CA), October 17, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/458380765>.

watched.⁸¹ Six members of the gang were arrested at the scene, but police dropped the charges against all but one member, presumably because he broke the leg of a Berkeley police officer.⁸²

While it was clearly reported that the Angels were the only source of violence during the marches, the signal was successfully sent to the public that the VDC was a group of dangerous extremists. Fred Ullner, director of Republicans for Conservative Action, raised bail for the arrested members of the Hell's Angels and claimed that they were "patriots" who "only did what everybody wanted to do."⁸³ The Berkeley Barb conducted an informal poll of Oakland residents and discovered that "only 5 out of 66 surveyed supported the marchers" with one respondent opining that "they should take a machine gun and shoot them all down."⁸⁴ An editorial entitled "The Evil Nature of the VDC" accused them of using communist tactics from 35 years ago and characterized them as lawless.⁸⁵ Another claimed that the VDC "knowingly set out to violate Oakland's parade law" and opined that if it wasn't for "excellent police work and sheer good fortune" the protest would have turned into "mass violence, mass arrests, and another costly round of mass trials like the Sproul Hall sit-in trials."⁸⁶

⁸¹ Rorabaugh, *Berkeley*, 97-98

⁸² Jack Schreibman, "Police 'Wall' Blocks Second Berkeley March," *Sacramento Bee* (Sacramento, CA), October 17, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/618602111>.

⁸³ Daryl E. Lembke, "Hells Angels Attack Peace March at UC," *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), October 17, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382418617>.

⁸⁴ Chris A. Smith, "Angels, Protesters and Patriots: What a Long-Ago Skirmish Says About Love of Country," *California*, Spring 2016, <https://alumni.berkeley.edu/california-magazine/spring-2016-war-stories/angels-protesters-and-patriots-what-long-ago-skirmish/>.

⁸⁵ "The Evil Nature of the VDC," *San Francisco Examiner* (San Francisco, CA), October 14, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/458374240>.

⁸⁶ "A Bitter Harvest at Berkeley," *San Francisco Examiner* (San Francisco, CA), October 20, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/458417943>.

Some editorials openly began to make the connection between the perceived criminality of Berkeley protests and previous tolerance of civil disobedience. One editorial lamented that the protestors “called their unlawful force by another and softer name – civil disobedience – just as they wrapped their higher morality around a spurious but appealing slogan of free speech.” It quoted one of the judges involved in the prosecution of FSM protesters, who undermined the entire idea of civil disobedience, saying “resistance to the rule of law, whether active or passive, is intolerable, and to describe criminal conduct as civil disobedience is to make words meaningless.”⁸⁷ After the VDC troop train protests, a cartoonist for the *San Francisco Examiner* went further, depicting a smiling, carefree man carrying a sign that read “civil disobedience” walking confidently off a cliff into a dark abyss labeled “anarchy.”⁸⁸ These editorials are clear evidence that Wilson’s strategies were in full effect. California law enforcement officials from all levels and localities, including Berkeley and Oakland police, the California Highway Patrol, Alameda County sheriffs and District Attorney’s office, and the California District Attorney’s office, manipulated the press and elected officials such as the governor to present Berkeley student protests as an extraordinary danger to law and order and to position law enforcement as the only protection available. Their efforts to criminalize the student protests in the mind of the public and politicians turned Berkeley into a counterexample to the Civil Rights Movement that transformed civil disobedience from a legitimate form of nonviolent protest into a wave of criminal activity that undermined legitimate acts of peaceful protest.

⁸⁷ “Berkeley Sit-in Convictions,” *San Francisco Examiner* (San Francisco, CA), June 30, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/458641612>.

⁸⁸ “Analyzing Civil Disobedience,” *San Francisco Examiner* (San Francisco, CA), September 26, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/458771026>.

Law enforcement efforts to influence Governor Brown and local media had a clear effect on how the governor and the public responded to the Sproul Hall protests and changed how observers viewed the University of California. In 1961, Brown supported the right to peacefully protest and extolled its exercise as a sign of a healthy society. In 1964, he regarded similar activity as a harbinger of the breakdown of law and order and the decay of meaningful political discourse. Brown's approach to the Berkeley student protest controversy allowed law enforcement officials and conservative politicians to successfully make the case to observers that tolerance of civil disobedience emboldened criminal activity of other sorts without having to deal headlong with the increasingly popular precepts of the Civil Rights Movement. While voters still understood racial relations as a societal problem, they viewed the solutions to that problem as a nuanced one that required careful consideration and sharp policy. The Berkeley protests created an emerging political consensus that society had become too permissive and that an increased emphasis on law enforcement and punitive measures was required to quell the state of chaos and anarchy of the moment. This shift in public opinion created a political context that was far more favorable to the law-and-order messaging of Republicans such as Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan than it was to Great Society Democrats like Lyndon Johnson and Pat Brown. This shift would have huge ramifications for the 1966 election and changed the trajectory of elections for the foreseeable future.

Chapter III

Watts

On August 11, 1965, Los Angeles became the fifth major city to experience major racial unrest in the last year. The Watts Rebellion captured national attention unlike any of the previous incidents, perhaps because of the scale of the unrest or the prominence of Los Angeles in the cultural imagination of Americans. Unsurprisingly, Watts and its aftermath inspired both contemporary and future observers to conclude that the racial unrest that unfolded over those six days in 1965 symbolized a major turning point in racial relations in the US and had major political ramifications that are still reverberating over half a century later. Contemporary observers simultaneously opined that the Watts Rebellion was the result of racial disparities that remained unaddressed by federal and state civil rights legislation and predicted that the rebellion would undermine future efforts by civil rights activists to ameliorate the root causes of those disparities.⁸⁹ Future researchers would agree and identify racial unrest such as the Watts Rebellion as a catalyst for “white backlash” against civil rights legislation that had failed to resolve racial issues. Others concluded that racial unrest had created a messaging opportunity for anti-civil rights politicians that they used to convince the public that the underlying issues behind rebellions such as Watts was not race relations but crime.⁹⁰ In any case, the racial unrest experienced in Watts and other major metro areas in the United States directly

⁸⁹ Paul Weeks, “Grasp of Poverty Gradually Eases,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), August 13, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382356364>; Theodore H. White, “Lesson of Los Angeles: A Call for New Thinking About Race Relations in the Big City,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), August 22, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382261995/>.

⁹⁰ Naomi Murakawa, “Electing to Punish: Congress, Race, and the American Criminal Justice State,” Proquest Dissertations Publishing, 2005; Weaver, “Frontlash,” 236-239.

preceded an onslaught of punitive crime bills instituted by the federal government that utterly decimated black communities throughout the country.⁹¹

This narrative does not fully explain the political conditions in California directly after the Watts Rebellion, where the forces of white backlash emerged first. To be sure, resistance to civil rights legislation was widespread and palpable in California even before the Watts Rebellion. In 1964, the Rumford Fair Housing Act, a law that forbade racial discrimination in housing deeds and real estate transactions, was repealed by referendum. However, opinions on race and the civil rights movement in general did not shift appreciably after Watts. While they vehemently opposed violence against property and person, most Californians understood that the root cause of racial unrest was legitimate frustration with the socioeconomic conditions experienced by most black Americans and the policies (and people) that reenforced them. They also did not believe that Watts was a harbinger for further unrest, nor that Watts had demonstrated that civil rights legislation had gone too far.⁹² This is not to say that the Watts Rebellion and other racial issues did not factor into the 1966 gubernatorial campaign or other campaigns in the future. It is simply to ask: how did Watts become such an important issue despite this political context? The answer to this question lies in how Watts was framed as a political issue. Watts shifted within the political discourse of the 1966 campaign, changing from a civil rights issue to a crime issue. Previous research has illustrated this idea but failed to completely explain important aspects of this change, either failing to account for the

⁹¹ Weaver, "Frontlash," 247-258.

⁹² A Public Opinion Survey by Opinion Research of California, September 11-12, 1965, Box 756, Folder 28, The Edmund G. Brown Papers, 1907-1996, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

bipartisan nature of crime legislation post-Watts or why law-and-order messaging suddenly appealed to an American electorate that had repeatedly rejected it at the polls.

I argue that the approach employed by law enforcement to the Watts Rebellion explains this political shift. The approach to crime prevention adopted by police departments throughout California during the 1960s created the illusion that crime was rising to a fever pitch throughout the state, particularly in urban areas predominantly inhabited by people of color. These efforts created a positive feedback effect that incarcerated a disproportionate amount of black people in California, leading to an increase in racial strife that culminated in rebellions such as Watts. Law enforcement officials such as LAPD chief Willie Parker targeted both politicians and the public with public relations strategies that successfully parried accusations that police brutality was responsible for incidents like the Watts Rebellion and championed increases in the presence of law enforcement as the only solution to urban strife. Framing Watts as a crime issue rather than a race issue shifted Watts from the context of civil rights to the context of law and order. Political responses to Watts from the right and left reflected the same political consensus surrounding crime as the Berkeley student protests and facilitated connections that were already being made in the public discourse between the civil disobedience of the Civil Rights Movement and perceived increases in crime and disorder.

The Operational Services

In the 1960s, police professionalizers standardized officer evaluation methods and manpower distribution which exacerbated socioeconomic problems in urban communities of color and inflamed tensions between those communities and law enforcement. These

tensions would eventually result in rebellions, like the one in Watts, which would be spun into a narrative that society's lax approach to criminality was responsible for a breakdown of law and order. Two methods prescribed by Wilson in *Police Administration* combined to create a positive feedback effect that resulted in statistics that suggested an increase in criminal behavior that originated from minority communities in urban areas. The most impactful suggestion from Wilson regarded how to evaluate the performance of beat officers. Wilson set out to separate how well police officers on patrol addressed crimes on their beat from the effectiveness of prosecutors and the sentiments of judges. To do this, Wilson decided that officers should be held accountable to the percentage of crimes cleared on their beat, using a simple ratio of crimes cleared over crimes reported. Any arrest made in relation to a reported crime counted as a clearance, regardless of whether the accused was convicted. Arrests that did not result in conviction were regarded by Wilson to be a failure on the part of the prosecutor or else the criminal justice system writ large. Wilson thus created a perverse system that disincentivized taking the time to find the actual perpetrators of crimes and incentivized making arrests indiscriminately, often based on the similarity between the reported crime and the *modus operandi* of known criminals. Exacerbating the problem was the fact that crime statistics also reported clearances, not convictions. The effects of this system are manifold. One result was an increase in arrests but a decrease in convictions, which was observed in internal documents from the time. For instance, in an intradepartmental memo from the San Joaquin County Sheriff's department, it was reported that the homicide rate increased by 15.5% in 1964 and 36% in 1965, while convictions per year decreased slightly. It also undoubtedly resulted in an increase in false convictions and plea deals by

accused who did not want to risk a defense in court. Most importantly, it would contribute to a rise in the reported crime rate without a proportional rise in criminal activity.⁹³

Wilson's text compounded this problem by proposing principles of police allocation that essentially codified the prejudices police professionalization was designed to eradicate. He advocated segmenting the jurisdiction into equally sized areas and recording the number of police incidents that occur in each section, hour by hour. Police incidents would include both crimes that were witnessed and addressed by police while on patrol and crimes reported to them by other people. Wilson then recommended allocating the force according to need- areas and times of day with more incidents would have more officers on patrol. While rigorous on its face, Wilson's approach left significant room for bias and would amplify its effects. The system as devised did not suggest beginning with an equal number of officers in each segment of the jurisdiction at every hour. It also failed to account for baseline activity rates for given officers assigned to given beats. Therefore, it is likely that the number of incidents in each segment reflected the prevailing prejudices and behaviors of the department in question. Wilson himself acknowledged the limitations of his approach, pointing out that the data invariably suggested a "slump in need for police activity just before the end of a tour of duty" more likely attributable to police behavior than the behavior of criminals. He also identified an inexplicable slump during "dinner hour" that he found "interesting" but failed to analyze.⁹⁴ It's clear that the behavior of police had an outsized effect on the

⁹³ Memo from Lt. Sainaghi to Sherriff Canlis, October 11, 1966, Gubernatorial Administration of Ronald Reagan File 1941-1976, Box 220, Crime 66-68, Edwin Meese Papers, Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA.

⁹⁴ Wilson, *Administration*, 258-264.

number of incidents, perhaps even more so than the behavior of criminals, but Wilson pushed on anyway. If the dinner habits of beat officers affected incident numbers, then surely racial biases would too. Departments with severe racial biases among its members likely recorded a higher rate of incidents in areas in which racial minorities resided. This resulted in an increase in the presence of law enforcement in these areas. Those officers would then have been incentivized to make more arrests regardless of the likelihood that the accused perpetrated the crime for which they were booked. Statistics generated by this approach would suggest that there was an increase in the crime rate centered around minority populations in heavily trafficked areas regardless of whether crime was more extant in these regions or not.

This problem with California's crime numbers was identified as early as 1960 by the Chief of California's Bureau of Criminal Statistics, Ronald H. Beattie. Writing for the *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, he warned that crime statistics were skewed on a state-by-state basis by the efficacy of their police forces. He explained that the influence of California's place on the cutting edge of policing meant that California enjoyed "high levels of police efficiency" and "better and more complete records." Beattie concluded that this caused California to appear to have a much higher crime rate than any state in the country. He cautioned, therefore, that "states where in general there are many police agencies with poor record systems, incomplete reporting, and lower standards of police proficiency should not be accredited as having less crime simply because the statistical data reported show less crime."⁹⁵ It follows that increases in crime

⁹⁵ Beattie, "Criminal Statistics in the United States – 1960," 53-54.

should not necessarily be taken as such as methodology and reporting improves across the rest of the United States over time.

Unfortunately, California law enforcement had a vested interest in framing increases in crime statistics as evidence that law enforcement had to be better funded and afforded more influence in the legislative arena to stamp out sources of criminality. Police departments in California followed Wilson's advice to present facts in an "interesting manner that will enable the citizen to interpret them easily and to understand the message conveyed by them." Police departments generally did this by issuing an annual report, a document that summarized local crime statistics and presented the activities of the police department related to crime prevention. The 1964 annual report of the Los Angeles Police Department made it clear to the citizens of Los Angeles that LA would quickly succumb to violent crime if LAPD did not receive an increase in funding along with laws that helped them contend with the shackles placed on them by recent Supreme Court decisions. LAPD lamented that "local and national crime statistics are testimony to our society's failure to stem the rising tide of criminality which threatens our destruction from within." They went on to warn that "the noble aspirations of our founding fathers for a truly great society dedicated to the common good are doomed to failure until and unless the march of crime is halted and abated." The report spends three pages describing how LAPD is outfitted with state-of-the-art technology and received the best training in the country only to report that the number of reported crimes had increased by nine percent. They square this paradox by claiming that "the beneficial effect of these advances has been largely negated by the fetters of legal technicality by which the officer of today finds himself bound." The previous page shows a graph of the

national crime rate per 100,000 people with every sharp increase adorned with a description of the Supreme Court case responsible. One particularly large increase was attributed to *Smith v. California* which the report explains “declared the Los Angeles City Ordinance regarding possession of indecent writings to be unconstitutional” while another complains that *People v. Burke* held “a later search of an arrestee’s vehicle at impound garage unreasonable because a search warrant had not been obtained.” In all, fourteen cases are cited by LAPD as contributors to rising crime rates. In the final analysis, LAPD made the case on a page entitled “Quest for Quality” that even more law enforcement is required to meet the challenges laid out in the report.⁹⁶

The messaging approach surrounding crime statistics worked similarly to that of the Berkeley student protests and established a narrative in the media and with elected officials that inner city crime was increasingly becoming a problem that threatened the prosperity of the rest of society. Justified by crime trends created by a positive feedback effect created by evaluation methods instituted by police professionalizers, law enforcement activity in urban communities of color exacerbated socioeconomic problems and racial tensions in places like Oakland and Los Angeles, eventually resulting in rebellions that would eventually be blamed on a lax approach to criminality. The Watts Rebellion would be one high profile result of this approach, and the aftermath would have massive implications for crime legislation in California and the election of 1966.

