the woman named Miss America in 1968, as being crowned with "her smile still blood-flecked from Mayor Daley's kiss." 35

But Morgan and her sisterly comrades were also out to make a point their erstwhile brethren on the Left had neglected: it was a moral outrage (and, of course, a boon to the garment and cosmetics industries) to judge women primarily by their looks, by a standard of beauty borrowed from popular magazines like Playboy and Cosmopolitan as much as from the Miss America contest. The New York Times article about the protest provided unwitting confirmation of the problem. Reporter Charlotte Curtis described Robin Morgan wearing a "black-and-white pajama suit" and mentioned the dress and hat color of another protester who was in her middle sixties. 36 Outside the fashion pages, the Times never mentioned a man's sartorial choices.

But few people then considered sexual images a cause for political protest. Under way at the same time in Atlantic City was a Miss Black America contest sponsored by the NAACP, that was dedicated to redressing the exclusion of African Americans from the white pageant. "We'll show black beauty for public consumption," announced a male organizer, "herald her beauty and applaud it." 37 A few years later, debates about the depiction of women's bodies in advertising and films and on television would become too heated and prevalent to ignore.

Neither the Times reporter nor other mainstream journalists recognized the historic nature of the protest. It was, Morgan later wrote, "the first major action of the current Women's Movement... years of meetings, consciousness-raising, thought, and plain old organizing had made it possible. 38 Ecstatic about what they'd done, the demonstrators ended the day with a "funeral dance" by candlelight on Atlantic City's famous Boardwalk.

As with other radical actions in 1968, this one immediately spurred a backlash. Critics in the media began referring to "bra-burning feminists," even though no woman in Atlantic City had set fire to anything. During the protest, male onlookers shouted, "Go home and wash your bras" and urged demonstrators to throw themselves into the "freedom trash can." A former contestant from Wisconsin named Terry Meewse got so angry that she rushed off to paint her own protest sign. "There's only one thing wrong with Miss America," it read, "She's beautiful." On her dress, Meewse proudly wore a Nixon-for-president button. 39
their own, such as California governor Ronald Reagan. But, fearing a repeat of the Goldwater debacle, they settled on Nixon, who had already campaigned three times for national office and was skilled at bridging the party's ideological factions. Few Americans, whatever their ideology, were happy with the state of the nation. The radicals of SDS expressed their disgust with politics as usual by organizing election day marches under the slogan, “Vote with your feet, Vote in the streets.” If the GOP could wage a united, uncontroversial campaign, Nixon should be able to waltz into the White House.

Humphrey, by contrast, seemed a forlorn figure in his bitterly divided party. Anti-war liberals scorned the vice president as LBJ's lackey. White southerners and urban white ethnics mistrusted Humphrey's long record of support for black rights and anti-poverty programs. To have any chance to win, he would have to cling to the organizational might of big labor unions and the fact that a large plurality of voters were still registered Democrats. In early September, Humphrey's campaign manager had a candid talk with the nominee over breakfast. "Look, I'm going to work my tail off for you," confided Larry O'Brien. "but as your manager I have to say to you—right now, you're dead."40

It took a pugnacious third-party candidate to prevent the Republicans from winning an easy victory. George Wallace, who created the American Independent Party in order to secure a ballot line, knew he would not be elected president; his reputation as a bigot gave him little prospect of winning any state outside the South. But his strong regional base also threw open the possibility that, if Humphrey could make it a close race, no man would win a majority of the electoral vote. If that occurred, the Constitution left the choice up to the House of Representatives, with each state having one vote. Wallace might have driven a hard bargain for his support—perhaps even repeal of the landmark civil rights and voting rights acts.

As it was, the Alabamian defined one of the two main issues of the campaign and forced his major-party rivals to sing his tune. The issue was “law and order.” Four years of ghetto riots and campus protests and a growing rate of street crime had left over 80 percent of Americans believing, according to a September poll, that public order had “broken down.” Wallace's response was curt and uncompromising. “No one has a grievance in this country that gives him a right to... endanger the health and life of every citizen,” he announced. And his solution was equally tough: “Let the police run this country for a year or two and there wouldn’t be any riots,” he told white working-class audiences that were more ardent than the large but rather passive throngs Humphrey and Nixon were drawing.41 At the end of September, Wallace was scoring 21 percent in opinion polls, less than 10 points behind the vice president.

