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CHAPTER 29

Civil Rights and the Crisis of Liberalism (1947–1969)

preview • Largely walled out from the prosperity of the 1950s, African Americans and Latinos campaigned to gain the freedoms denied them through widespread racism and, in the South, a system of segregation. As the civil rights movement blossomed, young, relatively affluent baby boomers spread the revolution to other areas of American life. Their radical goals sometimes clashed with President Lyndon Johnson's liberal strategy of using federal programs to alleviate inequality and create a "Great Society."

Six-year-old Ruby knew the lessons. She was to look straight ahead — not to one side or the other—and especially not at them. She was to keep walking. Above all, she was not to look back once she'd passed, because that would encourage them. Ruby knew these things, but it was hard to keep her eyes straight. The first day of school, her parents came, along with federal marshals to keep order. And all around hundreds of angry white people were yelling things like, "You little nigger, we'll get you and kill you." Then she was within the building's quiet halls and alone with her teacher. She was the only person in class: none of the white students had come. As the days went by during that autumn of 1960, the marshals stopped walking with her but the hecklers still waited. And once in a while Ruby couldn't help looking back, trying to see if she recognized the face of one woman in particular.

Ruby's parents were not social activists. They signed their daughter up for the white school in this New Orleans neighborhood because "we thought it was for all the colored to do, and we never thought Ruby would be alone." Her father's white employer fired him; letters and phone calls threatened the family. Through it all Ruby seemed to take things in stride, though her parents worried that she was not eating well. Often she left her school lunch untouched or refused anything other than packaged food such as potato chips. It was only after a time that the problem was traced to the hecklers. "They tells me I'm going to die, and that it'll be soon. And that one lady tells me every morning I'm getting poisoned soon, when she can fix it." Ruby was convinced that the woman owned the variety store nearby and would carry out her threat by poisoning the family's food.

Desegregation in New Orleans, 1960

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Over the course of a year, white students gradually returned to class and life settled into a new routine. By the time Ruby was 10, she had developed a remarkably clear perception of herself. "Maybe because of all the trouble going to school in the beginning I learned more about my people," she told Robert Coles, a psychologist studying children and the effects of segregation. "Maybe I would have anyway; because when you get older you see yourself and the white kids; and you find out the difference. You try to forget it, and say there is none; and if there is you won't say what it be. Then you say it's my own people, and so I can be proud of them instead of ashamed."

The new ways were not easy for white southerners either—even those who saw the need for change. One woman, a teacher from Atlanta, recalled for Robert Coles the summer 10 years earlier, when she went to New York City to take courses in education. There were black students in her dormitory, an integrated situation she was not used to. One day as she stepped from her shower, so did a black student from the nearby stall. "When I saw her I didn't know what to do," the woman recalled. "I felt

Overton Park Zoo in Memphis, Tennessee, was segregated like thousands of other public facilities throughout the South in the late 1950s. In the case of the zoo, Tuesdays were "colored" days, the only time when blacks could attend—except if the Fourth of July fell on a Tuesday. Then "colored" day was moved to Thursday.

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sick all over, and frightened. What I remember—I'll never forget it—is that horrible feeling of being caught in a terrible trap, and not knowing what to do about it. . . . My sense of propriety was with me, though—miraculously—and I didn't want to hurt the woman. It wasn't her that was upsetting me. I knew that, even in that moment of sickness and panic." So she ducked back into the shower untill the other woman left.

It took most of the summer before she felt comfortable eating with black students. Back in Atlanta, she told no one about her experiences. "At that time people would have thought one of two things: I was crazy (for being so upset and ashamed) or a fool who in a summer had become a dangerous 'race mixer.'" She continued to love the South and to defend its traditions of dignity, neighborliness, and honor, but she saw the need for change. And so in 1961 she volunteered to teach one of the first integrated high school classes in Atlanta. "I've never felt so useful," she concluded after two years; ". . . not just to the children but to our whole society. American as well as Southern. Those children, all of them, have given me more than I've given them."

THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

For Americans in all walks of life, the changes that swept the United States in the 1960s were wrenching. From the schoolrooms and lunch counters of the South to the college campuses of the North, from eastern slums to western migrant labor camps, American society was in ferment.

On the face of it, such agitation seemed to be a dramatic reversal of the placid 1950s. Turbulence and change had overturned stability and consensus. Yet the events of the 1960s grew naturally out of the social conditions that preceded them. The civil rights movement was not brought about by a group of farsighted leaders in government but by ordinary folk who sought change, often despite the reluctance or even fierce opposition of people in power. After World War II, grassroots organizations like the NAACP for blacks and the American GI Forum for Latinos acted with a new determination. Both peoples sought to achieve the equality of opportunity promised by the American creed.

The Changing South and African Americans

The struggle of African Americans for equality during the postwar era is filled with ironies. By the time barriers to legal segregation in the South began to fall, millions of black families were leaving for regions where discrimination was less easily challenged in court. The South they left behind was in the early stages of an economic boom. The cities to which many migrated had entered a period of decline. Yet, as if to close a circle, the rise of large black voting blocs in major cities created political pressures that forced the nation to dismantle the worst legal and institutional barriers to racial equality.

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Before World War II, 80 percent of African Americans lived in the South. Most raised cotton as sharecroppers and tenant farmers. But the war created a labor shortage at home, as millions went off to fight and others to armament factories. This shortage gave cotton growers an incentive to mechanize cotton picking. In 1950 only 5 percent of the crop was picked mechanically; by 1960 at least half was. Farmers began to consolidate land into larger holdings. Tenant farmers, sharecroppers, and hired labor of both races left the countryside for the city.

Mechanized cotton farming

The national level of wages also profoundly affected southern labor. When federal minimum wage laws forced lumber or textile mills to raise their pay scales, the mills no longer expanded. In addition, steel and other industries with strong national unions and manufacturers with plants around the country set wages by national standards. That brought southern wages close to the national average by the 1960s. As the southern economy grew, what had for many years been a distinct regional economy became more diversified and more integrated into the national economy.

As wages rose and unskilled work disappeared, job opportunities for black southerners declined. Outside of cotton farming, the lumber industry provided the largest number of jobs for young black men. There, the number of black teenagers hired by lumber mills dropped 74 percent between 1950 and 1960. New high-wage jobs were reserved for white southerners, since outside industries arriving in the South made no effort to change local patterns of discrimination. So the ultimate irony appeared. As per capita income rose and industrialization brought in new jobs, black laborers poured out of the region in search of work. They arrived in cities that showed scant tolerance for racial differences and little willingness or ability to hire unskilled black labor.

The NAACP and Civil Rights

In the postwar era the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) led the legal fight against racial segregation. Their hard-hitting campaign reflected the increased national political influence of African Americans as they migrated out of the South. No longer could northern politicians readily ignore the demands that black leaders made for greater equality. At first, however, the NAACP focused its campaign on the courts.

Thurgood Marshall was the association's leading attorney. Marshall had attended law school in the 1930s at Howard University in Washington. There, the law school's dean, Charles Houston, was in the midst of revamping the school and turning out sharp, dedicated lawyers. Not only was Marshall sharp, he had the common touch as well. "Before he came along," one observer noted,

Thurgood Marshall

> the principal black leaders—men like Du Bois and James Weldon Johnson and Charles Houston—didn't talk the language of the people. They were upper-class and upper-middle-class Negroes. Thurgood Marshall was of the people. . . . Out in Texas or Oklahoma or

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down the street here in Washington at the Baptist church, he would make these rousing speeches that would have 'em all jumping out of their seats. . . . "We ain't gettin' what we should," was what it came down to, and he made them see that.