⁹⁶ 1964 LAPD Annual Report, Carton 500, Folder 10, The Edmund G. Brown Papers, 1907-1996, The Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

Watts

On August 11, 1965, California Highway Patrol conducted a traffic stop on Marquette Frye, a black Angeleno they suspected was driving under the influence. After Frye failed a field sobriety test, CHP began to arrest him. Marquette's brother, Ronald, walked to their house and returned with their mother, who began berating Marquette for his behavior. At some point after this, the arrest went sideways and devolved into a scuffle that resulted in the arrest of Ronald and their mother as well. The Watts community heard that the cops roughed Frye up and even assaulted a pregnant woman and began forming a crowd around the arresting officers, throwing rocks and chunks of concrete at them.⁹⁷

The incident sparked six days of unrest that resulted in 34 deaths, over 3,000 arrests, and \$40 million in property damage including over 200 buildings that were completely destroyed. In the aftermath, debates over the root causes of the Watts Rebellion swirled through newspaper and television coverage throughout the country, creating a maelstrom of uncertainty that threatened the established order in every aspect of American society. Watts was positioned as a referendum on the legislative approach of progressive Democrats regarding both civil rights and poverty, the approach of civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. had taken to the struggle for freedom and equality for black Americans, and the quality of leadership exhibited by the Brown administration in California. As the dust settled, Watts community leaders quickly identified two major factors that led to the rebellion: a continuous campaign of police brutality aimed at black citizens of California, particularly by LAPD, and the abject

⁹⁷ Charles Davis Jr., "Anatomy of a Riot: Minor Incident Ignited Violence," *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), August 15, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382363070>.

poverty and hopelessness that permeated the community because of decades of racial oppression. This narrative was quickly swamped by law enforcement messaging designed to amplify the violence and destruction of the Watts Rebellion and downplay criticisms of police as the work of outside agitators or claims made in bad faith by criminal elements of society. The police then provided an elegant counternarrative that focused on rising crime rates and emphasized a need to increase funding for law enforcement to combat urban anarchy and, ostensibly, help communities like Watts rise from the ashes rendered by wanton rioting.

The relationship between the black community of Los Angeles and LAPD was already fraught before the Watts Rebellion, and charges of police brutality had already been made. The LA chapter of CORE registered a litany of complaints against LAPD to the LA city council more than a year before the Watts Rebellion, CORE wrote that “Los Angeles is faced with an emergency situation arising from the sharply increased tension between the police department and minority communities.” While “there is no stated departmental policy dividing the citizenry into two classes,” they continued, LAPD has “two very different sets of rules,” one for the “white majority” and another for people of color and for white “minority” groups such as the very poor and the non-conformist. CORE implied that this difference in ruleset was borne out by statistics such as “the number of arrests per reported crime in one section of the city as compared with other sections” or “felony arrests which end either in dismissal or a reduction in charges.” While CORE correctly asserted that there was no departmental policy that explicitly laid out this difference in treatment, Wilson’s prescribed evaluation methods for both efficacy of patrol and distribution of manpower created an implicit racial bias. This bias was

difficult to demonstrate because, as CORE described, “few involve clear-cut brutality and many do not constitute grounds for legal action” but instead involved “arrogance, hostility, and day to day harassment” that represented “a major reason for the present climate of ill-feeling” between the black community and the police. Examples provided included Mrs. Alice Smith, whose house was “twice subjected to unwarranted entry and search” by a LAPD sergeant and whose son “was arrested that same day, on suspicion – without a warrant” and was then “detained twelve days and released – without being arraigned.” Another was Mrs. Case, who was accused of jaywalking and was arrested after she failed to produce identification because she doesn’t drive. On the way to the station, Mrs. Case was “handcuffed, her arms were twisted and her shoes were removed.” At the station, she was “subjected to a search in the presence of male officers” and denied medication she had in her purse to treat her glaucoma. Mrs. Case was detained from 4:30 PM to 11 PM.⁹⁸

In the same document, CORE called for the resignation of Chief Willie Parker and detailed much of the public relations strategy that Parker and other law enforcement officials used to win the allegiance of the media, elected officials, and the public. CORE charged that Parker “put all blame on the minority communities as a whole” and claimed that they “have no respect for law and order.” They also wrote that Parker “tried to hold the civil rights movement responsible for all these violent incidents, equating nonviolent demonstrations with violence and accusing anyone who criticizes the police as ‘inciting anarchy.’” CORE did acknowledge that “in professional circles he is reputed to be an

⁹⁸ Statement on Police Malpractice by the CORE Chapters of Metropolitan Los Angeles to the Joint Committees of the City Council, June 4, 1964, Box M-10-30, civil rights 1965 folder, Los Angeles City Archive, Los Angeles, CA.

efficient police administrator” but rebutted that he was “willing to sacrifice individual rights in favor of more effective law enforcement.”⁹⁹ CORE’s statement to LA city council shows the effect of policies encouraged by the work of reformers like Wilson. Increased law enforcement presence in communities of color was driven by arrest statistics accrued by police forces with unfettered racial prejudices which were then reinforced with the cold language of routine. The increased law enforcement presence in places like Watts combined with an approach that incentivized making as many arrests as possible to create an atmosphere of harassment and brutality.

These conditions were cited as root causes by many in the Watts community in the aftermath of the rebellion more than a year after CORE’s statement. Assemblyman Mervyn Dymally called for the resignation of Chief Parker and an establishment of a civilian police review board on the fourth day of the rebellion. While he denounced the violence and looting that had been taking place, Dymally also said that “public disclosure that the Los Angeles Police Department is a bed of bigotry is not conducive to good police community relations.” He also asserted that the black community in Los Angeles had “no confidence in Chief Parker” and that “tensions would continue” as long as he remained police chief.¹⁰⁰

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. echoed these sentiments and related more sentiments from the people of Watts a few days later. King said that “there are serious doubts that the white community is in any way concerned or willing to accommodate” the needs of

⁹⁹ Statement on Police Malpractice by the CORE Chapters of Metropolitan Los Angeles to the Joint Committees of the City Council, June 4, 1964, Box M-10-30, civil rights 1965 folder, Los Angeles City Archive, Los Angeles, CA.

¹⁰⁰ “Dymally Calls for Parker’s Resignation,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), August 15, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382363725>.

the black community. He added that “there is a unanimous feeling” among the Watts community “that there is police brutality.” Exacerbating these feelings was a “growing sense of disillusionment and resentment” toward the black middle class and “the leadership it has produced” which led to “the feeling that they are alone in their struggle and must resort to any method to gain attention to their plight.”¹⁰¹

King’s view was corroborated by reporting by the *Los Angeles Times* published the next day. The *Times* published an extensive interview with a black man who admitted to participating in the rebellion and was incredibly candid about why he felt the need to do so. The man, called Joe in the article, claimed that he first got involved upon hearing an officer use a racial epithet. Upon joining the fray, Joe said:

The cops drove up to clusters of people and got out of their cars and started swinging at everyone with their billy clubs. The little kids were there and they got hit just like everyone else. And when I say little kids, I mean real little kids. Ten. Nine. Eight. Anyone. It didn’t matter. That’s what got the people mad. There probably wouldn’t have been another night after that first Wednesday if it hadn’t been for them hitting the little kids... You can’t tell me the police haven’t been taught how to handle a kid without hitting him with a club.

Joe was under the impression that the LAPD often instigated encounters between bystanders and police so that they could make arrests and reported that an incident like that had happened to him at the start of the riot. “I don’t expect police to be soft,” Joe said, “but I didn’t expect L.A. to be like Alabama.”¹⁰²

A study commissioned by a congressional inquiry into the Watts Rebellion

¹⁰¹ Paul Beck, “L.A. Lacks Leadership on Rights, King Says,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), August 21, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382254352>.

¹⁰² Jerry Cohen, “Viewpoint of Rioters Hard to Find, but Here’s How One of Them Sees It,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), August 22, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382260333>.

provides an even more layered perspective into the policing problems in Watts. When the citizens of Watts who participated in the study were asked to provide what they believed to be the causes of the unrest, a majority listed economic problems. Second on the list was police brutality. Those who affirmed the presence of brutality were asked to elaborate. John F. Kraft, the author of the report, described answers that “ranged from the commonplace of malpractices, such as kickings and beatings, to the unusual,” such as a black man being forced to tie a police officer’s boot. Interestingly, Kraft also deduced from his data that a larger problem than police brutality was a lack of police protection, and he claimed that more respondents wanted a larger police presence in their neighborhood than those who saw police as a problem. Kraft’s analysis does not seem to rely on the nuance in his data. Those who he classified as wanting “Better, more police protection” answered that black police should have been called in to stop the unrest and that there should be black police in their community rather than white police. While Kraft suggested that neglect rather than brutality is the problem in Watts, the respondents asked for police to be fundamentally different than it was. Rather than asking for more of what exists, they asked for a police force that they can trust to protect them. These ideas are not as mutually exclusive as Kraft treats them to be and actually work together to paint a dire picture of a community with crime problems that are exacerbated by the presence of police rather than assuaged by it.¹⁰³

Governor Brown, meanwhile, was beset by many different perspectives within his administration and, as with the Berkeley situation, he eventually sided with law

¹⁰³ Report on Federal Role in Urban Affairs by John F. Kraft, 1966, box C36, Urban Insurrection/Crime 4, Series V: Campaign Research Material, Ronald Reagan Gubernatorial Campaign Files, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum, Simi Valley, CA.

enforcement. The man with the perspective closest to that of the Watts community was William Becker, a special assistant to Brown who would go on to become the first director of the San Francisco Human Rights Commission. Becker attended a public hearing with Watts residents who vented their feelings on why the rebellion happened. Becker sent back eleven pages of notes, which Becker summed up at the beginning when he wrote that the residents “reflected an almost universal bitterness toward the ‘establishment’” (emphasis his). He related that residents on the whole sided with participants in the rebellion over the police as most of them had previous experience with LAPD harming someone they knew. They also explained that shops that were burned down and looted were owned by white landlords that kept their shop in slum conditions. Almost every government assistance program was listed as inadequate or too far away to help.¹⁰⁴ In contrast, Howard Jewell, a member of the state Attorney General’s office, refuted the idea that the problem came from the police department’s actions but instead from the way they were perceived by the black community. Jewell wrote that “Chief Parker does not deserve the reputation for bigotry which clings to him” and claimed that he dislikes the black community not because of their race but because “they dislike the police department” which was “the only unforgiveable sin” for Parker. He went on to agree with Parker’s assessment that “his department is unprejudiced and efficiently administered” but that he “must convey this fact” to the black community of Los Angeles.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Memo from William Becker to Governor Edmund G. Brown, August 30, 1965, carton 500, folder 11, Administrative Files 1907-1996, Edmund G. Brown Papers, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

¹⁰⁵ Memo from Howard Jewell to Stanley Mosk, May 25, 1964, carton 500, folder 13, Administrative Files 1939-1966, Edmund G. Brown Papers, The Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

Police Messaging

As with Berkeley, law enforcement was hard at work countering the charges of police brutality in the press and in conversation with elected officials. At the same time, police informants were ensuring that reporters received information framed in a police-friendly light. Initial reporting by the *LA Times* claimed that a “routine arrest of 3” sparked a “melee” in Watts. Their report said that “an undetermined number of persons were injured, including at least 12 police officers and two newsmen.” Police were described as being knocked from motorcycles with bricks. Reporters were assaulted from behind by “rioters” and fire trucks were “damaged by rocks” and “unable to fulfill their mission.” Deputy Chief Roger Murdock explained that the unrest began because “It was just a night to throw rocks at policemen.” In the *Times* report, Rena Frye, the mother of the motorist stopped by CHP, went from berating her son for driving under the influence to joining her sons in “berating the officers” while they resisted arrest with no explanation as to why her focus shifted.¹⁰⁶

By day two, the *Times* reported that now “13 policemen and 2 firemen” had been injured and rumors of violence became more extreme. Reporters wrote that “rioters were reportedly firing guns at policemen” while “hundreds of householders telephoned police seeking protection.” The press also printed unsubstantiated rumors, presumably straight from the mouths of their police informants, using the word “reportedly” to abdicate their responsibility to confirm the reports. According to the *Times*, “rifles and machetes” had been reported stolen and “Molotov cocktails reportedly were being hurled into cars and crowds.” Details were also included in the article that suggested remarkable restraint

¹⁰⁶ “1,000 Riot In L.A.: Police and Motorists Attacked,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), August 12, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382359613>.

from LAPD. For instance, the reporters relayed to their readers that “long-range tear gas guns were sent to the area but permission was not immediately granted for their use.”¹⁰⁷

By day three, the headline screamed “Eight Men Slain; Guard Moves In.” The lead article in the *Times* reported that “negro mobs fought bloody battles with police, looted stores and set fires to scores of buildings” while “sniper fire and uncontrolled flames were reported over a widening area.” Police and national guardsmen were referred to as “peace officers” while other injuries happened to “looters” and “rioters” but never bystanders. The sheriff who was killed in the unrest was the only of the eight slain who was reported to have a family he left behind. The *Times* apparently could not ascertain who did the shooting that resulted in injuries or death, but they wrote that it was believed to be a “combination of gunfire from police, guardsmen, and rioters.”¹⁰⁸

Contrary to the implications of news reports, a survey of coroner’s reports from fatal shootings during the rebellion suggest that LAPD and national guardsmen were shooting indiscriminately at unarmed suspects. For instance, Calvin Jones was shot by LAPD inside a shoe store that was being looted. The officer who shot Jones claimed that he had his “hands and arms full of articles” and that when he was asked to stop, he “threw down the articles he was carrying and spun at us from the waist.” Jones, however, exhibited entrance wounds in his back and buttocks. Another victim, Montague Whitmore, was shot in the back and head by a shotgun fleeing from a Pep Boys where he allegedly was seen with an arm full of “nondescript articles.” The officer who shot him chased him for forty yards before firing. Whitmore was unarmed and fleeing. Another

¹⁰⁷ Jack McCurdy and Art Berman, “New Rioting: Stores Looted, Cars Destroyed,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), August 13, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382356324>.