The second major issue was the war in Vietnam, key cause of the Democrats' internal hemorrhage and the GOP's opportunity. Wallace took the safe position of supporting the troops under fire without endorsing U.S. pol-
icy; after the Tet offensive, even his own stalwarts no longer believed that Americans were effectively defending the freedom of South Vietnamese. Nixon and Humphrey tried to sound “presidential.” Knowing there was no public consensus about how to exit the Indochina quagmire, each tried to strike a balance between wooing doves and reassuring hawks. The Republican candidate promised he had “a secret plan” to end the war but made clear it did not involve surrendering South Vietnam to the enemy. At the end of September, Humphrey departed gingerly from his full-throated endorsement of administration policy; “I would be willing to stop the bombing of North Vietnam as an acceptable risk for peace,” he told a TV audience. But he quickly added that the bombs would start falling again if the other side showed “bad faith.” 42

Such statements were drafted with exquisite care and the advice of advertising professionals. In 1968, to appeal to voters, both major parties employed companies whose normal business was to persuade Americans to buy automobiles, soap, and laundry detergent. For the Nixon campaign, a market research firm tested how voters from key states felt about a variety of issues. The candidate’s TV commercials, more ingenious than those shown in earlier campaigns, unsettled voters, on purpose, with rapid editing and electronic music to remind them that “America is in trouble today,” trouble only a change in leadership could remedy.

To counter, Humphrey hired Doyle, Dane, Bernbach—an agency known, fittingly, for creating the slogan, “We’re only Number Two. We have to try harder,” for the Avis rental car company. 43 But his managers thought the ads the agency created were dry and stilted, and they turned instead to liberal TV producers. They filmed an emotional telebiography in which Humphrey played with his retarded, 5-year-old granddaughter. She “taught me the meaning of true love,” the Democrat told viewers. 44

George Wallace had neither the money nor the inclination to employ such methods. His campaign was a technological throwback; aside from the usual buttons and bumper stickers (which his supporters had to purchase), the candidate’s personal appearances were virtually his entire campaign.

Wallace’s rallies were exhibitions of political fury, a mirror image of the passions unleashed at many an outdoor rock concert. The typical event would begin with a country music band and a prayer. Then, after a warm-up speaker urged the crowd to donate “to the fastest-growing political movement in the history of our nation,” the man himself strutted on stage, waving to his fans and the handful of (multiracial) hecklers who had been allowed, even encouraged, to attend. Wallace knew his people hungered for a way to fight back against liberals and the counterculture. So he first let hecklers have their (often obscene) say. Then he reduced them to slovenly parasites: “You young people seem to know a lot of four-letter words. But I have two four-letter words you don’t know: S-O-A-P and W-O-R-K.” 45

The three candidates did have one thing in common. Whether through sophisticated advertising or bellicose one-liners, each spoke directly to voters.
In the past, party bosses and local organizations had carried much of the burden of selling their candidate. Presidential nominees began advertising on TV in the 1950s, but, beginning in 1968, campaigns were completely dominated by the well-spun image of the man in the spotlight. One consequence was an increase in the number of independent voters who disdained participation in either party. And, beginning in 1968, voter turnout began a long-term decline.

But the presidential race that year almost ended in an upset. Humphrey slowly rose from his political grave to challenge Nixon in the big industrial states. Essential to his comeback were the publicists and precinct walkers of organized labor. Union officials feared that a Republican victory would put in jeopardy the economic gains of millions of blue-collar Americans who had only recently lifted themselves into the middle class. The AFL-CIO and United Auto Workers flooded union members with hard-hitting leaflets that called a vote for Wallace a vote for Nixon. The man from Alabama was blamed for his state’s high illiteracy rate, poor record of adhering to child labor laws, and for letting racists and members of the John Birch Society run his campaign. The attacks helped reverse Wallace’s surge, as did the customary reluctance to “waste” a vote on a third-party hopeful. In the end, Wallace won only 13.6 percent of the vote, most of it in the South. The strong union states of Michigan, Washington, and Pennsylvania all went for Humphrey. A heavy black vote also helped to pull the veteran liberal within sight of the White House.

