

The background of the cover is a light yellow-green color with a subtle pattern of stylized leaf motifs. These motifs are arranged in a diagonal line from the top-left to the bottom-right. Each motif consists of a short stem with two leaves pointing upwards and to the right.

LEADERS FROM THE 1960S

A Biographical Sourcebook of American Activism

David DeLeon

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LEADERS
from the 1960s

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A Biographical Sourcebook of
American Activism

EDITED BY
David DeLeon



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PREFACE

The radicals and liberals of the 1960s expressed beliefs and emotions that continued to attract or repel people decades later. There were “nostalgia” books on the mammoth Woodstock festival of 1969 and the protests of the 1960s. Politicians like Ronald Reagan and George Bush, by contrast, remembered the ferment of the era with overall unease. Newspaper obituaries in 1989 painted the virtues and the vices of Abbie Hoffman, Huey Newton, I. F. Stone, and Michael Harrington. Memoirs like Tom Hayden’s *Reunion* (1988) received wide attention. Collections of readings have been published, such as *The Sixties Papers* (1984) and *The 60s without Apology* (1984). Skirmishes over the meaning of this period continued in politics, documentary films, the arts, and specialized university courses.

There has been no volume, however, which outlines what happened to many of the major activists of the 1960s through the 1970s and the 1980s, into the 1990s. Did their influence rise or fall? How did their goals, thoughts, and actions change? Had they continued to be radical, like Angela Davis, or liberal, like Ralph Nader? Had many become entrepreneurs like Jerry Rubin? Were the majority embittered, such as David Horowitz and Peter Collier? How many had become right-wing apologists like Eldridge Cleaver? This book provides information on a wide selection of nationally prominent activists of the 1960s.

The entries are grouped into broad categories for the general convenience of the reader, not because everyone fits into a neat box. Each section has a brief introduction that cites basic themes and provides some explanation why the individuals in that section were chosen. If an individual that is mentioned in the section introduction has an entry, there is an asterisk (*) after the name. For example, in Part One, “Racial Democracy,” the section introduction mentions Louis Farrakhan (*). If an individual can be found in one of the other

sections, that will be noted by including the section number by the sign, such as for Maulana Karenga (5*). Thus, there is an entry on Karenga in Part Five.

Some of the individuals in this volume were active before the 1960s (such as Herbert Marcuse), but became prominent in the 1960s; some became leaders or symbolic figures in the early 1970s (such as Leonard Peltier); but most are centered in the 1960s movements for democratic social change. Some were chosen because of a momentary notoriety, such as H. Rap Brown, while others have been widely known for many years, such as Tom Hayden. The entry on Brown is relatively brief; that on Hayden is longer. The longest entries are for individuals that the editor regards as having the greatest cultural, social, or political influence, such as Noam Chomsky. Readers will undoubtedly have some disagreements with these judgments. It should be noted, furthermore, that the selection process has several limitations. For example, the dominant culture has a greater willingness to publicize male leaders and English-speaking, Eurocentric people. Thus, this volume has a limited number of women, Chicanos, and indigenous Americans. While the editor made efforts to broaden the volume's selection, these inherent limitations remain. The section bibliographies direct the reader to other sources of information, such as the two volumes edited by Darlene Clark Hine, *Black Women in America* (Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing, 1992), and Jessie Carney Smith's *Notable Black American Women* (Detroit: Gale Research, 1992).

Each entry provides a biographical sketch of the individual's origins, development, and possible sources of activism. Most of each entry, however, focuses on the basic concepts or essence of the individual's work, writings, or persona, and the critical responses to these. Each entry provides some answers to questions such as these: What were the fundamental goals of this individual? What organizations or networks (if any) sustained the work of this activist financially, socially, and intellectually? What methods were used to achieve the individual's central goals? Did this person's goals, methods, and affiliations change fundamentally over the years? Why was this person of social importance? What were the major responses among other activists and within the general community to his or her work? What may be considered the overall strengths and weaknesses of that work? Although there are no footnotes for these comments, each entry does conclude with a list of some of the most important works by the individual (if he or she wrote significantly), and essays, articles, and book commentaries on the individual. Although the emphasis is on items that are readily available, there has been an effort to include a broad range of opinion.

