

# A Decade of Discord

## The Challenge of The Sixties

**“We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed.”**

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR., 1963

In April 1968 civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. traveled to Memphis, Tennessee, to offer his support for a black garbage men's strike. Around 6:00 pm on April 5, 1968, as King leaned over a balcony

railing outside his second-story room at the Lorraine Motel to chat with two friends in the courtyard below, shots rang out. A wounded King collapsed on the floor of the balcony, and colleagues frantically tried to stem the bleeding with towels while waiting for the ambulance to arrive. Within an hour hospital doctors pronounced the thirty-eight-year-old minister dead. As news of King's assassination spread, rioting erupted in black communities throughout the nation, and images of violence saturated the television airwaves. In this photo King's thirteen-year-old daughter Yolanda sits inside a car peering at mourners, reflected in the car window, while her mother Coretta Scott King sits solemnly behind her as they leave King's funeral in Atlanta, Georgia. This somber photograph, as much as the images of rioters had, captured the crushing disappointment of dashed dreams. It was a sentiment shared by many Americans in the 1960s, white and black, who failed to fully realize their goals of either reforming America or ending the cultural turmoil.

America was rife with discord during the sixties. Much debate centered on liberalism and its willingness to use the government to protect civil rights and expand economic opportunity. Throughout the decade social reformers working within the liberal tradition advanced competing visions of social justice and shared prosperity. Some visions were bold; some, truly radical. King dreamed of using nonviolence to achieve racial equality; more militant activists advocated armed self-defense. Building on the reform legacies of the Progressive Era and the New Deal, Democratic presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson launched their own wars against poverty. Their legislative agendas were too timid for young radical activists who wanted to revolutionize American capitalism. Feminists, Chicano activists, and Native American protesters all mobilized as well to demand equal rights.

These visions of reform, especially the more radical revolutionary ones, appeared like nightmares to conservative segments of the population that abhorred liberalism. Southern segregationists organized to prevent any government-mandated dismantling of Jim Crow, and white northerners increasingly resented taxpayer-supported programs for unruly minorities. The rise of a hippie counterculture that emphasized love and pleasure convinced many working- and middle-class whites that liberalism meant the end of law and order and traditional values.

If there was one point of agreement throughout the sixties, it was that the political and cultural battles that defined the decade, for good or ill, transformed the nation. By the end of the decade, frustration over unfulfilled dreams left Americans divided over whether the nation had changed too much or not enough.

What was the larger political significance of the King family's personal tragedy?



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# The Liberal Moment

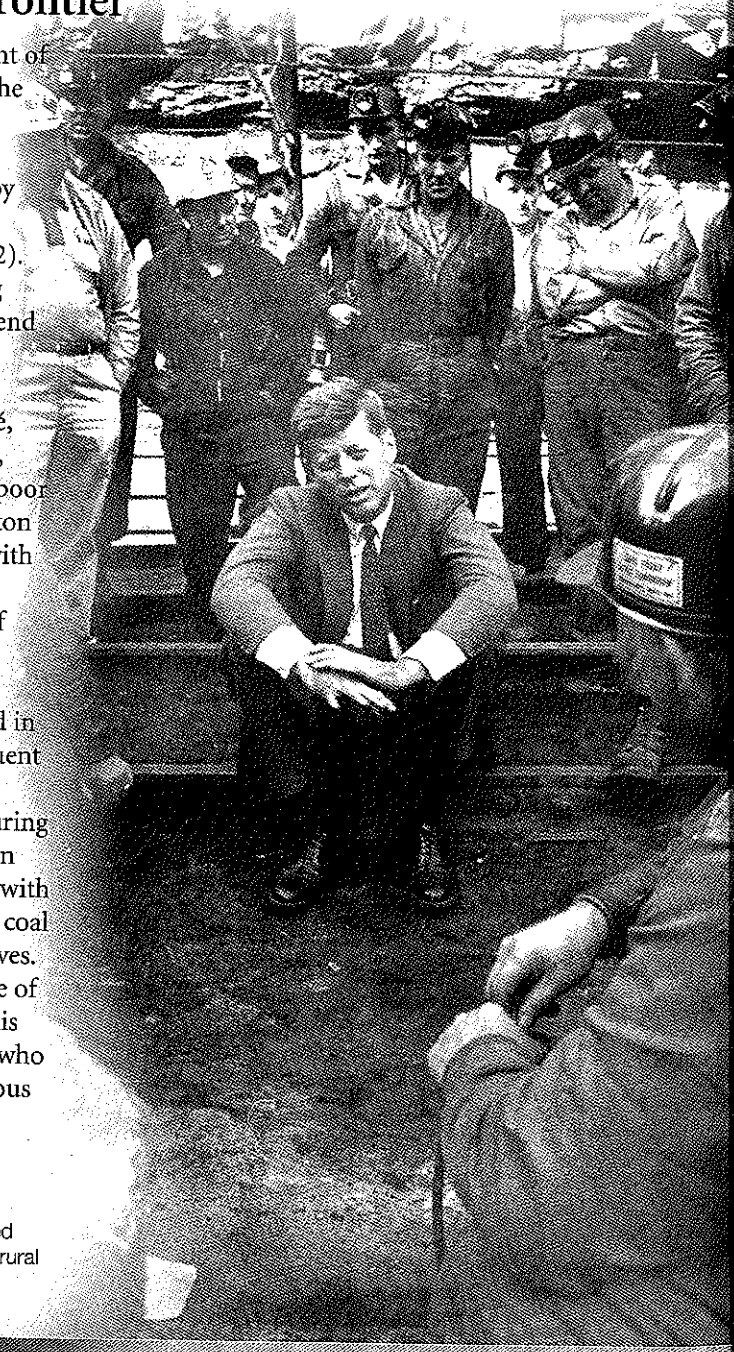


The 1960s was the heyday of American liberalism, thanks in part to the reform agendas of presidents Kennedy and Johnson and pivotal Supreme Court rulings. Kennedy and Johnson viewed themselves as heirs to the New Deal legacy, and they intended to follow in Harry Truman's footsteps, who as president had desegregated the American military and secured federal funds for urban public housing, education, and public works projects. Kennedy and Johnson each believed in the power of the federal government to positively reform American society, but each faced intense resistance from conservatives who were certain that the less the government interfered in the economy or society, the better.

## Kennedy and the New Frontier

Nearly 20 percent of Americans, 70 percent of them white, lived in dire poverty during the most prosperous moment in American history. Many middle- and upper-class Americans learned this startling statistic by reading Michael Harrington's *The Other America: Poverty in the United States* (1962). Harrington documented the deteriorating schools, substandard hospitals, and dead-end jobs that created a cycle of poverty that continued unabated for generations. Just like Jacob Riis's nineteenth-century exposé, *How the Other Half Lives* (see Chapter 17), Harrington made the lives of the nation's poor "visible" to the rest of the nation. Harrington claimed that a "culture of poverty" filled with extramarital sex, illegitimate children, and broken families created "a different kind of people" who did not share the values or outlook of middle-class America. Like Riis seventy years earlier, Harrington succeeded in awakening the social consciousness of affluent liberals, including John F. Kennedy.

While campaigning in West Virginia during his 1960 presidential bid against Republican Richard Nixon, Kennedy came face to face with appalling poverty as he sat and talked with coal miners, pictured here (27.1), about their lives. This moment of intimate conversation, one of his speechwriters noted, was "Kennedy at his best" as he gathered details about children who never drank milk and their fathers' dangerous



### 27.1 Presidential Candidate John F. Kennedy Speaking with Coal Miners, 1960

Kennedy's personal touch and charisma helped him create a strong connection with voters, who educated him about the entrenched poverty endemic to many rural communities.

work underground. "I was better off in the war than they are in the coal mines," Kennedy, a World War II veteran, told his campaign staff after this photo was taken. "It's not right."

"Let us begin anew," John F. Kennedy told the nation in his 1961 inaugural address, setting a tone of hope that inspired young people and liberals

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**"Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country."**

Kennedy's Inaugural Address, 1961

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throughout the nation. After eight years with the moderate Republican Dwight Eisenhower in the White House, Kennedy wanted to reinvigorate the liberal agenda through a legislative program called the *New Frontier*. Kennedy's proposed reforms included raising the minimum wage, reducing overcrowding in schools, and providing health care for the elderly. Kennedy also advocated cutting taxes and increasing government spending to stimulate the economy, reasoning that as incomes rose more tax revenue would flow into federal coffers to pay for these programs.

Kennedy also needed large sums for the ongoing space race with the Soviet Union, begun when the Soviets launched Sputnik in 1957 (see Chapter 24). The Soviets sent the first astronauts into space in 1961, prompting Kennedy to announce that the United States intended to recover its reputation as the world's technological leader by putting a man on the moon.

The youngest elected president in American history, Kennedy's charisma and idealism inspired many baby boomers who were just reaching adolescence or entering college. Thousands rushed to join the Peace Corps, an agency established by Kennedy that sent recent college graduates to work on humanitarian projects overseas in developing nations. "I really believed that I was going to change the world," recalled one teenager. By the end of the decade, over ten thousand Peace Corps volunteers had traveled abroad to teach, build hospitals, set up water treatment plants, and establish irrigation systems.

Kennedy succeeded in raising unemployment and Social Security benefits, as well as the minimum wage, but he had trouble implementing other parts of his liberal legislative program. Unskilled in lobbying individual legislators, just over one-third of his

proposals became law. Conservative congressmen balked at using deficit spending to fund the tax cuts and programs Kennedy proposed. Southerners objected to northerners' insistence that federal education funds only go to racially integrated schools, while Protestants resisted offering public monies to private Catholic parochial schools. It was one of the "great ironies of American politics," a *New York Times* reporter noted, that "JFK, the immensely popular president, could not reach his legislative goals."

## A Liberal Court

Under the leadership of Chief Justice Earl Warren from 1953–1969, the Supreme Court became an aggressive champion of individual rights, fostering the liberal agenda better than Kennedy and Democrats in Congress did. Warren believed that the Constitution gave the government the power, and the responsibility, to protect the relatively powerless against oppression by the majority. By choosing to render opinions on a wide range of social justice issues, the *Warren Court* brought about a legal revolution in the United States that permanently altered American schools, politics, the criminal justice system, and cultural norms. Northern liberals cheered these court decisions, but conservatives in both parties viewed the Warren Court as an activist court that rewrote rather than upheld the Constitution.

In 1954 the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision (see Chapter 25) paved the way for school desegregation. Throughout the fifties and sixties, the court continued to dismantle Jim Crow piece by piece, striking down segregated interstate and city buses, upholding the rights of civil rights protesters to hold sit-ins, and embracing mid-1960s federal laws that desegregated public places and guaranteed the right to vote as constitutional.

Another innovative judicial premise, the right to privacy, accompanied the Supreme Court's new support for civil rights. The Court struck down a host of state laws that outlawed possession of obscene publications, prohibited the use of contraception, and prevented interracial marriages. Individual Americans, the Court ruled, had the right to decide what to read, to use birth control, and to marry whom they wanted. Other court decisions redefined how the police arrested and interrogated suspected criminals. The police now had to inform individuals of their constitutional right to have a state-funded attorney present during questioning and their right not to answer questions that might incriminate them in a crime.

- 1954 **Brown v. Board of Education** outlawed racial segregation in public schools.
- 1962 **Baker v. Carr** gave federal courts right to intervene if states created voting districts of unequal size.
- 1962 **Engle v. Vitale** outlawed official school prayer in public schools.
- 1963 **Gideon v. Wainwright** gave accused felons the right to free legal counsel.
- 1965 **Griswold v. Connecticut** established "right to privacy," overturning state laws banning use of contraception.
- 1966 **Miranda v. Arizona** required that police inform suspect of right to remain silent and have a lawyer present during police questioning.
- 1967 **Loving v. Virginia** prohibited state laws banning interracial marriages.

**27.2 Major Decisions of the Warren Court**  
The Supreme Court presided over a major "rights revolution" in the sixties.

The Court also championed freedom of speech, ruling against Red Scare-era laws that required Communist Party members to register with the government and striking down official school prayer. For many years children across America had begun their school days by reciting the "Pledge of Allegiance," to which Congress added the words "under God" in 1954 as a Cold War measure intended to contrast American religiosity with the godless communism embraced by the Soviet Union. Most schoolchildren then sang a patriotic song like "America," and some concluded this opening ritual with a short reading from the Bible. The Court's ruling against official school prayer in *Engel v. Vitale* (1962) is explored in *Choices and Consequences: Is School Prayer Constitutional?* The decision ignited a firestorm of controversy among conservative Protestants and Catholics. President Kennedy, however, endorsed the decision. Having encountered strong anti-Catholic bigotry during his 1960 presidential campaign, Kennedy welcomed the chance to make religion a strictly private matter as he geared up for his reelection campaign. The chart, *Major Decisions of the Warren Court* (27.2), summarizes key court decisions.

## The 1964 Election

When Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ) assumed office in the wake of Kennedy's assassination on November 22, 1963 (see Chapter 26), he took up the slain president's liberal agenda. "Let us continue," President Lyndon Johnson proclaimed, echoing Kennedy's earlier entreaty, "let us begin." Unlike Kennedy, Johnson excelled at forging the deals needed to move legislation through Congress, and under his stewardship liberalism gained tremendous momentum. Over the next few months, Johnson adroitly used the nation's grief to great political advantage by cajoling Congress into enacting key pieces of Kennedy's legislative initiatives, including civil rights legislation, a tax cut, and federally funded public housing. Johnson also announced his own War on Poverty, creating an Office of Economic Opportunity that formed the Jobs Corps to teach inner-city youth vocational skills and created Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), a domestic Peace Corps

that sent privileged young adults to work on community projects in impoverished rural and urban areas.

Despite these legislative successes, Johnson knew that "for millions of Americans I was still illegitimate . . . a pretender to the throne," because he had not been elected president. Johnson saw the 1964 election as an opportunity to validate his presidency. His campaign, however, got off to a rocky start. LBJ expected to lose southern votes for having openly supported federal civil rights legislation. Alabama segregationist and former governor George Wallace's strong showing in a few northern Democratic primaries was unwelcome evidence that racism was strong in northern white working-class ethnic neighborhoods and some middle-class suburbs as well.

Racial controversy also rocked the Democratic Party's presidential nominating convention in Atlantic City when two separate delegations from Mississippi appeared. Disenfranchised blacks could not vote in Mississippi's official Democratic primary, so the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) had held a shadow primary to elect their own convention delegates. This delegation traveled to Atlantic City and challenged the all-white Democratic Party's claim to represent the state.

