

'60S RADICALS: WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

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Though out of the headlines, some of the aging warlords of social change are still in the trenches. Others have died, gone to jail or sold out.

One is a Connecticut homemaker, another a physical therapist. Some teach. Several are dead; several more are in jail. Some have seen their lives turned into fodder for bad movies or weekly TV dramas.

These are the superstars of social consciousness, activists whose names became synonymous with the revolutionary spirit of the 1960s. With the recent announcement that a onetime associate of the violent Symbionese Liberation Army active in the 1970s is a potential suspect in the Unabomber case and the continued release of the bomber's radical-tinged rhetoric, those earlier epochs of radicalism are again being recalled. Older, grayer and often beset by the infirmities that strike at midlife, many of the warlords of social change remain committed to causes that mirror their youthful fervor. Out of the headlines, many are still in the trenches. For most, political philosophy remains a powerful force in their lives.

With his bushy red ponytail, for example, Mario Savio — 52 and plagued by an arthritic elbow — recently waited for a chance to speak in the crowded room where University of California regents were discussing plans to end affirmative action programs.

He never got it, because speakers were selected by lottery. Instead, the Sonoma State mathematics and critical-thinking instructor, whose oratory from the roof of a car sparked the Free Speech Movement at UC Berkeley in 1964, handed out brochures for the Campus Coalitions for Human Rights and Social Justice, the organization he helped start nine months ago.

“Mostly I believe in going along with the program and keeping your eyes open,” said the father of three sons, one of whom helped write the Campus Coalitions brochure. “There are so many things wrong in the galaxy, you’d be fighting Klingons if you tried to take on every one of them.

“But occasionally something comes down the pike which is just so horrible” — in this case, Savio said, reduced funding for higher education and the threat to affirmative action — “that you just have to do something.”

Across the country, former Black Panther chairman Bobby Seale said he stresses a similar theme in his speeches at 40 to 50 colleges each year.

“If we’re not reaching for the future world of cooperational humanism, then we missed the whole damned point,” said Seale, who is 59 and lives in Philadelphia. When he is not volunteering as a recruiter for Temple University’s African American studies program, Seale is busy updating his autobiography, “A Lonely Rage,” and transforming his best-selling cookbook, “Barbecuing With Bobby Seale,” into a CD-ROM. He is also wrapping up a volume on what he calls “polylectic reality.”

In one of the strangest scenes in American jurisprudence, Seale was so disruptive in the courtroom of Judge Julius Hoffman in 1969 that his trial was separated from the fellow defendants who became known as the Chicago Seven. All eight had taken part in the boisterous demonstrations that marked the 1968 Democratic National Convention

in Chicago. “I am proud that I stood up in front of Judge Julius Hoffman and cussed his butt out,” Seale said. Most of the charges were dismissed.

After decades of railing against the shortcomings of politicians, another of the Chicago Seven defendants, Tom Hayden, became one. In 1982, Hayden was elected to the California state Assembly; 10 years later, he successfully ran for a seat in the state Senate. Hayden is a champion of environmental issues. Recently, Hayden, 55, announced his support for the death penalty.

In her own period of primarily anti-Vietnam War activism, Hayden’s former wife, actress Jane Fonda, visited Hanoi and inspired the legendary counter-counterculture bumper sticker still seen on some decrepit vehicles: “I’m not Fonda Jane.” Fonda had breast augmentation surgery, and in 1991, wore a Scarlett O’Hara wedding gown when she married multibillionaire Ted Turner. The wedding banquet included quail shot by Fonda herself.

The two class clowns of the Chicago Seven — Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin — both met tragic ends. Hoffman was 52 when he died in 1989, an apparent suicide. It brought to a sad close a flamboyant life that included such antics as throwing dollar bills onto the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, attempting to levitate the Pentagon by mental force and running a pig for president. Convicted of selling cocaine to undercover agents, Hoffman fled before his trial began. He spent seven years on the run, undergoing plastic surgery and adopting the alias Barry Freed.

Together, Hoffman and Rubin founded the Youth International Party, the Yippies, in 1968. They munched jelly beans in Judge Hoffman’s courtroom and urged the youthful masses never to trust anyone over 30. After they turned 30, they were amazed when so many people didn’t trust them anymore.

Rubin drifted through est, meditation, modern dance, acupuncture massage and hypnotism. He married a former debutante and eventually went to work for a Wall Street investment firm.

“If I am going to have any effect on my society in the next 40 years, I must develop the power that only the control of money can bring,” Rubin wrote in a New York Times article announcing his decision to become a securities analyst.

In 1991, Rubin moved to Los Angeles as a distributor for a nutritional drink called Wow! In his designer suits, he was a familiar sight in the Westwood area, where he was struck and killed by a car last November while jaywalking.

William Kunstler, a lawyer for the Chicago Seven, said he found it hard to offer harsh judgment of former clients who have fallen from the radical fold. “They did their thing,” he said. “How many others did?”

“The problem is, I guess, that age, financial responsibility, maybe burnout take a lot of people out of the struggle,” said Kunstler, who at 76 revels in his role as attorney-to-the-revolutionary-stars. “And in fact, those same things make some people jump to the other side of the spectrum.”

Former Black Panther leader Eldridge Cleaver, the best-selling author of “Soul on Ice,” has passed through unsuccessful career stops as recycling maven and fashion

designer. He lives in Berkeley and sometimes tours with his old pal Bobby Seale, who confirms that Cleaver takes pride not only in having become a Republican, but in having voted for Ronald Reagan.

Jail time turns out to be an experience shared by many from the various strands of radicalism. Kathy Boudin, part of a splinter group from the Weather Underground known as “The Family,” is serving a 20-years-to-life sentence in Bedford Hills, N.Y., for her role in a 1981 raid on an armored car in which a guard and two police officers were killed.

In Massachusetts, 44-year-old Katherine Ann Power pleaded guilty in 1993 to charges of manslaughter and armed robbery that dated to 1970, when she was an anti-war activist at Brandeis University. Power is serving an eight-to-12-year sentence in a Massachusetts prison.

Susan Saxe, another former Brandeis student, was involved in the same incident — in which a highly decorated Boston police officer was killed — served five years in jail and now works for a Jewish charity in Philadelphia.

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