During the late 1930s and early 1940s Marshall toured the South (in "a little old beat-up '29 Ford"), typing out legal briefs in the back seat, trying to get teachers to sue for equal pay, and defending blacks accused of murder in a Klan-infested country in Florida. He was friendly with whites and not shy. Black citizens who had never even considered the possibility that a member of their race might win a legal battle "would come for miles, some of them on muleback or horseback, to see 'the nigger lawyer' who stood up in white men's courtrooms."

For years NAACP lawyers worked hard to organize local chapters, to support members of the community willing to risk their jobs, property, and lives in order to challenge segregation. But they waged a moderate, pragmatic campaign. They chose not to attack head-on the Supreme Court decision (*Plessy v. Ferguson*, 1896) that permitted "separate but equal" segregated facilities. They simply demonstrated that a black college or school might be separate, but it was hardly equal if it lacked a law school or even indoor plumbing.

The Brown *Decision*

In 1950 the NAACP changed tactics: it would now try to convince the Supreme Court to overturn the separate but equal doctrine itself. Oliver Brown of Topeka, Kansas, was one of the people who provided a way. Brown was dissatisfied that his daughter Linda had to walk past an all-white school on her way to catch the bus to her segregated black school. A three-judge federal panel rejected Brown's suit because the schools in Topeka, while segregated, did meet the legal standards for equality. The NAACP appealed the case to the Supreme Court and, in 1954, won a striking decision. *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* overturned the lower court ruling and overthrew the doctrine of "separate but equal."

Marshall and his colleagues succeeded in part because of a change in the Court itself. The year before, President Eisenhower had appointed Earl Warren, a liberal Republican from California, as chief justice. Warren, a forceful advocate, managed to persuade the last of his reluctant judicial colleagues that segregation as defined in *Plessy* rested on an insupportable theory of racial supremacy. The Court ruled unanimously that separate facilities were inherently unequal. To keep black children segregated solely on the basis of race, it ruled, "generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone."

Overturning *Plessy*

At the time of the *Brown* decision, 21 states and the District of Columbia operated segregated school systems. All had to decide, in some way, how to comply with the new ruling. The Court allowed some leeway, handing down a second ruling in 1955 that required states to carry out desegregation "with all deliberate speed." Some border states reluctantly decided to comply, but in the Deep South,

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many pledged diehard defiance. In 1956, a "Southern Manifesto" was issued by 19 U.S. senators and 81 representatives: they intended to use "all lawful means" to reestablish legalized segregation.

Latino Civil Rights

Mexican Americans also considered school desegregation a key to their civil rights campaign. After World War II, only one percent of children of Mexican descent graduated from Texas high schools. Two Latino organizations, the American GI Forum and the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC, see page 716) supported legal challenges to the Texas system of school segregation.

In 1947 the superintendent in the town of Bastrop, Texas, had refused a request to enroll first-grader Minerva Delgado in a nearby all-white school. Civil rights lawyer and activist Gus Garcia, a legal adviser to both LULAC and the GI Forum, helped bring a case on Minerva's behalf against the school district. But before *Delgado et al. v. Bastrop et al.* could even be tried, a Texas judge ordered an end to segregated schools beyond the first grade (the exception was based on the assumption that the youngest Mexican American children needed special classes to learn English). *Delgado* served notice that Mexicans would no longer accept second-class citizenship. It also served as a precedent in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954.

Delgado and segregated schools

Two weeks before the Supreme Court made that landmark civil rights ruling, it also decided a case of great importance to Latinos. Unlike African Americans, Latinos did not face a Jim Crow system of laws imposing segregation. Throughout the Southwest the states recognized just two races: black and white. That left Mexican Americans in legal limbo. Though legally grouped with whites, by longstanding social custom they were barred from many public places, could not serve on juries, and faced widespread job discrimination. To remedy the situation, Mexican Americans had to establish themselves in the courts as a distinct class of people. Only then could they seek legal remedies.

An opportunity to make that case arose in the case of Pete Hernández, who had been convicted of murder by an all-white jury in Jackson County, Texas. As lawyer Gus Garcia and other Mexican American attorneys realized, no Mexican American had served on a Jackson jury in the previous 25 years. Taking a leaf from the tactics of Thurgood Marshall, they appealed the Hernández case before the Supreme Court, hoping to extend to Mexicans the benefits of the Fourteenth Amendment's equal protection clause.

The key to the Hernández case was ingenious but direct. Lawyers for Texas argued that because Mexicans were white, a jury without Mexicans was still a jury of peers. Yet the courthouse in which Hernández was convicted had two men's rooms. One said simply "MEN." The other had a crude, hand-lettered sign that read "COLORED MEN" and below that in Spanish, "HOMBRES AQUI [MEN HERE]." As one of Garcia's colleagues recalled, "In the

Hernández and desegregation

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Attorney Gus Garcia (left) was one of the key leaders of the American GI Forum, founded by Mexican American veterans to pursue their civil rights. He and his colleagues successfully appealed the conviction of Pete Hernández (center) before the Supreme Court in 1954.

jury pool, Mexicans may have been white, but when it came to nature's functions they were not." Such examples of discrimination persuaded the Supreme Court, in *Hernández v. Texas*, to throw out the state's argument. Latinos in south Texas, like African Americans across the South, were held to be a discrete group whose members deserved equal protection under the law. "The Fourteenth Amendment is not directed solely against discrimination due to a 'two-class theory,' that is, based upon differences between 'white' and Negro," ruled Chief Justice Earl Warren. Warren's reasoning made it possible for Latinos to seek redress as a group rather than as individuals. After *Hernández*, the Mexican American community had both the legal basis and the leadership to broaden its attack against discrimination.

A New Civil Rights Strategy

Neither the *Brown* nor the *Hernández* decisions ended segregation, but they combined with political and economic forces to usher in a new era of southern race relations. In December 1955 Rosa Parks, a 43-year-old black civil rights activist, was riding the bus home in Montgomery, Alabama. When the driver ordered her to give up her seat for a white man, as Alabama Jim Crow laws required, she refused. Police took her to jail and eventually fined her $14.

Rosa Parks

Determined to overturn the law, a number of women from the NAACP, led by Jo Ann Robinson, met secretly at midnight to draft a letter of protest:

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> Another Negro woman has been arrested and thrown into jail because she refused to get up out of her seat on the bus and give it to a white person. . . . Until we do something to stop these arrests, they will continue. The next time it may be you, or you or you. This woman's case will come up Monday. We are, therefore, asking every Negro to stay off the buses on Monday in protest of the arrest and trial.

Thousands of copies of the letter were distributed and the Monday boycott was such a success it was extended indefinitely. Many in the white community, in an effort to halt the unprecedented black challenge, resorted to various forms of legal and physical intimidation. No local insurance agent would insure cars used to carpool black workers. A bomb exploded in the house of the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., the key boycott leader. Still the boycotters held out until November 23, 1956, when the Supreme Court ruled that bus segregation was illegal.

The triumph was especially sweet for Martin Luther King Jr., whose leadership in Montgomery brought him national fame. Before becoming a minister at the Dexter Street Baptist Church, King had had little personal contact with the worst forms of white racism. He had grown up in the relatively affluent middle-class black community of Atlanta, Georgia, the son of one of the city's most prominent black ministers. He attended Morehouse College, an academically respected black school in Atlanta, and Crozer Theological Seminary in Philadelphia before entering the doctoral program in theology at Boston University. As a graduate student, King embraced the pacifism and nonviolence of the Indian leader Mohandas Gandhi and the activism of Christian reformers of the progressive era.

