

rights and was now engaged in “another phase of the same struggle.” How would you characterize this new phase, and what do you think prompted it? Anderson also describes the free speech movement at Berkeley during the 1960s and how it escalated into a major confrontation between students and the university administration. What does Anderson consider to be the key issues during those hectic times? Anderson acknowledges that on many campuses dissatisfaction was strangely absent, that students were often “optimistic and comfortable.” How was it possible for both student satisfaction and protest to exist in the same decade?

Some students were not content to limit their protests to racial discrimination and restrictions on speech on their campuses; they also objected to university rules and regulations on social behavior, such as drinking and sexual activity. Still others saw the university as only one institution in need of fundamental change. In 1962 Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) was formed. From an organizational meeting at the United Auto Workers’ Port Huron center in Michigan, SDS issued the Port Huron agenda, calling for radical solutions to what they believed to be injustice in America. The first document is taken from this SDS statement. What are the main points of its critique of society? Most of these predominantly white students were privileged; how can you explain their discontent?

Terry Anderson notes at the end of his essay that unhappiness with the Vietnam War was a major factor in explaining the upheavals of the sixties, and that without the war the “sixties generation” might have taken a different shape. It is understandable why male students especially objected to the war, for they were faced with the draft and the possibility of being sent to fight, thousands of miles across the Pacific in a war in which they did not believe. But students were by no means the only Americans to oppose what many termed “Lyndon Johnson’s war.” Returning veterans organized the Vietnam Veterans Against the War. The second document, a statement by veteran John Kerry who would become a U.S. Senator from Massachusetts, speaks for these veterans. What was there about this war that led to such widespread disillusionment?

ESSAY

The Movement and the Sixties Generation

Terry Anderson

“Last summer I went to Mississippi to join the struggle there for civil rights,” said Berkeley student Mario Savio in 1964. “This fall I am engaged in another phase of the same struggle, this time in Berkeley. In Mississippi an autocratic and powerful minority rules, through organized violence, to

SOURCE: From *The Movement and the Sixties* by Terry H. Anderson. Copyright 1996 by Terry H. Anderson. Used by permission of Oxford University Press, Inc.

suppress the vast, virtually powerless majority. In California, the privileged minority manipulates the university bureaucracy to suppress the students’ political expression.”

That expression had been curtailed by the University of California as students arrived on the Berkeley campus for fall semester in September. As was typical for university officials during the cold war era, a dean simply informed all student organizations that from now on they were no longer permitted to set up tables on campus to promote “off-campus” causes such as civil rights, and this ban applied to the traditional area for such endeavors, a small strip of property at the campus’s main entrance where Telegraph Avenue met Bancroft Way.

Activism had long since arrived in Berkeley. In 1958 students organized Towards an Active Student Community, which later became SLATE, and a few dozen began discussing civil rights, capital punishment, and nuclear disarmament. “For us,” student Michael Rossman later wrote, “the discovery was of each other. We began to realize we were not alone.”

In spring 1960 they acted, holding silent vigils at San Quentin to protest the execution of Caryl Chessman and picketing the House Un-American Activities Committee investigation of Communist activities in the Bay Area, a demonstration that led to Black Friday.* Activism increased, and by the 1963–64 academic year hundreds of students had become involved in civil rights demonstrations, picketing hotels, automobile dealerships, restaurants, and other businesses that had discriminatory employment practices. At Lucky food stores, activists held “shop-ins,” filling grocery carts with food, and after going through the checkout line, saying, “Sorry, I forgot my money. If you would hire some Negroes I would remember it next time.” They picketed the Oakland *Tribune*, whose conservative owner was on the university’s board of regents, and in March the local campaign reached a crescendo when 2000 violated a court order restricting the number of protesters in front of the Sheraton Palace Hotel; police arrested 800.