# Choices and Consequences

## IS SCHOOL PRAYER CONSTITUTIONAL?

In 1962 a group of parents in New York State challenged the constitutionality of the short nondenominational prayer that the state Board of Regents had adopted in 1951 for use in the public schools. The question was whether government-directed prayer violated the First Amendment clause that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." The Fourteenth Amendment made this clause applicable to state law.

### Choices

1 The prayer was constitutional because students were not required to recite it.

2 An officially composed prayer, regardless of its content, violated the First Amendment.

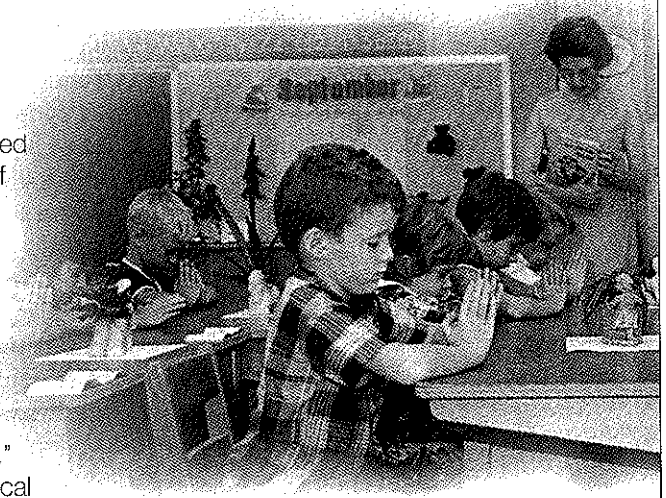
3 School prayer simply recognized the importance of religion in American society without establishing an official religion.

### Decision

In *Engel v. Vitale* (1962) the Supreme Court ruled 6 to 1 that state-directed school prayer was unconstitutional. Justice Hugo Black wrote the majority opinion, stating that the First Amendment prohibited "official prayers for any group of American people to recite as part of a religious program carried on by government."

### Consequences

The Warren Court received more mail opposing this case than any other. In 1963 the Court also banned reciting the Lord's Prayer and Bible-reading in public school, ruling that to remain truly neutral the government could not support "the tenets of one or all religions." Shared outrage over school prayer rulings helped forge a new political coalition between southern fundamentalist Protestants and northern orthodox Catholics, whose grassroots activism against liberalism contributed greatly to the conservative right's resurgence in the late 1960s. Subsequent court decisions in the 1980s and 1990s prohibited moments of silence for private prayer, minister-led prayers at high school graduation ceremonies, and student-led prayers at high school football games.



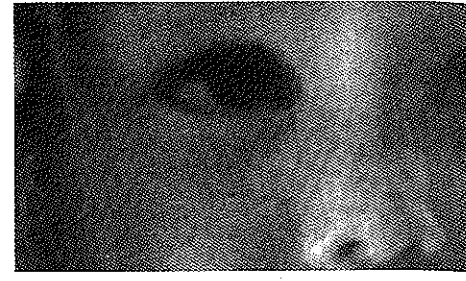
First-graders praying

### Continuing Controversies

*Does school prayer violate the First Amendment?*

Those who answer "yes" believe that the Founding Fathers included the establishment clause in the Constitution because the union of government and religion often leads to religiously based persecution of those not adhering to mainstream religious views. Freedom of religion requires a

completely secular government that neither advances nor inhibits religious beliefs. Many conservatives disagree. They argue that the Court's decisions violated their First Amendment right to exercise free speech and destroyed the spiritual heritage of the nation that stretched back to the Pilgrims.



### 27.3 Sequence of Stills from the Daisy Girl Campaign Ad, 1964

This Democratic campaign ad implied that Republican candidate Barry Goldwater would start a nuclear war if elected. The ad script included these directions: "Ominous male voice counts down launch sequence, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Close up of girl's face as camera progressively zooms in on her eye. Overlay an atomic explosion into the pupil of her eye."

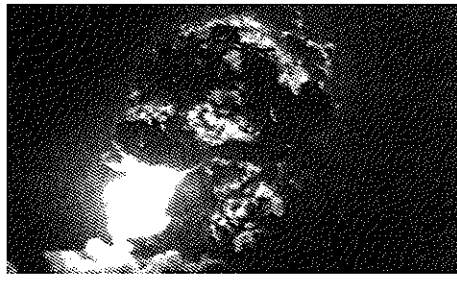
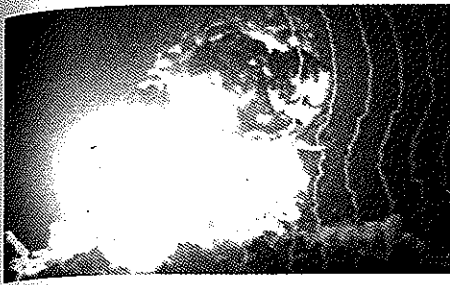
In deciding which delegation to seat as the official delegates from Mississippi, the convention's Credentials Committee heard gripping testimony from MFDP delegate Fannie Lou Hamer. Thanks to the live television feed covering the proceedings, Americans throughout the nation heard Hamer describe being beaten, losing her job, and receiving a \$9,000 water bill even though her house had no running water—all retribution for trying to register to vote. "Is this America, the land of the free and the home of the brave, where we are threatened daily because we want to live as decent human beings?" she asked before the cameras. Suddenly the networks broke away for an impromptu presidential news conference that Johnson had called to interrupt news coverage of Hamer's moving personal story. Johnson did not want the convention and his subsequent campaign to center on civil rights. To end the matter Johnson tried to broker a deal off-camera. When the MFDP rejected the offer of two delegate seats, the all-white Mississippi delegation took the floor.

In the election of 1964, the Democrat and Republican parties fielded candidates who offered starkly different visions of the role that government should play in American society. The Democrats selected Johnson, who spoke of creating a Great Society with social welfare reforms that would make the amenities of modern life—a decent standard of living, education, health care, clean water—available to all Americans. Like turn-of-the-century Populists and Progressives, and 1930s New Dealers, Johnson wanted to use the power of the federal government to reign in the wealthy and help economically disadvantaged Americans. Having begun his congressional career as an avid New Dealer in the 1930s, Johnson shared Franklin D. Roosevelt's desire to provide the deserving poor with a decent standard of living. Johnson, however, believed even more strongly than previous generations of liberal reformers in the ability of the government to improve

the quality of life in America. Under Johnson the federal government began combating pollution, supporting the arts, and planting trees and flowers along the nation's highways—a beautification project strongly endorsed by his wife, Lady Bird Johnson. Johnson aspired to do more than put food in people's bellies; he wanted to nurture their spirits as well.

Barry Goldwater, a conservative Republican senator from Arizona, offered a radically different view of what responsibilities the government should assume. Instead of more government Goldwater proposed dismantling most of the New Deal, including Social Security, and opposed federal civil rights laws because he saw them as the first step toward creating "a police state." "My aim is not to pass laws but to repeal them," he declared. Goldwater spoke for the radical right, staunch conservatives who felt that the government's interference in the economy and society did more harm than good. Goldwater's extreme conservative views, however, alarmed some prominent moderate Republicans who openly supported Johnson.

The Democrats astutely used Goldwater's most extreme pronouncements against him in the campaign, making the liberal Johnson look almost moderate in comparison. Amplifying a remark by Goldwater that NATO commanders should have the authority to use nuclear weapons, a Democratic television campaign ad pictured a little girl counting as she picked the petals off a daisy (27.3). When she reached nine the camera froze on the image of her uplifted face before dissolving into the scene of a countdown to a nuclear bomb explosion. As the mushroom cloud dissipated, the screen turned dark and these words appeared: "Vote for President Johnson on November 3. The stakes are too high for you to stay home." The ad provoked its own firestorm of controversy and only aired once. It succeeded, however, in planting the image of



VOTE FOR PRESIDENT JOHNSON  
ON NOVEMBER 3.

## “In Your Heart You Know He’s Right.”

Republican billboards

## “In Your Guts You Know He’s Nuts.”

Democratic bumper stickers

Dueling campaign slogans in the 1964 presidential election centered on  
Republican candidate Barry Goldwater

Goldwater as a dangerous extremist who might lead the nation into nuclear war.

Johnson won the election with over 61 percent of the popular vote, the largest percentage of any presidential candidate in American history. The Democrats also widened their control of Congress, further strengthening Johnson’s hand. Johnson knew that he had to strike immediately to enact his legislative agenda. “Hurry, boys, hurry,” he told his staff. “Get that legislation up to the hill and out. Eighteen months from now Landslide Lyndon will be Lame-Duck Lyndon.”

### The Great Society

Admiring the trees and landscaping along a national highway, reading a food label listing nutritional content in the supermarket, buying unleaded gas at a service station, and watching a documentary on the Public Broadcasting System (PBS): these are all experiences of modern life made possible by Johnson’s Great Society. Reflecting liberal faith in the power of the government to do good, the Great Society hoped to remove the causes of debilitating poverty by improving the nation’s educational system, providing health care to the aged and indigent, and creating a new cabinet-level position in

housing and urban affairs to oversee housing and economic relief to struggling cities. Johnson’s Great Society also included a new Department of Transportation to manage the federal funds pouring into highway construction and landscaping.

Johnson worked hard to create consensus for his liberal ideals. He offered conservative industrialists tax breaks in return for supporting his social welfare programs, arguing that his programs would create highly skilled workers who consumed more. “Doing something about poverty is economical in the long run,” he told them. From his long years in Congress, Johnson knew how to lobby individual legislators. To secure a needed vote, Johnson brought legislators to the White House and subjected them to “The Treatment,” a mixture of cajoling, horse-trading, and intimidation. One congressman recalled the 6-foot Johnson grabbing him by the lapels of his coat, pulling him close and holding his face inches away while he “talked and talked. I figured it was either getting drowned or joining.” Johnson succeeded in pushing through over 65 percent of his proposals, a level of success only surpassed by Franklin D. Roosevelt’s 80 percent legislative passage rate. Unable to stop the Great Society juggernaut, Republicans complained bitterly of “the three-B Congress—bullied, badgered, and brainwashed.”



- 1964** **Economic Opportunity Act** - created VISTA, a domestic version of the Peace Corps, and community-based antipoverty programs that residents designed and administered.
- Wilderness Act** - protected public lands from development to preserve their unspoiled state.
- 1965** **Social Security Act** - created Medicare, government health insurance for Americans over 65, and Medicaid, government health insurance for the poor.
- Department of Housing and Urban Development** - established a new Cabinet-level position to administer Great Society legislation intended to clear slums and build new public housing.
- Elementary and Secondary Education Act** - allocated \$1 billion to improve education for impoverished children.
- Higher Education Act** - created federal scholarships and loans for students in need.
- Immigration Act** - eliminated national quotas, set new guidelines privileging family unification and desirable occupational skills.
- Highway Beautification Act** - provided funds for landscaping along nation's highways.
- Motor Vehicle Air Pollution Control Act** - set first federal standards for motor vehicle emissions.
- 1966** **The Department of Transportation** - established a new Cabinet-level position to administer federal funds to improve highways and urban mass transit.
- Fair Packaging and Labeling Act** - required manufacturers to label number of servings and nutritional information on food packages.
- 1967** **Public Broadcasting Act** - created public television and radio stations dedicated to educational programming.

#### 27.4 Key Great Society Legislative Achievements

The Great Society built on liberal legislation initiated during the Progressive Era and New Deal to give the federal government an expanded role in American society.

After pushing first for federal aid to schools, Johnson turned to providing health care to senior citizens and the poor. Facing strong opposition from health insurance companies and medical professionals to government-provided health care, Johnson compromised. Medicare, government-funded health insurance for the elderly, reimbursed doctors and hospitals whatever they charged senior citizens instead of establishing government rates.

Johnson also agreed to let the states, not the federal government, run Medicaid, which provided health services to the poor.

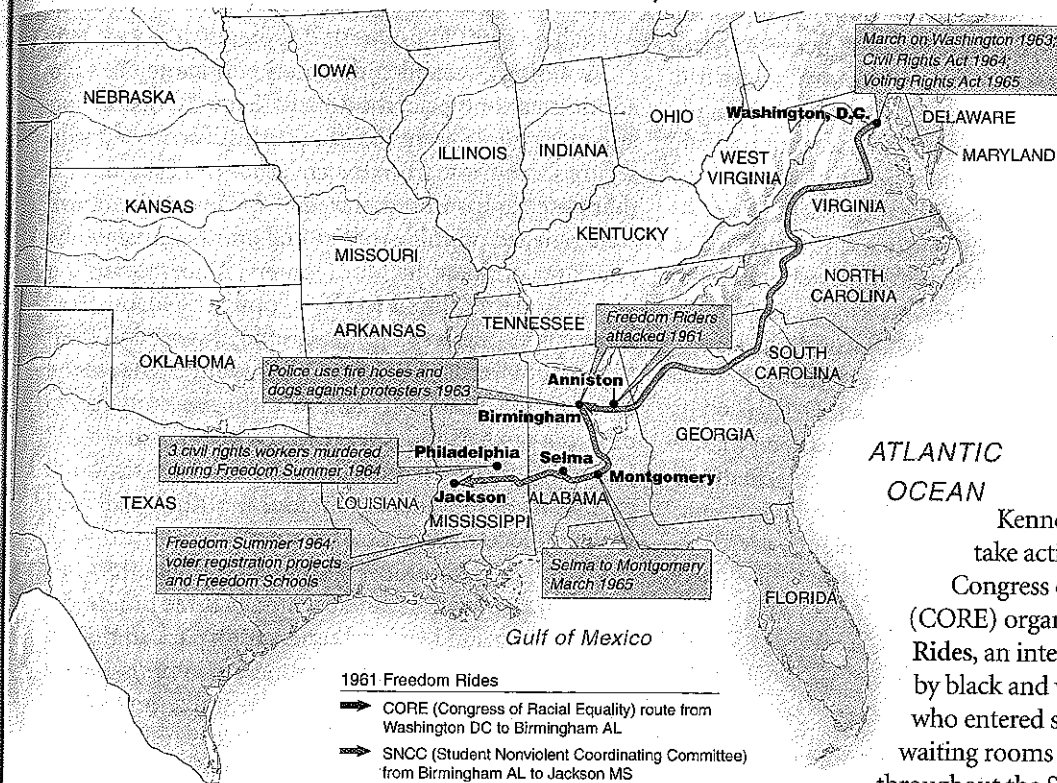
In creating the Great Society, Johnson wanted to restore America's identity as the land of opportunity for immigrants. The Immigration Act of 1965 eliminated the quota system established in the 1920s that set stringent caps on immigration from southern and eastern Europe and barred all Asian immigration (see Chapter 21). In the first great wave of immigration since the 1910s, unprecedented numbers of Koreans, Chinese, Filipinos, and Vietnamese migrated to the United States over the next thirty years. Whether immigration benefited or hurt the nation once again became a topic on which Americans offered competing visions (see Chapter 29).