Martin Luther King Jr.

As boycott leader, it was King's responsibility to rally support without triggering violence. Since local officials were all too eager for any excuse to use force, King's nonviolent approach proved an effective strategy. "In our protest there will be no cross burnings. No white person will be taken from his home by a hooded Negro mob and brutally murdered." And he evoked the Christian and republican ideals that would become the themes of his civil rights crusade. "If we protest courageously, and yet with dignity and Christian love," he said, "when the future history books are written, somebody will have to say, 'There lived a race of people, of black people, of people who had the moral courage to stand up for their rights. And thereby they injected a new meaning into the history of civilization.'"

Indeed, the African Americans of Montgomery did set an example of moral courage that attracted national attention and rewrote the pages of American race relations. King and his colleagues were developing the tactics needed to launch a more aggressive phase of the civil rights movement.

Little Rock and the White Backlash

The civil rights spotlight moved the following year to Little Rock, Arkansas. There, reluctant white officials had adopted a plan to integrate the schools with a most deliberate lack of speed. Nine black students were scheduled to enroll in September

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1957 at the all-white Central High School. Instead, the school board urged them to stay home. Governor Orval Faubus, generally a moderate on race relations, called out the Arkansas National Guard on the excuse of maintaining order. President Eisenhower, who had refused to endorse the *Brown* decision, tacitly supported Faubus in his defiance of court-ordered integration by remarking that "you cannot change people's hearts merely by laws."

Still, the Justice Department could not let Faubus defy the federal courts. It won an injunction against the governor, but when the nine blacks returned on September 23, a mob of 1000 abusive protesters greeted them. So great was national attention to the crisis that President Eisenhower felt compelled to send in a thousand federal troops and take control of the National Guard. For one year the Guard preserved order until Faubus, in a last-ditch maneuver, closed all the schools. Only in 1959, under the pressure of another federal court ruling, did the Little Rock schools reopen and resume the plan for gradual integration.

In the face of such attitudes, King and other civil rights leaders recognized that the skirmishes of Montgomery and Little Rock were a beginning, not the end. Cultural attitudes and customs were not about to give way overnight. Black leaders were unable to achieve momentum on a national scale until 1960. Then, a series of spontaneous demonstrations by young people changed everything.

A MOVEMENT BECOMES A CRUSADE

On January 31, 1960, Joseph McNeill got off the bus in Greensboro, North Carolina, a freshman on the way back to college. When he looked for something to eat at the lunch counter, the waitress gave the familiar reply. "We don't serve Negroes here."

It was a refrain repeated countless times and in countless places. Yet for some reason this rebuke particularly offended McNeill. He and his roommates had read a pamphlet describing the 1955 bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama. They decided it was time to make their own protest against segregation. Proceeding the next day to the "whites only" lunch counter at a local store, they sat politely waiting for service. Rather than serve them, the manager closed the counter. Word of the action spread. A day later—Tuesday—the four students were joined by 27 more. Wednesday, the number jumped to 63, Thursday, to over 300. Come the weekend, 1600 students rallied to plan further action. Within two weeks, the courage of the Greensboro students had inspired 15 sit-ins across the South. By year's end, 70,000 people had demonstrated; thousands had gone to jail.

Greensboro sit-ins

The campaign for black civil rights gained momentum not so much by the power of national movements as through a host of individual decisions by local groups and citizens. When New Orleans schools were desegregated in 1960, young Ruby's parents had not intended to make a social statement. But once involved,

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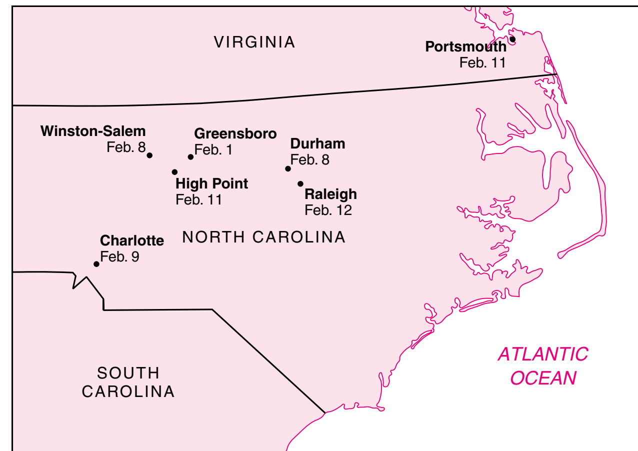

THE SPONTANEOUS SPREAD OF SIT-INS, FEBRUARY 1960
Sit-ins began in Greensboro the week of February 1. After a weekend rally, they spread to Durham and Winston-Salem on Monday, February 8. Tuesday, the demonstrations jumped to Charlotte; Thursday, High Point and Portsmouth, Virginia. A radio news broadcast in Raleigh assured white residents that black students there would not follow Greensboro's example. In response, angry black students demonstrated in Raleigh.

they refused to back down. The students at Greensboro had not been approached by the NAACP, but acted on their own initiative.

Riding to Freedom

The SCLC, CORE, and SNCC

Of course, organizations channeled these discontents and aspirations. But the new generation of younger activists also shaped and altered the organizations. Beginning in the 1960s, the push for desegregation moved from court actions launched by the NAACP and the Urban League to newer groups determined to take direct action. Martin Luther King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) hinted at newer, more direct challenges to the social order. Since organizing the Montgomery boycott, King had continued to advocate nonviolent protest: "To resist without bitterness; to be cursed and not reply; to be beaten and not hit back." A second organization, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), was even more prepared to force confrontations with the segregationist system. Another group, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC, pronounced "Snick"), grew out of the Greensboro sit-in. SNCC represented the militant, younger generation of black activists, impatient with the slow pace of reform.

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In May 1961 CORE director James Farmer led a group of black and white "freedom riders" on a bus trip from Washington to New Orleans. They intended to focus national attention on the inequality of segregated facilities. Violent southern mobs gave the freedom riders the kind of attention they feared. In South Carolina, thugs beat divinity student John Lewis as he tried to enter an all-white waiting room. Mobs in Anniston and Birmingham, Alabama, assaulted the freedom riders as police ignored the violence. One of the buses was burned.

Sensitive to the power of conservative southern Democrats, President Kennedy tried to avoid sending federal forces to protect the demonstrators. But his hopes were dashed. From a phone booth outside the bus terminal, John Doar, a Justice Department official in Montgomery, relayed the horror to Attorney General Robert Kennedy:

> Now the passengers are coming off. They're standing on a corner of the platform. Oh, there are fists, punching! A bunch of men led by a guy with a bleeding face are beating them. There are no cops. It's terrible! It's terrible! There's not a cop in sight. People are yelling. "There those niggers are! Get 'em, get 'em!" It's awful.

Appalled, Robert Kennedy ordered in 400 federal marshals, who barely managed to hold off the crowd.

Both Kennedys understood that civil rights was the most divisive issue the administration faced. The president needed the votes of African Americans and liberals to win reelection. Yet an active federal role threatened to drive white southerners from the Democratic party. Thus Kennedy hedged on his promise to introduce civil rights legislation. He assured black leaders that executive orders would eliminate discrimination in the government and in businesses filling government contracts. He appointed several blacks to high positions and five, including Thurgood Marshall, to the federal courts. But the freedom riders, by their bold actions, forced the Kennedys to do more.

Civil Rights at High Tide

By the fall of 1961 Robert Kennedy had persuaded SNCC to shift its energies to voter registration, which he assumed would stir less violence. Voting booths, Kennedy noted, were not like schools, where people would protest, "We don't want our little blond daughter going to school with a Negro."

