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The Sixties of Today: The SDS of the Present

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Oral Presentation O8.2

THE SIXTIES OF TODAY: THE SDS OF THE PRESENT

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In the early 1960s, a small group of students joined together to form what would become one of the most infamous and influential protest organizations of the decade, the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). The group was marked by intellectualism and extreme idealism; SDS pledged its adherence to the ideal of "participatory democracy," a term signifying the direct participation in political affairs by every citizen. Although the group formed in 1961, SDS is better known for the last years of its history, in which it became one of the most militant and revolutionary organizations of the sixties. Although much history of this organization ends with its formal demise in 1969, my project extends well beyond this period into the present. This presentation explores the impact of participation in SDS on its members. An analysis of the contemporary activities and writings of various former SDSers, from historians to professional organizers, reveals the ways in which they were affected by membership in the organization. Additionally, such research illustrates how SDS and its beliefs have carried on into the present day, even if the formal organization has long since ceased to exist.