By detailing the destructive impact of pesticides, Rachel Carson's best-selling book *Silent Spring* (1962) helped create a politically favorable climate for the environmental regulation that Johnson proposed. *Silent Spring* vividly detailed the destructive impact of pesticides on native bird populations, provoking general alarm over the possibility of a future silent spring when no bird songs would be heard. Johnson noted that Americans had always been proud of "America the beautiful," but the reality of polluted air, disappearing forests, and filthy rivers had already tarnished this image. The air in some major cities was so bad that motorists had to use their headlights after noon. The pronouncement that Lake Erie was "dead" and the sight of oil slicks on the Cuyahoga River in Cleveland burning for eight days after a man tossed a lit cigar into the water underscored the seriousness of environmental deterioration. These ecological catastrophes helped spawn an exploding grassroots environmental movement that included Greenpeace, a radical direct-action group, and the Sierra Club, a long-standing conservation society. Responding to environmental activism and growing middle-class concerns, Congress enacted a slew of bipartisan environmental measures that required pollution controls on cars and established national standards for acceptable air and water pollution. Johnson also created federally protected wilderness areas to safeguard endangered domestic species at risk of extinction, such as the whooping crane. *The Great Society* chart (27.4) contains a list of Johnson's most significant pieces of legislation.

# Nonviolence Triumphant: The Civil Rights Movement, 1960–1965



Kennedy's and Johnson's strong civil rights agendas came in response to a series of carefully planned grassroots protests against segregation and disenfranchisement in Alabama and Mississippi. These highly visible demonstrations put many civil rights workers in peril, and civil rights leaders hoped to win support from white liberals and moderates nationally by showing them the face of southern segregationists' resistance. Putting increased pressure on the federal government to act, the Civil Rights Movement successfully brought an end to legalized segregation and disenfranchisement by 1965.



## Kennedy and the Freedom Riders

Inspired by Kennedy's pronouncement during his inaugural address that "the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans," civil rights leaders expected the new president to aggressively seek an end to Jim Crow. Kennedy, however, adopted a cautious stance, and like his predecessors, remained silent on civil rights. The movement would have to compel the new president to act.

The immediate issue centered on the enforcement of recent Supreme Court rulings that desegregated bus terminals serving interstate travelers. Faced with

## ATLANTIC OCEAN

Kennedy's reluctance to take action, the interracial Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) organized the Freedom Rides, an interstate bus journey by black and white activists who entered segregated bus waiting rooms together throughout the South. "We felt

we could count on the racists of the South to create a crisis so that the federal government would be compelled to enforce the law," the African American CORE leader James Farmer recalled.

The Freedom Rides began when a group of thirteen whites and blacks (including Farmer and John Lewis, a veteran of the 1960 Nashville sit-ins) boarded an interstate bus on May 4, 1961, in Washington, D.C., headed for the Deep South. Expecting the worst several riders left sealed letters for their families to open if they were killed. The map of "Civil Rights Milestones, 1961–1965" (27.5) traces their route. After a smooth ride through the upper South, in Atlanta the Freedom Riders decided to take two separate buses into the heart of the

rigidly segregated Deep South. When the first bus carrying Freedom Riders entered the Anniston, Alabama, bus depot, a waiting mob pelted the bus with stones and slashed its tires. The bus driver drove away without stopping, pursued by fifty cars carrying vigilantes. When a flat tire forced the driver to stop along a deserted country road, a firebomb thrown at the bus forced the Freedom Riders into the waiting gauntlet of sticks and crowbars. State troopers arrived in time to save the lives of the traumatized Freedom Riders, two of whom sit stunned on the ground in this photo (27.6) of the bus burning. Meanwhile the second bus arrived in Birmingham, where a large group of Ku Klux Klansmen savagely beat white Freedom Rider James Peck, a forty-seven-year-old labor and peace activist, when he entered a white-only waiting room with a black colleague. "When you go somewhere looking for trouble, you usually find it," the governor of Alabama remarked unsympathetically.

A photo of Klan members beating Peck accompanied the front-page story in the *New York Times* that informed President Kennedy about the organized attacks on the Freedom Riders. Still dealing with the fallout from the Bay of Pigs invasion that had ended in disaster four weeks earlier and preparing for a summit with Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev (see Chapter 25), Kennedy urged the Freedom Riders to call off the rest of their scheduled journey. Instead members of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the

student-run civil rights group founded in 1960 during the sit-ins (see Chapter 25), rushed to Birmingham to ride alongside John Lewis, a founding member of SNCC, taking the place of riders unable or unwilling to continue.

**"We can't let them stop us with violence. If we do, the movement is dead,"**

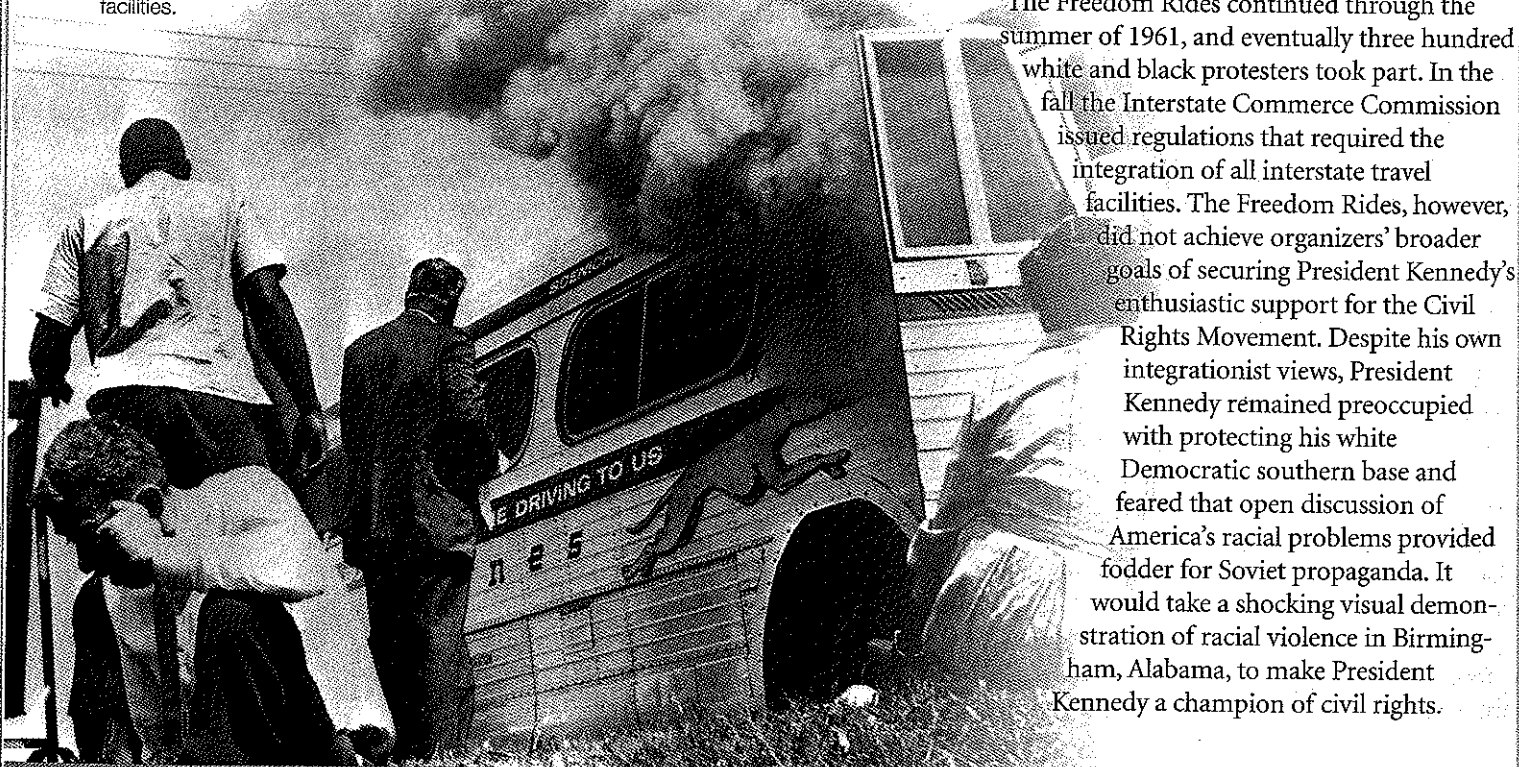
SNCC leader DIANE NASH upon resuming the Freedom Rides, 1961

Avoiding a violent confrontation became the administration's priority. Robert Kennedy, the attorney general in his brother's administration, secured a promise from the governor of Alabama that state troops would protect the riders. When the state reneged on this promise and another savage attack occurred at the Montgomery, Alabama bus depot, Robert Kennedy sent six hundred federal marshals to protect the riders as they traveled to the Mississippi border. Rather than allowing vigilantes to attack the riders, Mississippi authorities took a different tack. As the riders filed off the bus in Jackson, police escorted them into waiting patrol cars. Most of the riders spent four months in jail for violating local segregation laws.

The Freedom Rides continued through the summer of 1961, and eventually three hundred white and black protesters took part. In the fall the Interstate Commerce Commission issued regulations that required the integration of all interstate travel facilities. The Freedom Rides, however, did not achieve organizers' broader goals of securing President Kennedy's enthusiastic support for the Civil Rights Movement. Despite his own integrationist views, President Kennedy remained preoccupied with protecting his white Democratic southern base and feared that open discussion of America's racial problems provided fodder for Soviet propaganda. It would take a shocking visual demonstration of racial violence in Birmingham, Alabama, to make President Kennedy a champion of civil rights.

**27.6 Freedom Riders Attacked in Anniston, Alabama, 1961**

Traumatized civil rights activists sit on the ground after a mob firebombed the bus the Freedom Riders were riding to protest the continued segregation of interstate bus facilities.



Who made key choices that affected the course and outcome of the Freedom Rides?

## Birmingham, 1963

In 1963 the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Martin Luther King Jr.'s church-based civil rights organization, unfurled a carefully coordinated campaign to desegregate Birmingham, perhaps the most segregated city in the nation. SCLC's goals went beyond desegregating lunch counters or drinking fountains. "We were trying to launch a systematic, wholehearted battle against segregation that would set the pace for the nation," explained the Birmingham-based SCLC leader Fred Shuttlesworth. The city's volatile police chief Bull Connor made the city an especially dangerous place to launch such a protest. SCLC accurately predicted that they would gain the attention of the president once the world saw Connor's police force attacking nonviolent demonstrators with high-power water hoses and police dogs. Television was vital to this campaign: The images of violence pouring into living rooms would make it impossible for moderate white Americans to ignore the nation's racial problems.

In April 1963 King and the SCLC initiated their Birmingham campaign with economic boycotts and a limited number of sit-ins. Press coverage increased dramatically when King and Shuttlesworth led a march in defiance of a state injunction that prohibited public demonstrations. Police immediately arrested and jailed the pair. King purposefully timed his arrest to occur on Good Friday, the day that Jesus carried his cross to the site of his crucifixion, using religious symbolism to underscore the immorality of racial persecution.

As King sat in solitary confinement, the *Birmingham News* published an open letter to him from a group of white liberal southern clergymen who criticized the demonstrations as "unwise and untimely" for trying to intentionally provoke hard-core segregationists. The opinion of liberal and moderate southern whites mattered to King. The nonviolent strategy depended on swaying those who may have traditionally supported segregation but were not die-hard racists. Visitors to King smuggled out his response, written on the margins of newspapers and scraps of toilet paper during his eight-day jail stay. King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" did not influence the course of events in Birmingham (by the time it was published, the protests had ended), but the text was one of King's most eloquent statements on the dehumanizing aspects of racial discrimination. "For years now I have heard the

word 'Wait!' It rings in the ear of every Negro with piercing familiarity. This 'Wait' has almost always meant 'Never,'" King wrote. How would whites feel about sleeping in their cars when traveling because "no motel will accept you," telling their children that they could not go to the segregated amusement parks advertised on television, and "living constantly on tiptoe stance, never quite knowing what to expect next"? These were the reasons, King explained, "why we find it difficult to wait."

Hoping to put a stop to downtown demonstrations that were keeping shoppers away and worried that the federal government might intervene, moderate white business owners initiated secret talks with SCLC leaders without Police Chief Connor's knowledge. To put increased pressure on the business owners, SCLC went ahead with a series of planned marches despite lukewarm support from Birmingham churches and adults. To fill the ranks Jim Bevel, another veteran of the Nashville sit-ins, proposed turning Birmingham into a "children's crusade" by recruiting from the city's high schools and, if necessary, middle and elementary schools. "A boy from high school has the same effect in terms of being in jail, in terms of putting pressure on the city, as his father, and yet there's no economic threat to the family, because the father is still on the job," Bevel argued convincingly.

On May 3, 1963, the second day of the protests, Carolyn McKinstry, like many others, left her high school without telling her parents that she was joining the demonstrations. When the teenagers arrived downtown, Connor was waiting with water hoses and police dogs. A shocked nation viewed television and newspaper images of firefighters directing torrents of water at McKinstry and her friends and police dogs biting protesters. (See *Images as History: Birmingham, 1963*, page 822.)

As the SCLC had hoped, northerners reacted with outrage to this blatant display of police brutality, while moderates in the South worried that Connor's heavy-handed tactics would invite more federal scrutiny of southern politics and racial customs. The Civil Rights Movement scored a major victory in Birmingham. Besides winning a commitment to desegregate lunch counters and schools as well as the promise of jobs, the protests renewed President Kennedy's interest in civil rights. Concerned about losing momentum in the Cold War, Kennedy asked the nation: "Are we to say to the world—and much more importantly to each other—that this is the land of the free, except for the Negroes . . . ?"