¹⁰⁸ Art Berman, “Eight Men Slain; Guard Moves In,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), August 15, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382363117/>.

victim shot by a national guardsman was Andrew Houston Jr. The guardsman who shot him in the head reported seeing Houston “standing in the doorway leading out to the balcony on the second story” of a building. The guardsmen reported that he believed “he was going to be shooting at the police officers in the street” and so he shot him. Although he reported that “there was no more sniping” after he shot him, the guardsmen could not say whether he was armed. In many cases, coroner’s reports revealed that LAPD and National Guardsmen had fired upon and killed unarmed citizens. In all of these cases, the coroner ruled them justified homicides because the slain were engaged in felonies at the time of their death. None of the coroner’s reports made their way into reporting on Watts, creating the illusion that all of the violence reported during the rebellion originated from participants engaged in criminal behavior.¹⁰⁹

This view of the rebellion was compounded by reports that the rebellion was spurred on by organized gang activity. Paul O’Rourke, special assistant for anti-poverty planning in the Brown administration, wrote a memo to the governor explaining that “the majority of community residents and experts” that he and his staff had spoken to during the rebellion were “convinced that major portions of the riot activity were inaugurated and sustained by hardcore youth, gang leadership, between the ages of sixteen and twenty years old.” O’Rourke claimed that there was “overwhelming evidence to support” the claim and cited that “the spread-pattern of the riot coincided with the territories – the ‘turf’ or ‘sets’ – of the major, hardcore gangs.” He also reported that people who investigated “time honored ‘stashies’” of the gangs “found them to be overflowing with Molotov cocktails, arms and loot.” O’Rourke explained further, writing that participants

¹⁰⁹ Gerald Horne, *Fire this Time* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 72-88.

in the rebellion used “highly effective guerrilla tactics” that gangs have used in intergang warfare for years and that many participants used gang signs to “pass unharmed through active riot areas.”¹¹⁰ While O’Rourke’s written evidence is not necessarily indicative of anything outside of the existence of gang activity within the area affected by the rebellion, testimony from other community residents and gang members corroborate the idea that gangs within the Watts community provided organization to the proceedings once the unrest began. Historian Gerald Horne identifies this activity as the beginning of the sort of black power activism that manifested in organizations such as the Black Panthers in Oakland. He writes that “even when those affiliated with gangs” or organizations such as the Nation of Islam “were not in the streets in organized detachments,” those groups “possessed the only organized, militant ethos left in the community in the wake of the ideological devastation of the Red Scare.” So even if participants were not official members of these groups, the ethos of these groups were “being adopted en masse by black youth” who were “repelled by the sight of blacks in the South being beaten by racists” and who had “been abandoned by mainstream civil rights organizations.”¹¹¹

Regardless of the actual extent of gang activity during the Watts Rebellion, the prevalence of the reported gang activity would help law enforcement establish the narrative that, while the grievances of the Watts community were real and legitimate, the rebellion represented more of a crime problem than a race problem. In an article lamenting a lack of leadership in Watts, Woodrow Coleman, a cochairman of the Non-

¹¹⁰ Memo from Paul O’Rourke to Governor Edmund G. Brown, August 19, 1965, carton 500, folder 11, Edmund G. Brown papers 1907-1996, The Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

¹¹¹ Horne, *Fire*, 100.

violent Action Committee, refuted the idea that most of the participants were gang members, saying that he saw “looters...guys who were hungry...and saying, ‘maybe this will get us some jobs.’” He went on to say that the rebellion was a “direct result of the failure of the nonviolent movement to make gains.” Another local leader, Lewis Green, chairman of Watts’ United Neighborhood Organization, argued that if “(Mayor Samuel) Yorty or...(Police Chief) Parker will sit down and...promise us that these people will not be molested and roused all the time by police then maybe we can talk to these kids.” Robert Hall, another chairman of the Nonviolent Action Committee, complained that the press was “laying too much emphasis on ‘gangs’ in the riot region” and that “reports making the police look well-behaved and the street crowds like senseless rioters were resented by the neighborhood.”¹¹²

The police quickly capitalized on the gang narrative and used it to suggest that the issues in Watts would only get worse without an influx of law enforcement into the area. An article from August 18 highlighted the fact that LAPD had confiscated 2,000 firearms during the unrest. Police Inspector Ed Walker was quoted saying that they “may never know how many guns were grabbed by looters” and police were reported to be worried that “hoodlums and juvenile gangs may be storing them underground for use in future times of violence.” Vice Squad Sergeant Lou Ronanno said that “there’s no question that these weapons will be used against us – or innocent persons.”¹¹³ Another article on August 22 simultaneously suggested that the increase in police patrols during the rebellion suppressed crime and that the violence during the rebellion was largely

¹¹² Jack Jones, “Area Appears Devoid of Community Leadership,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), August 14, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382358760>.

¹¹³ Jerry Cohen, “2,000 Guns Seized in Riot Here,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), August 18, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382379878>.

perpetrated by criminals rather than regular citizens with legitimate grievances. The article noted that West Los Angeles reported a 56% drop in burglaries, a 40% drop in robberies, and a 17% drop in car thefts. Venice reported a 25% drop in burglaries and a 50% drop in car thefts week over week. Venice's Division analytical officer noted that not only was there a drop in crime but there was also an increase in arrests "because of the extra patrols on the streets." Santa Monica, Beverly Hills, and Culver City all reported similar drops and noted that they had their officers on 12 hour shifts all week. Sgt. Fred Norris of the Santa Monica police said that it was his opinion that "the criminals were burglarizing places in the riot area because it was so easy." He went on to posit that "the statistics seem to show clearly that heavier police service would cut the crime rate" but that "In Santa Monica, we're already pushed to the hilt into our budget from overtime pay because of the extra duty during the riot."¹¹⁴ The clear message delivered by police interlocutors was that unrest like what happened in Watts was driven by criminal activity which was easily curbed by an increase in law enforcement presence. Unfortunately, departments did not have enough money to meet that level of activity on a regular basis.

The same message was reinforced by the 1965 LAPD Annual Report. The report included eight pages dedicated to the Watts uprising, most of which was devoted to a detailed timeline of events. Half of it, however, emphasized the manhours needed to meet the challenge of quelling the rebellion and noted how many resources had to come from outside the department to successfully restore law and order. On a page entitled "Assignment Without Precedent," the report asserted that the August unrest required that

¹¹⁴ "Police Officials Note Crime Rate Drop During L.A. Riots," *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), August 22, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382266789>.

“organizational structure...be modified and a detective manpower pool established in order to conform to emergency requirements.” Additionally, while there was “little respite from the regular investigative responsibilities,” many “already overtaxed and undermanned units were required to lend personnel for assignment in the ravaged area to meet the extraordinary demands which had arisen.”¹¹⁵ The riot section coupled with the usual refrain about rising crime rates and an activist supreme court protecting the rights of criminals to implore the reader to consider that more financial and legal support of law enforcement was needed to fight the rising tide of crime and preempt the next emergency situation brought on by a societal laxity toward criminal activity.

LAPD also spent considerable time and effort countering the brutality narrative and rehabilitating their image. Shortly after the Watts Rebellion, an item in the *LA Times* described an event straight out of the Wilson playbook. In *Police Administration*, Wilson suggested that the police should “overlook no opportunity to speak in the schools and before other groups of children” because it will “influence his attitude toward police when he becomes an adult.” Another benefit was that “good will on the part of children also results in the good will of their parents.”¹¹⁶ Following Wilson’s advice, the LAPD visited the Head Start program at West Adams Presbyterian Church and allowed each child in turn to explore their police car while explaining to them that the police are there to help them. Officer Robert Carter told the children that “a policeman is your friend.” He went on to compare the police to their parents and implore the children that they should be “friends with all policemen.” The teacher at the head start reported that during the

¹¹⁵ 1965 LAPD Annual Report, box 2, LAPD 1965 Annual Report, Watts Rebellion Collection, Gerth Archives and Special Collections, California State University Dominguez Hills, Carson, CA.

¹¹⁶ Wilson, *Administration*, 199.

rebellion, the children responded to the question “what is a policeman?” with things like, “he shoots you,” “he puts you in jail,” or “they get you.” Now, the teacher was confident that the visit from LAPD would “leave a lasting and healthy impression in their young minds.”¹¹⁷

Chief Willie Parker himself also went on a media tour to reestablish a police friendly narrative in the mind of the public. In an extended interview that aired on *Newsmakers* on August 14, 1965, Chief Parker fielded questions on how the police handled the rebellion and how they approached policing in Los Angeles in general. When the interviewer asked if it was a mistake to “take it easy in the first hours of the riot” Parker claimed that LAPD had “attempted to position ourselves...so that we are not in any way provocateurs from the standpoint of disorders and we don’t want our officers to use more force than is necessary under any circumstances.” He went on to say that criticisms of LAPD for not patrolling communities of color with black officers were attempts by civil rights leaders to relieve the black community “of all responsibility for their actions and find some other explanation for everything they do.”¹¹⁸

Later, the interviewer asked Parker about the paucity of leadership in the area. In response, Parker capitalized on the gang narrative that had emerged out of Watts and used it to connect the violence of the rebellion with the general crime environment. Parker said that young people in Watts “seem to be very well led in their violence” and that he thought “they respond better to that sort of leadership.” He blamed this state of affairs on the fact that there was “a tremendous amount of criminality in this general

¹¹⁷ Charles Hillinger, “Policemen Visit Negro Children,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), August 22, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382254100>.

¹¹⁸ Interview of Chief William Parker from *Newsmakers*, August 14, 1965, carton 500, folder 13, Edmund G. Brown papers 1907-1996, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, CA.

area” from people coming into LA from the south “many of them with criminal backgrounds.” He continued, saying that there were 600,000 black people in LA that were “perfectly law-abiding people” but “you have got this criminal element” that is “constantly engaged in criminal activity that is causing this tremendous amount of damage [to] property” with “no leaders except within their own group and their own criminal element.” He then claimed that the accusations of police brutality were “deliberately manufactured” by demagogic civil rights leaders.¹¹⁹ In short, according to Parker, the rebellion was the result of a criminal network within the Watts community that used allegations of police brutality by LAPD to gain the support of the community and consolidate their power. They would then use that power to continue their criminal activities with less law enforcement to contend with.

When calls for his resignation emerged from the Watts community in the aftermath of the rebellion, Parker began to publicly criticize the California Highway Patrol for the way they handled the Frye arrests. He told reporters that CHP did not have the proper “training and experience to handle” cases like that and that if LAPD had made those arrests “the rioting would have been averted.” He also quoted Governor Brown who he alleged told him that “Parker had 100% support” from the black community in Los Angeles “except for a few red hots.”¹²⁰ This quote was later attributed to Municipal Court Justice Loren Miller, who wrote Governor Brown to say that he had never made such a statement and that he had “long known and said repeatedly that there was a deep hostility

¹¹⁹ Interview of Chief William Parker from *Newsmakers*, August 14, 1965, carton 500, folder 13, Edmund G. Brown papers 1907-1996, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

¹²⁰ David Kraslow, “Parker Puts Blame for Riot on State Highway Patrolmen,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), August 30, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382279497>.

in the Negro community toward Chief Parker, regardless of the reasons.”¹²¹ Nevertheless, only one of those statements was printed for public consumption. In the same article, Parker continued to combat charges of police brutality by LAPD saying that 76% of those arrested during the Watts Rebellion had a previous criminal record. These comments served two purposes for Chief Parker. First, by pinning the blame for the rebellion on CHP rather than LAPD, Parker could spin the catalyst as being an issue of not following protocol in the face of an intense crime wave rather than an issue of systemic racism and police abuse. All that needs to happen to solve the problem in the first scenario is a little bit of training for the CHP. The second scenario requires a total overhaul of the LAPD’s approach to policing their community and legitimizes calls for Parker’s resignation. Second, it weaponizes the spike in arrests created by the way police departments had begun to evaluate beat officers. The increase in criminal records among the population of Watts was a direct result of the perverse incentive to make as many arrests as possible. Now, not only was that harming those that were arrested directly, but it was being used to legitimize calls to increase the presence of law enforcement, increasing the magnitude of the effect.

Mayor Sam Yorty, the Democratic mayor of Los Angeles and future primary opponent of Governor Brown, also joined in the criticism of the CHP. Yorty represents an interesting case that shows how much direct influence law enforcement officials had on elected officials from any political persuasion. Before the Watts Rebellion, Yorty appeared to be a skeptic of Chief Parker and the LAPD. He apparently sent a letter to Parker on January 22, 1965, asking him to address accusations of police brutality outlined

¹²¹ Letter from Loren Miller to Governor Edmund G. Brown, carton 500, folder 12, Edmund G. Brown Papers, 1907-1996, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

in a sermon by Stephen H. Fritchman, minister of the First Unitarian Church of Los Angeles, who was a well-known progressive activist in the area. The sermon, entitled “What Should We Expect of the Police Today?” was a levelheaded examination of the problems Fritchman observed in modern policing. These problems ranged from different treatment of minorities, the close ties between organizations such as the John Birch Society and police departments, and the lack of community redress for mistreatment by police. Fritchman repeatedly acknowledged that being a policeman was difficult, thankless work and that Chief Parker had done some good in professionalizing the police force, particularly with drinking on the job. However, he also pointed out that the higher crime rate in communities of color “is no reason for a different standard of police enforcement and treatment than elsewhere in the city.” He called on Los Angeles City Council to create a citizen review board to give citizens an avenue to assert their rights as citizens. He also asserted that police would not “win wide popular support from democratic sections of our citizenry until it is clear that police merit support by their own understanding and practice of American values,” including “respect for all sections of society.” His criticism echoed that of Assemblyman Dymally, who also called for both the establishment of a citizens’ review board and the resignation of Chief Parker.¹²²

Parker answered by sending Yorty a copy of a 1956 hearing before the House Committee on Un-American Activities and a letter that identified Fritchman as a member of the Los Angeles Committee For Protection of the Foreign Born which “had been cited as a Communist-controlled, Communist-front organization, as documented in the HCUA Guide to Subversive Organizations and Publications.” There was no attempt by Parker to

¹²² Letter from Chief of Los Angeles Police Department William H. Parker to Mayor Samuel Yorty, Box M-10-30, folder “Civil Rights 1965,” City Archives of Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA.

rebut any of Fritchman's points. Instead, he counted on his affiliations with "subversive" organizations to be enough to undermine his credibility to the point where Yorty would need no clarification from Parker.¹²³

Parker's estimation was correct, as Yorty would jump on Parker's bandwagon, beginning with his criticism of CHP on August 30 and continuing throughout the primary elections in 1966. Yorty called for "a full-scale investigation of what he termed 'bad judgement' used by California Highway Patrol officers in making the arrests that triggered the Watts riot." He went on to say that "their conduct in such an area under such circumstances indicated a lack of awareness of the dangerous potentialities inherent in the situation." He claimed that LAPD officers "three times advised patrolmen to take the suspects away from the vicinity as soon as possible" but that their "admonition was ignored." He then noted that, while there were signs of police brutality from CHP when LAPD arrived, including a "large gash" on Marquette Frye's forehead, LAPD "acted in line with their training on how to avoid inciting crowds."¹²⁴ He also provided specific support for LAPD in general and questioned the idea that the way the police treated the Watts community had anything to do with the rebellion. He pointed out that "police have always protected lawful civil rights demonstrations" and claimed that Martin Luther King Jr. told him that "the Los Angeles Police Department is so good I'd like to take it to Selma." He went on to ask, "How come, that if it was so good three months ago, it has deteriorated so much in a few months that it caused these riots (as various persons have

¹²³ Letter from Chief of Los Angeles Police Department William H. Parker to Mayor Samuel Yorty, Box M-10-30, folder "Civil Rights 1965," City Archives of Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA.

¹²⁴ Harry Trimborn, "Yorty Asks CHP Probe Over Riot," *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), August 30, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382279497>.

charged?)”¹²⁵ As Yorty himself was asking questions about LAPD treatment of its community in January, this argument was entirely disingenuous.