Political debate also was mounting. The Republican convention was held during June 1964 in San Francisco and the candidacy of conservative Barry Goldwater inspired discussion as he faced Lyndon Johnson in the upcoming elections. Then, in August, just weeks before students returned to classes, President Johnson declared that North Vietnam had attacked U.S. ships in the Gulf of Tonkin. He asked for and received from Congress the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which stimulated more student debate about America’s role in South Vietnam. And as fall semester began in September approximately fifty students returned from volunteer work during Mississippi Summer.** At Berkeley and at other universities many of these students were welcomed back to campus as “civil rights heroes.”

*In May 1960 a student protest against the House Un-American Activities Committee in San Francisco resulted in a violent confrontation between the police and the demonstrators. (Eds.)

**A campaign to encourage voter registration among blacks. (Eds.)

The university administration apparently was under pressure by conservatives in the state, community, and on the board of regents to curb activism when they issued the political ban. The students' response was dramatic. On September 21 campus organizations of all political persuasions united—from the Young Socialist Alliance to Youth for Goldwater—and they violated the ban. Two hundred students picketed on campus with signs such as "UC Manufactures Safe Minds," "Ban Political Birth Control," and "Bomb the Ban." To most, the issue was freedom of speech. "We're allowed to say why we think something is good or bad," said activist Jackie Goldberg, "but we're not allowed to distribute information as to what to do about it. Inaction is the rule, rather than the exception, in our society and on this campus." The movement gained support, and a week later some students set up political tables. Administrators took down names, and ordered civil rights veteran Jack Weinberg to appear in front of a dean. He did the next day, but he was followed by 500 supporters who packed into the administration building, Sproul Hall, and stayed until early the next morning. University of California president Clark Kerr suspended eight activists, but that did not stifle dissent as it would have in the 1950s. It only increased ill will and resulted in more protest. "A student who has been chased by the KKK in Mississippi," said student Roger Sandall, "is not easily scared by academic bureaucrats."

The Free Speech Movement it was called, and along with the civil rights protests the previous spring it demonstrated the emergence of a new generation. "How proud I felt," wrote Berkeley student Sara Davidson. "I belonged to a great new body of students who cared about the problems of the world. No longer would youth be apathetic. That was the fifties. We were committed." . . .

The role of the university in the first half of the 1960s . . . was not only to train students but to tame them to be conventional adults. To fit in, to become their parents. Students who did not play the game often were expelled or left in disgust; professors who did not teach the game usually were fired. Journalism major Phil Ochs at Ohio State was slated to become editor of the school paper, *The Lantern*, but faculty advisers rejected him because his views were "too controversial." He quit in his last year and became a folksinger. Illinois professor Leo Koch wrote in the *Daily Illini* that in his opinion premarital sex was all right for mature unmarried college students. The university president found the views "offensive and repugnant . . . contrary to the accepted standards of morality," and he fired Koch. For similar reasons St. John's University fired two dozen faculty members in 1966—none even received a hearing, for according to university rules the board of trustees could give or take away tenure at any time without explanation. *Newsweek* editorialized that "college must not abdicate its role in conserving, transmitting, and helping to mold both moral and intellectual values" of its students.

Yet many students by the mid-1960s had little desire to "be molded." This generation was different from older brothers and sisters who had been cowed by McCarthyism. That campaign was ancient history to them, hardly remembered and not taken seriously. Furthermore, these students had learned from the struggle. "If there is any one reason for increased student protest," a University of Utah journalist wrote, "it would probably be the civil rights movement. The movement . . . convinced many of them that non-violent demonstrations could be an effective device on the campus. It also served to make them more sensitive of their own civil rights." Problems in society had to be confronted and resolved, not blamed on imaginary subversives or outside agitators, and that called for student activism.

The reasons for student power were stated by the activists themselves in their campus papers and in new student undergrounds. This generation felt *in loco parentis* rules were absurd. Texas student Jeff Shero complained that campus regulations were "aimed at maintaining a 'proper image' for the University, rather than protecting girls." The young editor of *The Paper* declared "Michigan State is the Mississippi of American universities," protesting the administration's "closed-mindedness, intolerance and backwoods McCarthyism." The *New Orleans Freedom Press* proclaimed that student discontent resulted from "administrative restrictions on student autonomy," while University of Florida activists were blunt in their campus underground, *Freedom Forum*: "The American university campus has become a ghetto. Like all ghettos, it has its managers (the administration), its Uncle Toms (the intimidated, status-berserk faculty), its raw natural resources processed for outside exploitation and consumption (the students)." Their demand highlighted the reasons for student power: "NO RESTRICTIONS MAY BE PLACED ON STUDENT DRINKING, GAMBLING, SEXUAL ACTIVITY, OR ANY SUCH PRIVATE MORAL DECISION."

