

Student Handout
Oakland Museum of California
What's Going On? California and the Vietnam Era
Lesson Plan #2

1968: Year of Social Change and Turning Point in Vietnam and the U.S.

Oral History

Irv Sarnoff

Irv Sarnoff is a peace activist and an organizer for Peace Action Council (PAC). He led many of the anti-war rallies in Southern California.

At that particular time when U.S. presidents traveled and did things, it was announced way ahead of time. *[Laughter]* You can't do that today. But uh we found out that the President of the United States, Lyndon Johnson, was going to be a major speaker at the convention or fundraiser, fundraiser for the Democratic Party at the Century Plaza Hotel. And we found out like a few months in advance. Well, we were so highly organized, you know through the Peace Action Council, that once we found out it was going to happen, it was like, okay, next target Century Plaza Hotel, June 23, 1967. And it was just that's what we did. And we began organizing you know 120 organizations. You know everybody had their focus, June 23, 1967, Century Plaza Hotel. And you know it was—that was it. Be there, you know. And so, that became the focal point of the entire anti-Vietnam War movement in Southern California was that event. And uh it was very important for two reasons. One, it was the leadership of the Democratic Party was there in the hotel. And secondly, the President of the United States. So, we got the permits you know. I have copies of the permits here. It was like a whole history just to that event. Because I guess in some ways it made a profound impression in many way. But we got the permit. The permit was to have a rally at Chevy Hills Park and then there would be a march from the Park uh in front of the Century Park—Century Plaza Hotel. Uh and then the march would proceed in front of the hotel, and then it would disperse after going in front of the hotel. So, uh we gathered in the park. Uh my personal estimate is somewhere around 20,000 people.