# Images as History

BIRMINGHAM, 1963

In Birmingham civil rights activists developed a strategy that included using television and news photos to their advantage. The Civil Rights Movement succeeded in getting exactly the images the activists wanted in 1963 when the Birmingham police chief Bull Connor unleashed extreme violence against protesters in the downtown area. How important was

the press to the success of the Birmingham campaign? Why did the public react so strongly to these photos?

As a white child in rural Alabama, *Life* photo-journalist Charles Moore had accepted segregation “as the way things were.” Birmingham proved a crucial turning point in his own evolving social consciousness. “My emotional involvement in the story grew

“The water hoses hurt a lot,” recalled Carolyn McKinstry, the high school sophomore girl pictured here.

Three teenage protesters clung to a doorway as water whipped their bodies, an ordeal that Moore immortalized in this iconic photograph of the Birmingham protests.



Fire Hoses, Birmingham, 1963

McKinstry remained “proud of what I had done,” but afterwards she questioned “the tactics that they [SCLC] were using because I think I felt that you could actually be hurt.”

Moore avoided taking photos that might send a mixed message to the public. He took no pictures of students, only partly schooled in nonviolent techniques, who threw pieces of concrete at the police—even after a slab hit him and injured some tendons.

Does knowing more about McKinstry and Moore alter this photograph's meaning?

as I saw what was happening," he noted. On the afternoon of May 3, 1963, Moore arrived in downtown Birmingham just as firefighters turned their high-pressure hoses and police dogs on teenage demonstrators. When Moore's photos appeared in *Life*, a magazine read by half of American adults in the sixties, his images, along with television coverage of

the mayhem, helped transform Birmingham from a local crisis into an event that prompted national soul-searching about the state of democracy in America. Drawing inspiration from these images, civil rights activists initiated one thousand demonstrations in nearly one hundred cities throughout the South in subsequent months.

Movement leaders wanted liberal and moderate Americans to blame the police for escalating the violence in Birmingham, and Moore's pictures left little room for an alternative explanation.

The police arrested Moore when he refused to stop taking pictures. "It was scary to be a victim" of abusive police, Moore recalled, an experience that strengthened his sense of solidarity with the protesters.



"The sight of snarling dogs, and the possibility of dogs ripping flesh, was revolting to me," Moore recalled.

Moore sided with the protesters, but the story that accompanied his photos blamed extremists on both sides for the melee. "[The pictures] are frightening because of the brutal methods being used by white policemen in Birmingham, Ala. against Negro demonstrators. They are frightening because the Negro strategy of 'nonviolent direct action' invites that very brutality—and welcomes it as a way to promote the Negroes' cause, which, under the law, is right," *Life* told readers.

**Police Dogs, Birmingham, 1963**

In his address Kennedy proposed a civil rights act that would outlaw racially segregated public facilities nationwide. The white supremacist response came immediately. The next day a Klansman shot and killed Medgar Evers, the head of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in Mississippi, as Evers stood in the driveway of his Jackson home. Evers's killing was the first, but not the last, politically motivated assassination of a major political figure of the sixties.

## March on Washington

Birmingham had given the civil rights cause national and international visibility, and Evers's shocking assassination reinforced Kennedy's determination to enact a sweeping civil rights bill. Southern Democratic senators were equally prepared to filibuster to prevent its passage. Intent on winning this legislative battle, King and other civil rights leaders decided to organize the **March on Washington**,

a massive demonstration in the nation's capital that would demand passage of a federal civil rights act. Adopting the slogan, "Jobs and Freedom," organizers underscored the link between greater economic opportunity and civic equality. The organizing committee included African American labor leader A. Philip Randolph, founder of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Randolph had planned his own March on Washington in 1941, but he cancelled it when President Franklin D. Roosevelt agreed to guarantee fair protection at the workplace during World War II (see Chapter 23).

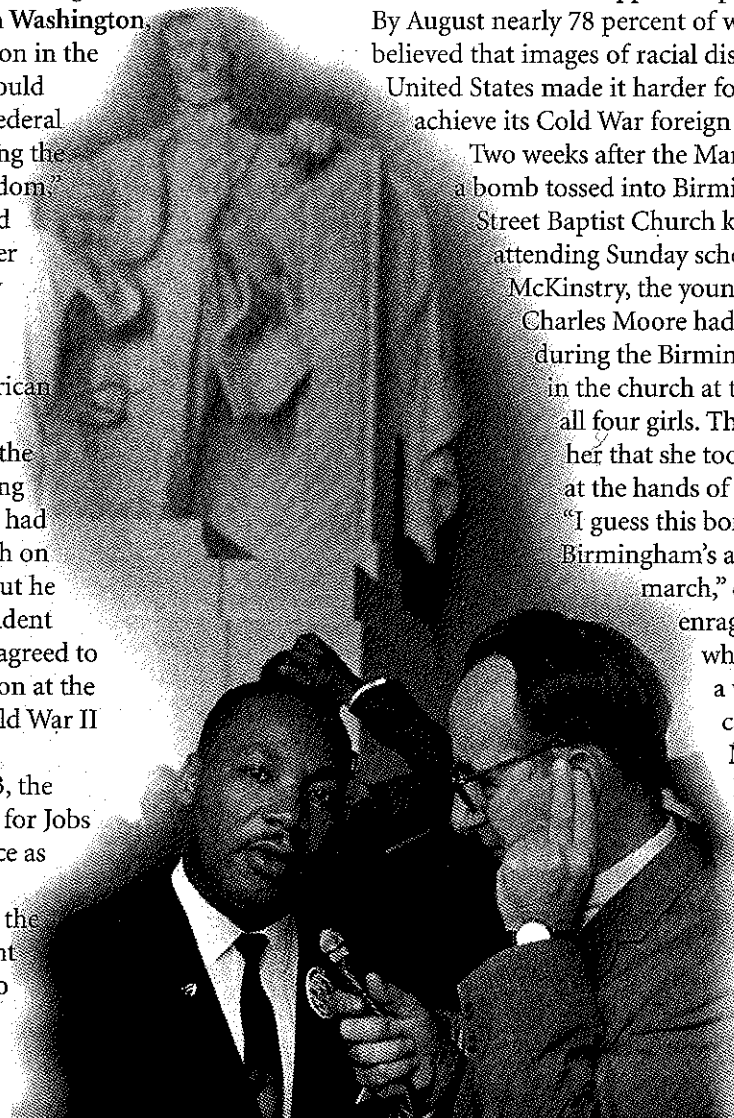
On August 28, 1963, the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom took place as more than 200,000 marchers walked from the Washington Monument to Lincoln Memorial to listen to a three-hour program of music and

speeches, forming the nation's largest political protest to date. This photo (27.7) of Martin Luther King Jr. talking to a reporter reveals why organizers chose to put their speakers' platform before the Lincoln Memorial. On the hundredth anniversary of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, the larger-than-life statue of President Abraham Lincoln in the background offered a potent reminder of how long African Americans had waited for equal rights. "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character," declared King in the day's most memorable speech.

The march received the national media's full attention. It was also among the first events that television viewers throughout the world could watch live, thanks to a newly launched communications satellite. From Cairo to Amsterdam people participated in sympathy marches before American embassies and sent supportive petitions to Kennedy. By August nearly 78 percent of white Americans believed that images of racial discrimination in the United States made it harder for the nation to achieve its Cold War foreign policy goals.

Two weeks after the March on Washington, a bomb tossed into Birmingham's Sixteenth Street Baptist Church killed four little girls attending Sunday school. Carolyn McKinstry, the young woman that Charles Moore had photographed during the Birmingham protests, was in the church at the time, a friend to all four girls. The attack convinced her that she too would one day die at the hands of white supremacists. "I guess this bombing is Birmingham's answer to the march," exclaimed an

enraged Anne Moody, who was working on a voter registration campaign in Mississippi. President Kennedy's assassination two months later only underscored her growing conviction that "nonviolence is through."



**27.7 March on Washington, 1963**  
Martin Luther King Jr. speaks to a reporter while standing inside the Lincoln Memorial to underscore that one hundred years after Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation blacks were still second-class citizens in the segregated South.

What symbolism and rhetoric connected the 1963 March on Washington to the past and future?

## Freedom Summer

With SCLC's Birmingham campaign to desegregate public facilities successfully concluded, the spotlight turned to Mississippi. Freedom Summer, a multi-pronged attack on white supremacy in Mississippi during the summer of 1964, was a turning point in the Civil Rights Movement. It forced the federal government to deepen its commitment to equal rights, laid bare the rising tensions within the Civil Rights Movement, and trained a new generation of student activists who would soon spearhead new leftist and feminist movements.

In the summer of 1964, the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO) coordinated the efforts of several civil rights groups to launch Freedom Summer, including SNCC and CORE. With ambivalence SNCC recruited large numbers of northern whites to work on the voter registration projects. SNCC had reluctantly concluded that the national media, which had started to ignore blacks-only protests, would pay attention to Freedom Summer only if white students were involved. SNCC, CORE, and COFO hoped that the media spotlight would offer Freedom Summer workers some protection from racial violence, protection that the federal government was unwilling to give. This calculation proved incorrect.




**“At night, people should not sit in their rooms without drawn shades.”**

Rule from CORE security handbook meant to protect Freedom Summer workers from sniper attacks

On the first day of Freedom Summer, three CORE workers went missing in Mississippi. Twenty-four-year-old Michael Schwerner was a white Jewish social worker from Manhattan who, one coworker recalled, “had been deeply affected by the photographs of Negroes sprawling under the dogs and fire hoses” in Birmingham. On June 21, 1964, Schwerner went with James Chaney, a twenty-one-year-old Mississippi black activist, and twenty-year-old Andrew Goodman, another white Jewish volunteer from New York, to inspect a church that the Ku Klux Klan had burned to the ground to stop CORE from opening a school there. On the return home they passed near Philadelphia, Mississippi, where local


# MISSING CALL FBI

THE FBI IS SEEKING INFORMATION CONCERNING THE DISAPPEARANCE AT PHILADELPHIA, MISSISSIPPI, OF THESE THREE INDIVIDUALS ON JUNE 21, 1964. EXTENSIVE INVESTIGATION IS BEING CONDUCTED TO LOCATE GOODMAN, CHANEY, AND SCHWERNER WHO ARE DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS:

<b>ANDREW GOODMAN</b>	<b>JAMES EARL CHANEY</b>	<b>MICHAEL HENRY SCHWERNER</b>
		

RACE: White	Race: Negro	Race: White
SEX: Male	Sex: Male	Sex: Male
DOB: November 21, 1942	DOB: May 23, 1943	DOB: November 8, 1939
POB: New York City	POB: Meridian, Mississippi	POB: New York City
AGE: 22 years	Age: 21 years	Age: 24 years
HEIGHT: 5'11"	Height: 5'7"	Height: 5'10" to 5'11"
WEIGHT: 150 pounds	Weight: 138 to 140 pounds	Weight: 170 to 180 pounds
HAIR: Dark brown, wavy	Hair: Black	Hair: Brown
EYES: Brown	Eyes: Brown	Eyes: Light blue
TEETH:	Good, none missing	
SCARS AND MARKS:	1 inch cut scar 2 inches above left ear	Pink mark scar at forehead, right ear on left side of nose, approximately 1/2 inch above right eye

SHOULD YOU HAVE OR IN THE FUTURE RECEIVE ANY INFORMATION CONCERNING THE WHEREABOUTS OF THESE INDIVIDUALS, YOU ARE REQUESTED TO NOTIFY ME OR THE NEAREST OFFICE OF THE FBI. TELEPHONE NUMBER IS LISTED BELOW.

  
 DIRECTOR  
 FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
 UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
 WASHINGTON, D. C. 20535  
 TELEPHONE, NATIONAL 9-7117

June 29, 1964

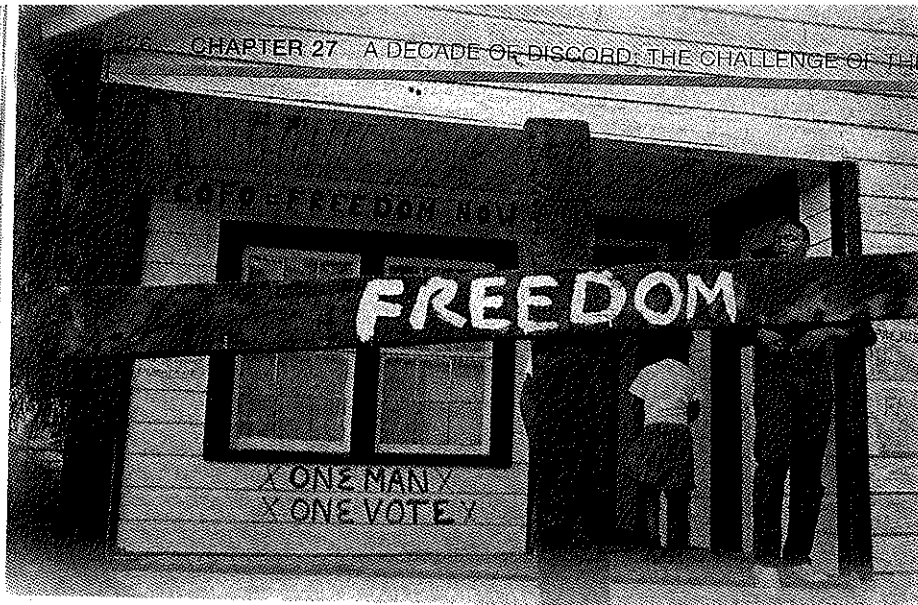
### 27.8 FBI Poster of Three Slain Freedom Summer Civil Rights Workers, 1964

The murder of these three CORE workers hardened the resolve of many Freedom Summer volunteers to continue their work registering blacks to vote, but some blacks resented that the nation seemed to care only if white activists disappeared.

sheriff (and Klansman) Cecile Price recognized Schwerner's car and license plate from a circular the governor's office had issued concerning "outside agitators." Price arrested the trio on charges of speeding then alerted fellow Klansmen to join him for an ambush after he released the three men from jail in the middle of the night.

The trio's disappearance created national headlines, forcing the FBI to launch a massive manhunt across five states to find them. The FBI posted this circular (27.8) seeking information about the men's whereabouts, haunting images that conveyed more than the dangers of vigilante violence. Putting her own grief aside, Schwerner's wife Rita, herself a dedicated CORE field worker, publicly voiced her suspicion that "if Mr. Chaney, who is a native Mississippian, had been alone at the time of the disappearance, . . . this case, like so many others that have come before it, . . . would have gone completely unnoticed." As if to prove her point, sailors sent to comb through Mississippi swamps for the bodies of the three men (now assumed to be dead) discovered the corpses of three lynched black men whose previous disappearances authorities had ignored.