The sixties generation began to confront its university administrations in 1964, politely demanding to be heard. During spring semester the administration at Brandeis consulted no one and then instituted new, stricter dorm visitation rules. That prompted several hundred students to stage a two-day demonstration, and the campus newspaper declared that such regulations "makes impossible any meaningful relationship between boy and girl." That fall semester, Syracuse University students approached their administrators with a simple request—they felt that holiday break, which began on December 23, was too close to Christmas. A few dozen students asked for more travel time to get home by Christmas Eve. After officials turned down all petitions, the students called a rally in December, and they were surprised when 2000 appeared. They demanded a speech from the chancellor, and he gave a short address, again saying no. As he ended his talk, some students jeered and booed, which shocked elders. "The students were supposed to show proper respect," a journalist wrote, "to know their place and keep it." Student activists, however, had a different

interpretation. They wanted some role in the university. "If today's demonstration proves nothing else," the student paper editorialized, "we are not ones to be ignored or taken lightly."

Students at Berkeley certainly were not going to be taken lightly—they again challenged the ban on disseminating literature. On October 1, Jack Weinberg and others set up a few tables outside the administration building on Sproul Plaza and began passing out civil rights and political flyers. Before noon two university deans and a policeman approached Weinberg. "Are you prepared to remove yourself and the table from university property?" asked the dean. "I am not," replied Weinberg. After a brief discussion the official informed Weinberg of his arrest, and at this point several hundred students who were gathering for a free speech rally startled the officials by shouting, "Take us all, take us all!" Policemen drove a car onto the plaza and placed Weinberg inside, but suddenly someone shouted, "Sit down!" "I'm around the police car," recalled Michael Rossman. "I'm the first person to sit down. You will hear five hundred others who say that, and everyone is telling the truth." Students either laid or sat down around the car. They refused to move. The police could not drive their prisoner to jail as the crowd swelled to 3000. Mario Savio and many others climbed on top of the car and gave speeches, and later the crowd sang civil rights songs. They remained on the plaza all night. The next morning the area looked like a campsite, filled with sleeping bags, blankets, and even a pup tent. The crowd increased to 4000 that afternoon and President Kerr realized that the free speech issue was not going to disappear. After a thirty-hour sit-in, university administrators finally agreed to meet the activists.

To university officials, and to most citizens after the law and order 1950s, Berkeley had been reduced to chaos. Although campus rebellion would become common later in the decade, this was the first major eruption, and administrators responded forcefully. Under pressure from conservatives in the community and state government, they allowed 500 police officers to appear on campus minutes before they met activists. The police were armed with nightsticks, and the sight shocked students who never could remember a police army on campus and who felt that the incident was novel in American educational history. As police stood by, civil rights veterans taught nonviolent arrest tactics and urged those with police records or children to leave. Administrators had the support of California Governor Edmund G. Brown, a Democrat who stated that the demonstration was "not a matter of freedom of speech" but was an attempt by the students to use the campus illegally. "This will not be tolerated." He continued, "We must have—and will continue to have—law and order on our campuses."

Negotiations with Kerr continued for two hours, and then Savio and other students emerged from Sproul Hall. Savio climbed on the police car and announced that an agreement had been reached. A student-faculty committee would examine the free speech issue and make recommendations to the pres-

ident. The university would not press charges against Weinberg or FSM leaders, and the eight students suspended earlier would have their case reviewed. Kerr seemed to support establishing a small free speech area at the campus's main entrance where Telegraph Avenue met Bancroft Way.

