

# Strike at S.F. State

Chris Singer

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“There has had to be an escalation on this campus.”

—S.I. Hayakawa, President, San Francisco State College

We live in a MacLuhanesque age. The world is our village, its inhabitants are all as close as the nearest TV screen. California, and most especially, switched on San Francisco, are where it's all at—right?

So it just sort of figures that if we're going to watch a TV drama on campus revolt, no re-runs, no commercials, great instant replay, it ought to originate in San Francisco.

The cast of characters includes: California governor Ronald (Reggie) Reagan, veteran actor; San Francisco Mayor Joseph Alioto, you remember Alioto, the Humphrey lover; the San Francisco Police Tactical Squad, that is, riot squad; and, starring San Francisco State College President S.I. Hayakawa.

Hayakawa—valiant little general, personally at the barricades, beating back the colored barbarian hordes armed only with his colorful tam.

The cast also features: The Black Student Union (BSU); the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF); Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), and their friends; and, the press, plus assorted extras.

It all takes place on a set made to resemble San Francisco State College, one of 18 California State colleges, serving 215,000 students. The state colleges with the multi-campus of the University of California system. They have their own governing board of political appointees, most of them middle echelon management from firms supporting the governor.

The state colleges are commuter schools, for the sons and daughters of the lower-middle class. In the complex scheme of Clark Kerr's educational vision, the state colleges train middle-level white collar workers, the universities train top-level management. A place for everything and everything in its place.

It should only work so well.

What has happened is that a different breed of student has taken the campuses. San Francisco State, which is four percent black, has attracted the “brothers off the block,” from the Fillmore and Hunter's Point districts. And they somehow just don't seem to want to learn a trade, like they're supposed to.

The median age for S.F. State students is 25.

They're there to learn alright, but not to apply their knowledge to running the money machine.

The seeds of revolt are planted.

Robert Smith was, before all of this nasty mess, the president of the college. A good sort of starry-eyed white liberal, he met a demand by the BSU to set up a department of Black Studies.

He somehow neglected to supply funds or faculty. Black students, not being as backward as white liberals might think, took careful note of this discrepancy.

They countered by demanding funds, faculty, the right to hire and fire the staff, the right to set up courses, and a guarantee that the trustees would mind their own business. In alliance with the TWLF, they demanded that any non-white student seeking admission to S.F. State be automatically admitted.

California junior colleges already do admit all comers.

If that wasn't enough, a part-time English instructor and student, George Murray, found a third job: Minister of Education of the Black Panther Party.

Smith's sky was falling.

On October 28, 1968, Murray announced a strike at a BSU rally. He coincidentally advised nonwhite students to carry guns for self-defense.

One of Reagan's appointed trustees ordered Smith to suspend Murray, a violation of due process. Smith, a good liberal, obeyed. The faculty was incensed. Smith was on his way out the back door.

On November 6, the strike started. The BSU was in charge, supported by the TWLF, with the SDS bringing up the rear. The blacks ordered that no confrontations take place.

Their experience with police was a little different than that of the white students., Confrontation was an invitation to police presence—and police presence was an invitation to killing. Hence, no confrontation.

Students did, however, roam the buildings inviting their fellows, still in class, to join the strike.

To have justice, you must have order, say white liberals in nodding agreement. So Smith brought in the police, to deal with the "roving bands of militants."

After a few days of random head-knocking, police finally ended up waving guns around.

The school was shut down, as a result—but by the faculty. Drawn guns didn't suit them, for some reason, so they stopped teaching.

Smith tried every means at the disposal of right thinking, good-hearted, rational white liberals; but the school stayed shut. He resigned.

His successor was Hayakawa, linguist, right-winger, and strike opponent.

Like any good principal dealing with rowdy youngsters, Hayakawa seized the initiative: he brought in more members of the Tactical Squad; told the faculty to straighten up and fly right; issued orders as to where and when striking students could assemble; and shut the school a week early for the Christmas holidays so everyone could cool off and be back in their places like good boys and girls.

He even went so far as to personally rip out the wiring of PA equipment mounted on a strikers' sound truck. He had, after all, banned the use of sound equipment without his permission.

A man of real conviction, this Hayakawa.

With the beginning of the new year, Hayakawa is now garrisoned in his office, issuing orders over a public address system mounted on the roof of the building.

The school is still shut down. Members of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), representing a number of faculty, went on strike when their contract expired.

There have been assorted beatings and arrests, some for charges like assault and inciting to riot, at the hands of police.

Picketing students have clashed with police and AFT pickets. And a time bomb was found just outside Hayakawa's office. Fires have been set in various buildings.

The BSU and TWLF are as close as ever, and even more solidly in command than ever.

It's going to be a long, hot winter.

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