Political Consensus

By the end of August, Yorty was parroting Chief Parker’s talking points. In a letter to Los Angeles District Attorney Evelle Younger, Yorty lamented that “communists, fellow travelers, dupes, and demagogues have drummed the charge of ‘police brutality’ into the ears of the people of the area, deliberately fomenting antagonism to law enforcement officers.” He went on, claiming that “no matter how correct and restrained the police are...they will continue to be subjected to false, exaggerated, and malicious charges and rumors deliberately calculated to create tension and increase the difficulty of their work.” He lamented that “law enforcement faces a crisis” and hoped that “the recent destructive riots may serve some useful purpose if they awaken the nation to the dangers inherent in the deteriorating ability of law enforcement agencies to function effectively.” In between these exhortations, Yorty repeated lines straight out of the LAPD annual report concerning supreme court decisions that had handcuffed police attempting to put criminals behind bars and the difficulty law enforcement had encountered recruiting enough officers to meet the increased challenges they faced.¹²⁶ The similarities between Yorty’s messaging and that of Parker suggests that Parker’s influence on Yorty was effective in swaying him to the side of the police.

¹²⁵ Erwin Baker, “Yorty Hails Johnson’s Dispatch of Riot Rehabilitation Team Here,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), August 26, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382256684>.

¹²⁶ Letter from Mayor Sam Yorty to District Attorney Evelle Younger, carton 500, folder 14, Edmund G. Brown papers 1907-1996, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

Yorty's voice was not alone on that side of things. California Democrats lined up behind LAPD and other law enforcement entities in the aftermath of Watts – no small feat considering the political rift between Speaker Jesse Unruh and Governor Brown. Unruh had believed that Brown would support his candidacy for governor in 1966, only to indicate that he would run for a third term. Unruh then unleashed a personal political vendetta against Brown, often putting obstacles in the way of Brown's legislative agenda. In the wake of Watts, Unruh unveiled a plan to prevent further unrest that included "calls for an increase in the number of state parole officers...to improve surveillance of known criminal offenders." It also included new penalties for the possession of Molotov cocktails and the expansion of CHP in "critical areas."¹²⁷ Governor Brown had been on Parker's side from the outset of the rebellion, exclaiming on August 14 that "we are going to maintain law and order in California so long as I am governor" and expressing "his confidence that Los Angeles Police Chief William H. Parker could handle the situation competently."¹²⁸ He also responded to the unrest by including a huge expansion of the CHP in the budget for the following fiscal year, a proposal that included adding 1,383 officers over the next three years while ensuring that they were "better armed." The cost of the program would be \$14.7 million and included standard issue riot batons and crash helmets.¹²⁹ Even the most outspoken critics of Chief Parker relented in the face of his political support. Assemblyman Dymally, who initially had called for the resignation of Parker, set up a subcommittee dedicated to restoring economic stability to Watts but

¹²⁷ Memo from William Becker to Governor Edmund G. Brown, carton 500, folder 14, Edmund G. Brown papers 1907-1996, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

¹²⁸ Joe Alex Morris Jr. "Brown Flying Home, Pledges Aid to Parker," *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), August 14, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382358122>.

¹²⁹ "Brown Seeks to Strengthen Highway Patrol," *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), February 10, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382426148>.

“emphasized that the subcommittee doesn’t want to listen to complaints or discuss charges of police brutality.”¹³⁰

In fact, a political consensus emerged around Watts that bore a remarkable resemblance to that which surrounded the Berkeley protests. The consensus was that tolerance of civil disobedience had begun to contribute to a breakdown of law and order. Chief Parker was at the vanguard of the movement regarding Watts, saying in a speech to the American Legion that “those who advocate the violation of laws that have neither been repealed or declared unconstitutional advocate anarchy.” He attacked calls for his resignation from leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. as “an impersonal diversionary tactic to draw attention away from the lawlessness of the rioters and looters” and that charges of police brutality were “an attempt to break the will of the police and get them out of the way of the social revolution they choose to call civil disobedience.”¹³¹

Editorial writers followed along behind. Conservative commentator William F. Buckley Jr. wrote that “the notion that the Negroes in Los Angeles expressed the frustration of the larger Negro community at the intransigence of American white society is hardly plausible” because “the explosion occurred just at the moment when a major civil rights bill was passed: a bill which should have brought to the Negroes whatever that satisfaction is that comes from having gotten an unconditional surrender from The Enemy.” Buckley went on to make an explicit connection between Berkeley, Watts, and the Civil Rights Movement. He concluded that things like the Watts Rebellion were likely to happen again “so long as the nation coddles the teachings of the Mario Savios

¹³⁰ Jerry Gillam, “Negro Assemblyman Looks at Riots, Sees Failure in Leadership,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), August 26, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382258253>.

¹³¹ “Parker Warns Disrespect for Law Perils U.S.,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), August 22, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382260333>.

and the Martin Luther Kings, and their disciples who, seeking an honorable motivation for the exercise of their anarchic instincts, walk away from the bloodshed they have caused.”¹³²

Other conservative writers joined in a similar vein. David Lawrence wrote in the *LA Times* that elected officials had a responsibility to “make clear again and again to the people who do not understand such things that the right to ‘demonstrate’ does not mean there is a license to create disorder or to stimulate the criminal elements who loot stores, set fires, and attack innocent bystanders.” He finishes by calling for a “moratorium on all kinds of street demonstrations” until law and order is restored and the “deeply rooted causes of unrest” are solved.¹³³ Others, like Morrie Ryskind went further, claiming that poor black Americans received special treatment when compared with poor whites and quoted someone he described as a black visitor to Los Angeles from Sacramento who said that they “would not blame the police if they shot right into the mob.”¹³⁴

It was not just conservative voices in the chorus. Kenneth Rexroth, famous poet and radical progressive, wrote in an opinion article in the *San Francisco Examiner* that race riots were “a problem of inertia,” in the sense that it was “everybody’s fault because it was nobody’s.” He separated the rebellion from the rest of the Civil Rights Movement but in so doing acknowledged the existence of an inner-city crime problem that was being excused by apologists. He wrote, “How about the Negro responsibility? These riots have nothing to do with ‘civil disobedience’ or the civil rights movement. The civil rights

¹³² William F. Buckley Jr. “Source of Riots Can Be Spotted by Close Look Inside Ourselves,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), August 20, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382252170>.

¹³³ David Lawrence, “Right to Demonstrate Is Not a License to Loot and Burn,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), August 18, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382380802>.

¹³⁴ Morrie Ryskind, “Who Really Draws the Color Line?” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), August 25, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382254177>.

leaders live far away from the civil riot neighborhoods.” He concluded the paragraph by suggesting that if one asked “the Harvard or Howard educated lawyer, doctor, or politician about one of these poolhall hangers on – ‘would you have one home to dinner? Would you want your sister to marry one?’” He concluded by saying “the cultural desegregation of the Negro outcast poor is going to depend ultimately on the direct, personal assumption of responsibility by the Negro middle class, motivated by a sense of overwhelming crisis and by a sharply awakened conscience.”¹³⁵

Another editorial in the *Sacramento Bee* continued to excoriate the idea of civil disobedience, suggesting that “The United States is on a demonstration binge.” The author argued that demonstrations were occurring “on about every major subject from racial issues to the Vietnamese War.” “Some of the protests,” they continued, “have gone over the line of law and order.” They argued that “the protests are beginning to be so automatic they are more like reflexes than constructive policies.” They continued, writing that “it goes without saying, of course, that illegal and dangerous actions never are justified while orderly means of free speech are available, and abuses are being rectified by law.” The column finished with the fear that “a dash for the picket lines and the streets at the first occasion robs them of their force and value.”¹³⁶

These sentiments extended to political leaders as well. President Johnson said that “a rioter with a Molotov cocktail in his hand is not fighting for civil rights any more than a Klansman with a sheet on his back and a mask on his face” and said that Watts “bore no

¹³⁵ Kenneth Rexroth, “A Worsening Situation,” *San Francisco Examiner* (San Francisco, CA), August 18, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/458723142>.

¹³⁶ “Effectiveness of Demonstrations Is Lost When They Are Overused,” *Sacramento Bee* (Sacramento, CA), August 15, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/618590433>.

relation to the orderly struggle that has ennobled the last decade.”¹³⁷ Governor Brown invited a radio commentator named Morton Jackson, who was a lawyer in Los Angeles who previously worked on the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration, to discuss Watts with him. Jackson believed that calls for equality from “the fringes of the rights cause” amounted to “an invitation to lash out and take by force what they are constantly told has been denied them and withheld from them.” He claimed that they constantly “receive encouragement from all sides to disregard the law” and “to treat our law enforcement officers with contempt, or worse.”¹³⁸

Public opinion also closely tracked the media discourse surrounding Watts and civil disobedience. According to internal memos, Governor Brown received almost 6,000 letters concerning Watts, most of which supported the Governor’s support for law enforcement and his restoration of law and order. “A great number” of respondents showed “strong support” for Mayor Yorty and Chief Parker and “deplored the Los Angeles visit by Martin Luther King.” The memo also pointed out that the volume of letters concerning Watts was only surpassed by the Berkeley protests, which outnumbered the Watts letters 2 to 1.¹³⁹ Another letter to the Under Secretary of Commerce, Governor Leroy Collins, reported that “80% of calls” into LA area radio shows “discuss the Watts riots” and that “most callers are against the actions and philosophy of the rioters.” The callers also demonstrated anger because “the government

¹³⁷ Robert E. Thompson, “Johnson Compares L.A. Rioters to Klan Riders,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), August 21, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382254272>.

¹³⁸ Letter from Morton Jackson to Governor Edmund G. Brown, October 22, 1965, carton 500, folder 15, Edmund G. Brown Papers 1907-1996, The Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

¹³⁹ Memo from Jim Alexander to Winslow Christian, September 29, 1965, carton 500, folder 13, Edmund G. Brown Papers 1907-1996, The Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

has done nothing except send food to the looters and arsonists.”¹⁴⁰ A poll completed shortly after the Watts Rebellion shows similar results. When asked an open-ended question about what they believed to be the most impactful cause of the unrest, respondents were split between socioeconomic conditions in Watts and “lawlessness, criminal element, hoodlums, juvenile delinquency.” A large minority cited things like “the civil rights movement” and “Negro agitators.” Respondents said that they believed Chief Parker and the CHP should receive less blame for the riots than the Mayor and the Governor and only 9% believed that Parker should resign.¹⁴¹

Letters to the editor also reflected these feelings. Mary Jane Essex of Novato, California wrote in to the *San Francisco Examiner* in response to a column that suggested that residents of Watts did not actually want jobs but rather government handouts and that white residents that protected themselves and their property were responding reasonably by writing that she was dismayed by “newscasters, ministers, and teachers condoning” the actions of participants in the Watts Rebellion, but that his article “pleasantly surprised” her. She said that she “had begun to think that the people most influential in guiding young minds all held the belief that civil disobedience is all right.”¹⁴² William P. Caulfield of San Francisco wrote in to the *Examiner* to say that he saw “little difference between civil disobedience in...the Berkeley riots and this most recent anarchy in Los Angeles.” He argued that if “society is to allow illegal actions in a lesser degree, then we

¹⁴⁰ Letter from A.J. Williams to Governor Leroy Collins, September 23, 1965, carton 500, folder 13, Edmund G. Brown Papers 1907-1996, The Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

¹⁴¹ Public Opinion Survey on Watts, September 11-12, 1965, box 756, folder 28, Edmund G. Brown Papers 1907-1996, The Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

¹⁴² Dick Nolan, “Talking Back,” *San Francisco Examiner* (San Francisco, CA), August 23, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/458771152>.

must be prepared to suffer the consequences of full-scale lawlessness when that come to pass.”¹⁴³

In the end, Watts became a huge political issue in the 1966 election, as to be expected of an event that caused so much devastation. More importantly for the election of 1966, police interlocutors connected Watts to the student protests at Berkeley in an effort to undermine civil disobedience as political speech. Law enforcement representatives like Chief William Parker were able to use crime rate increases that resulted from over-policing communities of color to undermine legitimate racial grievances and convince California voters that the root causes of the Watts Rebellion were criminal, not social and economic. The political influence of police interlocutors swayed elected officials such as Mayor Sam Yorty of Los Angeles and Governor Brown to accept the narrative that an overburdened police force was unable to meet the challenges that urban racial unrest presented. Further, police exploited the sequence of the student protests at Berkeley and the unrest in Watts to encourage voters to see the excoriations of civil disobedience as a slippery slope to social disorder. These two issues, fresh in voters’ minds as the 1966 election cycle began in California, would dominate the gubernatorial election and act as harbingers of the political future of America.

¹⁴³ “Discrimination Evils,” *San Francisco Examiner* (San Francisco, CA), August 20, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/458735894>.

Chapter IV

The Campaign

The opinion of contemporary political experts at the approach of the 1966 campaign season was that Governor Brown was vulnerable to defeat. Brown was running for a third term, and voters had already been signaling that they might be interested in a change at the top. Brown had many polarizing moments in his second term aside from the student protests at Berkeley and the Watts Rebellion. They also included his attempts to continue importing temporary agricultural workers under the Bracero program that had been ended by Congress in 1964 and the repeal of the Rumford Fair Housing Act, a law Brown supported that forbade discrimination in real estate practices. In a neutral political context, any Republican challenger might have been a prohibitive favorite heading into the primaries.¹⁴⁴

The political context was not neutral, however. Republicans both in California and nationwide had just experienced a number of high-profile defeats at the ballot box. Their apparent Richard Nixon, who came within a percentage point of defeating John F. Kennedy for president in 1960, was soundly defeated by Pat Brown in the 1962 Gubernatorial election in California. This was followed by the landslide defeat of Barry Goldwater in the 1964 election by Lyndon Johnson. Republicans, it seemed, were in the wilderness, beset by a rift between the far-right wing of their party, where Goldwater

¹⁴⁴ A Public Opinion Image and Attitude Survey Concerning the 1966 Gubernatorial Election in the State of California by Opinion Research of California, October 23-25, 1965, Box 756, Folder 29, The Edmund G. Brown Papers, 1907-1996, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley, CA; Robert Blanchard, "Brown Will Still Need That Luck He Has Had," *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), December 3, 1964 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382137588>.

resided, and the center. Furthermore, it seemed like there was no obvious choice to pick up the standard and lead them back to the top. Most political commentators had a bearish prognostication for the GOP's chances in the near future, and all agreed that the only way forward was to pivot back to the center. After Goldwater's defeat in 1964, Robert J. Donovan, presidential historian and political correspondent, wrote a twelve-part analysis of the recent failures of the GOP, the present problems they faced, and a prescription for their future success. Donovan cautioned that Republicans had to move on from current leadership if they wanted to have future success. He pointed out that Nixon's candidacy as "titular leader" had "largely dissipated" after his defeat in California and that he expected Goldwater would "fare no better." Goldwater, he wrote, would "retain a friendly following among hardcore conservatives" but "the rest of his party will take the view that he and his philosophy have been repudiated by the voters." He concluded that it was "difficult to visualize any major national issue on which Goldwater's views will make a significant impact."¹⁴⁵

Donovan opined that the only way forward for Republicans was to turn back toward the center and leave the most conservative part of their party in their wake. He wrote, "if the Republicans are to be, or seem to be, the voice of right-wing radicalism or extremism, advocating reactionary changes at home and adventures abroad, they will remain a minority party indefinitely," regardless of whom they nominate. He continued: "but if they swing back as the conservative party of the center, standing in opposition to the Democrats as the liberal party of the center, nothing in the 1964 election returns

¹⁴⁵ Robert J. Donovan, "The Future of the Republican Party: Titular Leaders Have Failed to Rule GOP," *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), November 16, 1964, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382072574>.

foredooms them to permanent minority status.” The problem with leaning into the most conservative wing of their party, in Donovan’s estimation, was that the embrace of civil rights required by a “modern” Republican party would alienate any supporters the GOP might hope to gain in the south from such a maneuver. In any event, Donovan saw the road ahead for Republicans as an uphill one, as Democrats had “all but crowded the Republicans off the main positions of the day.”¹⁴⁶

California voters seemed to agree with Donovan. Opinion polling in January of 1966 showed that Brown was indeed vulnerable to moderate Republicans but remained formidable against GOP candidates cut from the Goldwater cloth. Brown trailed San Francisco Mayor George Christopher, known as a moderate Republican with a strong record of support for the Civil Rights Movement, by nine percentage points while leading actor Ronald Reagan, who had ties to the far-right John Birch Society (JBS), a far-right organization that opposed the civil rights movement, argued that states’ rights superseded the power of the federal government, and espoused conspiracy theories that trafficked in antisemitism, by four percentage points. Most telling about the poll is that George Christopher lacked the name recognition of the other candidates, which appeared to benefit him. Essentially, voters were backing an avatar for a generic Republican over Brown. Reagan was hurt by the fact that he lacked political experience and was “just a movie actor.” Those who did mention his politics didn’t like that he had supported Goldwater in the 1964 election and that he had connections to JBS. Meanwhile, voters saw Brown as indecisive and easily influenced and continued to believe that he had not

¹⁴⁶ Robert J. Donovan, “The Future of the Republican Party: GOP Must Return to Old Ground,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), November 22, 1964, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382092472>.

handled Watts properly.¹⁴⁷ Public opinion at the outset of the election mirrored Donovan's analysis: if you were a moderate Republican, you had a good chance of defeating Brown.