The October 2 agreement collapsed by November. The administration filled the committee with their own supporters, and then stalled for weeks. Meanwhile, Kerr took the issue to the press. Under pressure from conservative regents and politicians, the president attacked activists by raising the old bugaboos: "Reds on Campus," Kerr told the *San Francisco Examiner*. The article reported that the president "declared flatly that a hard core of 'Castro-Mao-Tse-tung line' Communists were in the crowd of demonstrators." The president then rejected political activity, provoking students to petition the regents and to set up tables on Sproul Plaza. The regents refused to hear the case, and on November 29 Kerr surprised students by announcing that the university was going to press new charges against FSM leaders Art Goldberg and Savio for their actions during the October 1 demonstrations. Charges included "entrapping a police car," "packing in" Sproul Hall, and, against Savio alone, biting a policeman "on the left thigh, breaking the skin and causing bruises."

The administration's behavior only alienated more students, irritated many professors, and fueled more protest as students and faculty began to feel that the university all along had been negotiating in bad faith. "The Administration sees the free speech protest as a simple problem of disobedience," proclaimed an FSM steering committee statement. "By again arbitrarily singling out students for punishment, the Administration avoids facing the real issues. . . . We demand that these new charges be dropped." Thousands of activists took those demands to Sproul Plaza on December 2, and Savio voiced the students' frustration by telling the crowd: "There is a time when the operation of the machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick at heart, that you can't take part; you can't even tacitly take part, and you've got to put your bodies upon the gears and upon the wheels, upon the levers, upon all the apparatus and you've got to make it stop."

"We Shall Overcome," sang Joan Baez, and others joined in as they moved toward Sproul Hall. "We'll walk hand in hand," for "the truth will make us free." The activists shut down the university administration—again they confronted the establishment.

Governor Brown responded immediately: "We're not going to have anarchy in California." He informed Kerr that force must be used to oust the students and ordered police to arrest activists who refused to leave the administration building. At about 4 a.m. some 600 policemen entered Sproul Hall and began arresting students, eventually about 770, in the largest mass arrest in California history. Some 7000 students remained on the plaza, and that morning they began picketing all entrances to the campus, handing out flyers:

IT IS HAPPENING NOW!

In the middle of the night, the police began dragging 800 of your fellow students from Sproul Hall. Sproul Hall was turned into a booking station; the University has become an armed camp—armed against its own students! . . .

Now the police take over.

Instead of recognizing the legitimacy of the students' demands, the administration is attempting to destroy the FSM. . . . The administration position is clear. It is saying "We decide what is acceptable freedom of speech on this campus. Those who disagree will be ignored; when they can no longer be ignored, they will be destroyed."

We have not been defeated by the University's troops! Our protest will continue until the justice of our cause is acknowledged. You must take a stand now! No longer can the faculty attempt to mediate from the outskirts of the crowd. No longer can students on this campus afford to accept humbly administrative fiat. Raise your voice now!

WE SHALL OVERCOME.

The faculty met, and after a long and heated discussion in their senate, they declared their position: Professors overwhelmingly voted to condemn the use of police on campus and to support the FSM. As faculty left the meeting, students cheered, and on December 4 both students and faculty held a huge rally on Sproul Plaza. Arrested activists had been released on bail, many wore a large white "V" on black shirts, and they and several professors criticized Governor Brown, the regents, and President Kerr. Students declared a strike, and that week half the classes were canceled.

With business as usual disrupted, Kerr called a special meeting for December 7 at the Greek Theater. About 16,000 students, faculty, and staff gathered, and the president condemned the sit-in but offered clemency for all acts of civil disobedience before December 2 and stated that the university would abide by "new and liberalized political action rules" then being developed by the faculty senate. The speech sounded conciliatory, and as the president left the podium Savio began walking across the stage apparently to make an announcement. Before he reached the microphone, campus police astonished the crowd by grabbing the activist and dragging him backstage. When other activists attempted to help, the police wrestled them off the stage.