### 27.9 COFO Freedom School, 1964

Refusing to be intimidated when the Ku Klux Klan burned a cross in front of their Freedom School, Freedom Summer workers painted "freedom" on the blackened wood.

As the FBI investigation unfolded, Freedom Summer continued. Nearly one thousand black and white activists fanned out throughout Mississippi to register blacks in rural areas. Hoping to recruit and train a new generation of student leaders, SNCC and COFO founded summer Freedom Schools that taught high school students African American history to build pride in the long legacy of black accomplishment and gave remedial instruction in basic subjects to remedy their deficient public education. In a state with no mandatory school laws, black children often spent more time in the cotton fields than in the classroom. COFO volunteers refused to be intimidated when the Klan left a burning cross in front of a Freedom School in the Mississippi Delta (27.9). Writing their own counter-message of "Freedom" on the cross, Freedom Summer workers openly asserted that "COFO=Freedom Now" to underscore that it would take determined activism to meet their goals of "One Man, One Vote."

In the midst of Freedom Summer, Congress passed the **Civil Rights Act of 1964**, which banned segregation in businesses and places open to the public (such as restaurants and public schools) and prohibited discrimination in employment on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, or sex. This landmark legislation, the most sweeping civil rights law since Reconstruction, came about because thousands of individuals risked arrest, murder, or unemployment to participate in boycotts, sit-ins, and street demonstrations in towns and cities throughout the South. Their activism went unnoticed in the national press, which focused mostly on a few dramatic moments such as the disappearance of Schwerner, Chaney, and Goodman.

A month after the Civil Rights Act's passage, after six weeks of searching, the FBI paid \$30,000 to an

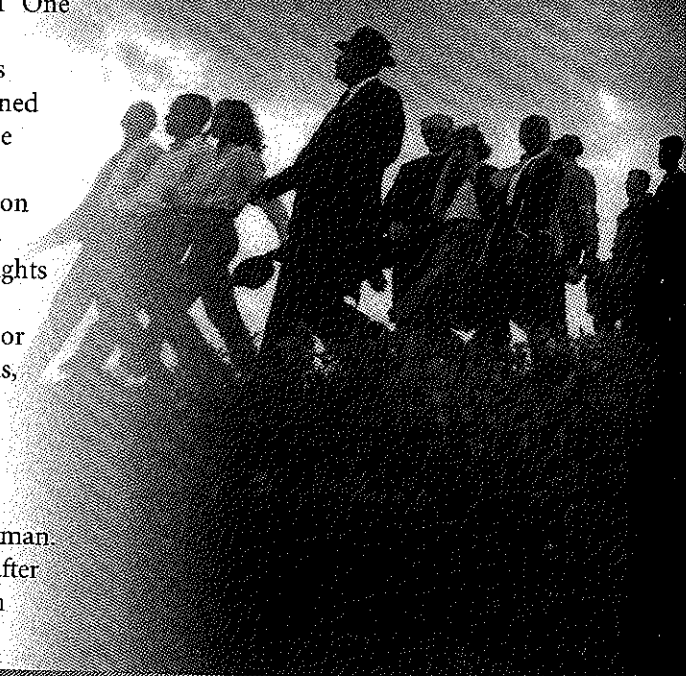
informant who helped officers locate the three men's bodies buried in an earthen dam. All three had been shot in the head, and Chaney's shattered bones attested to the savage beating he had received. No one was ever convicted of the murders, although Price and nine others were found guilty on federal conspiracy charges in 1967 and served a few years in jail.

Like Kennedy, Johnson knew that the world was watching events unfold in Mississippi. Passage of the Civil Rights Act was front-page news overseas, and world leaders rushed to congratulate Johnson. Winning the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize, King was now an international figure who inspired social justice activists worldwide.

Passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act was a great victory for the Civil Rights Movement, but the strain of combat-like conditions during Freedom Summer took its toll. Becoming increasingly fearful some SNCC volunteers began to arm themselves for self-defense. Many blacks resented the media attention given to white activists. Meanwhile female civil rights workers, black and white, increasingly objected to males' expectations that they would clean and cook for them. The stage was set for a fracturing within the activist community.

## Selma and the Voting Rights Act of 1965

The nonviolent Civil Rights Movement registered one more significant victory before that fracturing occurred, using a stand-off in Selma, Alabama, to secure President Johnson's open support for federal



What pivotal role did college-age students play in Freedom Summer?

legislation guaranteeing blacks the right to vote. On Sunday March 7, 1965, a day soon known as "Bloody Sunday," about six hundred marchers left the small town of Selma, Alabama, and began walking across the Edmund Pettis Bridge that spanned the Alabama River. They intended to march 50 miles to Montgomery, the state capitol, to demand voting rights. At the other end of the bridge, a line of county troopers armed with clubs and tear gas waited for them. When the marchers knelt in prayer at the end of the bridge, Sheriff Jim Clark ordered the troopers to attack as white spectators cheered.

Photographers and television crews witnessed the violent attack in Selma. That evening ABC interrupted the film *Judgment at Nuremberg*, a dramatized account of the war crimes trials that convicted Nazi leaders of crimes against humanity, to show news footage of the Bloody Sunday assault. The juxtaposition between the film's portrayal of the Holocaust and events in Selma haunted many viewers. Late that evening the door opened to the chapel in Selma that served as the marchers' headquarters. "We have seen on the television screen the violence that took place today, and we're here to share it with you," announced a group of blacks and whites from New Jersey who had chartered a plane to arrive that night.

On Monday, March 15, 1965, President Johnson, who had spoken privately with King before Selma about how to win public support for voting rights legislation, announced in a televised address that he was sending a federal voting rights act to Congress. "It's not just Negroes, but really all of us, who

**"I asked my mother and father for my birthday present to become registered voters."**

Eight-year-old SHEYANN WEBB, youngest member of the first Selma to Montgomery march.

must overcome the crippling legacy of bigotry and injustice," Johnson told the nation. "And we shall overcome," he concluded, quoting the anthem of the Civil Rights Movement.

A triumphant march from Selma began the following Sunday, March 21, 1965, a moment captured by James Karales's stirring photograph for *Look* magazine (27.10). The photograph accompanied an article on the decision of northern white ministers to join the march in Selma, reaffirming the mainstream media focus on the role of whites in the Civil Rights Movement. When the marchers arrived in Montgomery five days later, King addressed the crowd on the steps of the state capitol building, looking down at the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church where he had helped initiate the Montgomery Bus Boycott ten years earlier (see Chapter 25). "I know you are asking today, 'How long will it take?' . . . How long? Not long, because no lie can live forever," King said hopefully. Five months later Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965, legislation that prohibited literacy tests and poll taxes, plus authorized the use of federal registrars to register voters if states failed to respect the Fifteenth Amendment. Within a year over nine thousand blacks had registered in Dallas County, Alabama, enough to block Jim Clark's reelection as sheriff.

**27.10** March from Selma to Montgomery, March 21-25, 1965  
Storm clouds hovered as marchers walked along the rural highway that linked Selma to Montgomery, creating a poetic image that captured their resolve to keep moving forward, no matter what the obstacle.



How did the media, public, and government respond to events in Selma?

# The Fractured Left



Conservative Republicans and Democrats never liked the antipoverty legislative initiatives of Kennedy and Johnson, while die-hard segregationists adamantly opposed the integrationist goals of nonviolent civil rights leader like King. The most potent attacks on these progressive visions, however, came from the left where competing visions proliferated. By the mid-sixties disaffected student activists increasingly dismissed the Great Society as too cautious and protested openly against “Johnson’s War” in Vietnam, while others renounced all ties to mainstream culture. Within the Civil Rights Movement, militancy replaced nonviolence as the dominant ethos. Meanwhile many white women left the Civil Rights Movement to pursue the goal of women’s liberation.

## The New Left and the Counterculture

The baby boom generation came of age in the sixties. By 1968 over half of the American population was under the age of twenty-five. By then a core of white middle-class college students had created the New Left, a small, but highly visible, coalition of left-leaning student-based organizations that attacked racial discrimination, poverty, and the war in Vietnam.

Al Haber formed Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in 1960 at the University of Michigan, believing “that if any really radical liberal force is going to develop in America, it is going to come from the colleges and the young.” In 1962 Tom Hayden, a white activist in the Civil Rights Movement, penned the group’s manifesto, “The Port Huron Statement.” Hayden urged his peers to act, noting “we are people of this generation, bred in at least modest comfort, housed now in universities, looking uncomfortably to the world we inherit.”

Although the majority of college-age Americans did not attend university, their ranks were increasing. By 1965 nearly 6.5 million students attended colleges or universities, compared with 2.2 million in 1950. Strict rules governed student behavior. Students lived in single-sex dormitories, had to obey curfews each evening and abide by dress codes that prohibited female students from wearing pants. The University of California, Berkeley, went one step further by forbidding all political debate or discussion on campus, a rule in place since the 1930s to prevent communist student groups from recruiting.

For years students had used a small strip just outside the campus main gate to hand out political pamphlets or give speeches. In the fall of 1964, the

university administration shut this down as well, provoking the Free Speech Movement, a mass student protest that accused the University of California of denying students the right to freedom of speech. Protest leader Mario Savio, who had just returned from Freedom Summer, pointed out that “the two battlefields [in Mississippi and Berkeley] may seem quite different to some observers, but this is not the case. The same rights are at stake in both places—the right to participate as citizens in a democratic society.” Aided greatly by sympathetic television coverage, the Free Speech Movement succeeded after four months of demonstrations and inspired left-leaning students on other university campuses. Most college students never joined any organized protests, but in response to those who did universities eliminated codes of conduct, introduced more elective courses into curriculums, and established black and women’s studies.

After 1964 local SDS chapters took the lead in organizing antiwar demonstrations on university campuses that included teach-ins and draft-card burnings (see Chapter 26). SDS at first embraced the liberal vision of using representative government to implement incremental reforms, but in the course of its antiwar protests the group became more radical. By 1968 New Left leaders expressed open admiration for Marxist-inspired communist revolutionaries like the Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh and Ernesto “Che” Guevara, a colleague of Cuban dictator Fidel Castro trying to foster revolution in Bolivia and the Congo. When student-led protests roiled Europe and South America in 1968, the American New Left assumed they were part of a global youth rebellion that would ultimately reshape the world.

Once the novelty of student demonstrations wore off, getting television reporters to cover their protest

required more outlandish theatrics, images that increasingly radicalized student leaders eagerly provided. Press scrutiny sometimes backfired, however. Nightly news reports of demonstrators hurling bricks and expletives frightened many moderates, who increasingly viewed the New Left as unpatriotic and dangerous.

The challenge to the liberal vision went beyond the New Left. An emerging counterculture, the heir to the Beat cultural ethos of the 1950s (see Chapter 25), emphasized rejecting middle-class lifestyles more than agitating for political change. Hippies, youthful social rebels who renounced material acquisition and used drugs to explore their inner spiritual selves, refused to dedicate their lives to acquiring the same suburban home, car, and corporate job as their parents. The hippie utopian vision embraced peace, pleasure, sexual liberation, and sharing of material resources., an ethos captured in this 1968 photograph (27.11) of a hippie gathering by Robert Altman (who became a renowned filmmaker).

Drugs, especially marijuana and lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), formed an essential part of the counterculture's challenge to the established values of middle-class society. Rock music exposed many young people to these counterculture ideals. Bob Dylan, a folk troubadour whose songs had inspired civil rights protesters, transformed himself into a

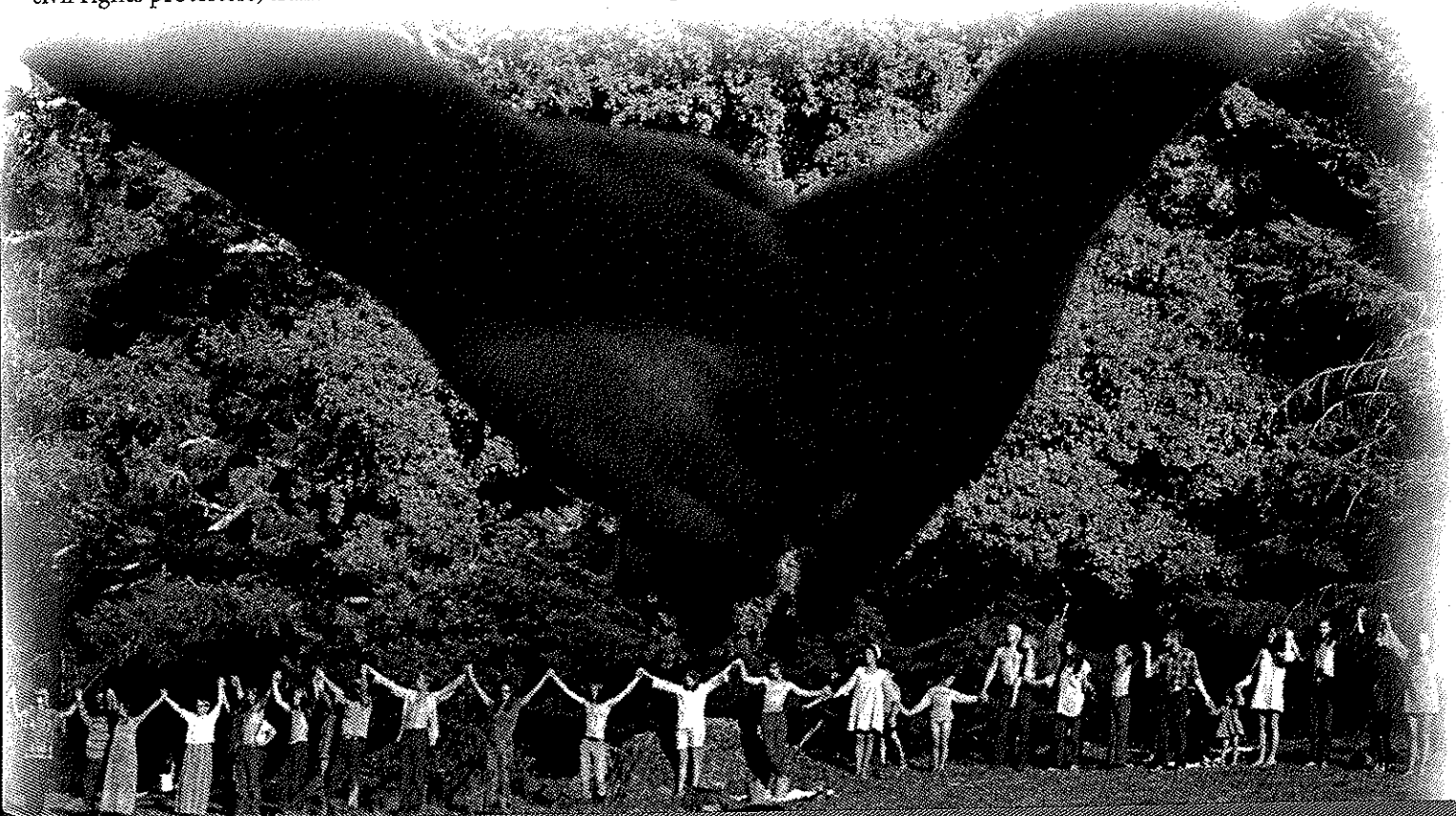
rock musician with poetic lyrics steeped in drug references. The Beatles underwent a similar transformation after taking America by storm. Nearly 60 percent of the nation watched the four mop-headed British musicians sing their masterful pop concoctions during the band's first televised performance on the *Ed Sullivan Show* in 1964. In just three years the group underwent a complete makeover with the release of an album, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, that broadcasted the counterculture message, "I'd love to turn you on"—a reference to taking drugs and having sex. The heyday of the marriage between rock music and the counterculture was Woodstock, a free three-day drug-infused music festival held on a farm in upstate New York, in August 1969.