As SNCC and CORE workers arrived in southern towns in the spring of 1962, they discovered that voting rights was not a peaceful issue. Over two years in Mississippi they registered only 4000 out of 394,000 black adults. Angry racists countered with legal harassment, jailings, beatings, bombings, and murders. Terrorized workers who called for protection found it woefully lacking. FBI agents often stood by taking notes while SNCC volunteers were assaulted. Undaunted, the workers fanned out across the countryside to speak with farmers and sharecroppers who had never dared ask for the vote.

Confrontation increased when a federal court ordered the segregated University of Mississippi to admit James Meredith, a black applicant. When Governor

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EYEWITNESS TO HISTORY

A Mississippi College Student Attends the NAACP Convention

In mid September [1962] I was back on campus. But didn't very much happen until February when the NAACP held its annual convention in Jackson [Mississippi]. They were having a whole lot of interesting speakers: Jackie Robinson, Floyd Patterson, Curt Flood, Margaretta Belafonte, and many others. I wouldn't have missed it for anything. I was so excited that I sent one of the leaflets home to Mama and asked her to come.

Three days later I got a letter from Mama with dried-up tears on it, forbidding me to go to the convention. It went on for more than six pages. She said if I didn't stop that shit she would come to Tougaloo and kill me herself. She told me about the time I last visited her, on Thanksgiving, and she had picked me up at the bus station. She said she picked me up because she was scared some white in my hometown would try to do something to me. She said the sheriff had been by, telling her I was messing around with that NAACP group. She said he told her if I didn't stop it, I could not come back there any more. He said that they didn't need any of those NAACP people messing around in Centreville. She ended the letter by saying that she had burned the leaflet I sent her. "Please don't send any more of that stuff here. I don't want nothing to happen to us here," she said. "If you keep that up, you will never be able to come home again."

I was so damn mad after her letter, I felt like taking the NAACP convention to Centreville. I think I would have, if it had been in my power to do so. The remainder of the week I thought of nothing except going to the convention. I didn't know exactly what to do about it. I didn't want Mama or any one at home to get hurt because of me.

Meredith enters University of Mississippi

Ross Barnett personally blocked Meredith's registration in September 1962, Kennedy ordered several hundred federal marshals to escort Meredith into a university dormitory. The marshals were met by a mob, which shot out street lights and threw rocks and bottles. The president finally sent in federal troops, but not before 2 people were killed and 375 wounded.

In Mississippi, President Kennedy had begun to lose control of the civil rights issue. The House of Representatives, influenced by television coverage of the violence, introduced a number of civil rights measures. And in 1963 Martin Luther King led a group to Birmingham, Alabama, to force a showdown against segregation. From a prison cell there, he produced one of the most eloquent documents of the civil rights movement, his "Letter from Birmingham Jail." Addressed to local ministers who had called for an end to confrontation, King defended the use of civil disobedience. The choice, he warned, was not between obeying the law and nonviolently breaking it to bring about change. It was between his way and streets "flowing with blood," as frustrated black citizens turned toward more militant ideologies.

"Letter from Birmingham Jail"

I had felt something was wrong when I was home. During the four days I was there, Mama tried to do everything she could to keep me in the house. When I said I was going to see some of my old classmates, she pretended she was sick and said I would have to cook. I knew she was acting strangely, but I hadn't known why. I thought Mama just wanted me to spend most of my time with her, since this was only the second time I had been home since I entered college as a freshman.

Things kept running through my mind after that letter from Mama. My mind was so active, I couldn't sleep at night. I remembered the one time I did leave the house to go to the post office. I had walked past a bunch of white men on the street on my way through town and one said "Is that the gal goin' to Tougaloo?" He acted kind of mad or something, and I didn't know what was going on. I got a creepy feeling, so I hurried home. When I told Mama about it, she just said, "A lotta people don't like that school." I knew what she meant. Just before I went to Tougaloo, they had housed the Freedom Riders there. The school was being criticized by whites throughout the state.

The night before the convention started, I made up my mind to go, no matter what Mama said. I just wouldn't tell Mama or anyone from home. Then it occurred to me—how did the sheriff or anyone at home know I was working with the NAACP chapter on campus? Somehow they had found out. Now I knew I could never go to Centreville safely again. I kept telling myself that I didn't really care too much about going home, that it was more important to me to go to the convention.

I was there from the very beginning. Jackie Robinson was asked to serve as moderator. This was the first time I had seen him in person. I remembered how when Jackie became the first Negro to play Major League baseball, my uncles and most of the Negro boys in my hometown started organizing baseball leagues. It did something for them to see a Negro out there playing with all those white players. Jackie was a good moderator, I thought. He kept smiling and joking. People felt relaxed and proud. They appreciated knowing and meeting people of their own race who had done something worth talking about.

Source: Excerpt from Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi*, pp. 261–262. Copyright © 1968 by Anne Moody. Reprinted by permission of Doubleday, a division of Random House, Inc.

Once freed, King led new demonstrations. Television cameras were on hand that May as Birmingham police chief "Bull" Connor, a man with a short fuse, unleashed attack dogs, club-wielding police, and fire hoses powerful enough to peel the bark off trees. When segregationist bombs went off in African American neighborhoods, black mobs retaliated with their own riot, burning a number of shops and businesses owned by white citizens. In the following 10 weeks, more than 750 protests and marches erupted in 186 cities and towns, both North and South. King's warning of streets "flowing with blood" no longer seemed far-fetched.

Kennedy sensed that he could no longer compromise on civil rights. "If [an American with dark skin] cannot enjoy the full and free life all of us want," he asked Americans, "then who among us would be content to have the color of his skin changed and stand in his place? Who among us would then be content with counsels of patience and delay?" The president followed his words with support for a strong civil rights bill to end segregation and protect black voters. When King announced a massive march on Washington for August 1963, Kennedy

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objected that it would undermine support for his bill. "I have never engaged in any direct action movement which did not seem ill-timed," King replied. Faced with the inevitable, Kennedy convinced the organizers to use the event to promote the administration's bill, much to the disgust of militant CORE and SNCC factions.

On August 28 some 250,000 people gathered at the Lincoln Memorial to march and sing in support of civil rights and racial harmony. Appropriately, the day belonged to King. In the powerful tones of a southern preacher, he reminded the crowd that the Declaration of Independence was a promise that applied to all people, black and white. "I have a dream," he told them, that one day "all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, 'Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!'"

The march on Washington

On August 28, 1963, more than 250,000 demonstrators joined the great civil rights march on Washington. The day belonged to the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., who movingly called on black and white Americans to join together in a color-blind society.

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The Fire Next Time

While liberals applauded Kennedy's civil rights stand and appreciative African Americans rejoined the Democratic party, many southern whites and northern ethnics deserted. The president scheduled a trip to Texas to recoup some southern support. On November 22, 1963, the people of Dallas lined the streets for his motorcade. Suddenly, a sniper's rifle fired several times. Kennedy slumped into his wife's arms, fatally wounded. His assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, was caught several hours later. Oswald seemed a mysterious figure. Emotionally unstable, he had spent several years in the Soviet Union. But his actions were never fully explained, because only two days after his arrest—in full view of television cameras—he was gunned down by a disgruntled nightclub operator named Jack Ruby.

Assassination

In the face of such violence, many Americans came to doubt that gradual reform or nonviolence could hold the nation together. Many younger black leaders observed that civil rights received the greatest national coverage when white, not black, demonstrators were killed. They wondered too how Lyndon Johnson, a consummate southern politician, would approach the civil rights programs.