"The crowd was stunned," wrote participant Bettina Aptheker, "then there was pandemonium." Students cried out "We Want Mario! We Want Mario!" Kerr, realizing that the police were ruining his efforts to reach an understanding, quickly agreed to let Savio make his announcement—a rally

would be held at noon. Nevertheless, most spectators remembered the incident and its inescapable symbolism: authorities physically preventing a student committed to free speech from speaking on his own campus. As Aptheker later wrote: "That episode more than any other single event revolutionized the *thinking* of many thousands of students."

The next day the faculty met and overwhelmingly passed a motion affirming that "speech or advocacy should not be restricted by the university." While the administration and regents discussed the motion during the next two weeks, the FSM invited CORE national director James Farmer to address a rally on December 15. The administration was conciliatory, informing students that Farmer could talk on campus, but FSM activists decided to hold a legal rally off campus as a token of good faith. Farmer told the crowd that the "battle for free speech" could not be lost, for that would "turn off the faucet of the civil rights movement." When someone charged that he was an "outside agitator," he replied, "Every housewife knows the value of an agitator. It's the instrument inside the washing machine that bangs around and gets out all the dirt."

The administration eventually decided to accept the faculty's liberalized political rules. On January 4, 1965, the Free Speech Movement held its first legal rally on Sproul Plaza. The FSM was a success, Savio told the crowd, because "it was so obvious to everybody that it was right."

The FSM raised a philosophical debate that divided many students and administrators: What is the nature of a public university? While Kerr thought of himself as a liberal and had been praised for his stand favoring academic freedom, he stated the usual reasoning of cold war culture. The "university is an educational institution that has been given to the regents as a trust to administer for educational reasons, and not to be used for direct political actions." FSM advocates and many professors disagreed, arguing that the mission of higher education was much broader. "The university is the place where people begin seriously to question the conditions of their existence and raise the issue of whether they can be committed to the society they have been born into," wrote Savio. At a public institution supported by all taxpayers, activists felt that discussion should not be reserved only for campus issues but should be open to all concerns of the Republic. Art Goldberg advocated making Berkeley "a marketplace of ideas" where citizens would be exposed to "new and creative solutions to the problems that every American realizes are facing this society in the mid-60s."

That idea was not original in 1964, for actually students had initiated free speech movements earlier at a few other campuses, including Ohio State and Indiana University. In March 1963 three students at Indiana, officers of the Young Socialist Alliance, sponsored a speech by a black socialist on the civil rights movement. In May, the county prosecuting attorney charged the students with violating the Indiana Anti-Communist Act, meeting with the purpose of "advocating the violent overthrow" of the

governments of Indiana and the United States. The prosecutor also demanded that the university drop its recognition of YSA. “We may all be ten years away from Senator McCarthy,” wrote one professor, “but I am ten blocks away from the office of the Prosecuting Attorney.” Supporters of the three established the Committee to Aid the Bloomington Students, which eventually received assistance from 50 colleges in 15 states. Over 140 faculty members signed a statement that the indictment was not “motivated by zeal for law enforcement, but by a desire to dictate to Indiana University that it shall not permit the use of University facilities for the expression of ideas repugnant to the Prosecutor.” The university president agreed, and state courts found the law unconstitutional: The faculty continued supporting the students and broadly defined the university as a community where “debate, disagreement and the sharp confrontation of opposing ideas is a vital part of the attempt to come closer to the truth.”

The free speech episode at Indiana differed from that at Berkeley. The Indiana administration viewed the conservative attack as a threat to the institution, and eventually the president supported the First Amendment. If Berkeley administrators had subscribed to such views, the sit-in of Sproul Hall probably would have been avoided. Flexible officials could avoid most confrontations on campus—a point remembered by hundreds of successful university presidents throughout the 1960s.

Kerr and the regents could not overcome their authoritarian 1950s mentality. They treated the students like subordinates, gave orders to tuition-payers, which only increased resentment toward authority. Activists felt that “liberal” administrators, the “power elites” who ran the university in Berkeley, seemed more interested in maintaining the status quo than changing rules, even if those regulations denied rights guaranteed by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Looking back, Kerr’s position was indefensible. During the 1950s he had supported academic freedom for professors, yet in 1964 his administration curtailed freedom of speech for students. Many students wondered, if they could not hand out political statements, if freedom of speech did not exist on a public campus, then where did it exist in the land of the free?

