

## 60 Years of Free Speech: A Panel with Icons of Berkeley Activism

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### Project Summary

The Berkeley Forum is a nonpartisan organization run by passionate undergraduates at UC Berkeley that aims to inspire students through moderated events featuring notable individuals. In addition to hosting free, accessible, and non-partisan events, the Forum sponsors the student-taught class (DeCal) “History of Free Speech at Berkeley” and is committed to promoting free speech on campus.

In celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley, a pivotal moment in history that showcased the power of student activism, the Berkeley Forum hosted an anniversary panel featuring FSM veterans Dr. Bettina Aptheker, Lynne Hollander Savio, and Jack Radey. This project, made possible by the VOICE Grant, sought to inspire a new generation of students and to celebrate the milestone by facilitating continued connection amongst veterans. The event included an introduction to the Movement from New York University Professor of history Dr. Robert Cohen, a moderated panel discussion, audience Q&A, and a reunion luncheon for veterans of the Movement.

### Impact

The panel event was attended by over 250 in-person attendees and 50-75 virtual attendees. The demographic largely consisted of undergraduate and graduate students, as well as veterans and friends of the Movement. Thirty-five veterans of the Movement attended the private reunion luncheon before the panel.

Overall, we feel that this event significantly increased student engagement with the Free Speech Movement, campus history, and student activism. Though there were several events on campus in the Fall semester on the Free Speech Movement, Forum’s panel was the only one that was run by a student organization and engaged directly with veterans of the Movement. As a result, our event had high student attendance and interest. Forum members reported positive feedback from attendees after the event, citing the informativeness, diversity of topics, and relevance to campus life.

A particular highlight of the day was the reunion luncheon. Many of the veterans were old friends that had not interacted with their classmates in well over a decade. Being able to facilitate joy between the veterans was truly very special and heartwarming.

Additionally, as the Forum is a student-run organization, the event gave members an in-depth and personal experience with the Free Speech Movement. As a result of volunteering to help run this event, several of the members have been inspired to learn more about campus history and take on facilitator roles in our student-led course, History of Free Speech at Berkeley. The event programming, connections, and media has been integrated into the course and will continue to enrich the curriculum.