It wasn’t enough. Nixon drew only half a million more ballots than Humphrey (and 43 percent overall) yet easily won a majority of the electoral vote. Cries of “law and order” paid big dividends, particularly among those Americans who were leery of agitators of another race or from another region. In the South, the Republican candidate essentially split the vote with George Wallace; only 10 percent of whites in Dixie pulled the Democratic lever. This pattern (absent Wallace) would hold in presidential elections for the rest of the century. Except when the Democrats nominated a southerner (Jimmy Carter or Bill Clinton), the newly prosperous but still conservative white South voted solidly Republican. In the North, Democrats remained competitive (Humphrey won Michigan, Pennsylvania, and New York) but needed big turnouts from unionists, working women, and racial minorities.

So the 1968 election marked the end of a political era. Although Humphrey’s party remained in control of Congress, the initiative gradually shifted to the Right. Advocates of liberal reform had to play defense against a growing and confident conservative movement. A year that rang with shouts of “revolution” and an angry backlash ended with the triumph of Richard Milhous Nixon—a brilliant if uninspiring man whose only strong faith was in his own fierce ambition. On the day after the election, the victor recalled a sign he had seen a teenage girl carrying as he campaigned through Ohio. “Bring Us Together,” it read. As with many promises made by politicians in the 1960s, this one proved impossible to fulfill.
CHAPTER 13

Many Faiths

THE '60s REFORMATION

EVERY DAY PEOPLE ARE STRAYING AWAY FROM THE CHURCH AND GOING BACK TO GOD.

—Comedian Lenny Bruce, c. 1965

Nothing changed so profoundly in the United States during the 1960s as American religion. That may seem a startling statement. So many aspects of national life underwent turmoil during that decade and the years surrounding it—from race relations and relationships between the sexes to the citizenry's trust in politicians. The most familiar images of the period depict Americans protesting, dancing, taking drugs, or fighting a war—anything but praying.

Yet an era when little could be taken for granted was also a time when millions of people rethought and re-formed the place of the spiritual in their lives. Following a tradition as old as the nation, Americans made sense of rapid social and moral change in religious terms. Some expressed their faith by participating in the same movements for human rights, against war, and against the liberal state that attracted secular activists; a greater number confined their hopes and energies to matters of the spirit.

Whatever the choice, a good many citizens, particularly young adults, broke away from the churches and synagogues of their childhoods. Between the mid-1950s and the mid-1980s, over a third of all Americans left the denomination in which they'd been raised. Hungry for a faith both authentic and fervent, they created new styles of Christian and Jewish worship and joined new kinds of religious communities that promised a direct link to the Almighty. At the same time, a small but growing minority of Americans rejected the beliefs and institutions of Western religion altogether. They explored the transcendent paths blazed by one variety or another of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam. Spiritual discipline, voluntarily chosen, came back into
fashion. Millions more dabbled in less rigorous pursuits like astrology and sprinkled their conversations with terms like “karma,” “mantra,” “yin and yang.” By the mid-’70s, the United States was in the throes of a religious revival—one in a series that has periodically rolled across the land since the colonial era.

Ironically, this spiritual surge was, in part, a revolt against the successes of established religion in the years immediately following World War II. During the late ‘40s and ‘50s, the major Christian and Jewish denominations all grew larger and more prosperous. Families rushed to join, particularly in the booming suburbs, and construction firms raced to keep up with demand. In 1960 over a billion dollars was spent on building churches, 40 times the total in 1945. In formal ways, Americans seemed more devout than ever. More than half the population regularly attended a church or synagogue (an historic high), and over 90 percent told pollsters they prayed to God and said grace before meals.