By the end of 1966, conventional wisdom had been turned on its head. Ronald Reagan drubbed George Christopher in the primary, winning 77% of the vote. He went on to run a campaign that incorporated many of the same themes that the Nixon and Goldwater campaigns had prominently featured: preserving law and order and dismantling governmental anti-poverty programs. Reagan certainly did not represent the pivot to the center Donovan envisioned for Republican success at the ballot but his success in California provided a blueprint for Republican candidates at the national level and brought the politics of Barry Goldwater from ignominious defeat to become the prevailing ideology of a conservative revolution.¹⁴⁸

Reagan's campaign was able to capitalize on the narratives established in California by law enforcement concerning the Berkeley protests and Watts Rebellion to repackaging law and order politics. In Reagan, the politics of Goldwater shed its identity as the politics of warmongering and political extremism and replaced it with the idea that abiding by the established laws of the country preserved an essential kind of morality that was endangered by an insidious tolerance for civil disobedience by current political leaders. This tolerance, according to Reagan's campaign, had emboldened criminals, perverted institutions, and provided a poor example of leadership that had rendered

¹⁴⁷ California Poll 66-01, Berkeley D-Lab, January 29, 1966-February 5, 1966, <https://sda.berkeley.edu/sdaweb/analysis/?dataset=cal6601&selectedvar=Q15>.

¹⁴⁸ Richard Bergholz, "Reagan Landslide; Brown Winner," *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), June 8, 1966 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382455755>; Richard Bergholz, "Reagan Triumphs: GOP Scores Heavily in Nation," *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), November 9, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382335399>.

America rudderless. Reagan built this message with the help of state and national law enforcement officials, who resented the Brown administration for appointing judges that they felt tied their hands in their battle with crime. The police used its influence over the media and politicians like Mayor Sam Yorty of Los Angeles, who would run against Governor Brown in the Democratic primary, to emphasize rising crime rates, the Watts Rebellion, and the student protests at Berkeley. This created the sense that California was in a state of chaos that could only be corrected by a stronger hand. Further, people like J. Edgar Hoover of the FBI and Edwin Meese of the Alameda County District Attorney's office provided direct aid to the Reagan campaign that materially changed public opinion during the election. These efforts by law enforcement catapulted Berkeley and Watts back into the public consciousness and helped the Reagan campaign frame them as symptoms of a "leadership and morality gap" in politics that could only be repaired by reemphasizing respect for the law. The joint efforts of law enforcement and the Reagan campaign, coupled with Governor Brown's consensus that civil disobedience was a slippery slope to a breakdown of law and order, created a political climate in which the political messaging that resulted in a landslide defeat of Barry Goldwater led to a stunning victory by Ronald Reagan in 1966 that ushered in a new era of conservative politics in the United States.

The Primaries: Reagan

When John Harmer, a Republican political operative who would win a state senate seat in 1966, first met Ronald Reagan, he was unimpressed. In a letter to Bill Roberts of Spencer-Roberts Associates, the political consulting firm who eventually would run Reagan's gubernatorial campaign, Harmer impressed upon Roberts that

Reagan had a lot of work to do before Harmer considered him a viable candidate. Harmer said that his “strongest impression” was that “everything I heard was the Nixon Campaign all over again.” He lamented that there was “no reference to any new proposal or program” nor was there “new ideas presented on the old issues.” Instead, there was talk of the “business climate, rising crime, mass transit etc., ad nauseum.” Harmer’s “second strongest impression” was that Reagan had “much too shallow a knowledge of certain basic issues.” He cited many examples including his lack of understanding that there was a connection between the rise in California’s productivity and the rise in California’s budget, nor that the increase was “both justified and quite natural.” Not only that, but Reagan apparently was also unaware of any of the mass transit proposals made in Los Angeles County, nor was he able to provide alternatives to the unemployment compensation programs he criticized. Lastly, Harmer seemed insulted and alarmed that Reagan did not seem to have “even the slightest idea” who he was and why he was meeting with him.¹⁴⁹ Harmer’s concerns echoed those of Donovan and California voters at large: Reagan lacked experience and presented the same ideas that had continually been trounced at the ballot box.

Despite the misgivings of the Republican establishment of California, Reagan launched his campaign in January of 1966, becoming the fourth candidate to enter the fray on the Republican side. The most serious contender of the slate was former Mayor of San Francisco George Christopher, and most observers assumed that more moderate Republicans would run. The policy proposals Reagan offered at the outset of the campaign were milquetoast and lacked detail. They included a “possible tax moratorium”

¹⁴⁹ Letter from John Harmer to Bill Roberts, July 12, 1965, Box 549, Political Campaign 1966, Edwin Meese Papers, The Hoover Institution, Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA.

for retired homeowners, raising the salary of state legislators, an “in-depth study” of the state tax structure, “working out a plan” to remove the appointment of justice from “the influence of party politics.” He also called for the end of “hyphenated blocs of Negro-Americans, Mexican-Americans, Irish-Americans, Italian Americans” and other groups “fostered only for political expediency so cynical men could make cynical promises in a hunt for votes.” Lastly, he called for the lessening of restrictions on police who are making arrests.¹⁵⁰ Few of his ideas were actual policy proposals and instead represented either an empty pledge to at least explore issues identified by voters or an attempt to poke at a grievance held by his most ardent conservative supporters.

Reagan’s announcement did little to assuage the concerns of Harmer and other Republican operatives, who joined with Democrats to attack Reagan as a far-right extremist in attempts to undermine any potential groundswell of support. One of Reagan’s primary opponents, Laughlin Waters, said that Reagan represented the “extreme-right within the Republican party” and that California voters had “consistently repudiated” his philosophy.”¹⁵¹ George Christopher took a similar tack, claiming that he opposed “the zealots of the extreme right and extreme left” including “the ultra-conservative John Birch Society.” He then went on to say that it was “no secret that the John Birch Society is supporting Mr. Reagan.”¹⁵² While Reagan’s direct membership in the John Birch Society was never corroborated, he found himself in the same circles as prominent members and skirted opportunities to distance himself from them. For

¹⁵⁰ Carl Greenberg, “Reagan Announces He’s Candidate for Governor: Requests Tax Moratorium,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), January 5, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382357122>.

¹⁵¹ Richard Bergholz, “Waters Claims Reagan Represents Right Wing: Candidate for GOP Governor Nomination Says State Won’t Accept Actor’s Views,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), January 14, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382369244>.

¹⁵² Richard Bergholz, “Birch Society Backing Reagan – Christopher,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), March 12, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382449128>.

instance, in March of 1965 Reagan attended an event hosted by the California Republican Assembly at which the keynote address was delivered by State Senator and JBS member John Schmitz. The convention also feted Reagan as a potential gubernatorial candidate. When questioned about his ties to JBS at the event by reporters, Reagan responded that “a very predominantly Democratic study committee (the State Senate Committee on Un-American Activities) found it was not subversive and that’s good enough for me...I don’t think those fellows in Sacramento would issue a false report.” He also claimed that he “found himself in great disagreement” with the founder of JBS, Robert Welch.¹⁵³

Once it became clear that Reagan was a real threat to win the Republican nomination, Democrats also began highlighting his connection to the John Birch Society and his previous support of Barry Goldwater. In May, Brown described Reagan as “a new package designed to cover the tired old Goldwater goods”¹⁵⁴ and called him “pure Goldwater”¹⁵⁵ a week later. These joint attacks were built on the understanding that John Harmer had after his meeting with Reagan. Reagan was of Goldwater’s ilk and Goldwater had just been humiliated in the previous election. This understanding seemed to be supported by polling early in the election cycle. In polls throughout 1965 and early 1966, respondents continually signaled that they disapproved of the John Birch Society and Goldwater supporters. In October of 1965, respondents said that they would be less inclined to vote for a Goldwater supporter by a factor of 2 to 1. In August of 1966, half of respondents said that they would be less likely to vote for a candidate that supported the

¹⁵³ Carl Greenberg, “Conservatives Rallied: Goldwater Can Win Presidency in 1968, CRA Convention Told,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), March 28, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382231876>.

¹⁵⁴ “Brown Likens Reagan Stand to Goldwater’s,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), May 27, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382367984>.

¹⁵⁵ “Brown Ends Northern Drive, Likens Reagan to Goldwater,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), June 3, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382277223>.

John Birch Society. Democrats and establishment Republicans counted on this pattern to hold with Reagan.¹⁵⁶

The challenge faced by the Reagan campaign and his boosters was clear. They had to get out from under the extremist label that had been applied to them by Democrats in the last two elections to great success. There were two ways they could do this. The first was to denounce the John Birch Society and right-wing extremism in any form. This path ran the risk of alienating a large part of Reagan's base in Southern California, and a growing part of the Republican electorate nationwide. Goldwater's nomination for the 1964 election demonstrated the comparative power of the far right to the center within the GOP. The other path would require convincing the public that Democrats like Governor Brown were beholden to far more extreme and subversive elements than Ronald Reagan. The seeds of this path had already been sown by law enforcement PR campaigns against the Berkeley student protests and the nascent Black Power movement, and these narratives had already gained quite a bit of traction among the public. The Reagan campaign simply had to recreate the fervor that had accompanied the peak of the Berkeley protests to convince voters that the most extreme elements of society were in fact on the left. The Reagan campaign had to bet that the organizations on the left that had recently sown discord and chaos in California would be more threatening to voters than right-wing organizations that theoretically could in the future.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ A Public Opinion Image and Attitude Survey Concerning the 1966 Gubernatorial Election in the State of California by Opinion Research of California, October 23-25, 1965, Box 756, Folder 29, The Edmund G. Brown Papers, 1907-1996, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley, CA; Robert Blanchard, "Brown Will Still Need That Luck He Has Had," *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), December 3, 1964, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382137588>.

¹⁵⁷ McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 56.

Sam Yorty's Curious Campaign

On March 10, 1966, Mayor Sam Yorty of Los Angeles announced that he would be running for Governor against Pat Brown on the Democratic side. Yorty charged that the Brown administration was “tired” and seemed “to have lost its forward thrust.” He went on to criticize Brown’s budget keeping – a nod to polling that suggested that Californians were unhappy with tax increases that had been required the previous year – and point out that Brown was unable “to understand urban problems.” Yorty elaborated, saying that “in the five years I have been mayor in Los Angeles we’ve really never had cooperation from the state,” specifically, it seems, on matters of smog control and mass transit. His most incendiary and curious attacks, however, were related to Watts. When Yorty was asked if he thought Watts would be a factor in the campaign, Yorty answered that he thought that “if judicial appointments were taken out of politics, it would relieve some of the problems (of the Watts area).” He continued, claiming that “some of the Brown-appointed judges have rendered ‘decisions weighted a little too heavily against the public interest.’”¹⁵⁸ This was an interesting tack for Yorty to take. When Democrats were asked about Brown’s judicial appointments the previous October, more than half of them said they were satisfied with them while only 23% of them said that they weren’t. Meanwhile, Californians were not necessarily thinking about the criminal justice system as a major problem in their state. When asked to name the biggest problem facing California before the primaries began, Californians listed racial relations, water, taxes, unemployment, population growth, welfare, education, transportation, reapportionment,

¹⁵⁸ Richard Bergholz, “Yorty Will Run For Governor to Give Democrats ‘a Choice’,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), March 10, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382437780>.

and the Bracero program before crime and law enforcement.¹⁵⁹ Why, then, would Yorty emphasize this line of criticism in his press conference announcing his candidacy for governor?

A more important question to ask might be why Yorty chose to run for governor in the first place. Two weeks before he announced his candidacy, Yorty made it clear that he didn't want to run at all. An article from February of 1966 reported that Yorty "pleaded once again" for "some Democrat to 'poke his head over the horizon' and challenge Governor Brown for the party nomination." Yorty went on to say that if someone like businessman George Killion, a steamship executive from San Francisco, would run then Yorty could "forget about it." He explained that he felt California voters deserved an alternative because "the great bulk of middle-road voters are repelled by Republican Ronald Reagan because 'he's too far to the right' and by Brown because 'he's the captive of the left-wing California Democratic Council.'" He went on to suggest that "communists are working a lot harder now than most people realize" and that "anyone who labels an anti-communist as a reactionary is guilty of 'completely false thinking.'" ¹⁶⁰ When voters were asked what they liked least about Governor Brown in the run-up to the 1966 campaign, exactly one respondent mentioned his "association with 'red-front organizations'" and another "his CDC backing."¹⁶¹ Again, why was Yorty championing such fringe attacks on Brown?

¹⁵⁹ A Public Opinion Image and Attitude Survey Concerning the 1966 Gubernatorial Election in the State of California conducted by Opinion Research of California, October 23-25, 1965, Box 756, Folder 29, The Edmund G. Brown Papers 1936-1966, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

¹⁶⁰ Richard Bergholz, "Yorty Wants Someone Else to Battle Brown: If Another Democrat Would Enter the Race, 'I Could Forget About It.' Press Club Told," *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), February 24, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382275685>.