The administration brought on the crisis, handled it poorly, and lost to students. As in the civil rights struggle, the FSM students put another dent in the idea that those in charge should be in charge, that the older generation had some monopoly on determining the proper path for the present and future in America. “Don’t trust anyone over thirty,” said Jack Weinberg and others, meaning that the generation who grew up in the 1950s had a different view of the world than their parents. During cold war culture the older generation “told the truth” to students, but in the 1960s students were “discovering the truth” for themselves, and their younger siblings would continue the process throughout the decade. At Berkeley, the young began to realize that the older generation had no monopoly on truth or on virtue.

Once students began to raise their voices and question policy, Michael Rossman wrote, then “the emperor had no clothes.” President Kerr’s decision to uphold an untenable regulation at Berkeley could be just as wrong as Chief of Police Bull Connor’s enforcement of segregation rules in Birmingham.

The FSM was significant for many other reasons. Activists adopted a political style that reflected the ideas of the new left and some of the practices of SNCC.* Unlike traditional organizations or political parties, Berkeley students “worked through direct personal involvement in small autonomous interest groups. Our groups were ad hoc,” Rossman recalled, “problem-orientated, flexible. They strove to govern themselves by participatory democracy, and to come to consensus on decisions.” They also were pragmatic. “We were experimental social scientists, placing practice before theory. . . . We also were cheerful and funny, and made art as we went.”

. . . [B]y the end of spring semester 1965 the climate on campus had shifted dramatically from the 1950s and early 1960s. “An End to Party Raids,” wrote a student at Kansas. The most important issues were civil and student rights; another continued that his generation was “fed up with their elders over such things as mass faceless education. . . . Students want to feel a sense of participation.” With successes in the South and on their campuses, many students were optimistic about change, and as they became involved many began to think of themselves as part of a movement. “The thing for me right now is the movement,” said Steven Block, an activist at Williams College. “That’s an interesting word, if you think about it—movement. Because it is people in motion. It’s not an end; it’s not static. That’s a very apt word for what we are doing.”

The silent generation was history. *College Press Service* in December declared, “1964 Is Year of Protest on Nation’s Campuses,” and Professor Andrew Hacker called 1964–65 the “Year of the Demonstration.” It was when compared with any time in memory.

But, more important, Hacker then placed the activists in context of the larger sixties generation. “Certainly, this year’s protesters and demonstrators were not representative of their classmates, and it is instructive how quickly their ranks have tended to dwindle away after the first flamboyant outbursts. So long as a school will give an undergraduate his passport into the upper-middle-class without demanding more than . . . 15 weekly hours of studying, few are going to complain.” Few indeed. Two years later, in 1967, professors Seymour Lipset and Philip Altbach flatly declared that it “should be made clear that . . . the scope of the American student ‘revolution’ has been greatly exaggerated by the mass media.”

Newsweek confirmed such sentiments during spring 1965 when it conducted interviews and a poll of over 800 students at numerous universities.

*At this stage in its history, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) employed peaceful demonstrations to achieve civil rights goals. (Eds.)

Over 90 percent expressed confidence in higher education, big corporations, and the federal government, while over 80 percent were satisfied with college and had positive views about the armed forces, organized religion, and the United Nations. When asked what students thought their lives would be like in fifteen years, most of them mimicked their older brothers: "I'll be secure, financially, married, have children, at least three," said one. Another aimed to be "upper middle class," and a third predicted, "I'll be living in a Long Island suburb." A journalist labeled the students "Flaming Moderates."

In mid-decade only a few students were activists while the larger sixties generation was comfortably moderate. A conservative student at the University of Miami wrote about the "deadly infection called student apathy" and referred to his campus as a "hotbed of apathy." Fraternities and sororities still dominated campus life, and a coed at Kansas as late as 1967 admitted that the biggest craze on her campus was "to get your boyfriend's fraternity sweater." Most college papers were similar to the *Daily Illini*, printing regular features like "The Party Line" which announced lavalierings, pinnings, engagements, and marriages. "I have respect for the ones who went to Mississippi or joined the Peace Corps, who committed themselves," said an English professor at Illinois in 1965, "but there are very, very few of them. Very few on this campus."