An older reader, looking at the table of contents, may think that the selections are too obvious: "Everyone knows who they are." Many of these activists are known, however, for their work in the 1960s and not for their later fate. Many activists also have name recognition but little public understanding of what they thought or did. Younger readers, in addition, may not be familiar

with “movement heavies” known to the previous generation since the educational system rarely transmits such information.

The editor attempted to cover a broad spectrum of national leaders, but there is no claim that this list is somehow complete. Some people originally scheduled for inclusion—such as Timothy Leary, Abbie Hoffman, Bert Corona, Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales, Shulamith Firestone, and Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Toure)—have no individual entries in the present volume, though they are mentioned in the discussions of others’ activities. Some subjects, such as gay and lesbian organizers, are covered less thoroughly than originally planned. However, the diversity of activists and movements in this book allows the editor to meet his fairly modest goals: to suggest that much can be learned, positively and negatively, from the activists of the 1960s, and to provide some introductions that might be useful for further study.

The reader also will find valuable these references:

The Alternative Press Index, 1967–present (Baltimore, Maryland).

Buhle, Mari Jo, Paul Buhle, and Dan Georgakas, eds. *Encyclopedia of the American Left*. New York: Garland Publishing, 1990.

Buhle, Mari Jo, Paul Buhle, and Harvey Kaye, eds. *The American Radical*. New York: Rutledge, Chapman and Hall, 1994.

The Left Index; A Quarterly Index to Periodicals of the Left, 1984–present (Santa Cruz, California).

Whitman, Alden, ed. *American Reformers: An H. W. Wilson Biographical Dictionary*. New York: H. W. Wilson, 1985.

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INTRODUCTION

American conservatives had a golden age in the early 1950s. Most fundamental critics of U.S. foreign and domestic policies were dismissed as naive, ignorant, Communist, or pinko. Most Negroes still seemed to be docile, although there were reports of trouble caused by agitators. Only a few “bad girls” were uppity or went wrong. Homosexuals (the small number who lurked within wholesome American society) were isolated, silenced, and dismissed as fags or dykes. Non-WASPs were usually characterized in openly bigoted terms such as greasers, spics, or kikes. Schools rarely bothered students with irritating subjects such as civil rights, non-Christian religions, the value of languages other than English, respect for other cultures, or what a genuine democracy would mean socially, economically, and politically. The mass media were full of self-congratulations about the United States. This conservative world began to crumble in the 1950s.

Naive white racism was the first pillar of conservatism that was attacked. American blacks who had fought against Nazi racism were less willing to accept a legally sanctioned American apartheid which limited their education, jobs, housing, political rights, and entire futures. The introduction to Part One of this reference book, “Racial Democracy,” describes the growing protests of the 1950s and the 1960s. Black demands invaded the white cultural ghetto. White men could no longer assume that they would dominate everything of importance in U.S. society. Native Americans, Puerto Ricans, and other races were stirred also by such massive rallies as the 1963 March on Washington that brought a quarter of a million people to the nation’s capital. “Nonwhites” were increasingly unwilling to tolerate white society’s definition of them as inferior.

Young people, from all races, would often be in the vanguard of the coming movements for social justice. Adult leftists and progressives, by the end of the

1950s, had been purged generally from the federal government and the labor unions. Presidents Truman and Eisenhower, for example, authorized about 6.5 million security checks on federal employees. Dissent had been chilled in many of the institutions of U.S. society. Although the election of John F. Kennedy in 1960 promised a New Frontier in which “the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans,” the margin of victory had been only a little more than 100,000 votes out of 68 million. The alternative in 1960, Richard Nixon, was quite as popular. Radicals such as Michael Harrington had suggested, at first, that beyond rhetoric, there wasn’t much difference between Nixon and Kennedy.