New Left and young civil rights activists increasingly adopted a hippie-style of dress and experimented with drugs, but unlike hippies they remained dedicated to political activism. Most black civil rights activists, rather than rejecting white middle-class materialism, were fighting for their fair share of the nation's wealth and prosperity. New Left radicals shared the hippie belief that acquisitive capitalism bred inequality and injustice, but they were committed to engaged social action, not "tuning out."

Out of the spotlight conservatively minded college students were also active, laying the foundation

### 27.11 Holding Together

In their quest to define an alternative lifestyle, hippies emphasized love and harmony in their gatherings—sometimes wearing clothes, sometimes not.



How did the New Left, Civil Rights Movement, and counterculture disagree?

for the future conservative resurgence within a Republican Party dominated by moderates. A group of college students formed the Young Americans for Freedom (YAF) in 1960 under the guidance of *National Review* founder William F. Buckley. Throughout the sixties the Radical Right YAF attracted more members than the New Left SDS. Strong Goldwater supporters in 1964, these conservative students championed limited economic regulation, states' rights, respect for law and order, and staunch anticommunism. For the time being, however, the New Left had center stage.

## Malcolm X: An Alternative to Nonviolence

The New Left and counterculture did not speak with one voice, and by the mid-sixties fractures within the Civil Rights Movement were also apparent.

The Nation of Islam, an African American religious sect founded in the 1930s, rejected integration as the path to salvation for the black community and instead wanted to establish a separate black nation within the United States. As with conventional Muslims followers of Nation of Islam leader Elijah Muhammad prayed to Mecca five times a day, dressed modestly, and avoided pork and alcohol. The Nation of Islam departed from traditional Islamic thought, however, by viewing whites as "blue-eyed devils" whom Allah would condemn to eternal damnation on a forthcoming day of judgment.

Nation of Islam leader Malcolm X moved ideas of armed self-defense and black separatism from the fringes to the center of the civil rights debate. A magnetic speaker Malcolm X had converted to Islam while serving a six-year stint in prison. After his release he changed his name from Malcolm Little to Malcolm X, the X signifying the lost name of his African ancestors.

Even during the heyday of nonviolence in the 1950s and early 1960s, more militant voices within the black community championed a competing vision of self-defense and racial pride that extended back to Marcus Garvey (see Chapter 21). Malcolm X openly ridiculed the nonviolent strategy of the Christian-led SCLC. "If someone puts his hand on

you, send him to the cemetery," proclaimed Malcolm X in 1963. His statements received an increasingly sympathetic hearing among northern blacks who could already vote and sit alongside whites at lunch counters but encountered racial prejudice that relegated them to segregated ghettos, limited their employment opportunities, and subjected them to continued harassment by the police.

Malcolm X linked the domestic black struggle for civil rights to the global anticolonial movements underway in Africa and Asia, underscoring that the American Civil Rights Movement was just one of many liberation movements underway in the world, including a campaign to end apartheid in South Africa. Malcolm X's rhetorical links with Africa resonated well among northern blacks, who were incorporated African styles of clothing, hairstyles, and music into their daily lives. Many jettisoned the old label of "Negro" in favor of "black" to reflect their growing color consciousness and racial pride.

This photo

(27.12) of Malcolm X smiling as he takes a photograph of boxer Muhammad Ali in a Miami restaurant after he won the heavyweight championship in

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**"I don't see any American dream;  
I see an American nightmare."**

MALCOLM X, ridiculing King's "I Have a Dream Speech" during the 1963 March on Washington

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1964 conveys the charisma that each man radiated, and the strong bonds they maintained to the black urban community. Ali, who called himself "the greatest," gained fame not just for his athletic feats but, like Malcolm X, also for his defiance of authority. The day after this photo was taken he announced his conversion to the Nation of Islam, changing his name from Cassius Clay to Muhammad Ali. His mentor Malcolm X applauded Ali's announcement, knowing that the magnetic boxer would help attract other converts.

By the time Malcolm X's ideas began to gain widespread currency among disaffected blacks, however, his own philosophies were starting to shift. Viewing the increasingly powerful Malcolm X as a potential rival, Nation of Islam leader Elijah Muhammad had silenced Malcolm X a few months before this photo was taken. Malcolm X's transgression was calling the assassination of President Kennedy "a case of 'the chickens coming home to roost'" because whites were finally experiencing the vigilante violence that had terrorized blacks for years. Malcolm X left the Nation of Islam soon afterwards,

and Ali severed all ties with him. Malcolm X went on to experience a change of heart about the possibility of interracial cooperation following a 1964 pilgrimage to Mecca, Islam's holiest city, in Saudi Arabia, where he saw pilgrims "of all colors" coming together to worship. His more moderate stance did little to mollify his Nation of Islam critics. On February 21, 1965, as he stood to address a gathering in Harlem, three Nation of Islam members shot him dead.

## Watts and Chicago

Malcolm X did not live to help heal the fractures that ultimately unraveled the Civil Rights Movement. In the mid-sixties tensions among activists led to an overt split between those who continued to advocate non-violence and integration and those who assumed a more militant, nationalistic approach. Stalwart civil rights veterans like John Lewis and Martin Luther King, Jr. never stopped advocating their vision of nonviolent collective action. But after 1965 the vision of armed self-defense won many new adherents.

August 6, 1965, the day that President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965, represented the high-water mark of the nonviolent Civil Rights Movement. Five days later, with activists still basking in the afterglow of this major achievement, riots erupted in Watts, a Los Angeles black ghetto rife with high unemployment, poor schools, and rampant drug use. A routine arrest of a black man for drunk driving, which residents viewed as yet another example of the police harassment that plagued them daily, sparked the uprising. Watts burned for six days before sixteen thousand national guardsmen managed to stop the violence. The Watts riot left thirty-four dead and destroyed \$35 million in property, including many businesses and homes owned by blacks.

Watts changed the image of African American protest in the white imagination from a portrait of nonviolent protesters kneeling in prayer before their attackers to one of lawless mobs shouting "burn, baby, burn." The same television cameras that helped



awaken the liberal and moderate white consciousness now stoked white fears about unchecked black violence. The press ignored residents' complaints about police harassment and instead portrayed Los Angeles police as heroes who toiled tirelessly to prevent black rioters from destroying their own community. Watts was the prelude to several long, hot summers of racial rioting that rocked cities throughout the nation from 1965–1968.

The Watts riot convinced leaders like King to move aggressively to end economic inequality nationwide now that battles against legalized segregation and disenfranchisement were won. The SCLC's 1966 Chicago campaign dramatically demonstrated the limits of moderate northern whites' support for racial equality. When protesters marched through all-white neighborhoods to protest racial discrimination in renting and selling homes,

### 27.12 Malcolm X Snaps a Photo of Muhammad Ali, 1964.

This meeting between two mid-sixties icons of black manhood came just after Ali won the heavyweight boxing title. Both Black Muslims, Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali enjoyed keeping whites on edge with militant rhetoric that emphasized black pride and physical prowess.

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**"It's much easier to integrate lunch counters than it is to eradicate slums."**

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

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white crowds pelted them with bottles and rocks, which some marchers threw back. "I have never seen—even in Mississippi and Alabama—mobs as hostile and hate-filled as I've seen in Chicago," King noted with dismay. After King's death in 1968,

**27.13 Black Panther Leader Huey Newton, 1967**  
This staged photo showed Newton dressed in guerrilla-style clothing surrounded by symbols of African warrior culture to convey the Black Panthers' militant, nationalistic ideology.

## Black Power and the Black Panthers

The "black power" slogan emerged during James Meredith's 1966 "March against Fear" in Mississippi. Meredith had faced down hostile crowds in 1962 when he became the first black student to graduate from the University of Mississippi. Four years later he decided to march 220 miles by himself from Memphis, Tennessee, to Jackson, Mississippi, hoping that his courage would inspire blacks to register to vote. On the second day of his march, a sniper waiting in the bushes shot and wounded Meredith. When activists flocked to continue Meredith's march, SNCC leader Stokely Carmichael told participants "we been saying freedom for six years, and we ain't got nothing. What we gonna start saying now is black power." Black Power, however, soon became a slippery term that different people employed in various ways. *Competing Visions: Defining "Black Power"* explores how black leaders with completely different ideologies embraced competing definitions of Black Power.

In 1966 Black Power militants came to the forefront of traditionally nonviolent civil rights organizations like SNCC, which expelled whites from the organization to foster black community leadership. That same year Bobby Seale and Huey Newton founded the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense in Oakland, California. The Black Panthers were a militant civil rights group dedicated to armed self-defense, racial pride, and inner-city renewal. The paramilitary group initiated several community projects including free breakfasts for school children and health clinics, but the press only saw their rifles.

The Black Panthers organized paramilitary patrols that openly carried weapons (then legal under California law) and, Newton explained, "stopped whenever we saw the police questioning a brother or a sister" to ensure that no beatings or abuse occurred.

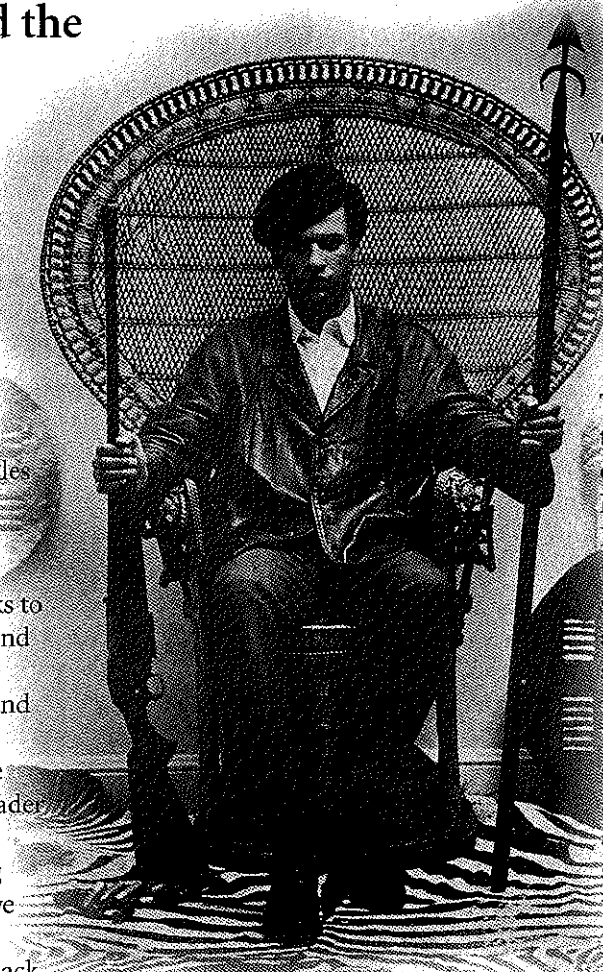
To project an image of strength that would appeal to inner-city youth, the Black Panthers wore commando-style attire including black leather jackets, black pants, black berets, and dark sunglasses, items already fashionable among young black men. The 1967 photo (27.13) that became the emblem of the Black Panther Movement depicted Newton sitting in a throne-like wicker chair surrounded by a zebra rug and warrior shields, symbols of a racial identity rooted in African culture. Wearing Western military-style clothing and holding a rifle in his right hand and a spear in his left, Newton stared into the camera with the steely resolve of a modern revolutionary.

By October, 1967 Newton was under arrest

wounded by police during a shoot-out and accused of killing a white policeman who died in the melee. FBI chief J. Edgar Hoover viewed the Panthers as "the greatest threat to the internal security of the country" and used spies to plan raids on Panther offices and create rifts within the group to weaken the Panthers internally. When the courts overturned Newton's conviction in 1970, he emerged from jail to find the Black Panthers in shambles.

## The Women's Liberation Movement

Another fracture within the Civil Rights Movement this one between men and women, energized the modern women's movement. When young white



# Competing Visions

## DEFINING "BLACK POWER"

The powerful image of a raised, clenched black fist became the most enduring symbol of "Black Power," but it only represented one view of the slogan's meaning. In the following excerpts civil rights leaders debate the meaning and implications of Black Power. Malcolm X never used the term directly, but his separatist message laid the groundwork for Black Power nationalism later in the decade. In contrast Martin Luther King, Jr. advocated using nonviolent methods to empower the black community. Political scientist Charles Hamilton notes the various interpretations given to the "Black Power" slogan and embraces one that emphasizes pride in being black. Are there any points of agreement among these competing definitions? How does this debate compare to the one between Marcus Garvey and W. E. B. DuBois in the 1920s (see *Competing Visions*, Chapter 21)?

**The revolutionary, nationalist rhetoric in Malcolm X's fiery 1963 "Message to the Grassroots" greatly influenced later advocates of Black Power.**

There's no such thing as a nonviolent revolution. The only kind of revolution that is nonviolent is the Negro revolution. The only revolution in which the goal is loving your enemy is the Negro revolution. It's the only revolution in which the goal is a desegregated lunch counter, a desegregated theater, a desegregated park, and a desegregated public toilet; you can sit down next to white folks—on the toilet. That's no revolution. Revolution is based on land. Land is the basis of all independence. Land is the basis of freedom, justice, and equality ...