While some students had been provoked out of apathy by campus issues and civil rights, most of the sixties generation sitting in crowded classes during spring semester of 1965 were optimistic and comfortable—still best defined as the cool generation—mildly alienated from their parents' values and eager to sing along and "let the good times roll." *Time* surveyed the generation then and reported conformity: "Almost everywhere boys dress in madras shirts and chinos, or perhaps green Levis, all trim and neat. The standard for girls is sweaters and skirts dyed to match, or shirt-waists and jumpers plus blazers, Weejun loafers, and knee socks or stockings." At that time no one would have predicted that just two years away were the Summer of Love and the March on the Pentagon. Campus life that spring semester was cool, the good life. As the student body president of University of Texas said, "We haven't really been tested by war or depression. We live very much in the present because we don't have to be overly concerned about the future."

"There was that little conflict in Vietnam," Bob Calvert remembered, "but most of us in the movement felt optimistic during the summer of 1965." Indeed, most Americans felt that the nation was moving forward, and that mood was glowing in August when LBJ signed the Voting Rights Act. The president asked civil rights leaders to be present, and the signing ceremony included Bayard Rustin, Roy Wilkins, A. Philip Randolph, and Martin Luther King, Jr. LBJ had met with King the previous day and they discussed the remarkable advances during 1964 and 1965, not only in civil rights but also in the War on Poverty and Great Society programs—massive

federal aid to education and job training, Headstart, Medicare, and Medicaid. King spoke of the president's amazing sensitivity to the difficult problems that Negro Americans face in the stride toward freedom," and at the signing celebration the president declared, "Today is a triumph for freedom as huge as any victory that's ever been won on any battlefield." The civil rights leaders proclaimed LBJ the "greatest President" for blacks, even surpassing Abraham Lincoln.

"There was a religiosity about the meeting," recalled a presidential aide, "which was warm with emotion—a final celebration of an act so long desired and so long in achieving." Now liberals could sit back in their easy chairs and relax. In spring 1964 a new president had made his pledge, had declared his vision of the future. "This nation, this people, this generation, has man's first chance to create a Great Society: a society of success without squalor, beauty without barrenness, works of genius without the wretchedness of poverty. We can open the doors of learning. We can open the doors of fruitful labor and rewarding leisure, of open opportunity and close community—not just to the privileged few, but, thank God, we can open those doors to *everyone*. Now, just fifteen months later, it seemed that the liberals were delivering. The civil and voting rights acts had outlawed racial discrimination in public accommodations, employment, and the vote, and social programs were beginning to help the poor—white and black—to share the American Dream. On that day in August, liberalism reached its zenith in the 1960s.

Then, during the next two years, President Johnson gave the sixties generation a reason to be concerned about the future—he massively escalated America's role in the Vietnam War. The cool generation became history.

What would have happened to the sixties generation without the experience of Vietnam? Certainly, many would have continued to support and some would have demonstrated for civil rights. Five years of the struggle meant that it had become part of the generation's consciousness, and students began demanding classes on black literature and history at universities such as Stanford, Cornell, and San Francisco State. The "movement" would have been remembered as the civil rights struggle and the rise of student power. Increasing enrollments meant that the university was going to continue evolving in size and in substance, and that students would continue demanding and supporting change. In spring 1966 Stanford activist David Harris won election as student body president by calling for student control of regulations, equal policies for men and women, option of pass-fail grades, legalization of marijuana, elimination of the board of trustees, and the end of all university cooperation with the Vietnam War. The next year students challenged campus rules and regulations at Brown, Cornell, Oregon, Washington, and administrators at the best institutions were moving toward adopting the suggestion of a committee at Wisconsin that advocated "withdrawal by the University from its *in loco parentis* activities." By

mid-decade it also was clear that 1950s morality was cracking and that the younger generation was revolting against the values of Ma and Pa. Most of this quest would be superficial, beer bashes and bundling at the beach as the sixties became a party decade. But for a few others, the questioning of morals would lead them to substantial changes as they became part of an emerging counterculture. Finally, the massive size of the generation alone meant that it would have modified society, and thus would have made an impact.