The new president, however, saw the need for action. Just as the Catholic issue had tested Kennedy's ability to lead, Johnson was convinced that if he failed on civil rights, "I'd be dead before I could ever begin." On his first day in office, he promised one civil rights leader after another that he would pass Kennedy's bill. Despite a southern filibuster in the Senate, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 became law. Embodying the provisions of the Kennedy bill, it barred discrimination in public accommodations like lunch counters, bus stations, and hotels. It also prohibited employers from discriminating by race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.

Civil Rights Act of 1964

The Civil Rights Act, however, did not strike down literacy tests and other laws used to prevent black citizens from voting. With King and other black leaders keeping up the pressure, President Johnson persuaded Congress to pass a strong Voting Rights Act in August 1965. The act outlawed literacy tests and permitted federal officials to monitor elections in many southern districts. With some justice Johnson called the act "one of the most monumental laws in the entire history of American freedom." Within a five-year period black registration in the South jumped from 35 to 65 percent.

Voting Rights Act of 1965

Black Power

But even the new civil rights laws did not strike at the de facto segregation found outside the South. This was segregation not spelled out in laws but practiced through unwritten custom. In large areas of America, African Americans were locked out of suburbs, kept out of decent schools, barred from clubs, and denied all but the most menial jobs. Nor did the Voting Rights Act deal with the sources

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of urban black poverty. The median income for urban black residents was about half of what white residents earned.

In such an atmosphere, militants sharply questioned the liberal goal of integration. Since the 1930s the Black Muslim religious sect, dedicated to complete separation from white society, had attracted as many as 100,000 members, mostly young men. During the early 1960s the sect drew wider attention through the efforts of Malcolm X. Provocative, shrewd, and charismatic, Malcolm had learned the language of the downtrodden from his own experience as a former hustler, gambler, and prison inmate. His militancy alarmed whites, though by 1965 he was in fact becoming more moderate. He accepted integration, but emphasized black community action. After breaking with the Black Muslims, Malcolm was gunned down by rivals.

Malcolm X

But by 1965, even CORE and SNCC had begun to give up working with white liberals for nonviolent change. If black Americans were to liberate themselves fully, militants argued, they could not merely accept rights "given" to them by whites: they had to claim them. Some members began carrying guns to defend themselves. In 1966 Stokely Carmichael of SNCC gave the militants a slogan—"Black Power"—and the defiant symbol of a gloved fist raised in the air.

In its moderate form, the black power movement encouraged African Americans to recover their cultural roots, their African heritage, and a new sense of identity. African clothes and natural hairstyles became popular. On college campuses black students pressed universities to hire black faculty, create black studies programs, and provide segregated social and residential space.

For black militants, on the other hand, violence became a revolutionary tool. The Black Panther party of Oakland, California, called on the black community to arm. Panther leader Huey Newton and his followers openly brandished shotguns and rifles as they patrolled the streets protecting blacks from police harassment. After a gun battle with police left a wounded Newton in jail, Eldridge Cleaver assumed leadership of the party. But even at the height of their power, the Panthers never counted more than 2000 members nationwide.

Black Panthers

Violence in the Streets

No ideology organized the frustration and despair that existed in the ghettos. Often, a seemingly minor incident like an arrest or an argument on the streets would trigger an eruption of violence. A mob would gather, and police cars and white-owned stores would be firebombed or looted. Riots broke out in Harlem and Rochester, New York, in 1964; the Watts area of Los Angeles in 1965; Chicago in 1966; and Newark and Detroit in 1967. It took nearly 5000 troops to end the bloodiest rioting in Detroit, where 40 died, 2000 were injured, and 5000 were left homeless.

To most white Americans the violence was unfathomable and inexcusable. Martin Luther King, still pursuing the tactics of nonviolence, was saddened by the destruction but came to understand the anger behind it. Touring Watts only days

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after the riots, he was approached by a band of young blacks. "We won," they told him proudly. "How can you say you won," King countered, "when thirty-four Negroes are dead, your community is destroyed, and whites are using the riot as an excuse for inaction?" The youngsters were unmoved. "We won because we made them pay attention to us."

For Lyndon Johnson, ghetto violence and black militance mocked his efforts to achieve racial progress. The Civil Rights and Voting Rights acts were essential parts of the "Great Society" he hoped to build. In that effort he had achieved a legislative record virtually unequaled by any other president in the nation's history. What Kennedy had promised, Johnson delivered. But the anger exploding in the nation's cities exposed serious flaws in the theory and practice of liberal reform.

LYNDON JOHNSON AND THE GREAT SOCIETY

Like the state he hailed from, Lyndon Baines Johnson was in all things bigger than life. His gifts were greater, his flaws more glaring. Insecurity was his Achilles' heel and the engine that drove him. If Kennedy had been good as president, Johnson

Lyndon Johnson had difficulty playing second fiddle to anyone, even as vice president under John F. Kennedy (right).

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would be "the greatest of them all, the whole bunch of them." His folksy style often verged on the vulgar: after a 1965 operation, he shocked a national audience by lifting his shirt to expose a jagged scar and corpulent belly. The president was sometimes driven to ask why so few people genuinely liked him; once a courageous diplomat actually answered; "Because, Mr. President, you are not a very likable man."

Johnson was born in the hill country outside Austin, Texas, where the dry, rough terrain only grudgingly yielded up a living. He arrived in Washington in 1932 as an ardent New Dealer who loved the political game. As majority leader of the Senate after 1954, Johnson was regarded as a moderate conservative who knew what strings to pull to get the job done. On an important bill, he latched onto the undecided votes until they succumbed to the famous "Johnson treatment," a combination of arguments, threats, rewards, and patriotic appeals. (Once, before meeting with Johnson, President Eisenhower pleaded with his attorney general, William Rogers, to run interference: "Bill, if Lyndon tries to get around my desk, block him off. I can't stand it when he grabs me by the lapel.")

The Johnson treatment

Despite his compulsion to control every person and situation, Johnson was best at hammering out compromises among competing interest groups. To those who served him well he could be loyal and generous. And as president, he cared sincerely about society's underdogs. His support for civil rights, aid to the poor, education, and the welfare of the elderly arose out of genuine conviction. In that sense, he stood squarely in the liberal political tradition that flowered during the 1960s. Like the New Dealers of the 1930s and the progressives before them, liberals were pragmatic reformers who wished to refine rather than overturn capitalism. Like Franklin Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy, Johnson believed that the government could and should actively manage the economy in order to soften the boom-and-bust swings of capitalism. Like progressives from the turn of the century, Johnson looked to improve society by applying the intelligence of "experts." With the nation still in shock over the Kennedy assassination, Johnson possessed the horse-trading skills—and the leverage with the southern wing of the Democratic party—to accomplish far more of the liberal dream than Kennedy himself ever could.

The liberal tradition

The Origins of the Great Society

In the first months after the assassination, Johnson acted as the conservator of the Kennedy legacy. "Let us continue," he told a grief-stricken nation. Liberals who had dismissed Johnson as an unprincipled power broker came to respect the energy he showed in quickly steering Kennedy's Civil Rights Act and tax cut legislation through Congress.

Kennedy had come to believe that prosperity alone would not ease the plight of America's poor. In 1962 Michael Harrington's book *The Other America* brought

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attention to the persistence of poverty despite the nation's affluence. Harrington focused attention on the hills of Appalachia that stretched from western Pennsylvania south to Alabama. In some counties a quarter of the population survived on a diet of flour and dried-milk paste supplied by federal surplus food programs. Under Kennedy, Congress had passed a new food stamp program as well as laws designed to revive the economies of poor areas. Robert Kennedy also headed a presidential committee to fight juvenile delinquency in urban slums by involving the poor in "community action" programs.