But some critics felt such signs of spiritual health concealed a certain hollowness of purpose. With the Cold War at its height, piety often seemed a patriotic reflex, even a civic obligation. Political leaders like Dwight D. Eisenhower regularly reminded citizens, “Without God there could be no American form of government... Recognition of the Supreme Being is the first—and most basic—expression of Americanism.” During Ike’s first term as president, the phrase “under God” was added to the Pledge of Allegiance and “In God We Trust” was inscribed on the currency. The ubiquitous slogan “The family that prays together stays together,” a creation of the Advertising Council, betrayed a more anxious sentiment: Was religion little more than a device for stabilizing the social order?

A number of theologians, both Christian and Jewish, complained about the banal character of worship. They worried that the blandness of ideology and the glisten of fresh concrete and stained glass were muffling the cry of the soul. Attending a house of God had become, for many Americans, little more than a social occasion. “Our services are conducted with pomp and precision,” wrote Abraham Joshua Heschel of the Jewish Theological Seminary. “Everything is present: decorum, voice, ceremony. But only one thing is missing: Life.” A certain superficiality may even have crept into scripture reading. Over 80 percent of American adults agreed that the Bible was the “revealed word of God,” but a majority could not name any of the four gospels in the New Testament.

The weakening of spiritual passion did have a side benefit: it helped encourage a growing tolerance for religious minorities. The United States had been founded, unofficially, as a Protestant nation. Followers of other faiths long had to prove they posed no threat to the Protestant dominion associated, as it was for many Americans, with the nation’s “freedom” from the religious tyrannies of the Old World. Ironically, bigotry went hand in hand
with claims of religious liberty. Notwithstanding the First Amendment, numerous Protestant bastions—universities, country clubs, entire neighborhoods—restricted Catholics and/or Jews or barred them altogether.

But, after 1945, many of the cultural walls began to come down. In the “one nation under God” that had triumphed over Hitler and was now resisting communism, interfaith hostilities seemed out of place. Marriage between Protestants and Catholics steadily gained acceptance, as, more grudgingly (on both sides), did unions between Christians and Jews. Pollsters in the mid-'50s found Americans far less willing than a decade before to believe the worst about religious minorities—for example, that Catholics were ignorant dupes of the pope or that Jewish businessmen were dishonest. Such Jews as composer Leonard Bernstein and actress Barbra Streisand became cultural icons, while Ivy League colleges abandoned their restrictive Jewish quotas. Meanwhile, it no longer seemed unusual for Catholics to occupy top spots in corporations, and John F. Kennedy skilfully parried the fears of Protestant bigots on his way to the White House.

At the beginning of the 1960s, American religion was thus snared in a paradox. The more citizens dutifully attended a church or synagogue, the less the traditional content of their faith seemed to matter to them. Did God really mind if His people just went through the motions?

Billy Graham and Martin Luther King, Jr. certainly thought so. The two men were the nation's most celebrated Protestant ministers during the late '50s and '60s. In quite different ways, each injected the majority faith with a fresh dose of revivalistic spirit. For their admirers, passionate conversion became, once again, the central duty of any serious Christian.

Graham smoothed the ragged edges—the faith healing and flagrant anti-intellectualism—from white Protestant evangelism and thrust it into the television age. Beginning in 1949, he took his “crusade” features a large, racially integrated cast of singers, musicians, and warm-up speakers—to city after American city and to many foreign lands. “All who are weak and heavy-laden, come unto me,” Graham would appeal from a stage drenched in light. “The coming of the Lord draweth nigh.” Millions responded, whether in person or after watching the spectacle on TV. Proudly and with restrained emotion, they made a “decision for Christ” and were “born again” in his service. In the process, Evangelical Protestantism gradually shed its image as an old-time religion.

Simultaneously, King was preaching an updated version of the social gospel. To be a sincere Christian, he told audiences of all races, was to combat, nonviolently, the injustice meted out to racial minorities and the poor. His Southern Christian Leadership Conference (whose city-by-city campaigns consciously emulated Graham's “crusades”) mobilized devout church members who insisted that God was on their side. “We cannot compromise with evil authority,” King wrote from his Birmingham cell in 1963 to local white ministers who warned him against taking “extreme measures.” We will put
our beliefs into practice and suffer accordingly; either join us or get out of
our way. King's messianic style converted people to the cause as much as did
agreement with the black movement's demands. Many liberal white Protes-
tants, confronting their churches' racist past, tried to follow the example black
Christian militants were setting.