Whoever heard of a revolution where they lock arms singing "We Shall Overcome"? You don't do that in a revolution. You don't do any singing, you're too busy swinging.

**In a "Conversation with Martin Luther King," March 25, 1968, King offered a definition of Black Power that supported his strategy of nonviolence.**

We have always stood up against injustices. We have done it militantly. Now, so often the word 'militant' is misunderstood because most people think of militancy in military terms. But, to be militant merely means to be demanding and to be persistent, and in this sense I think the nonviolent movement has demonstrated great militancy. It is possible to be militantly nonviolent. ... I haven't advocated violence, because I do not see it as the answer to the problem. I do not see it as the answer from a moral point of view and I do not see it as the answer from a practical point of view. ...

Let me briefly outline the positives [of Black Power]. First, Black Power in the positive sense is a psychological call to manhood. This is desperately needed in the black community, because for all too many years black people

have been ashamed of themselves. ... Secondly, Black Power is pooling black political resources in order to achieve our legitimate goals. ... Thirdly, Black Power in its positive sense is a pooling of black economic resources in order to achieve legitimate power. ... Withdrawing economic support from those who will not be just and fair in their dealings is a very potent weapon.

**Writing to white America in the *New York Times Magazine* in 1968, Charles Hamilton outlined competing views of Black Power and stressed the importance of maintaining black racial identity.**

Black Power has many definitions and connotations in the rhetoric of race relations today. To some people, it is synonymous with premeditated acts of violence to destroy the political and economic institutions of this country. Others equate Black Power with plans to rid the civil rights movements of whites who have been in it for years. The concept is understood by many to mean hatred of and separation from whites; it is associated with calling whites 'honkies' and with shouts of 'Burn, baby, burn!' Some understand it to be the use of pressure-group tactics in the accepted tradition of the American political process. And still others say that Black Power must be seen first of all as an attempt to instill a sense of identity and pride in black people. ...

Black Power rejects the lessons of slavery and segregation that caused black people to look upon themselves with hatred and disdain. To be 'integrated' it was necessary to deny one's heritage, one's own culture, to be ashamed of one's black skin, thick lips and kinky hair. ... The black man must change his demeaning conception of himself; he must develop a sense of pride and self-respect. Then, if integration comes, it will deal with people who are psychologically and mentally healthy, with people who have a sense of their history and of themselves as whole human beings. ...





**27.14** Feminists Picket the Miss America Pageant, 1968

This satirical portrait of a woman carved up like a side of beef criticizes beauty pageants for reducing a woman's value to the quality of her body parts.

female activists began leaving the Civil Rights Movement to join the women's movement, they joined a crusade already well underway. In 1963 journalist Betty Friedan reignited the feminist movement, which had faltered since the 1920s, with her treatise *The Feminine Mystique*. Calling it "the problem that has no name," Friedan challenged the widely accepted notion that women found homemaking and child-rearing fulfilling. In 1966 she founded the National Organization for Women (NOW), an organization dedicated to securing equal rights for women in employment, education, and politics—areas traditionally seen as male domains. NOW also wanted to give women control over their own bodies through unfettered access to contraception and legal abortions. A relatively small organization with only five thousand members in the late sixties, NOW nonetheless convinced President Johnson to issue an executive order that required government agencies and federal contractors to create affirmative action programs to hire and promote women and minority men.

The women's movement continued to grow as younger female activists, unhappy with gender discrimination within the Civil Rights Movement

and New Left, took up the cause of female liberation. The feminists who founded NOW lobbied for legislative solutions to women's problems. In contrast, more radicalized feminists, steeped in New Left ideology and nonviolent tactics, adopted a grassroots approach that used consciousness-raising—heightening awareness of social and political issues—to help women "understand the universality of our oppression." They emphasized changing attitudes rather than lobbying for legislative changes. To combat the ways that sexism pervaded normal social interactions, feminists introduced the word "Ms." into the American lexicon to replace "Miss" or "Mrs.," titles that linked a woman's identity to her marital status. When activist Robin Morgan brought busloads of women to Atlantic City to protest the annual Miss America

pageant in 1968, she sought maximum media coverage. Demonstrators carried the photograph (27.14) of an attractive, naked young woman with lines dividing her body into cuts of beef to protest how beauty pageants dehumanized women. "Welcome to the Miss America Cattle Auction," they chanted while filling a trash can with bras, high heeled shoes, mainstream fashion magazines, and copies of *Playboy*, items they believed reinforced "the Mindless Sex Object Image" of women. In deference to a local ordinance, the protesters never set the trash can on fire, but from this point onwards detractors used the dismissive term "bra-burners" to describe feminists.

Despite their different styles and messages, both moderate and radical feminists had trouble expanding their base of support beyond the white middle class. "If your husband is a factory worker or a tugboat operator, you don't want his job," noted Democratic Congresswoman Barbara Mikilski to explain why NOW's emphasis on equality in employment failed to resonate among working-class women. Similarly few black women joined the women's movement, convinced that racial oppression affected them more severely than sexual discrimination.

# The End of an Era



As the Civil Rights Movement unraveled, the Great Society also floundered. Republicans widened their political appeal by promising to end the cultural strife that was tearing the nation apart. Although most liberal and radical causes lost energy after 1968, activists in the Chicano and Native American communities helped keep the protest tradition alive as the decade came to a close.

## The Faltering Civil Rights Movement

Embittered by years of violent attacks in the South, young activists either left the movement altogether or migrated to more militant organizations. By 1967 King's weakening leadership reflected a movement adrift. When King spoke out against the Vietnam War, he strained his relationship with President Johnson, losing a valuable ally in the White House. King's call for a complete reconstructing of American capitalism to eliminate poverty also cost him the support of moderate blacks and whites. In the fall of 1967, after a summer of deadly race riots in Detroit and Newark, King proposed setting up a poor people's encampment in front of the White House. When the Poor People's Campaign stalled, King had time to make a quick trip to Memphis to offer his support for a garbage men's strike.

On April 4, 1968, a sniper's bullet tore through the knot in King's necktie and fatally wounded him as he leaned over the balcony of his Memphis motel. Within hours *Life* photographer Steve Schapiro entered King's motel room and snapped a haunting photograph of King's open suitcase containing a copy of his book *Strength to Love*, a wrinkled shirt, and the remnants of a meal (27.15). "The half-drunk cup of coffee gave me a moment of pause," Schapiro noted. "He had left his room planning to return." Completing this eerie scene King's portrait appeared on the motel television during a newscast reporting his death. The three-week urban rampage in one hundred cities across the nation that followed King's murder only further alienated the white community, who increasingly supported using troops to restore "law and order." Two months later a white man, James Earl Ray, confessed to the killing, a confession that he later retracted.

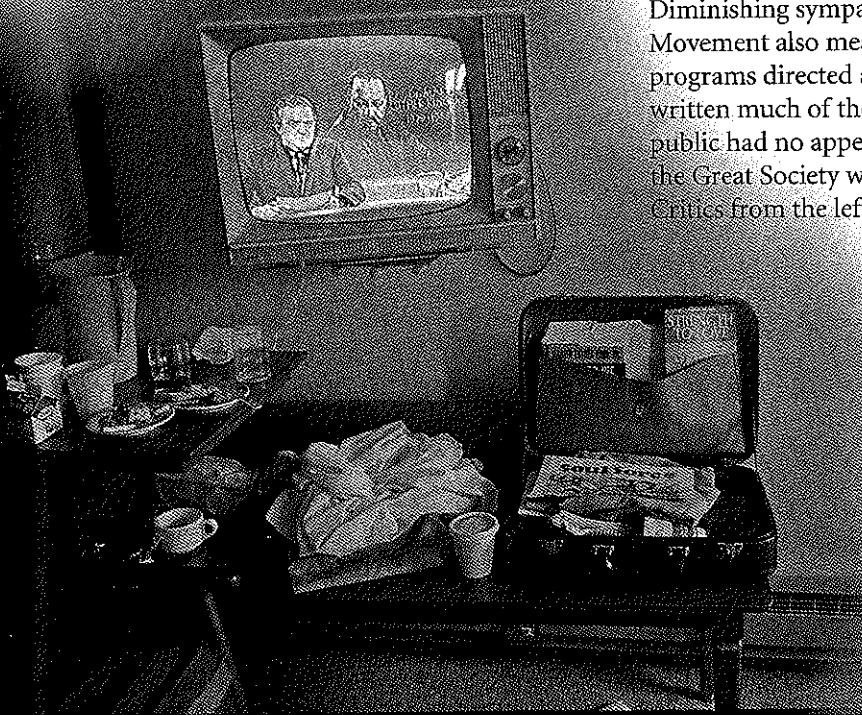
## The Great Society Unravels

Diminishing sympathy for the Civil Rights Movement also meant less support for Great Society programs directed at the urban poor. Congress had written much of the legislation quickly, but the public had no appetite for waiting patiently while the Great Society worked through its growing pains. Critics from the left and right continued their

attacks. The New Left advocated redistributing corporate profits more equitably throughout society. Meanwhile the Radical Right denounced the Great Society as a "hodgepodge" of

### 27.15 King's Room in the Lorraine Motel, April 4, 1968

King stepped out of this motel room to chat briefly with friends over the motel balcony and never returned. The television above King's suitcase announces his death to an empty room.



Why was King's death a serious blow to the Civil Rights Movement?

programs that humiliated the poor and encouraged dependency on government welfare. Ethnic working-class whites and left-leaning suburbanites, groups that had traditionally supported the Democratic liberal agenda, began to resent federal programs that they felt primarily helped black minorities. The shift in attitudes among the white working class had a significant political impact. In 1964 nearly 60 percent had voted for the Democratic ticket; four years later that percentage had dropped to 35 percent.

The Great Society's troubles reflected more than persistent racism, however. Johnson's unwillingness to raise taxes to pay for an exploding array of domestic programs and a costly war in Vietnam also contributed to its undoing. As the economy overheated interest rates doubled, the national debt exploded, and inflation caused prices to rise without any corresponding increase in wages. Americans reacted with dismay to this sudden decline in the standard of living after several decades of continued prosperity.

This 1967 Herblock political cartoon (27.16) illustrated Johnson's dilemma in trying to fund both the Vietnam War and the Great Society. In the drawing President Johnson prepares for an evening out with his mistress, a robust and expensively attired woman wearing a mink stole emblazoned with the

**27.16 Torn between Two Mistresses, 1967**

This Herblock cartoon illustrated how Johnson's escalation of the war in Vietnam deprived his Great Society programs of needed funds.

"There's Money Enough To Support Both Of You — Now, Doesn't That Make You Feel Better?"



words "Vietnam War." As they leave Johnson tries to assure the other woman in his life, a thin homemaker wearing a tattered apron labeled "U.S. Urban Needs," that "There's Money Enough to Support Both of You—Now, Doesn't That Make You Feel Better?" As this cartoon suggested the administration was neglecting its domestic programs and giving the war the bulk of its attention and funds. In 1968 Johnson agreed to raise taxes to finance the expanded war in Vietnam but southern conservative congressmen refused to vote for the measure until the president made substantial funding cuts to his domestic programs.

The Democratic Convention in 1968 pulled together these various strands of disenchantment with liberal politics. With Vice President Hubert Humphrey on track to secure the nomination, ten thousand antiwar activists led by New Left leader Tom Hayden organized a mass protest before the television cameras outside the Chicago Convention Center to support the antiwar candidate Eugene McCarthy. Yippies, a New Left splinter group that stood for blending "pot and politics," joined the protest. Led by Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin, the Yippies issued outlandish warnings that they planned to put LSD in Chicago's water supply. As Democratic Party delegates debated the administration's Vietnam policy inside the convention hall, the police launched a premeditated attack on the demonstrators outside. Televised images of long-haired, pot-smoking protesters who waved North Vietnamese flags and threw excrement had a greater impact on public opinion than news reports of police brutality. Over 70 percent of adults supported the police crackdown.

Critics of liberalism found the public suddenly much more receptive to their competing political vision. Richard Nixon won the presidency in 1968 promising to restore "law and order," a Republican catch-phrase that fueled the political shift already underway in many traditionally Democratic blue-collar and suburban neighborhoods. With grassroots conservatism on the rise, the liberal vision appealed to fewer and fewer Americans by the end of the decade.

At the end of this divisive decade, a rare moment of national celebration occurred on July 20, 1969 when astronaut Neil Armstrong became the first man to walk on the moon. Watching the event unfurl on their television sets, Americans heard Armstrong declare "that's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind" as he began to stride across the moon's surface. Announcing the U.S. space race victory over the Soviet Union to the world, astronaut Buzz Aldrin planted an American flag (27.17) near manmade

footprints that would permanently mark the moon's surface. This iconic photo of the United States conquering the moon bolstered many citizens' faith in the superiority of the American way of life, giving them another reason to reject the New Left and counterculture critique of American culture.