Michael Harrington's *The Other America*

It fell to Lyndon Johnson to fight Kennedy's "war on poverty." By August 1964 this master politician had driven through Congress the most sweeping social welfare bill since the New Deal. The Economic Opportunity Act addressed almost every major cause of poverty. It included training programs such as the Job Corps, which brought poor and unemployed recruits to rural or urban camps to learn new job skills. It granted loans to rural families and urban small businesses as well as aid to migrant workers. The price tag for these programs was high—almost $1 billion to fund the new Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO).

Economic Opportunity Act

The speed Johnson demanded led inevitably to confusion, conflict, and waste. Officials at OEO often found themselves in conflict with other cabinet departments as well as with state and local officials. For example, OEO workers organized voter registration drives in order to oust corrupt city officials. Others led rent strikes to force improvements in public housing. The director of city housing in Syracuse, New York, reacted typically: "We are experiencing a class struggle in the traditional Karl Marx style in Syracuse, and I do not like it." Such battles for bureaucratic turf undermined federal poverty programs.

The Election of 1964

In 1964, however, these long-term flaws were not yet evident. Johnson's political stock remained high as he announced his ambition to forge a "Great Society," in which poverty and racial injustice no longer existed. The chance to fulfill his dreams seemed open to him, for the Republicans nominated Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona as their presidential candidate. Though ruggedly handsome and refreshingly candid, Goldwater believed that government should not dispense welfare, subsidize farmers, or aid public education. Few Americans subscribed to such conservative views. Many worried, too, at Goldwater's willingness to give military commanders the power to launch tactical nuclear weapons without presidential authority.

Thus the election produced the landslide Johnson craved. Carrying every state except Arizona and four in the Deep South, he received 61 percent of the vote. Democrats gained better than two-to-one majorities in the Senate and House. The president moved rapidly to exploit the momentum.

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The Great Society

In January 1965 Johnson announced a legislative vision that would extend welfare programs on a scale beyond even Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. By the end of 1965, some 50 bills had been passed, many of them major pieces of legislation.

As a former teacher, Johnson made education the cornerstone of his program. Stronger schools would compensate the poor for their disadvantaged homes, he believed. Under the Elementary and Secondary School Act, students in low-income school districts were to receive educational equipment, money for books, and enrichment programs like Project Head Start for nursery-school-age children. As schools scrambled to create programs that would tap federal money, they sometimes spent more to pay middle-class educational professionals than to teach lower-income students.

Programs in education

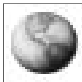
Johnson also pushed through the Medicare Act to provide the elderly with health insurance to cover their hospital costs. Studies had shown that older people used hospitals three times more than other Americans did and generally had incomes only half as large. Since Medicare made no provision for the poor who were not elderly, Congress also passed a program called Medicaid. Participating states would receive matching grants from the federal government to pay the medical expenses of those on welfare or those too poor to afford medical care.

Medicare and Medicaid

In many ways, Medicare and Medicaid worked. Over the next two decades, their benefits helped to lower significantly the number of elderly poor. But as more patients used hospital services, Medicare budgets rose. In addition, nothing in the act restricted hospitals or doctors from raising their fees or charging for care they had once given for free. The cost of the programs soared by more than 500 percent in the first 10 years.

The Great Society also reformed immigration policy in ways that showed how much global economics and culture had changed since 1924, when the National Origins Act was passed. Then, the National Origins Act had embodied the deeply Eurocentric orientation of American society, providing that almost all the annual admissions quota of 154,000 went to Northern Europeans. Asians were barred almost entirely.

Immigration



By 1965, with Asian economies growing, the war in Vietnam expanding, and civil rights sentiments at a peak, American attitudes were changing. The Immigration Act of 1965 abolished the national origins system. It increased annual admissions to 170,000 and gave marked preference to reuniting families of those immigrants already in the United States—so much so that some observers nicknamed it the "brothers and sisters act." Asians and Eastern Europeans were among its prime beneficiaries. Such liberal provisions were offset, however, by prejudice toward Latin Americans. Many in Congress feared a massive influx of workers from south of the border, where widespread poverty had left thousands unemployed and desperate for work. Hence the new act capped arrivals from the Western Hemisphere at 120,000 annually. Johnson's immigration reform thus reflected the shifting balance of the global economy.

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Nor did Johnson, in his efforts to outdo the New Deal, slight the environment. By the mid-1960s many Americans had become increasingly concerned about smog from factories and automobiles; lakes and rivers polluted by detergents, pesticides, and industrial wastes; and the disappearance of wildlife. In 1964 Congress had already passed the National Wilderness Preservation System Act to set aside 9.1 million acres of wilderness as "forever wild." Congress first established pollution standards for interstate waterways and a year later provided funds for sewage treatment and water purification. Legislation also tightened standards on air pollution. Despite opposition from entrenched interests, the new standards did result in a gradual improvement in water and air quality in many areas.

The environment

Historians have difficulty measuring the Great Society's impact. It produced more legislation and more reforms than the New Deal. It also carried a higher price tag than anyone predicted. Economic statistics suggested that general prosperity, boosted by the tax cut bill, did more to fight poverty than all the OEO programs. Conservatives and radicals alike objected that the liberal welfare state was intruding into too many areas of people's lives.

Evaluating the Great Society

For all that, the Great Society proved to be the high-water mark of a trend toward activist government that had grown steadily since the progressive era and the Great Depression. While Americans continued to pay lip service to the notion that government should remain small and interfere little in citizens' lives, no strong movement emerged to eliminate Medicare or Medicaid. Few Americans disputed the right of the government to regulate industrial pollution or to control the excesses of large corporations or powerful labor unions. In this sense, the tradition of liberalism prevailed, whatever Johnson's failings.

The Reforms of the Warren Court

Although Lyndon Johnson and Congress led the liberal crusade in the 1960s, the Supreme Court played an equally significant role. Until Chief Justice Earl Warren retired in 1969, the Court continued to hand down landmark decisions in broad areas of civil liberties and civil rights.

In 1960 the rights of citizens accused of a crime but not yet convicted were often unclear. Those too poor to afford lawyers could be forced to go to trial without representation. Often they were not informed of their constitutional rights when arrested. In a series of decisions, the Court ruled that the Fourteenth Amendment provided broad guarantees of due process under the law. *Gideon v. Wainwright* (1963), an appeal launched by a Florida prisoner, made it clear that all citizens were entitled to legal counsel in any case involving a possible jail sentence. In *Escobedo v. Illinois* (1964) and *Miranda v. Arizona* (1966), the Court declared that individuals detained for a crime must be informed of the charges against them, of their right to remain silent, and of their

Protection of due process

I was sentenced to The State Penitentiary by The Circuit Court of Bay County, State of Florida. The present proceeding was commenced on a petition for a Writ of Habeus Corpus to The Supreme Court of The State of Florida to vacate the sentence, on the grounds that I was made to stand Trial without the aid of counsel, and, at all times of my incarseration. The said Court refused to appoint counsel and therefore deprived me of Due process of law, and violate my rights in The Bill of Right and the constitution of the United states.

Clarence Earl Gideon

5th day of Jan 1962 Petitioner

Notary Public

Gideon's Letter to the Supreme Court
John F. Davis, Clerk, Supreme Court of the United States

Clarence Earl Gideon, a prisoner in a Florida jail, used this handwritten letter to bring his successful appeal to the Supreme Court. In the Gideon case the court ruled that even poor defendants have the right to legal counsel.

right to have an attorney present during questioning. Though these decisions applied to all citizens, they were primarily intended to benefit the poor, who were most likely to be in trouble with the law and least likely to understand their rights.