¹⁶¹ Public Opinion Poll conducted by Opinion Research of California, Box 756, Folder 27, the Edmund G. Brown Papers, 1936-1966, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

A potential answer to this question lies in Yorty's relationship with LAPD Chief of Police William Parker. Yorty and Parker were inexorably linked by the Watts Rebellion, but Parker clearly had Yorty's ear before that. Parker had already been sending anti-communist propaganda to Yorty from the House Un-American Activities Committee in order to discredit his local detractors. Now, Yorty found a common enemy with Parker in the form of the California Advisory Committee to the US Commission on Civil Rights, which felt that the McCone Commission's investigation into the causes of the Watts Rebellion was inadequate and failed to reckon with many of the charges of police brutality brought against LAPD. The committee "accused Parker and Yorty of failing to take constructive steps to avert or prepare" for an event such as the Watts Rebellion and concluded that both had engaged in gross negligence. Yorty called the claim a "political attack" and said that the committee was "afraid [he'd] run for governor" so this was an attempt to "use the police department as a scapegoat and to repeat the completely false charge that the police department caused the rioting." Clearly, Yorty felt that an attack on Parker and LAPD was also an attack on him, whether because of the committee's pairing of them or because he felt that he and Parker had worked closely together during the rebellion and had similar points of view on the matter.¹⁶²

Now, Yorty was employing the same line of criticism on Brown's judicial appointments as Parker and the rest of LAPD had been for years. In the 1964 LAPD annual report, a large section was devoted to "the judicial revolution." The section began: "violence and crime have grown to staggering proportions while the police, charged with the basic obligation to repress criminal activity, find themselves tragically weakened in

¹⁶² "Yorty, Parker Reject Riot Action Charges: Both Declare Rights Report Not Objective," *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), January 24, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382317314>.

their attempts to contain the problem.” The section cites US Supreme Court decisions such as *Weeks v. US* and *Mapp v. Ohio*, which disallowed evidence acquired through unlawful search and seizure. Importantly, however, it focuses much of its ire on California Supreme Court decisions such as one in which the confession of a man convicted of murder was thrown out because he was “entitled to counsel at the moment the investigation focused on him as a suspect and that in the absence of an intelligent waiver of this right, any confession made without counsel is inadmissible.”¹⁶³ The griping continued in 1965, as LAPD complained that the decision in *People v. Martin* limited the authority of police officers “to the boundaries of the political subdivision for which the police officer is appointed except in cases of fresh pursuit or the service of warrants.” The report explained that “the concomitant and logical result of these limitations on police authority and activity has been an inordinate rise in crime and a debilitation of the public security.”¹⁶⁴

In fact, by 1965, Yorty himself was contributing to propaganda created by the police and disseminated in California. Yorty wrote a statement on official letterhead that was included in a pamphlet entitled “California Crime Rate 1952-1964 Up 76% - Why?” In his statement, Yorty made the same case as the author of the annual reports. He wrote that “if we are to depend on the protection of law enforcement agencies, we must not hamstring them with court rulings which destroy their effectiveness in providing that protection.” He used recent examples to illustrate the danger, such as the convictions in

¹⁶³ Los Angeles Police Department Annual Report 1964, Carton 500, Folder 10, Edmund G. Brown Papers 1907-1996, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

¹⁶⁴ Los Angeles Police Department Annual Report 1965, Box 2, LAPD 1965 annual report, Watts Rebellion Collection, Gerth Archives and Special Collections, California State University Dominguez Hills, Carson, CA.

the cases of “the sledgehammer slayings of two little girls aged 9 and 12” and “the death of a 10-year-old girl who was stabbed 41 times” being “reversed by the Supreme Court on ‘technical grounds’ in spite of the admissions and confessions of the accused (emphasis his).” He lambasted the courts further, writing that “though the courts reject any responsibility for the rising crime rate, their decisions effectively deny the investigating officers the cooperation and assistance of the person who knows most about crime: the one who committed it.” He then cited that 225 police officers had been killed over the last 5 years and that 78% of the perpetrators had previous arrest records, “over half” of which were violent crimes. He closed by warning that “if the criminal offender is afforded more protection than those who obey the law, the meaning of all individual rights can disappear.”¹⁶⁵

Chief Parker’s identity as the source of Mayor Yorty’s newfound ideological blend of pro-police propaganda and fringe right-wing communist conspiracy was most strongly suggested by Yorty’s citation of *Intelligence Digest* during the primary campaign. In late April of 1966, Yorty claimed at his weekly city hall news conference that Governor Brown had “the support of the Communist Party” in the primary because Yorty was “anti-communist.” When pressed on why he believed this, the Mayor’s office provided the press with a copy of an article from *Intelligence Digest*, an obscure British publication known for its right-wing editorial slant and its rabid antisemitism. The article read that “the Communist infiltrated California Democratic Council with its 70,000 members is solidly behind Gov. Brown in his contest with Los Angeles Mayor Samuel Yorty for the Democratic Party gubernatorial election” and was written by “our special

¹⁶⁵ “California Crime Rate 1952-1964 Up 76% Why?,” Carton 721, Folder 24, The Edmund G. Brown papers 1936-1966, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

correspondent in Los Angeles.” Yorty ranted that “hardcore Communists are back in the shadows, pulling the strings in these campus demonstrations,” parroting attacks from the FBI that suggested that the City Hall demonstrations of 1960 and the Sproul Hall sit-ins were led by communist agitators. He also said that “he couldn’t understand why the news media do not make this clear to the public.” For their part, the Communist Party said that they had “not endorsed Governor Brown” and had no intention to because “he has made serious capitulations to conservative pressures – for instance, in his crackdown on the Berkeley Free Speech Movement and in his refusal to meet with the grape strikers.”¹⁶⁶ A week later, State Controller Alan Cranston, an expert in extremist propaganda who had been a foreign correspondent in Nazi Germany in the 1930’s, described *Intelligence Digest* as “one of the most popular” publications “in all the world’s sewers, where demented souls worship swastikas and long for the grand old days of the storm troopers,” and reported that he “was astounded to find Mayor Yorty ‘even reading such blatantly racist material, let alone quoting from it.’” When Yorty was confronted with that information, he deflected and disagreed, saying that “the real question” was “whether Governor Brown and Cranston are going to accept the support of the Communist-infiltrated California Democratic Council.” He went on to say that he didn’t agree that *Intelligence Digest* was antisemitic, and that people shouldn’t “forget that just because you read a publication doesn’t mean you agree with everything it says.” He went on to list more things that *Intelligence Digest* reported that he happened to agree with, including the existence of a “Communist-oriented school in Los Angeles.” He then seemed to give up the game, admonishing reporters for questioning the veracity of the

¹⁶⁶ Richard Bergholz, “Brown Backed by Communists, Yorty Charges,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), April 28, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382344703>.

reporting he quoted by claiming that he “checked all this out with Chief of Police William H. Parker and it’s correct.”¹⁶⁷ Whether or not Chief Parker was feeding Yorty the information he was citing, it was clear that Parker had a lot of influence over Yorty and that they shared quite a few opinions on the political machinations of California. It’s also clear that Parker was using Yorty to weaken Brown’s electoral prospects while simultaneously backing a candidate that could deliver more friendly judicial appointees if he were to be elected.

Coincidence or not, Yorty continually brought up narratives that law enforcement public relations campaigns had worked hard to establish in the minds of voters for the previous two years. In February, Yorty continued his attack on Brown’s judicial appointments, claiming that “crime in California had been going up while a Brown-appointed State Supreme Court strains at technicalities to reverse convictions of even confessed murderers.” He continued: “never in the history of California have judicial appointments been so flagrantly used to create, or pay off, political obligations” and that Brown failed to “take even a cursory interest in the views and inclinations of judges before their elevation to the State Supreme Court.”¹⁶⁸ In March, Yorty invoked the student protests at Berkeley, claiming that “lack of discipline on college campuses had ‘gone too far.’” He admonished Brown for not using “the University of California Board of Regents, which sets university policy, as a lever to enforce greater campus discipline.”¹⁶⁹ He doubled down on Berkeley in May, describing the situation as

¹⁶⁷ Ray Zeman, “Cranston Defends Brown on Yorty Charge of Red Backing,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), April 29, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382350230>.

¹⁶⁸ Richard Bergholz, “Yorty Assails Brown, Demands ‘End to Political Gimmicks, Drift,’” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), February 2, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382285463>.

¹⁶⁹ “College Lack of Discipline Hit by Yorty,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), March 31, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382322759>.

“disgusting” and again blaming Brown for not doing more to correct the situation, saying that Brown could “crack down on these kooky kids any time he wanted just by ordering the regents to do it.”¹⁷⁰ He then struck out on Watts, claiming that Communist agitators had helped incite the riot and asserting that “no one has a right to incite a riot any more than a person has a right to cry ‘fire’ in a crowded theater,” a reference perhaps intended to connect the Watts Rebellion with the right to protest established within the First Amendment. Lastly, he answered questions on whether his administration’s racial relations in Los Angeles contributed to the Watts Rebellion by replying that he would “take responsibility for trying to suppress crime in Watts” and that the real issue was “bad court decisions affecting law enforcement and citizen rights.”¹⁷¹ He later said that it would be “20 years before our judiciary can be straightened out because of Brown’s appointees.”¹⁷²

On June 7, 1966, Brown defeated Yorty in the Democratic Primary, but the results were bittersweet. Yorty had done far better than any prognosticator had anticipated, losing by only 13 points to Brown. Also, Reagan had defeated George Christopher in a landslide, receiving more votes than Brown did in his primary. Reagan’s brand of politics fit the trend of Republican politics better than Christopher’s relative centrism. Political observers might have thought that Republicans were better off pivoting to the center, but judging by the recent nominees endorsed by the GOP and the grassroots political activism of Southern California, that was not where the base of the party was.¹⁷³ The

¹⁷⁰ Richard Bergholz, “Yorty Blames Brown for UC Campus Strife,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), May 26, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382363337>.

¹⁷¹ Richard Bergholz, “Yorty Says Brown Has Been Captured by Left-Wingers,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), June 3, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382277223>.

¹⁷² Richard Bergholz, “Yorty Reiterates Charges Against Brown on Telethon,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), June 6, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382289502>.

¹⁷³ McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 147-186.

impact of Yorty's candidacy is difficult to separate from the effect of the rest of the general election campaign, but the fact that he attracted nearly a million votes in a contest in which the victors received 1.3 million votes suggests that his attacks on Brown reached an audience and helped reinsert Berkeley and Watts into the zeitgeist. Not only that, but law enforcement's clear preference for anyone but Brown would continue in the general election, and their assistance would help Reagan's campaign build on the momentum of Yorty's.

The General Election

In early February of 1966, Ronald Reagan was still nibbling on the margins of major issues in California politics. In front of 800 Republicans at the Walnut Valley Country Club, Reagan vowed to “oppose and challenge and fight back against the federal government” on public welfare regulations. While welfare spending and taxes in general were major concerns of California voters writ large, Reagan's skills as an orator and storyteller were still coming into focus, and it's clear from the reaction of the attendees that his welfare pitch fell flat. Questioners in the audience provided the spark the evening, and perhaps the campaign, needed. Reagan was asked “to comment on the student demonstrations at the UC Berkeley campus.” Reagan quipped that the chaos on campus was “an example of the fruit of appeasement” and lamented that the “university should have taken the ringleaders and sent them home to mamma and papa.”¹⁷⁴ Reagan began to see a pattern emerging in the GOP electorate. He told his campaign managers that no

¹⁷⁴ Richard Bergholz, “Reagan Would Fight Federal Welfare Plans,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), February 11, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382427538>.

matter where he went in the state, people asked him “what are you going to do about those bastards at Berkeley?”¹⁷⁵

Berkeley might have been at the forefront of the minds of the most conservative voters in California, but polling suggests that it had mostly faded as an issue in a post-Watts political environment. Watts was the most salient issue as the primary campaigns drew to a close, but Watts was a difficult issue for Reagan to push on. Republicans in general had found themselves on the wrong end of the Civil Rights Movement, which was fresh off the most important legislative victory the movement had ever accomplished. Attacking on Watts risked being perceived as attempting to delegitimize the socioeconomic plight of black Californians and being backward on race, a death knell for politicians like Nixon and Goldwater.¹⁷⁶

By the end of the 1966 election, the entire political environment had shifted. In polls taken just before the election, the dominant issues reported by voters still included race relations and the economy, but it had been joined at the top by crime and the student demonstrations at the University of California, Berkeley. This change speaks to the skill of the Reagan campaign in crafting a pitch that weaved together all of the foremost narratives of the past two years in a way that made voter concerns seem interconnected and root causes seem to all point back to the Brown administration. The Reagan campaign would not have been so successful, however, had it not been for the direct help of law enforcement officials, whose influence led the Brown campaign to conclude that their only chance of success was to project an image of Brown as a law-and-order

¹⁷⁵ Dallek, *The Right Moment*, 190.

¹⁷⁶ California poll 66-04, June 16-20, 1966, <https://sda.berkeley.edu/sdaweb/analysis/?dataset=cal6604&selectedvar=Q9>.

candidate who was tough on crime. Meanwhile, law enforcement officials from the FBI and local police leaked information to the Reagan campaign that helped them preempt any attempt by the Brown campaign to win a victory on that front. In the end, Reagan won a stunning victory that ushered in a new era of California politics and provided a blueprint for electoral success for Republicans nationwide.

Despite Brown's support for law enforcement's position on both the Berkeley protests and the Watts Rebellion, he had alienated both local police and the FBI by the time the general election rolled around. Local police, of course, were deeply unhappy with how Brown's judicial appointments were interpreting the constitutional rights of the accused and felt that Brown had undermined their ability to put criminals behind bars. However, Brown had also irreparably damaged his relationship with J. Edgar Hoover. Like many other law enforcement officials, J. Edgar Hoover liked to ensure that as many elected officials as possible acted according to his interests and the interests of law enforcement writ large. To that end, Hoover and the FBI had been working closely with the Brown administration throughout the Berkeley controversy. At the height of the FSM protests at Sproul Hall, Governor Brown had requested that Hoover "give him information on the demonstrations" that he could use "to make the proper suggestions at the next regents' meeting." Hoover furnished Governor Brown information from FBI informants that outlined the "communist affiliations of fourteen students and five faculty members" who had been at Sproul Hall in the hopes that it would impress upon Brown a communist influence that was in fact greater than there was. Brown thanked Hoover for the information and "promised to never reveal the FBI's role."¹⁷⁷ Unfortunately for

¹⁷⁷ Rosenfeld, *Subversives*, 228.

Hoover, in April of 1965, after he told newspapers that communists were behind the FSM movement, Brown no longer felt beholden to his pledge to Hoover. Brown felt that Hoover had essentially charged his administration with failing to address a foreign conspiracy on the campus of UC Berkeley. Brown wrote a guest essay in the *New York Herald Tribune* that revealed everything and undermined Hoover's claims of communist subversion. Brown wrote "The Federal Bureau of Investigation turned over to me their confidential file on the Berkeley situation" and, although "there were some Communists involved," the "file shows the Free Speech Movement was not instigated by the Communist Party." Hoover responded in internal memos to all FBI field offices in California, writing simply: "in view of Governor Brown's remarks he should be furnished no information by your offices in the future."¹⁷⁸

Reagan's campaign was aided both directly and indirectly by law enforcement officials. Law enforcement continued to emphasize Watts as a crime problem and began to work Berkeley back into public discourse while Reagan used deft political messaging to tie those two issues to Brown's shortcomings as governor and the most radical elements of his political party. While the police (and Sam Yorty) continued to hammer Brown's judicial appointments and the effect of their decisions on the efficacy of law enforcement, Reagan unveiled specific policy proposals designed to ratchet down the rapidly rising crime rate in California. On March 30, his campaign announced a "five-point program designed to combat the skyrocketing California crime rate and make streets and neighborhoods safe again." Reagan made sure to use the same rhetoric as police interlocutors used in press releases, annual reports, and interviews. His press

¹⁷⁸ Rosenfeld, *Subversives*, 259.

release recounted that California “accounts for 17% of the nation’s major crime” while only accounting for “9% of the nation’s population.” It reported that fighting crime resulted in an annual cost of “\$1000 per average family of four.” Much of the language not only echoed police messaging but also echoed Yorty’s messaging exactly. Reagan blamed the “spiraling crime rate” on “certain judicial rulings that took much of the law enforcement authority away from local police and left them handicapped in their effort to protect the law-abiding citizen from the increasingly insolent criminal element.” He vowed to “support and work for a plan to take the appointment of judges out of politics.”¹⁷⁹

Reagan also announced that he would start a new police training academy in California, aided by the FBI. In August, Reagan announced that he planned to open the academy in northern California to take advantage of Berkeley’s school of criminology. The facility would also include a crime lab that “would be equipped with the most modern devices for crime detection.”¹⁸⁰ His announcement implied the involvement of J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI, who Reagan had written to just days before the public announcement. He asked Hoover to provide his “aid and advice,” which would be invaluable due to his “long record” of “fighting crime” and “developing new techniques and methods.”¹⁸¹ According to documents retrieved by Seth Rosenfeld using the Freedom of Information Act, Hoover responded to Reagan, writing that the FBI “is always willing

¹⁷⁹ Press Release from Ronald Reagan’s gubernatorial campaign, March 30, 1966, Box C34, legal affairs – law and order, Series IV: Campaign Subject Files, Ronald Reagan Gubernatorial Campaign Files, 1966, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum, Simi Valley, CA.