Even if there was minimal substance to Kennedy, and he did little more than talk a good talk, the largely apolitical “silent generation” of the 1950s was beginning to be replaced or transformed by people who expected change. The 1960s experienced what one person called a “youthquake.” The post-World War II baby boom generation rippled through American society, politics, and culture. In 1960 there were 16 million Americans between the ages of 18–24 (with 3 million in college); in 1970 there were 25 million (with 10 million in college). Although there had been relatively lonely critics of the United States in the 1950s, such as Dorothy Day, Norman Thomas, C. Wright Mills, James Baldwin, Allen Ginsberg, Lenny Bruce, Michael Harrington, Herbert Marcuse, and Norman Mailer—along with tiny groups and tiny publications (such as *Dissent* and *Monthly Review*)—there were few large and active white constituencies for change. Then the Civil Rights movement reverberated through American life. Some of the uglier realities of this society appeared in the press and on TV screens. Consciousness began to change among many people. Some white students joined the struggle, such as the one thousand who went into the South during Freedom Summer in 1964. Most of the older generation, however, and the vast majority of “responsible” leaders urged caution, when they did not condemn student activism and the Civil Rights movement. The most powerful changes of this era began in the streets and only later compelled some positive legal and legislative acknowledgments.

The new student activism could be seen at places such as Berkeley, California, where some University of California students formed SLATE in 1959, and where some students aided civil rights organizing, anti-ROTC activities, opposition to the House Un-American Activities Committee, and local student complaints. The latter came to include free speech, the right to due process when students complained about the university or when the university sought to punish them, student delegates on committees and on the board of trustees, student input for curriculum design, student evaluation of faculty, and less repressive campus living environments.

Most of the new activists of the late 1950s and early 1960s were liberals who wanted the system to be as democratic as they thought it claimed to be. Some were later radicalized by racial injustice and resistance to their demands,

but relatively few turned to the Old Left (such as the Communist party and various Trotskyist sects), which most felt to be morally compromised by their slavish support for foreign dictatorships and by their own internal authoritarianism. As an alternative, the 1960s saw the emergence of a New Left represented by such organizations as the Students for a Democratic Society (formed in 1962), which advocated “participatory democracy” rather than the passive and often manipulated “representative democracy” of the dominant society.

The second major catalyst of the 1960s, other than race, was the war in Vietnam. This war was never legally declared by Congress, propped up an unpopular right-wing foreign government, and eventually exposed key U.S. leaders as mass murderers. When the 1964 victory of Lyndon Johnson, as a peace candidate, was followed by escalation of the war, a generation began to divide. Some of those who enlisted or were drafted discovered that the enemy was a landless peasant who hated the urban elites in Saigon who were protected by invading black and white soldiers. (About 10 percent of the males of the 1960s generation served in Vietnam.) Other young Americans found safe havens through legal deferments. For example, Dan Quayle, later a Republican vice president, had the right connections to get into the Indiana National Guard, even though, in theory, he was a “hawk” who supported the war. Similarly, Dick Cheney, a later secretary of defense, would candidly admit, “I had other priorities in the 60s than the military.” Some young people, like William Jefferson Clinton, combined deferments and protests. According to one poll, 16 percent of the 60s generation actively protested. Another surprisingly large number, perhaps 125,000, took the radically disruptive solution of escape to Canada. Despite this level of resistance, most of the older generation, and much of the younger generation, was shocked by the “draft dodgers” and resisters. By 1970, one conservative youth group, the Young Americans for Freedom, had as many members as SDS at its height.