What would have been remembered as the “sixties” without Vietnam? The Johnson administration would have continued civil rights legislation and Great Society programs, and along with the significant rulings of the Supreme Court of Chief Justice Earl Warren, the decade would have been taught today as another major reform era in American history.

Without the war, however, one wonders if the decade would have been as dramatic—would have been remembered as “the sixties.” The decade had been a turning point for blacks since Greensboro in 1960.* For white students and their parents the decade began to take shape in 1964 and 1965 as the young began to exhibit their new values and make demands on their campus administrators. Then, between autumn 1965 and the end of 1967, the Johnson administration escalated American involvement in Vietnam—and for the entire nation the decade became “the sixties.”

DOCUMENTS

Port Huron Statement, 1962

Introduction: Agenda for a Generation

We are people of this generation, bred in at least modest comfort, housed now in universities, looking uncomfortably to the world we inherit.

When we were kids the United States was the wealthiest and strongest country in the world; the only one with the atom bomb, the least scarred by modern war, an initiator of the United Nations that we thought would distribute Western influence throughout the world. Freedom and equality for each individual, government of, by, and for the people—these American values we found good, principles by which we could live as men. Many of us began maturing in complacency.

As we grew, however, our comfort was penetrated by events too troubling to dismiss. First, the permeating and victimizing fact of human de-

SOURCE: Students for a Democratic Society, Port Huron Manifesto, 1962.

*It was in Greensboro, North Carolina that black college students began the nonviolent sit-in movement to desegregate eating facilities in southern stores and restaurants. (Eds.)

gradation, symbolized by the Southern struggle against racial bigotry, compelled most of us from silence to activism. Second, the enclosing fact of the Cold War, symbolized by the presence of the Bomb, brought awareness that we ourselves, and our friends, and millions of abstract “others” we knew more directly because of our common peril, might die at any time. We might deliberately ignore, or avoid, or fail to feel all other human problems, but not these two, for these were too immediate and crushing in their impact, too challenging in the demand that we as individuals take the responsibility for encounter and resolution.

While these and other problems either directly oppressed us or ranked our consciences and became our own subjective concerns, we began to see complicated and disturbing paradoxes in our surrounding America. The declaration “all men are created equal . . .” rang hollow before the facts of Negro life in the South and the big cities of the North. The proclaimed peaceful intentions of the United States contradicted its economic and military investments in the Cold War status quo.

We witnessed, and continue to witness, other paradoxes. With nuclear energy whole cities can easily be powered, yet the dominant nation-states seem more likely to unleash destruction greater than that incurred in all wars of human history. Although our own technology is destroying old and creating new forms of social organization, men still tolerate meaningless work and idleness. While two-thirds of mankind suffers undernourishment, our own upper classes revel amidst superfluous abundance. Although world population is expected to double in forty years, the nations still tolerate anarchy as a major principle of international conduct and uncontrolled exploitation governs the mapping of the earth’s physical resources. Although mankind desperately needs revolutionary leadership, America rests in national stalemate, its goals ambiguous and tradition-bound instead of informed and clear, its democratic system apathetic and manipulated rather than “of, by, and for the people.”

Not only did tarnish appear on our image of American virtue, not only did disillusion occur when the hypocrisy of American ideals was discovered, but we began to sense that what we had originally seen as the American Golden Age was actually the decline of an era. The worldwide outbreak of revolution against colonialism and imperialism, the entrenchment of totalitarian states, the menace of war, overpopulation, international disorder, supertechnology—these trends were testing the tenacity of our own commitment to democracy and freedom and our abilities to visualize their application to a world in upheaval.

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Some would have us believe that Americans feel contentment amidst prosperity—but might it not better be called a glaze above deeply felt anxieties about their role in the new world? And if these anxieties produce a