¹⁸⁰ Paul Beck, “Reagan Outlines Plan to Fight Crime in State,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), August 21, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382327132>.

¹⁸¹ Letter from Ronald Reagan to J. Edgar Hoover, August 19, 1966, Box C34, Legal Affairs – Law and Order, Series IV: Campaign Subject Files, Ronald Reagan Gubernatorial Campaign Files, 1966, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum, Simi Valley, CA.

to extend its cooperative services to any and all local, state and federal agencies in order to more effectively combat crime.” He closed by imploring Reagan to not “hesitate to call upon the FBI for assistance in all matters of mutual interest.”¹⁸²

Governor Brown had no answer for Reagan’s push on crime. Brown’s problem was that he had attempted to position himself as a governor who valued the maintenance of law and order, even to the point of alienating some of his support from the political left. Now, his opponent was weaponizing the same law enforcement messaging that convinced Brown to take a stand on Berkeley and support the police response during Watts to convince the public that Governor Brown’s actions had worsened California’s crime problem. Brown’s campaign initially tried to delegitimize the FBI’s crime statistics by pointing out what had been true from the beginning: they were inflated by changes in police behavior. They cited a quote from “California’s top correctional officer” Richard A. McGee, who said that Reagan’s comparison of California’s crime rate to other states was misleading because “California has the nation’s best crime reporting system” while “other states have conceded substantial under-reporting.”¹⁸³ Reagan booster and state assemblyman George Deukmejian hit back, responding that “the FBI Uniform Crime Report gives the best available statistical picture of crime rates in the country. He continued, “it is widely accepted...by all law enforcement agencies, all levels of government, and by the press. He mused that if that wasn’t good enough for the governor, that they could “use their own figures to arrive at the same conclusion” and cited that the California Department of Justice’s own statistics showed that “the crime rate in

¹⁸² Rosenfeld, *Subversives*, 334.

¹⁸³ “McGee Hits Reagan on Crime Data,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), August 24, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382341748>.

California has increased by 100% under Pat Brown – both as Attorney General...and as Governor.”¹⁸⁴

Brown also tried to discredit Reagan’s idea for a California law enforcement academy – to no avail. In response to Reagan’s announcement, Brown responded that the academy was a “campaign gimmick” that showed how little Reagan understood “the needs of local law enforcement.” Brown said that state funds should be used “to help our excellent local police academies, not channeled into the unneeded and unwanted new state police training facilities proposed by Reagan.” In response to Hoover’s support, Brown said that “we all have great respect for Mr. Hoover’s professionalism, but I’m sure he wouldn’t want his name used to hide the defects of a bad idea.” He also derided Reagan’s request for Hoover’s involvement, quipping that “the only good thing” about his suggestion was that it showed “Mr. Reagan doesn’t want to cut California off from Washington completely.”¹⁸⁵

Brown’s weak response was totally obliterated by Reagan’s campaign, who managed to get a copy of a pamphlet Brown’s campaign had planned to release before the Reagan announcement that also included plans for a new state police academy. The pamphlet read that Governor Brown “proposes a state police academy to develop and instruct in newest scientific crime detection methods.” Phillip Battaglia, state chairman of the Reagan for Governor Committee, pointed out in a press release that “something must have happened” to change the Governor’s mind, “such as the fact that Ronald Reagan

¹⁸⁴ Press Release from the Republican State Central Committee, August 30, 1966, Box C34, Legal Affairs – Law and Order, Series IV: Campaign Subject Files, Ronald Reagan Gubernatorial Campaign Files, 1966, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum, Simi Valley, CA.

¹⁸⁵ Press Release from the campaign of Governor Edmund G. Brown, August 26, 1966, Box C34, Legal Affairs – Law and Order, Series IV: Campaign Subject Files, Ronald Reagan Gubernatorial Campaign Files, 1966, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum, Simi Valley, CA.

recommended it first.” Battaglia continued to twist the dagger, excoriating Brown’s record by saying that “after eight years of doing nothing it sounds almost as if the Governor is beginning to crib Ronald Reagan’s programs for California.” He ended by lamenting that it was “too bad” that Brown changed his mind because it hadn’t “stopped the Governor from trying to adopt Reagan’s stands on welfare, the Rumford Act, and other issues vital to California.”¹⁸⁶

After Reagan got the drop on him in regard to the state police academy, Brown continued to attempt to boost his law-and-order bona fides. On September 6, Brown proposed a five-point program to combat crime of his own that included the “establishment of a family court system” and a law that would give “no strings attached” support to local police in the form of funding local police academies, special counseling for first offenders, and community relations programs designed to promote “better understanding of law enforcement.” Brown also planned a “major expansion of programs to rehabilitate victims of narcotics and ‘further steps to crack down on narcotics peddlers.’” Lastly, his plan included a “statewide justice information system” that “would use computers and modern, high-speed communications to link ‘the talents, ,resources, and techniques of science with law enforcement.’”¹⁸⁷ On October 7, Brown proposed “a 13 member commission to study and recommend action on legal conflicts between local and state crime ordinances,” a proposal designed to answer the criticism of his judicial

¹⁸⁶ Press release from Citizens to Elect Ronald Reagan, September 1, 1966, Box C34, Legal Affairs – Law and Order, Series IV: Campaign Subject Files, Ronald Reagan Gubernatorial Campaign Files, 1966, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum, Simi Valley, CA.

¹⁸⁷ Harry Bernstein, “Brown Tells Goals as He Opens Drive,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), September 6, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382346505>.

appointments and assuage law enforcement's fear that they would continue to be undermined by state laws and courts.¹⁸⁸

Brown's anti-crime proposals reveal the vulnerabilities laid bare by his decision to meet Reagan blow for blow in terms of law-and-order politics. Reagan was free to give full throated support for the expansion of the power of law enforcement. Brown, on the other hand, was caught between voters that increasingly believed that increased law enforcement presence was required to combat all of the crime that they saw in the media and some of his most ardent supporters who still subscribed to the notion that society's ills could be solved by providing support to those who experienced poverty and lacked the support they needed to positively contribute to society. While Reagan could say that he would support programs to increase law enforcement resources and put California's worst offenders behind bars, Brown had to couch any proposal for increased law enforcement with programs designed to alleviate the social and economic causes of crime. Brown's proposals to increase law enforcement alienated voters to his left who saw those proposals as antidemocratic and correctly predicted that they would harm people of color most. His proposals to increase funding for social programs made him seem indecisive and soft on crime.

Unfortunately for Brown, even one of his relative strengths heading into the campaign turned into a weakness. As 1966 began, student protests at Berkeley had faded into the background, and many voters remembered Brown's handling of the controversy favorably. However, law enforcement officials and the Reagan campaign unleashed a perfect Wilsonian PR storm and convinced voters that Berkeley was in fact getting worse,

¹⁸⁸ Jerry Gillam, "Brown Appoints Group to Study Crime Laws," *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), October 7, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382248434>.

not better, that Brown's weaknesses as a leader had allowed him to be captured by the most radical elements of his party, and that the approach of Brown and other elected Democrats to civil disobedience had led to a breakdown of law and order. Law enforcement officials such as Edwin Meese, the Assistant Alameda County DA that had been on the fateful phone call to Governor Brown that initiated the Sproul Hall arrests, had been busy keeping Berkeley in the news by spearheading a California Unamerican Activities Committee investigation into allegations that VDC organizers had used Berkeley as a headquarters to plan criminal protests off campus. At the same time, FBI informants stashed on campus had been building a case against Kerr and Brown. Three of those informants, Professor Hardin Jones, assistant general counsel to the regents John Sparrow, and former Vice Chancellor Alex Sheriffs, met with Ronald Reagan at the house of Republican assemblyman from Oakland Don Mulford. These men would become the Reagan campaign's chief source of information about the goings on at Berkeley and would use their position of influence to push Reagan to go after Berkeley even harder than he was. They would eventually supply Reagan with the event that finally pushed Berkeley back into the collective consciousness of the California public and catapulted student activities at the flagship university to the top of the list of campaign issues.¹⁸⁹

On May 7, 1966, CUAC released a bombshell report as a culmination of their hearings into the VDC using Berkeley campus as a headquarters for political activity. In it, CUAC alleged that VDC held a dance in the men's gymnasium that "degenerated into

¹⁸⁹ Rosenfeld, *Subversives*, 326.

an orgy of sex, drinking, and marijuana smoking.”¹⁹⁰ The description in the police report furnished to CUAC and, later, the Reagan campaign described “three rock and roll bands” on bandstands “facing three different directions” and occasionally “playing at the same time.” There was also a projector that played movies on two screens. These screens provided the only light in the gym. The movies were described to include “a color sequence which gave the appearance of different colored liquids spreading across the screen...followed by shots of...men and women’s nude torsos. The “persons twisted and gyrated in a provocative, sensual fashion, and on occasion the man fondled the woman’s breasts.” Apart from the evidence of rampant drug and alcohol use, there was apparently “blatant” sexual misconduct. The report cited officer accounts that described “two couples quite apparently engaged in sexual intercourse” in the upper bleacher sections while another “young lady on the dance floor held her skirt at her waist and moved in obvious mimicry of an act of intercourse.” The account went on, alleging debauchery in every corner, all apparently either condoned or ignored by university leadership.¹⁹¹

Reagan jumped at the chance to use this to illustrate the overarching problems that he saw with California under Governor Brown. A week after the CUAC report came out, Reagan called for a legislative inquiry into the “charges that the University of California’s Berkeley campus is a rallying point for Communists and a center of sexual misconduct”¹⁹² He criticized the decision to let the regents investigate the report themselves and worried that the perspective of Californians would be that “the situation

¹⁹⁰ Gene Blake, “New UC Attack: Charges of Campus Sex Orgies Made,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), May 7, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382360291>.

¹⁹¹ Police Report of VDC Dance on March 25, 1966, Box 67, Series 4: Bay Area Reports 1962-1971, California Un-American Activities Committee Records, California State Archives, Sacramento, CA.

¹⁹² Sydney Kossen, “4,500 Hear S.F. Talk by Reagan: UC Inquiry Demanded,” *San Francisco Examiner* (San Francisco, CA), May 13, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/462491443>.

will be swept under the rug or that the people of California are not being given all the facts.”¹⁹³ In response to challenges made against the report by President Kerr, other regents, and reporters who attended the dance, Reagan said “if the charges are true, they should be the basis of a complete housecleaning at the university” and “if they are false, then those officials charged with the administration of the university should be given their day in the court of public opinion.”¹⁹⁴ The VDC dance controversy fit nicely with the rest of Reagan’s messaging on Berkeley, in which he claimed that “the Governor and his appointees” had shown a “lack of leadership.” He said that it would be his “purpose as Governor to return the University to its original purpose as an institution of learning and research and restore it to the respect it deserves and that has been lost due to indifference and a lack of leadership.” He concluded that “neither academic freedom nor the preservation of free speech can justify letting malcontents, beatniks, and filthy speech advocates disrupt the academic community and interfere with the University’s purposes.”¹⁹⁵

Reagan’s Berkeley message was a small part of a larger narrative that he used to weave together the major campaign issues of crime, race relations, and student protests and tie them all back to the approach Brown and other Democratic leaders took to civil disobedience. Reagan’s constant reference to a “leadership gap” did not just connote the idea that Brown did not take a strong stance when one was needed, but also suggested his failure to model the behavior that an elected leader should want from his constituents. For

¹⁹³ Carl Greenberg, “Reagan Hits Choice of Regents for UC Inquiry,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), May 22, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382263932>.

¹⁹⁴ “Reagan Demands Legislative Quiz on UC Charges,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), May 13, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382287762>.

¹⁹⁵ Press Release by Citizens Committee to Elect Ronald Reagan, April 1, 1966, Box C33, Ed – Academic Freedom, Series IV: Campaign Subject Files, Ronald Reagan Gubernatorial Campaign Files, 1966, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum, Simi Valley, CA.

instance, Reagan urged citizens to support the “law and morality week” program led by an organization called “Christians and Jews for law and morality.” Reagan explained in the press release that “law and morality for all begins with law and morality by one” and claimed that “Californians can cut our crime rate measurably by adopting a responsible attitude toward upholding our laws and our moral codes.”¹⁹⁶ Reagan suggested that part of the reason that morality was degrading in society was government intervention. In a Q and A session in which Reagan was asked how he would help “poor and downtrodden” members of California’s African American community, Reagan answered that he felt that many Americans had been derelict in their responsibility to “jump in first and do something.” He cited a few communities who had created community programs to help their fellow citizens rather than wait for government assistance as a model for his vision. He then finished by saying that he didn’t “blame a lot of us, because I think the government has tended to wrap us in cotton batten and tell us that they’ll take care of everything.”¹⁹⁷ Reagan’s narrative suggested to voters that many of the societal problems they were currently experiencing, including rioting, crime, and anarchy, could all be traced back to the government’s approach to solving problems. He intimated that government intervention had undermined America’s sense of community and responsibility to one another. Thus, when government programs failed to curb poverty, there was no one else to help. This problem combined with the new liberal approach of tolerance for civil disobedience to cause chaos and a breakdown of law and order.

¹⁹⁶ Press release from Citizens Committee to Elect Ronald Reagan, August 11, 1966, Box C34, Legal Affairs – Law and Order, Series IV: Campaign Subject Files, Ronald Reagan Gubernatorial Campaign Files, 1966, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum, Simi Valley, CA.

¹⁹⁷ Reagan Q and A session at the Toluca Lake Chamber of Commerce, August 30, 1965, Box C33, Q&A Session 1965 – Watts, Series IV: Campaign Subject Files, Ronald Reagan Gubernatorial Campaign Files, 1966, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum, Simi Valley, CA.

