

Dynamic Times

by M. Amine Hajji

When I was a freshman at UB in 1969, the turbulence of the Vietnam War was rippling across the United States and several major social and political events were being played out on the campus.

At the time I was a foreign student, newly arrived, and my focus was primarily on getting my education in mechanical engineering. But I was right in the middle of a very dynamic time--I remember one group set up an ad hoc college and would discuss Che Guevara's philosophy and other radical ideas.

A couple of physics professors had staged a sit-in at an administration building and had been arrested. While out on bail and while their trial was going on, the first 15 minutes of physics would start out with what they could legally tell us, then they would proceed with the lecture.

There were two camps of students--those who were solely concerned about getting an education and others focused on political issues and events. Once a couple of people disrupted the class over political issues, which infuriated some of the other students.

Although I didn't get very involved at the time, being in the midst of these issues affected me for the rest of my life. I was just a freshman and it was all a little overwhelming, but also influential. Being at UB at that time taught me that there are a lot of significant issues in addition to education, and it made me practice my civic duties and exercise my civil rights.

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