Although King occasionally cooperated with Graham in the late '50s, their
brands of Christian witness were headed in opposite directions. The civil
rights leader, despite his firm grounding in the Bible, symbolized a current
that flowed toward an ecumenical, consciously modern approach to Chris-
tianity. Modernists urged Protestant churches to jettison mystical dogmas and
puritanical ethics. One group of theologians even heralded the "death of God"
and counseled Christians to emphasize moral principles and abandon a doc-
trine grounded in faith. They and other liberal thinkers urged believers to
throw themselves into the battle for social change alongside people of other
religions and none at all.

In contrast, Billy Graham became the most prominent spokesman for
Christians who believed, as a fellow evangelist put it, that "Jesus Christ is
God's only provision for man's sin." But Graham insisted on preaching to
integrated audiences in both the North and South; in 1957, he praised King
for "setting an example of Christian love" in relations between blacks and
whites. But churches that neglected to spread the traditional gospel were,
Graham maintained, not really religious bodies at all.

Through most of the 1960s, the liberal modernists seemed to have the
upper hand—or at least to represent the future of American Protestantism.
They were prominent in all the best-established denominations—the United
Methodists, the Episcopalians, the United Presbyterians, and the United
Church of Christ—whose wealth and numbers guaranteed a serious recep-
tion from the mass media and intellectuals. They dominated the National
Council of Churches (NCC), an umbrella body that saw itself as the social
conscience of Protestant America. In the 1960s, the NCC financed civil rights
organizing in the Deep South and debated the virtue of draft resistance.

The liberal call to action galvanized many young Protestants who had
not expected their staid churches to participate in changing anything. On
scores of college campuses, Methodist student groups agreed it was a Chris-
tian's duty to "support all those movements which open up opportunities for
God's children to be their best selves," as one professor put it. Around the
country, seminarians and devout laypeople alike got arrested for opposing
racism and the Vietnam War and for supporting farmworkers' strikes. William
Sloane Coffin, Jr., chaplain of Yale University, urged young men to turn in
their draft cards and spoke at antiwar rallies. Desiring a more "relevant" faith,
some ministers invited folk and jazz musicians to play during services. Loyal
congregants in the established denominations were often shocked at the turn
toward grassroots politics and popular culture; they came to church seeking
comfort not conflict. But an aggressive moral agenda seemed to fit the era; one could not return to the quieter order of the '50s.

African Americans kept the fires of Christian justice burning. In the mid-'60s, a black theology emerged as the spiritual component of the larger turn to black nationalism (whose stand against integration Martin Luther King opposed). Protestant ministers competed with the Nation of Islam to express the anger welling up in black urban neighborhoods against “the white power structure”—its clergy as well as its police. African-American churches began displaying statues and paintings of a dark-skinned, woolly-haired Christ, while liberal theologians, and an increasing number of preachers, both black and white, stressed Biblical passages like Luke 4:18, in which Jesus adopted the cause of “the poor ... the brokenhearted ... the captives” and vowed to set them free.

But the new social gospelers ignored an embarrassing detail: the mainstream, mostly white churches were fast losing members. The slide began in the mid-'60s and accelerated over time. Between 1965 and 1975, the size of every major white liberal denomination shrank: the number of Episcopalians dropped by 17 percent, of United Presbyterians by 12 percent, of United Methodists by 10 percent, and of congregants in the United Church of Christ by 12 percent. Immersion in activism had certainly invigorated the purpose of some old-line churches: the ranks of the clergy opened up to African Americans and to women. But many laypeople saw no reason to remain in denominations they believed were merely pasting Christian labels on essentially secular causes. They either abandoned organized religion or searched for a more intensely spiritual alternative.