Voters responded to this messaging and rewarded Reagan with the desired outcome: Brown was seen as indecisive and beholden to a party that was increasingly extreme. Polls from the second half of 1966 showed that voters found that Brown was indecisive and too easily influenced. They also believed that Brown was more liberal than Reagan was conservative. When asked whether there was more danger from left-wing extremists or right-wing extremists, voters were three times more likely to choose left-wing extremists. When asked what the most important issue facing California was, the prevailing answers concerned crime, race relations, taxes, and Berkeley. When asked who they believed would handle those problems best, voters chose Reagan over Brown by 16 percentage points.¹⁹⁸

When it became clear to the Brown campaign that painting Reagan as a Bircher and a Goldwater acolyte would not be enough to win the campaign, they began flailing and failed to present a consistent message to voters. Brown failed to take a strong stance on Berkeley this time around, saying that he was “very surprised” by the findings of the CUAC report and that he was confident that the regents would consider the report “carefully, objectively, and as soon as possible.”¹⁹⁹ He resorted to fact checking Reagan on the particulars of the economy, for instance attacking Reagan’s assertion that California had a “bad business climate” by citing California’s gains in income for specific businesses such as agriculture, transportation, mining, and communications, failing to understand that Reagan’s non-specific assertions jibed better with how

¹⁹⁸ Public opinion polls from June, August, and September of 1966, Berkeley D-lab, <https://dlab.berkeley.edu/data/california-public-opinion-polls>

¹⁹⁹ “Brown Says Regents Will Study Charges of Misconduct,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), May 8, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382365722>.

Californians were feeling about the economy than Brown's facts and figures.²⁰⁰ By October, Brown had decided that his record was not going to speak for itself and that he needed to pivot to an "impeachment of the witness," or an attempt to paint Reagan as "a man of unknown and probably dangerous views."²⁰¹ To that end, Brown claimed that Reagan's campaign plan had been conceived of by an "extremist radio commentator" named Dr. W.S. McBirnie²⁰², and that he was receiving campaign funds from "wealthy, selfish interests in eastern states" that "know he is an enemy of practically every piece of social legislation since Franklin Roosevelt."²⁰³ He also pointed out that Reagan had been "making second rate movies" while "he and his administration were building California to its present greatness."²⁰⁴ Later, he claimed that Reagan "harbors the same ambition as Barry Goldwater – the Presidency of the United States" but that he is "afraid to engage in give-and-take press conferences" despite the fact that Reagan had engaged in Q&A sessions throughout California.²⁰⁵ This messaging ran counter to Brown's tendency to move toward Reagan on many issues, not just on crime but also on welfare, as Brown proposed that "those who can work" should be removed from the welfare rolls." Brown attempted to frame his proposal as an economic indicator, suggesting that "the growing number of jobs in California should make it possible for the first time to abolish welfare

²⁰⁰ Jerry Gillam, "Facts Belie Reagan's Speeches, Brown Says," *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), June 27, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382475754>.

²⁰¹ Richard Bergholz, "Brown Shifting Tactics, Rates Race as 50-50," *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), October 9, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382258246>.

²⁰² Richard Bergholz, "'Extremist' Created Reagan's Campaign Plan, Brown Claims," *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), October 13, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382289257>.

²⁰³ Richard Bergholz, "'Selfish Interests' Attracted to Reagan, Governor Charges," *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), October 14, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382294302>.

²⁰⁴ Richard Bergholz, "Reagan Made Movies While Democrats Built State – Brown," *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), October 7, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382248128>.

²⁰⁵ Paul Beck, "Brown Says Reagan Seeks to be President, Fears the Press," *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), October 27, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382252012>.

except for the aged, the blind, the disabled, and dependent children.”²⁰⁶ In reality Brown’s announcement acted as a tacit approval that welfare fraud existed and gave more weight to Reagan’s claims that the state spent too many tax dollars on programs that were ineffective and inefficient.

By September of 1966, Brown’s campaign essentially waived a white flag. Speaking at the State Bar convention on the 21st, Brown “asked that crime, the courts, the Rumford Act, and the University of California be removed as issues for partisan debate in the current political campaign.” This comment signaled that Brown had either no interest or no ability to solve the biggest problems on the minds of California voters as the election approached. It read as a complete disregard for any of their apprehensions about electing Brown for a third term and suggested that voters who were concerned about these issues were either hyper partisan or ill-informed. After casting around for a new campaign strategy for months in the face of Reagan’s invulnerability to being labeled an extremist, it seemed Brown had finally run out of ideas and given up. Any chance of his reelection would hinge on voters deciding that, on balance, his record was better than an unknown reality helmed by an inexperienced politician.²⁰⁷

On November 8, Ronald Reagan won the governorship by a landslide, defeating Brown by 15 percentage points and nearly a million votes. Brown’s campaign was sunk by its inability to establish a narrative outside of a critique of Reagan that became more difficult to make as the campaign advanced into its later stages. Reagan’s campaign was able to brilliantly weave issues that mattered to voters into a concise narrative that fit the

²⁰⁶ Leonard Greenwood, “Brown Orders Job Push to Cut Welfare Rolls,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), August, 25, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382249219>.

²⁰⁷ Gene Blake, “Brown Asks Elimination of 4 Issues From Election Campaign,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), September 22, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382315304>.

strengths of Reagan as a candidate and appealed to the sensibilities of voters who had become alienated by the tactics of the far left. Reagan's campaign benefitted materially from the groundwork laid by law enforcement officials regarding the student protests at Berkeley and the effect of the tolerance of civil disobedience on crime rates.

Developments such as the candidacy of Sam Yorty and the CUAC report on Berkeley were orchestrated by law enforcement either to aid the candidacy of Ronald Reagan or harm the candidacy of Governor Brown and succeeded in making the case that Brown's inability to be a strong leader led to a breakdown in law and order in California that could only be solved by the stronger hand of Ronald Reagan and an increase in the presence of law enforcement. Reagan's victory turned conventional political wisdom upside down and provided a blueprint that Republican candidates would adopt as soon as the next presidential election.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁸ Paul Beck, "Government of All People Pledged by Gov.-Elect Reagan," *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), November 9, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/382335452>.

Chapter V

Conclusion

In 1971, community organizers in Berkeley published a pamphlet in favor of the Community Control of Police Initiative, a proposed reorganization of the Berkeley police department that would create police review boards that oversaw police activity in the area. The pamphlet pointed out that the Berkeley police viewed their job as “holding the line” until “reform can overtake the revolutionary movement.” The authors countered that “when the desire for reform is community-wide...then ‘holding the line’ comes to mean protecting a rigid status quo by military means against the majority of the citizenry.” “In this context,” they concluded, “‘professionalism’ turns out to only be expertise at new and sophisticated means of oppression.” The organizers appeared to be remarkably aware of the internal tactics of the police in the professionalization era. They explained that Berkeley police chief Beall had “initiated a program of ‘intensive police patrols’ (IPP) on Telegraph avenue” that “increased arrests (for jaywalking, drug offenses, etc.),” creating a “statistical ‘crime wave’ which Beall then used as an argument for urban renewal.” The organizers even identified the influence that counterinsurgency theory had on new domestic police tactics. They explained that

Further proof that the police operate according to a counterinsurgency strategy lies in the fact that the 1970 crackdown was not only against thousands of “random” young people, but also directly against the liberal support institutions which have grown to service the needs of the South Campus community. That the police are hostile to the Free Church, Free Clinic, Runaway Center, and other institutions reflects their belief that “permissive liberalism” has replaced correct adult supervision. The police attacks are often perverted and brutal, but also indicate a deliberate, systemic attempt to wipe out these institutions.

All of this despite the fact, as the authors pointed out, that these new police tactics have “continued and escalated for five years without any decrease in ‘crime.’”²⁰⁹

If the critiques in this 1971 pamphlet hadn’t been so specific to Berkeley issues of a certain time, one might be successfully convinced that it had been written in the twenty-first century by a Black Lives Matter activist. The police tactics outlined in this pamphlet and this research continue today; undoubtedly, so do the political effects that they engender. While much has been done by activists like those who wrote the Berkeley pamphlet and by other historians and political scientists to examine and draw attention to the effects of these tactics on the communities they are brought to bear against, very little has been done to examine how the police affect how people think about politics. Perhaps because of the bipartisan nature of the expansion of the carceral state, the political ramifications of policing since the 1960s remains relatively unexplored. I contend that the fact that there *is* such a bipartisan commitment to law-and-order politics despite the failure of those policies to reduce crime and alleviate the social ills it creates is a compelling reason to examine the political influence of police organizations.

Research into the connection between foreign counterinsurgency efforts and domestic policing in the United States shows that law enforcement in both contexts prioritized security and societal order above all else. Police professionalizers spent decades in places like the Philippines, using tactics such as espionage, subterfuge, and intimidation to arrest any popular movement that threatened the social order established by the United States. This approach continually undermined attempts to transition colonial states and occupied territories to self-government because while US officials

²⁰⁹ “The Professional Oppressors,” box 230, folder 8, Legal Affairs 1968-1974, Edwin Meese III Papers, The Hoover Institution, Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA.

attempted to install representative democracies closely modeled on the US, the politics that emerged from the populace all focused on creating a government that empowered themselves. The police undermined and discredited these attempts by limiting the free exercise of the civil rights granted by provisional governments to those who supported the incumbent regime and eliminating legitimate avenues to political change. When counterinsurgency tactics were imported to the United States, domestic police also trampled on civil liberties expressly protected by law to apprehend criminals or insurgents.²¹⁰ In California in the 1960s, police departments throughout the state publicly complained about court protections of the civil liberties of the accused because, in their mind, it made it more difficult to do their job. This dissonance is revelatory. Law enforcement as it was conceived by professionalizers was not interested in upholding the law. If they had been, they would have been just as interested as the courts were in protecting the freedoms of all citizens according to the prescriptions of the Constitution. Instead, they were interested in ignoring the protections that allowed citizens to cause disruptions to the status quo – especially if those citizens threatened the established racial order or espoused views associated with the far left. It is in this spirit that “permissive liberalism” became the target of law enforcement officials in California in the 1960s. Civil disobedience was a tool used to great effect by the Civil Rights Movement not just to reveal the injustice of segregation laws but also to counter the power of law enforcement to enforce the racial order prescribed by those unjust laws. If civil disobedience was an accepted form of political speech, it would undermine the ability of

²¹⁰ McCoy, *Policing*, 8-11.

law enforcement to control society and it would remain a constant threat to societal order as professionalizers conceived of it.

In response to pressure from law enforcement, liberals like Pat Brown would become both enthusiastic participants and victims of the rise of the carceral state. In pursuit of political expediency, liberal politicians burnished tough on crime policies and increasingly deferred to the perceived expertise of law enforcement experts. By doing this, however, liberals harmed the credibility and appeal of the idea that it was possible to use the government to uplift the impoverished and that freedom of expression was the key to progress. This development diminished their electoral prospects rather than bolstering them. In Brown's case, by joining the chorus of critics of civil disobedience, he acknowledged that organizers from his side of the political spectrum were disrupting social order by engaging in criminal activity. Further, he tarnished the Civil Rights Movement and those that supported it by suggesting that the protest strategies they used to effect change were illegitimate. By investing both economic and political capital in law enforcement, Brown and other liberals of the time perpetuated a positive feedback effect that detracted from their own base of support. Organizations that championed liberal ideas lost credibility in the minds of the public due to their association with ideas law enforcement had successfully denigrated as the "permissive liberalism" that had created the anarchy and chaos currently experienced by potential voters. Further, black voters, who were more likely to vote for liberal candidates than their white counterparts, were systematically disenfranchised by the frenzy of arrests that accompanied increases in law enforcement presence in their communities.²¹¹

²¹¹ Hinton, *Mass Incarceration*, 1-22.

Outside of the indirect effects of law enforcement professionalization in California, there were also instances in which law enforcement showed a clear political preference and directly participated in efforts to aid their preferred candidate and harm his opponent. In the case of California, the indirect effects of police efforts to increase their funding and influence alone might have been enough to sink the Brown campaign, as they convinced voters that crime was a problem and that existential threats to the fabric of American society were more likely to come from the left than the right. However, collusion with the Reagan campaign by both local and national law enforcement officials suggests a nuance in the politics of the rise of the carceral state that has been neglected by carceral state researchers more focused (and not without reason) in demonstrating longstanding bipartisan support for the legislation that led to the eruption of the American carceral state. That fact does not preclude the idea that law enforcement officials throughout the country might have a clear ideological preference for politicians with conservative worldviews because their views align far better with the interests of the police. The 1966 election in California provides a clear illustrative example of this possibility. The incumbent Democratic governor, a former district attorney, clearly had good relationships with many law enforcement officials in his state. It was through these connections that he was influenced by law enforcement to crackdown on Berkeley protesters based on information that they were breaking the law. After making that decision, he continued to attempt to flex his law-and-order bona fides in future Berkeley brouhahas and also during the Watts Rebellion. Despite Brown's extensive support for the police, they still backed his opponent and pushed a primary challenger into the race because they fundamentally disagreed with Brown's interpretation of the constitutional

right to protest, and the constitutional protections extended to the accused. As the Berkeley organizers pointed out, the real problem for law enforcement was their belief that “permissive liberalism” was a slippery slope to anarchy and chaos. Mass public protest and community organization were threats that were identified exclusively on the left in this period because they were designed to fundamentally change the nature of elements of society law enforcement identified with the status quo. This disparity in treatment was experienced in California in the form of groups like the FSM and VDC on the left and the John Birch Society on the right. The public viewed each of these groups as extremist groups, but they viewed the groups on the left as far more dangerous and extreme because of efforts by law enforcement to influence them to think this way. The public witnessed members of the former groups being arrested and engaging in violence with officers on a weekly basis. The John Birch Society was a group of political actors with fringe beliefs that were not engaged in very public battles with law enforcement. The former groups were being investigated by the FBI while the latter group was not.

These distinctions mattered a great deal in the 1966 election, but they also existed throughout the United States. It is fair, then, to ask: did the political effects that show up in this study apply to the United States as a whole? If the political effects of law enforcement on the 1966 California gubernatorial campaign also showed up in national politics, it would be a compelling reason for the rightward shift of American politics beginning in the late 1960s. It might shed light on the fact that tough on crime legislative approaches continue to be in vogue for both parties even though the issues these laws purport to address simply continue to get worse. Lastly, it could also have some explanatory power as to why elements of far-right ideology have become normalized in

recent years. Kathleen Belew's work on far-right paramilitary groups shows that the FBI's reticence to investigate the ties of domestic terrorists to the larger far-right and white supremacist network fails to alert the public to the danger that these groups represent.²¹² Simultaneously, protests that result in violence instigated by left wing groups such as Black Lives Matter are meticulously reported in the news. The actions of law enforcement in California during the 1966 election suggest a potential mechanism for political and social engineering by law enforcement throughout the United States that should be explored further by researchers in this field.

Understanding Reagan's victory in 1966 is only possible by considering law enforcement as agents of political change. The fact that this election aligns so well with the social and political changes that would soon sweep the rest of the country suggests that many of the same political forces were likely active elsewhere in the United States. Reconsidering the major political shifts that occurred beginning with the election of 1968 by analyzing the effect of policing and law enforcement public relations campaigns would be a useful way to better understand the political success of conservative ideas throughout the late twentieth century. It would also shed light on the hegemony of tough on crime policies that have failed to solve the problems they purported to address. Many scholars have looked back at Reagan's campaign in 1966 as the proof of concept that led to the conservative revolution that began with Nixon's election in 1968. It is also possible to look at the campaign of Pat Brown and see the next fifty years of tough on crime Democrats unfurl into the future. It would do us well to also look back at Chief Willie Parker to understand the political dimension of policing.

²¹² Kathleen Belew, *Bring the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018), 237.

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