

**LINDA LANIER-KEOSAIAN**  
[lanierkeosaian@optonline.net](mailto:lanierkeosaian@optonline.net)

I found Robert Cohen's account of the unrest on the Berkeley campus deeply engaging. Having lived through the turbulent sixties as a student, I found myself reliving some of the passion and fear so many of us felt then. I remember the excitement we felt in the face of conservative restraint from our elders because we *knew* that we were *right*. We idolized the speakers who encouraged us to stand up for justice and for peace. We were proud of ourselves and our positions on civil rights, social justice, and war. We truly believed that we could make a difference, even change the world.

What I cannot understand is why this history was not written by Mario Savio. Having read the "barefoot historians," I think it would have made perfect sense for the history of the movement to gain free speech on campus to have been written by him, it having been his consuming passion. I want to know more about him, why he died so young, what he did between 1966 and 1984, when he finally finished his bachelor's and master's degrees.

The article and Notes do not tell us who Robert Cohen is, except to list some of his writings. He seems to be a historian of political movements. He was present for at least one of the speeches made by Savio, so he is, perhaps, of a similar age. If this is so, he, like I and many of that period, were shaped by those experiences. It would seem a natural development, then, for Cohen to write about those experiences that define that age. His use of original documents as well as of interviews gives what seems an insider's view of the interplay of forces which molded the events.

It was very impressive that Cohen obtained papers implicating the University Administration in premeditated actions to prevent Savio's readmission to the university, papers that Savio and his lawyer never knew about. When shown the documents, his lawyer, years later, said use of them

could have resulted in a lawsuit against the university, which would have forced Savio's admission.

This history was different from the "barefoot historians" who admitted to connections between their subject matter and their personal lives. It may be that Robert Cohen was drawn to this subject because of his own sympathies with the freedom of speech movement either at Berkeley, or at some other institution, but we his readers can only infer that, as we are not told. This history reads very well and kept me on the edge of my seat most of the time, even though it was written from the "objective historian" standpoint.