


Lauren Lassabe Shepherd. *Resistance from the Right: Conservatives and the Campus Wars*

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Maxwell Greenberg 

University of Wisconsin-Madison, WI, USA

Email: Maxwell.greenberg@wisc.edu

In her timely new book, *Resistance from the Right*, Lauren Lassabe Shepherd historicizes the right-wing student movement on American college campuses. She provides a view of campus conflict and political organizing from outside the offices of higher education administrators or New Left movements. Instead, she peers into the meetings and publications of nascent right-wing student organizations engaged in “astroturf mobilization” (p. 3). Using a capacious definition of conservatism, Shepherd argues that right-wing student movements of the 1960s—and later cohorts of political advocates and advisers in the 1970s—were “ideologically fickle,” tied together in their opposition to liberalism rather than by a coherent or shared political ideology (p. 79). Nevertheless, by imitating and revising left-wing slogans and tactics, conservative movements on campus ultimately provided the infrastructure and stratagem for cultivating future Republican leaders.

Centering student organizations such as Young Americans for Freedom (YAF), the Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI), College Republicans, and Campus Crusade for Christ International, Shepherd demonstrates how these groups became the “intellectual bulwark against a perceived liberal indoctrination on American campuses” (p. 2). *Resistance from the Right* introduces us to a familiar cast of right-wing characters—William F. Buckley Jr., Karl Rove, Richard Nixon—as well as lesser known or entirely unfamiliar participants. By tracing the financial ties of the groups in which they were involved, Shepherd argues that these organizations were inorganic, top-down directives inspired and funded by leaders of the Foundation for Economic Education, the Mont Pelerin Society, and various conservative publications. The centrality of elite universities to these movements further challenges prevailing notions of a populist, grassroots conservative backlash during the 1960s and ’70s.

Organized into two parts, “Coalition Building” and “Law, Order, and Punishment,” the book successfully weaves together concurrent narratives of left-wing student activism and reactionary right-wing responses. Encompassing four chapters that cover the years 1967 through 1970, part 1 locates right-wing campus mobilization efforts among a broader national political response to anti-war and civil rights demands. Chapter 1 surveys college student demographics during the late 1960s, contextualizes the relationship between the academy and the federal government, and documents the role of higher education in military research. Chapters 2 and 3 introduce the major conservative student organizations that sought to provide “intellectual balance” within perceived liberal universities (p. 35). In the final chapter of part 1, the reactionary

nature of right-wing student movements is exemplified by the multidimensional struggles at Columbia University in the spring of 1968 over military research and the construction of the school's "Gym Crow" athletic facility, and the ways these struggles broadened conservative appeal.

Part 2 explores efforts of right-wing student organizations to cultivate a "silent majority" that coalesced in opposition to the New Left. Chapter 5 highlights the relationship between the emerging New Right and segregationists, focusing on student activists' employment of law-and-order rhetoric as they transitioned from recruitment to action. Chapter 6 captures the contentious campaigns for civil rights and Black studies courses and how campus conservatives at colleges and universities such as San Francisco State, Cornell, and UC Berkeley appealed to "order" and cynically employed left-wing discourse in opposition to racial justice. As in-fighting among libertarians and more traditionalist conservatives broke out over the former's alignment with the New Left on issues of conscription, civil rights, and police brutality, chapter 7 highlights a newly emerging coalition between YAF and campus athletics. Chapter 8 covers YAF's Freedom Offensive campaign that encouraged more direct involvement in defending the Vietnam War and campus Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) programs. Greater physical confrontation and a weaponization of the courts defined the right's approach to preserving the status quo. Chapter 9 then examines campus conservatives' support—even lauding—of the invasion of Cambodia and the 1970 massacre of Kent State University students demonstrating in opposition to the ongoing war.

In accessible prose, *Resistance from the Right* offers an important historical account of the emergence of a new conservative coalition that sought to organize against the New Left on college campuses. It deftly centers issues of race, class, and power in campus political organizing and is attentive to gender insofar as the archival record and interview participants made possible. Joining John A. Andrew's *The Other Side of the Sixties* (1997), it similarly identifies anti-communism (read: anti-liberalism) as a consolidating force among disparate groups of campus conservatives. However, whereas Andrew asserts that market fundamentalism provided these groups with ideological unity, Shepherd instead identifies reactionary politics as the bellwether of 1960s conservatism. She also expands upon Gregory Schneider's contention in *Cadres for Conservatism* (1999) that staunch support for the Vietnam War was the most important organizing principle by demonstrating that right-wing opposition to liberal conceptions of racial justice was equally central. Whereas Rebecca Klatch's *A Generation Divided* (1999) emphasizes the ideological fissures of the 1960s as integral to understanding the New Right, *Resistance from the Right* presents the modern Republican Party as having acquiesced to those same factions in continued opposition to liberalism.

Considering Amy J. Binder and Jeffrey L. Kidder's *The Channels of Student Activism* (2022), the conclusion seems to obscure the continued role of campuses in shaping political ideology. By shifting from campus to the party as a contemporary organizing unit, student political movements and the ideas that animate them become seemingly less salient for modern political organizing. Nevertheless, while Shepherd is elsewhere attentive to the ideas that informed right-wing campus organizing, she is careful not to accept the imagined, romanticized past to which they sought to return. Beyond

traditional archival sources, she employs oral histories that flesh out the narrative. Vivid descriptions of cultural identifiers of campus conservatives and liberals alike—their dress, hairstyles, parlance, and in-group markers such as the leftist’s black arm band and the conservative’s blue button—color the pages of each chapter.


Having eschewed popularity for power, the student right employed various tactics to inflate the extent to which they were represented on campuses. During their founding years, many students held dual membership in YAF, ISI, College Republicans, and other conservative clubs on campus, giving “the illusory public impression that college conservatives were more widespread than they truly were” (p. 78). Anticipating news coverage, movement elders instructed students organizing campuses to choose a venue that was “too small” and to “remove chairs” to manufacture interest while carefully curating the audience’s questions (p. 144). Further, conservative students, with the support of movement elders, weaponized the power of the state, primarily through the courts, “to bend administrators to their political will” (p. 9). Collectively, these instances demonstrate Shepherd’s contention that a respectable and principled right-wing coalition existed only as mid-century mythology.

Ultimately, the book succeeds in capturing a through line from the campus conservative movement of the 1960s and ’70s to contemporary American politics defined by a reactionary right. It illuminates the ways in which power over popularity has become a Republican governing maxim. Further, it introduces readers to unexplored opportunities for future historical study: extending the chronology through the 1980s and ’90s, historicizing the creation and arming of campus police vis-à-vis conservative calls for law and order, and further examining the relationship between higher education administrators and their benefactors. *Resistance from the Right* is a welcome addition to the scholarship bridging the history of education with histories of conservatism.

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Jesús Jesse Esparza. *Raza Schools: The Fight for Latino Educational Autonomy in a West Texas Borderlands Town*

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Gonzalo Guzmán 

Macalester College, Saint Paul, MN, USA

Email: gguzman@macalester.edu

In 1930, a group of Mexican Americans filed one of the earliest known court cases in Texas against educational racial segregation, *Salvatierra et al. v. Del Rio ISD*. The case originated in the small west Texas border town of Del Rio. In *Salvatierra*, Mexican Americans sued the White-controlled Del Rio Independent School District (DRISD)