The war ultimately poisoned the Great Society hopes and programs of President Johnson. It diverted money and distracted public attention. Many of those who supported Johnson felt discouraged and betrayed. Some gave up, some supported the war, some turned to radical protest. In 1968, Johnson refused to run for re-election, and Senator Robert Kennedy, a hope for pragmatic idealism, was shot dead. At the end of the following race between Richard Nixon (Republican), Hubert Humphrey (Democrat), and George Wallace (independent), Nixon won with less than 50 percent of the popular vote. Although Nixon had packaged himself as the peace candidate, protests continued, especially after a 1970 military “incursion” into Cambodia that saw major demonstrations at 80 percent of U.S. colleges and universities (as 448 closed or went on strike). At Kent State, in Ohio, and Jackson State, in Mississippi, students were killed by the authorities. Many Americans were shocked, although polls indicated that a majority approved of the use of violence to sup-

press these protests. Major varieties of antiwar criticism are included in Part Two.

Growing frustration with peaceful political change in the 1960s encouraged some to drop out, whether turning to separatist black nationalism, the counterculture, and/or drugs to escape from the corrupt society around them. Rather than to continue to work with the existing legal and political structures, some people turned to cultural “solutions” to their problems. Such responses were tried by small numbers of people: only 5 percent of 1960s youth tried communal living; 42 percent tried marijuana (although Bill Clinton didn’t inhale), and 15 percent tried LSD. Some of those who didn’t experiment were attracted; others were horrified.

Out of all of this came a large number of counterculture publications, a looser attitude toward drugs, and more sexual experimentation. Although cultural radicals were quotable (such as Dr. Timothy Leary’s call to “turn on, tune in, and drop out”) and sometimes colorful (especially the showman Abbie Hoffman), the essential character of the surrounding society was not changed. Instead, it absorbed youth culture, repackaged it, and sold it for a profit. “Good vibes” or “the orgasm of immediate experience” (as Hoffman described it) could change individual people, but could it transform an entire society? Both the power and the limits of “radical culture” are considered in Part Five.

By the late 1960s there was a conservative backlash against such villains as unruly youth, crime, too aggressive minorities, and social welfare programs. The middle class had been burdened financially with much of the costs of the Great Society; the apparent defeat in Vietnam seemed a sign of weakness; many supported a return to “law and order.” The intensity and breadth of support for critics also diminished with the winding-down of the war, the racial and political fragmentation of the Left (such as the splintering of SDS and SNCC’s expulsion of all whites), the evanescent character of many of the institutions of the counterculture (like the Youth International Party, the “Yippies”), and the burning out or dropping out of some leaders and followers. Despite these changes, the struggles of the 1960s did not vanish in the 1970s and the 1980s, and some, such as the movements for women’s rights, gay liberation, and ecology (all of which were quite small in the 1960s) became highly visible and influential. These are considered in Parts Three and Four of this book.

Conservatives were offended, bruised, fearful, and angry. They tended to characterize the 1960s activists as (1) immature, naive, ignorant, and self-indulgent youth; (2) noisily complaining racial minorities wanting special treatment; (3) violence-prone, disrespectful, unpatriotic radicals who were determined to destroy America; (4) immoral people who challenged the “natural order of life” (i.e., prosperous white males on top) and, thereby, God; (5) subversive intellectuals who were poisoning the minds of the impressionable; and (6) tax-and-spend liberal champions of “welfare queens,” lazy workers, and slovenly riff-raff. Radicals had wanted to turn the world upside down.

Conservatives used various appeals and means to restore order. Whether in power or not, conservatives waged a cultural war to imply that they were more patriotic, more religious, and more American. The solutions to America's problems were primarily cultural: prayer in the schools, anti-abortion laws, respect for authority, and discipline ("just say no to drugs"/just say no to premarital sex). In power, conservatives sought to pack the Supreme Court and the federal judiciary with politically correct right-wing ideologues; appoint pro-business advocates to regulatory agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency and the National Labor Relations Board; deny (if possible) any government funding for their critics through the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities; belittle public education (preferring private schools); enact tougher sentencing laws; build more prisons; spend more money on the military; and reduce taxes, especially on the wealthiest, while expanding reliance on regressive taxes that most burdened the lower classes, such as the sales tax. Much of the American public acquiesced in or approved of these measures. In some cases, conservatives were able to use popular skepticism about the competence of government—which was derived partly from the failure of the Vietnam War, doubts about the effectiveness of centralized social engineering, and the pervasive corruption of the later Nixon presidential years (Watergate and more)—to advance their own agenda.