Liberal social decisions

Other decisions promoted a more liberal social climate. In *Griswold v. Connecticut* (1964) the Warren Court overturned a nineteenth-century law banning the sale of contraceptives or medical advice about their use. The Court also demonstrated its distaste for censorship by greatly narrowing the legal definition of obscenity. A book had to be "utterly without redeeming social value" to permit censorship. And the Court strengthened the constitutional separation of church and state by ruling in *Engel v. Vitale* (1962) that prayers could not be read in public schools.

Banning official school prayer may have been one of the Court's most controversial decisions; *Baker v. Carr* (1962) was one of its most far-reaching. Most states had not redrawn their legislative districts to reflect the growth of urban and suburban population since the nineteenth century. The less populated (and most often conservative) rural areas elected the most legislators. In *Baker v. Carr* the Court ruled that the states must redraw legislative lines to follow as closely as possible the principle of "one person, one vote."

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YOUTH MOVEMENTS

In 1964 some 800 students from Berkeley, Oberlin, and other colleges met in western Ohio to be trained for the voter registration campaign in the South. Middle-class students who had grown up in peaceful white suburbs found themselves being instructed by protest-hardened SNCC coordinators. The lessons were sobering. When beaten by police, the SNCC staff advised, assume the fetal position—hands protecting the neck, elbows covering the temples. That minimized injuries from nightsticks. A few days later, grimmer news arrived. Three volunteers who had left for Mississippi two days earlier had already been arrested by local police. Now they were reported "missing." Six weeks later, their mangled bodies were found, bulldozed into the earthworks of a freshly finished dam.

By the mid-1960s conservatives, civil rights organizations, and the poor were not the only groups rejecting liberal solutions. Dissatisfied members of the middle class—and especially the young—had joined them. The students who returned to campus from the voter registration campaign that summer of 1964 were the shock troops of a much larger movement.

Activists on the New Left

More than a few students had become disillusioned with the slow pace of reform. Tom Hayden, from a working-class family in a suburb of Detroit, went to college at the University of Michigan, then traveled to Berkeley, and soon joined civil rights workers in Mississippi. Along with other radical students, Hayden helped form Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). Members of SDS gave up on change through the electoral system. Direct action was needed if the faceless, bureaucratic society of the "organization man" were to be made truly democratic. SDS advocated a "participatory democracy" that made full use of sit-ins, protest marches, and confrontation.

Students for a Democratic Society

SDS also involved itself in SNCC's voting rights projects, especially Mississippi Freedom Summer. Young student volunteers gave up their surburban dress for overalls and work shirts of the sort worn by poor African American laborers in the Mississippi Delta. Volunteers and local folks shared in the terror of frequent harassment and even possible death. Once SNCC volunteers returned to their college campuses, they themselves became catalysts for much of the turmoil that followed. These students did not necessarily "cause" the rebellion of the 1960s, but they did help shape much of the discontent stirring beneath the veneer of campus conformity.

These discontents surfaced most dramatically in the Free Speech Movement at the University of California's Berkeley campus. To most liberals, Berkeley was the gem of the California state system. Like so many other universities, it had educated a generation of GIs following World War II. But to people like Tom Hayden and the SDS, Berkeley was a bureaucratic

Free Speech Movement

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monster, enrolling more than 30,000 students who filed into large impersonal halls to endure lectures from remote professors. In the fall of 1964, Berkeley officials declared off limits the one small area in which political organizations had been allowed to advertise their causes. When university police tried to remove a recruiter for CORE, thousands of angry students surrounded a police car for 32 hours.

To Mario Savio, a graduate student in philosophy and veteran of the Mississippi Freedom summer, the issue was clear: "In our free-speech fight, we have come up against what may emerge as the greatest problem of our nation—depersonalized, unresponsive bureaucracy." When the university's president, Clark Kerr, threatened to expel Savio, 6000 students took control of the administration building, stopped classes with a strike, and convinced many faculty members to join them. Kerr backed down, placing no limits to free speech on campus except those that applied to society at large. But the lines between students and administrators had been drawn. The rebellious spirit spread to other major universities like Michigan, Yale, and Columbia, and then to campuses across the nation.

The Rise of the Counterculture

Other youthful rebels were less interested in political dissent. Instead, they condemned American society as materialistic and shallow. These alienated students began to grope toward spiritual, nonmaterial goals. "Turn on to the scene, tune in to what is happening, and drop out of high school, college, grad school, junior executive," advised Timothy Leary, a Harvard psychology professor who dropped out himself. Those who heeded Leary's call to spiritual renewal rejected politics for a lifestyle of experimentation with music, sex, and drugs. Observers labeled their movement a "counterculture."

The counterculture of the 1960s had much in common with earlier religious revival and utopian movements. It admired the quirky individualism of Henry David Thoreau. Like Thoreau, it turned to Asian philosophies such as Zen Buddhism. Like Brook Farm and other nineteenth-century utopian communities, the new "hippie" communes sought perfection along the fringes of society. Communards "learned how to scrounge materials, tear down abandoned buildings, use the unusable," as one member of the "Drop City" commune put it. Sexual freedom became a means to liberate members of the counterculture from the repressive inhibitions that distorted the lives of their "uptight" parents. Drugs appeared to offer access to a higher state of consciousness or pleasure.

Communal living

The early threads of the 1960s counterculture led back to the 1950s and the subculture of the beat generation (page 833). For the beats, unconventional drugs had long been a part of the scene, but after 1965 their use expanded dramatically. Timothy Leary began experimenting with hallucinogenic mushrooms in Mexico and soon moved on to LSD. The drug "blew his mind," he announced, and he became so enthusiastic in making converts that Harvard blew

The drug scene

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him straight out of its hallowed doors. By 1966 Leary was lecturing across the land on the joys of drug use.

Where Leary's approach to LSD was cool and contemplative, novelist Ken Kesey (*One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*) embraced it with antic frenzy. His ragtag company of druggies and freaks formed the "Merry Pranksters" at Kesey's home outside San Francisco. Writer Tom Wolfe chronicled their travels in *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* as the Pranksters headed east on a psychedelic school bus in search of Leary. Their example inspired others to drop out.

This couple at their wedding reflect many of the motifs of the counterculture—long hair, casual dress, informal setting, and racial equality.

The Rock Revolution

In the 1950s rock and roll defined a teen culture preoccupied with young love, cars, and adult pressures. One exception was the Kingston Trio, which in 1958 popularized folk music and historical ballads, especially among college audiences. As the interest in folk music grew, the lyrics increasingly focused on social or political issues. Joan Baez, with a voice one critic found as pure and clear "as air in autumn," dressed simply, wore no makeup, and rejected the commercialism of popular music. She joined folk singer Bob Dylan in the civil rights march on Washington in 1963, singing "We Shall Overcome" and "Blowin' in the Wind." Such folk singers reflected the activist side of the counterculture as they sought to provoke their audiences to political commitment. Dylan, who had played his songs of social protest on an unamplified guitar, shocked fans in 1965 by donning a black leather jacket and shifting to a "folk rock" style featuring an electric guitar. His new songs seemed to suggest that the old America was almost beyond redemption.