Many a quest ended up in the evangelistic camp, “The Unchanging Gospel for a Changing World,” promised Billy Graham’s magazine Decision, whose circulation climbed into the millions during the 1960s. The slogan suggests the major reason why the appeal of conservative Protestant churches grew while that of modernist counterparts was fading. The former offered troubled individuals what the latter could not: the balm of simple answers to perennial questions of the soul.

American Protestantism had always been a deeply personal faith. Believers longed for an intimacy with the Almighty and, typically, did not feel “saved” unless they were sure that, as one young evangelist put it in the early 1970s, “God is a real person. ... He actually walks among His people. He listens to them, talks to them, and affects their daily lives.” The enthusiasm of participants in past “great awakenings” always stemmed from this kind of relationship—and the dedicated missionaries who spread the good word. Now, it was happening again.

Every conservative denomination spurted in membership during the decade beginning in 1965. The Southern Baptists grew by 18 percent to become the largest Protestant group in the nation, while the smaller Assemblies
of God and Nazarenes also made impressive gains. Evangelicals did not share the same theology or worship in the same way. Fundamentalists who stress the literal truth of the Bible and worship in a sober fashion differed from pentecostalists who believe the Holy Ghost takes over their bodies and leads them to display ecstatic “gifts of the Spirit” such as speaking in tongues. But evangelical Protestants agreed on two bedrock elements of their faith: Jesus is the only path to salvation, and the Bible is the unerring word of God. These united the world-famous Billy Graham with the humblest small-town preacher. To redeem the sinful was their common motivation.

Evangelists found a natural constituency among those marooned by sex, drugs, and rock and roll. The hedonistic trinity of the youth culture gave some Americans, for a time at least, the hope that one could transcend a life of drudgery and compromise. But it left other young people bruised and unhappy. They had glimpsed a vision of salvation—at the peak of an LSD trip or amid the collective rapture of a rock festival. But it quickly faded, leaving their lives in chaos. For some of these prodigal sons and daughters, the path of Jesus seemed the surest way home.

Of course, they couldn’t get there without a guide. The Campus Crusade for Christ was eager to fill the role. Organized in 1951 by Southern California businessman Bill Bright, the group grew slowly for a decade with aid from the Graham juggernaut and a handful of evangelical churches. In 1960 it had 109 employees. Then, in the mid-’60s, Bright and a nucleus of young staff members set out to create their own brand of counter-culture. In 1967 the Crusade held a public convention at the University of California in Berkeley. On the steps of Sproul Hall (birthplace of the Free Speech Movement three years before), Jon Braun proclaimed “Jesus Christ, the world’s greatest revolutionary.” Soon, Braun and some other young evangelists were, in the way of earlier missionaries, going native: they grew their hair long, donned tie-dyed and fringed clothing, and spoke the hip idiom. Former Campus Crusaders took on new names like the Christian World Liberation Front and Jesus Christ Light and Power Company. They published graphically inventive papers (the one in Berkeley was christened Right On) and opened crash pads for kids strung out on drugs.

New Leftists made fun of these “Jesus freaks,” but the appeal of the young crusaders outlasted that of their secular detractors. Evangelists, both of the hip and more conventional variety, converted thousands of lapsed Christians and the previously irreligious who dwelled in and around youth communities. By the mid-’70s, Campus Crusade boasted a staff of 6500 and a budget of $42 million. And Bright’s brigade was only the largest of its kind. In Orange County, California, Rev. Chuck Smith baptized hippies in his swimming pool and set up a series of communal houses in which converts lived and studied the Bible. The pentecostalist Bobbi Morris organized the Living Word Fellowship and convinced thousands of mostly white, work-
ing-class young people to accept her strict, maternal authority and "get high on Jesus."