Most reformers and radicals had fundamentally dissimilar views of the 1960s and its aftermath, although there could be some overlapping of interpretations and attitudes. The most persistent general legacy of the 1960s was a pervasive questioning of American life. Critics compared the egalitarian principle of this society to its realities. To what degree did the actual complement the ideal? Racial minorities did not have the same opportunities as most whites. Women did not have the same opportunities as most men. The poor were often trapped by their dead-end environments and education. Most people had little power in their jobs and in the general society. Many people concluded that American democracy was, in practice, a fraud.

Some responded to this realization by withdrawing from the struggle to change the United States, and became escapist, cynical, and apolitical. Others, angry that their ideals had been blocked, or liberated from their former illusions, worked for improvements within the existing system. A relatively small few envisioned a fundamentally new society, and some of these people became socially and intellectually entrapped in cults. A wide range of people, during the 1960s, became aware of deep layers of injustice that few had previously recognized, such as the broad cultural dominance of white supremacy, basic assumptions of female inferiority, fears of homoeroticism, contempt for children and the aged, and devastating abuses of nature.

Beyond this questioning of authority, a second legacy of the 1960s was the common expectation (by most of the critics) of positive change. Average people began to fight back against racial injustice, sexual discrimination, and the ar-

rogance of generals, politicians, and official experts. It was seldom the “leaders” of this society who formed the emerging movements. A Civil Rights movement began and then some politicians responded; a women’s movement began and then some politicians responded; an ecology movement began and then some politicians responded. It was not the governing elites who began the gay movement or any of the other movements of the 1960s and early 1970s. Many of the implications of these movements were too disturbing for the powerful. The military, for example, was criticized in the 1960s and early 1970s because of the anti-democratic Uniform Code of Military Justice; soldiers were unable to form their own bargaining units; and the military was used to support anti-democratic regimes abroad. Some criticisms were later deflected, but much of the public was at least wary of the use of the military in foreign wars after the painful years of Vietnam. Even a successful later war, such as the 1990s reinstallation of the feudal despot of Kuwait and aid for the family dictatorships of the Arabian peninsula, created an enthusiasm that rapidly evaporated.

The 1960s put some issues permanently on the political and cultural map, whether conservatives wanted them there or not. Foreign policies were seldom bipartisan, but likely to be controversial. Many blacks declared that integration was not all that they wanted; they would define who they were, not whites. Sex discrimination laws emerged as a new area of legislation and litigation. Ecology laws and lawsuits proliferated. Many gay people came out of the closet. Radicals insisted that their versions of U.S. history were more accurate than that of white, upper-class, male, capitalist versions.

Most of the critics used liberal means to promote their goals: education, litigation, and legislation. By the 1990s, there were strong elements of technocratic elitism in most of the descendants of the 1960s and the 1970s. They had evolved (or devolved) into polite spokesmen and organizations to lobby for special interests. But each movement also had radical activists, such as Earth First! for ecology or ACT-UP and Queer Nation for gay liberation. By contrast, most of the sectarian parties had perished or withered into insignificance.

This era produced no unified vision and no central organization or confederation of organizations. It also raised more questions than it provided clear answers. Nonetheless, it was a defining period. Many Americans came of age intellectually and emotionally in the 1960s. They gained a sharper and more mature understanding of their own society and its place in the world. The failures and successes of this time can be instructive. By debating this past, we can gain a clearer knowledge of both our present and our future.

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