Joan Baez and Bob Dylan

In 1964 a new sound, imported from England, exploded on the American scene. The Beatles, four musicians from Liverpool, attracted frenzied teen audiences who screamed and swooned as the "mod" crooners sang "I Want to Hold Your Hand." Along with other English groups, like the Rolling Stones, the Beatles reconnected American audiences with the rhythm-and-blues roots of rock and roll. And, like Dylan, their style influenced pop culture almost as much as their music. After a pilgrimage to India to study transcendental meditation, they returned to produce *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, possibly the most influential album of the decade. It blended sound effects with music, alluded to trips taken with "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds" (LSD), and concluded, "I'd love to turn you on." Out in San Francisco, bands like the Grateful Dead pioneered "acid rock" with long pieces aimed to echo drug-induced states of mind.

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The debt of white rock musicians to rhythm and blues led to increased integration in the music world. Before the 1960s black rhythm-and-blues bands played primarily to black audiences in segregated clubs or over black radio stations. Black artists like Little Richard, Chuck Berry, and Ray Charles wrote many hit songs made popular by white performers. The civil rights movement and a rising black social and political consciousness gave rise to "soul" music. Blacks became "soul brothers" and "soul sisters," and for the first time their music was played on major radio stations. One black disk jockey described soul as "the last to be hired, first to be fired, brown all year round, sit-in-the-back-of-the-bus-feeling." Soul was the quality that expressed black pride and separatism. Out of Detroit came the Motown sound, which combined elements of gospel, blues, and big band jazz.

Soul

The West Coast Scene

The heady visibility of the counterculture also signaled an increasing importance of the West Coast in American popular culture. In the 1950s the shift of television production from the stages of New York to the film lots of Hollywood helped establish Los Angeles as a communications center. San Francisco became notorious as a center of the beat movement. By 1963 the "surfing sound" of West Coast rock groups like the Beach Boys and Jan and Dean had made southern California's preoccupation with surfing and cars into a national fad. And Mario Savio and his Free Speech Movement attracted the attention of the nation.

Before 1967 Americans were only vaguely aware of another West Coast phenomenon, the "hippies." But in January a loose coalition of drug freaks, Zen cultists, and political activists banded together to hold the first well-publicized "Be-In." The beat poet Allen Ginsberg was on hand to offer spiritual guidance. The Grateful Dead and Jefferson Airplane, acid rock groups based in San Francisco, provided entertainment. An unknown organization called the Diggers somehow managed to supply free food and drink, while the notorious Hell's Angels motorcycle gang policed the occasion. In that way the Bay Area emerged as a spiritual center of the counterculture. Politically conscious dropouts gravitated toward Berkeley. Flower children who cared less about politics moved into Haight-Ashbury, a run-down San Francisco neighborhood of apartments and Victorian houses, where head shops sold drug paraphernalia, wall posters, and Indian bedspreads. Haight-Ashbury became a model replicated across the nation.

Hippies and Haight-Ashbury

In the summer of 1969 all the positive forces of the counterculture converged on Bethel, New York, in the Catskill Mountains resort area, to celebrate the promise of peace, love, and freedom. The Woodstock Music Festival attracted 400,000 people to the largest rock concert ever organized. For one long weekend the audience and performers joined to form an ephemeral community based on sex, drugs, and rock and roll. Even then, the counterculture was dying. Violence intruded on the laid-back urban communities

Woodstock

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that hippies had formed. Organized crime and drug pushers muscled in on the lucrative trade in LSD, amphetamines, and marijuana. Bad drugs and addiction took their toll. Free sex often became an excuse for rape, exploitation, and loveless gratification.

Much that had once seemed outrageous in the hippie world was readily absorbed into the marketplace. Rock groups became big business enterprises commanding huge fees. Yogurt, granola, and herbal teas appeared on supermarket shelves. Ironically, much of the world that hippies forged was embraced and tamed by the society they had rejected.

By the late 1960s most dreams of human betterment seemed shattered—whether Lyndon Johnson's Great Society, the communal society of the hippie counterculture, or Martin Luther King's dream of a nonviolent civil rights revolution. Recession and inflation brought an end to the easy affluence that made liberal reform programs and alternative lifestyles seem so easily affordable. Poverty and unemployment menaced even middle-class youth who had found havens in communes, colleges, and graduate schools. Racial tensions divided black militants and the white liberals of the civil rights movement into sometimes hostile camps.

But the Vietnam War more than any other single factor destroyed the promise of prosperity, equality, and a Great Society. After 1965 the nation divided sharply as the American military role in Southeast Asia grew. Radicals like the SDS condemned a capitalist system that promoted race and class conflict at home and imperialism abroad. Conservatives who supported the war called for a return to traditional values and law and order. Both the left and the right attacked the liberal center. Their combined opposition helped to undermine the consensus Lyndon Johnson had worked so hard to build.

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Largely excluded from the prosperity of the 1950s, African Americans and Latinos undertook a series of grassroots efforts to gain the legal and social freedoms denied them by racism and, in the South, an entrenched system of segregation.

- Early postwar campaigns focused on legal challenges to the system, culminating with victories in the Supreme Court decisions of *Brown v. Board of Education* and *Hernández v. Texas.*
- Later in the 1950s, Martin Luther King and other civil rights activists used new techniques of protest, like the boycott to desegregate the bus system in Montgomery, Alabama.
- Continued resistance by white southerners sparked a school integration dispute in Little Rock, Arkansas.
- Beginning in 1960 widespread grassroots efforts from African American churches, students, and political groups across the South accelerated the drive for an end to segregation.
- Violence against sit-ins, Freedom Rides, voter registration drives, and other forms of nonviolent protest made the nation sympathetic to the civil rights cause.
- In the wake of the assassination of President Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson persuaded Congress to adopt the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.
- The Supreme Court under Chief Justice Earl Warren expanded civil rights and liberties through its *Gideon*, *Escobedo*, and *Miranda* decisions, while also easing censorship, banning school prayer, and increasing voting rights.
- Lyndon Johnson delivered on the liberal promise of his Great Society through his 1964 tax cut, aid to education, Medicare and Medicaid, wilderness preservation, and urban redevelopment and through the many programs of his war on poverty.
- Johnson's liberal reforms did not satisfy student radicals, minority dissidents, feminists, gays, and the counterculture whose members sought to transform America into a more just and less materialistic society.

For quizzes and a variety of interactive resources, visit the book's Online Learning Center at www.mhhe.com/davidsonconcise3

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SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

1947 — *Delgado et al. v. Bastrop et al.* filed in Texas
1954 — *Hernández v. Texas*; *Brown v. Board of Education*
1955 — Montgomery bus boycott begun
1956 — Southern Manifesto issued
1957 — Little Rock crisis
1958 — Kingston Trio popularizes folk music
1960 — Greensboro sit-ins
1961 — CORE freedom rides begins
1962 — Michael Harrington's *The Other America* published; James Meredith desegregates University of Mississippi; *Engel v. Vitale*; *Baker v. Carr*
1963 — University of Alabama desegregation crisis; Kennedy introduces Civil Rights Bill; March on Washington; *Gideon v. Wainwright*; Kennedy assassinated
1964 — *Escobedo v. Illinois; Griswold v. Connecticut*; Civil Right Act passed; Harlem and Rochester race riots; Johnson enacts Kennedy tax cuts; Economic Opportunity Act; Wilderness Preservation System Act; Johnson defeats Goldwater; Berkeley Free Speech Movement; Beatles introduce British rock
1965 — Johnson launches the Great Society; Voting Rights Act; Watts riots; Malcolm X assassinated; Medicare and Medicaid acts; Elementary and Secondary School Act; Immigration Act; escalation in Vietnam
1966 — *Miranda v. Arizona*; Stokely Carmichael of SNCC coins "Black Power" slogan; Model Cities Act
1967 — Black Panthers battle Oakland, California, police; first Be-In
1968 — Fair Housing Act
1969 — Woodstock Music Festival