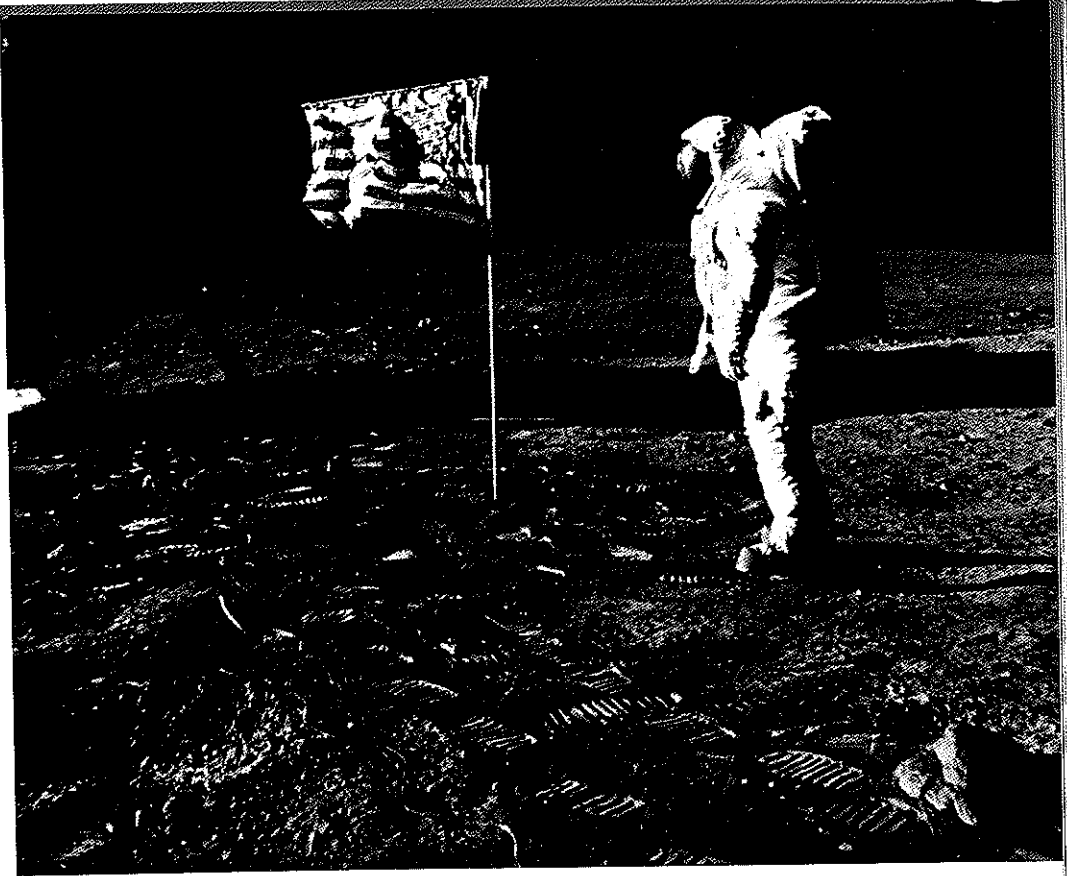
## The Demise of the Counterculture

As with the Civil Rights Movement and the Great Society, the hippie counterculture unraveled by the end of the decade. Heightened media coverage drew large crowds to the 1967 "Summer of Love" in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury neighborhood, a hippie gathering dedicated to free food, drugs, sex, and music. In the fall hippie stalwarts organized a mock "Death of Hippie: Son of Media" funeral procession, blaming the over-hyped media image of the free-loving hippie for the drug-related violence and epidemic of rapes that now beset Haight-Ashbury. They then departed en masse, moving the foci of hippie culture to rural communes away from the media glare, where some succeeded in keeping the hippie utopian ideal alive.

### "Beautify America, Get a Haircut."

A billboard in Rochester, New York, criticizes counterculture fashion

Ronald Reagan, the Republican governor of California, echoed the views of mainstream America in 1969 when he characterized a hippie as someone who "dresses like Tarzan, has hair like Jane, and smells like Cheetah," a reference to the counterculture's embrace of public nudity, long hair, and disdain for underarm deodorant. Worried that the counterculture had made addictive drugs such as heroin popular among the young, many states passed stringent anti-drug laws. At the federal level, in 1972 President Nixon announced a "war on drugs" aimed at disrupting the illicit drug trade.



The quick commercialization of the counterculture also hastened its demise as a potent alternative social vision. Modes of hippie dress, hippie slang, and hippie values (albeit in diluted form) swept into the mainstream. Granola appeared on supermarket shelves, and middle-aged men began growing their hair long. Affluent and educated adults increasingly smoked marijuana and listened to rock music. More sexually explicit movies and highly profitable rock record sales fueled rather than undermined acquisitive capitalism.

### 27.17 The First Moon Landing, 1969

National pride surged at the sight of an American flag planted on the moon. For many Americans, beating the Soviets to the moon challenged the radical left's view that American society was faltering.

## Keeping Protest Alive: Mexican Americans and Native Americans

The declining fortunes of the Civil Rights Movement and the counterculture did not mean the end of all campaigns for social justice in the late sixties. Mexican American and Native American activists drew inspiration from the African American struggle and launched their own highly visible, if short-lived, crusades to end ethnic discrimination. Ultimately, however, the same problems of factionalism and police harassment hurt these crusades as well.

In the 1960s the life expectancy for Mexican American migrant workers hovered around fifty years old, while infant mortality was double the national average. The short-handed hoe represented the nearly complete exploitation of California migrant workers. "The short one" forced workers to bend all day (27.18) as they worked in the fields, often causing crippling back pain that sidelined workers who could not afford health care. California regulators finally banned the tool in 1975.

Rallying Mexican Americans around the slogan *Si Se Puede* ("Yes, it can be done"), César Chávez, head of the United Farm Workers union, used strikes and marches to secure better working and living conditions. Chávez also appealed directly to consumers, convincing seventeen million Americans to stop buying nonunion-picked grapes, but also provoking a backlash among some. One Safeway grocery store manager reported antiunion customers loading up "their car with grapes and nothing else," while school children in the East refused to eat the grapes provided as part of their school lunches. By 1970 the economic toll of the boycott forced growers to recognize the United Farm Workers union and raise wages.

Latino urban radicals in Texas, California, and Colorado embraced a competing vision called *La Raza* (The Race) that emphasized racial identity over union organizing. The Brown Berets modeled themselves after the Black Panthers and proudly called themselves "Chicanos," embracing their Mexican American heritage while demanding an end to Anglo-American discrimination. In March 1968, ten thousand high school students in East Los Angeles staged a "blow-out" by walking out of their classrooms and into the streets to protest the poor education they received in their mostly Hispanic schools. By this point most white Americans had little tolerance for radical political protest and

overwhelmingly supported the police for shutting the demonstrations down. Internal divisions within the Mexican American community over the wisdom of confrontational tactics like mass demonstrations and steady harassment from the police hastened the demise of the short-lived Chicano student movement.

Native American activists also drew inspiration from the integrationist vision that championed equality and the competing militant one that emphasized maintaining racial identity. After encouraging Indians to move off their reservations in the 1950s, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) began terminating the rights of some Indian tribes to federal protection. Ending their dependence on the BIA to run schools, manage their lands, and provide health care, the agency argued, would encourage Indians to assimilate into mainstream culture more quickly. Indian activists wanted the federal government to continue its financial

**27.18 Hispanic Farm Workers Using Short Hoes**

Workers nicknamed short hoes "the devil's arm" because using them caused intense back pain. Every time César Chávez saw a head of lettuce in the supermarket, he thought of what the suffering workers had endured to grow it and was newly resolved to use strikes and boycotts to improve their working conditions.



How did the Civil Rights and labor movements influence Hispanic activists?

assistance, while at the same time allowing more self-government on Indian reservations.

On November 20, 1969, a group calling themselves "Indians of All Tribes" grabbed headlines when they occupied the abandoned federal prison on Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay. During their occupation of Alcatraz, Indian activists issued the sardonic **Alcatraz Proclamation** that offered to purchase the island for \$24 in glass beads and red cloth, the same amount that the Dutch had paid indigenous people for Manhattan Island in 1626. The proclamation further described Alcatraz as the perfect site for an Indian reservation because it lacked running water, sanitation, schools, mineral resources, and productive soil, plus "the population has always been held as prisoner and kept dependent upon others." Eventually the cold and isolation took its toll, and the protest ended in June 1971.

In the fall of 1972 a caravan of cars and vans left the West Coast to follow "The Trail of Broken Treaties," a slogan meant to remind Americans of

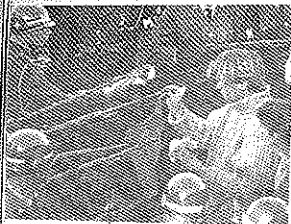
the "Trail of Tears," the 1838 forced removal of southeastern Indian tribes to interior lands. Stopping at individual reservations, the protesters urged tribes to fight for their legal rights. When they reached Washington, D.C., the group temporarily occupied BIA offices. Native Americans staged nearly seventy other occupations throughout the nation, including the American Indian Movement's armed takeover of the village of Wounded Knee, South Dakota, in 1973, the site of the army's massacre of three hundred Sioux in 1890. These highly visible protests prompted Nixon to increase funds for social services on Indian reservations and establish the Office of Indian Water Rights. In the early 1970s the federal government ended the policy of termination and Congress increased Indian self-rule on the reservations. Indian tribes also began suing the government for past treaty violations. At the same time, however, government harassment eviscerated radical Indian groups, part of a general crack-down on revolutionary political movements in the early seventies.

## Conclusion

Whether the 1960s represented the heyday of progressive social change or a nightmare from which America needed to awake remained a point of disagreement among liberals and conservatives for decades to come. By the mid-sixties the legal edifice that had supported racial segregation and disenfranchisement through the South was gone, thanks to countless grassroots protests including the Freedom Rides, the Birmingham campaign, Freedom Summer, and the march from Selma to Montgomery. The movement effectively used mass media to create a groundswell of support for civil rights legislation, and celebrated figures like Martin Luther King Jr. along with numerous other activists lost their lives while pursuing racial justice. Nonviolent direct action lost momentum when the competing militant call for Black Power and the focus on economic inequality moved the spotlight from the South to northern ghettos. Although the movement faltered in the closing years of the sixties, it left a legacy that permanently altered the social and political fabric of the nation.

Radical and liberal politics also left a mark. Student activists transformed university life. Counterculture rejection of traditional values seeped into the mainstream, changing attitudes toward sex, drugs, and authority. Women, Hispanics, and Native Americans made the larger society aware of longstanding discrimination that limited their chances to share the American Dream. America emerged from the sixties with a new vision of itself as a multicultural society.

The Great Society laid bare a vigorous set of competing visions among radicals, liberals, and conservatives over the role of the government in American society and the value of capitalism. Dismay over Supreme Court decisions that outlawed prayer in school, Great Society programs that primarily helped minorities, and the counterculture pervaded Middle America. Unhappy with the direction of the liberal vision, many former Democrats joined a new conservative coalition whose vision appealed to more and more Americans in the 1970s.



# CHAPTER REVIEW

## 1961

### **Peace Corps Established**

Program sends U.S. aid volunteers worldwide

### **Freedom Rides**

Convinces Kennedy administration to enforce Supreme Court ruling against segregated interstate travel

## 1962

### **Supreme Court rules school prayer unconstitutional**

Furor lays the foundation for religiously-based conservative resurgence

### **Port Huron Statement**

Motivates student activists to join SDS

## 1963

### **Birmingham**

Outrage over fire hose and dog attacks on civil rights protesters prompts Kennedy to support a federal civil rights law

### **March on Washington**

International press coverage turns the peaceful march into a triumphant movement for the nonviolent Civil Rights Movement

### ***Feminine Mystique* published**

Inspires creation of the modern feminist movement

## Review Questions

1. Compare the goals and strategies of the Freedom Rides and the Birmingham civil rights campaign. Why was each an effective episode of nonviolent protest?
2. How did the Great Society compare to the New Deal? What continuities or differences existed? What lasting impact did the Great Society have on American society?
3. Why did black nationalist sentiment become more popular among African Americans after 1965?
4. What alternative visions did the counterculture and the New Left offer? What were the differences and similarities in their critiques of American society?
5. How important was leadership in the civil rights and black nationalism movements? How did grassroots activism make these movements successful? Which reform and protest movements in the 1960s were the most successful? Why?
6. Why did conservative ideals gain strength as the decade progressed?
7. How did the sixties transform American society?



## 1964

### Freedom Summer

Murder of three Civil Rights workers in Mississippi prompts Congress to pass the Civil Rights Act of 1964

### Great Society begins

Largest legislative liberal reform effort since the New Deal



## 1965–1966

### March from Selma to Montgomery

Congress responds to vigilante attacks on marchers by passing the Voting Rights Act of 1965

### Watts Riot

Violent rampage in Los Angeles ghetto generates white backlash against Civil Rights Movement

### Black Panthers founded

Black militants reject nonviolent tactics and instead advocate Black Power



## 1967

### “Summer of Love”

Hippie gathering in Haight-Ashbury publicizes counterculture



## 1968

### King assassinated

Nationwide rioting signals the end of the nonviolent Civil Rights Movement

### Chicago Democratic presidential convention

Police crackdown on demonstrators wins general support for reinstating law and order

### Feminists picket Miss America pageant

Feminists use media coverage to challenge sexist stereotypes

# Key Terms

**New Frontier** Kennedy's legislative program that proposed raising the minimum wage, reducing overcrowding in schools, and providing health care for the elderly. 813

**Peace Corps** Government agency that President Kennedy established to send recent college graduates to work on humanitarian projects overseas in developing nations. 813

**Warren Court** Supreme Court that brought about a legal revolution in the United States by permanently altering American schools, politics, the criminal justice system, and cultural norms. 813

**Great Society** President Johnson's wide-ranging social welfare reforms intended to make the amenities of modern life—a decent standard of living, education, health care, and clean water—available to all Americans. 816

**Freedom Rides** An interstate bus journey by black and white activists who entered segregated bus facilities together throughout the South. 819

**Birmingham campaign** Civil rights effort to desegregate Birmingham, Alabama, where shocking images of police brutality prompted Kennedy to push for a federal civil rights act. 821

**March on Washington, 1963** Massive demonstration in the nation's capital that demanded passage of a federal civil rights act and more economic opportunities. 824

**Freedom Summer, 1964** Multipronged attack on white supremacy in Mississippi that included a voter registration drive and the creation of Freedom Schools. 825

**Civil Rights Act of 1964** Legislation that banned segregation in businesses and places open to the public (such as restaurants and public schools) and prohibited racial and gender discrimination in employment. 826

**Voting Rights Act of 1965** Legislation that prohibited literacy tests and poll taxes, plus authorized the use of federal registrars to register voters if states failed to respect the Fifteenth Amendment. 827

**New Left** A small, but highly visible, coalition of left-leaning student-based organizations that attacked racial discrimination, poverty, and the war in Vietnam. 828

**hippies** Youthful social rebels who renounced material acquisition and used drugs to explore their inner spiritual selves. 829

**Nation of Islam** African American sect that rejected integration as the path to salvation for

the black community and instead wanted to establish a separate black nation. 830

**Black Power** A call for blacks to unite politically and economically in black-only organizations to protect their racial identity as they fought for equality. 832

**Black Panthers** Militant civil rights group dedicated to armed self-defense, racial pride, and inner-city renewal. 832

**National Organization for Women (NOW)** An organization dedicated to securing equal rights for women in employment, education, and politics. 834

**Alcatraz Proclamation** Sardonic statement issued by Indian activists who occupied the island of Alcatraz and described it as the perfect site for an Indian reservation because it lacked running water, sanitation, schools, mineral resources, and productive soil. 839