A murmur of armageddon ran through this sprouting network. Interpreting the Book of Revelation, leading evangelists argued that the world was approaching the end of time. Very soon, Jesus would return to earth and render His judgment. In 1970, Hal Lindsey, former leader of the Campus Crusade at UCLA, published a dramatic synopsis of these ideas, entitled The Late, Great Planet Earth. Over the next decade, his book, which referred to the Antichrist as "The Weirdo Beast" and "the Rapture" as "The Ultimate Trip," sold more than 9 million copies. Serious theologians scoffed, but Lindsey had tapped into the same sense of dire crisis and wild optimism that gripped many on the secular Left. SDS and the Black Panthers expected some kind of socialism would emerge from the ashes of the U.S. empire. Lindsey and his fellow premillennialists (at times, including Billy Graham) were similarly convinced that the Second Coming would perfect the world.

Yet it was the spiritual security to be found in the conservative churches that best explains why they grew. "God loves you and offers a wonderful plan for your life," wrote Bill Bright in a 1965 pamphlet distributed all over the world. If one accepted this gospel, an eternity of contentment might result. It did require adopting a rigorous lifestyle and denying oneself certain sensual pleasures. But that only enhanced the appeal of the faith for people who had taken too many drugs or left bad marriages or simply felt their lives were
devoid of meaning. The Bible made clear how God wanted his people to behave. For those who believed, surrender felt like freedom.

During the 1960s, the world of American Catholicism imploded and had to be rebuilt. No denomination underwent more rapid or more wrenching changes than did the nation’s largest (which boasted some 48 million members in 1970). A decade that began with the election of the first Catholic president (even if he downplayed his religious identity) ended with Catholics, both laypeople and clergy, battling among themselves over the most basic matters of their faith: its liturgy, its authority structure, its moral obligations, and its definition of sin. The most tradition-laden of Western churches suddenly became the site of furious innovation—and of an equally vehement backlash among the defenders of old ways.

The prime cause of tumult occurred across the Atlantic, underneath the ornate dome of St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome. Priests and bishops from all over the world gathered there for the Second Vatican Council, which convened each autumn from 1962 to 1965. Called together by Pope John XXIII and completed by his successor, Paul VI, the council encouraged the breezes of theological pluralism and democracy to blow through church doctrines and practices essentially unchanged for centuries. The result was a Catholicism that invited “the active participation” of the laity, was open to dialogue and perhaps even future unity with Protestants, and encouraged debate and experimentation about its forms of worship.

Vatican II also updated the church’s own kind of social gospel. Since the late nineteenth century, the Catholic hierarchy had alternated between preaching obedience to rulers and giving support to movements of workers and the poor—as long as they spurned Marxists and other secular radicals. But the final document of Vatican II announced that the modern church would no longer stand aloof from the worldly struggles of ordinary people. Henceforth, “the followers of Christ” would treat “the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted” as their own.12

In the United States the statement lent a measure of legitimacy to what thousands of Catholic brothers and sisters were already doing. Daniel Berigan, a Jesuit, spoke out early and often against the Vietnam War. In 1968 he led a small group, including his brother and fellow priest Philip, that entered a Selective Service office in Maryland and burned hundreds of draft files. American bishops could not, of course, endorse the destruction of federal property, but neither did they defrock the flamboyant priest. Breaking with Cold War orthodoxy, thousands of devout Catholics attended mass marches to protest the war being fought against Asian Communists. In New York City, two seminarians passed out leaflets accusing Cardinal Terence Cooke, an honorary military chaplain, of abetting war crimes—on the same day the cardinal ordained them in the Jesuit order.13
The black freedom movement also inspired innumerable acts of Catholic solidarity. Just before the 1963 March on Washington, Godfrey Diekmann of the Benedictine order told an enthusiastic gathering of fellow clergy that to "refuse to accept the Negro as our daily table guest" was to "trumpet the blasphemous triumph of Satan." In 1965, white and black nuns dressed in their habits marched through New York and other cities in sympathy with demonstrators who were facing billy clubs and tear gas in Selma, Alabama. No longer would sisters accept being treated, as one put it, "like the children most of them spend their lives with." For their part, African-American Catholics, most of whom lived and worshiped in segregated areas, began to articulate a proud, separate identity. Black images of Jesus and Mary proliferated in inner-city churches, and parishioners demanded priests of their own race. "We have given up the myth," a black priest explained to a bishops' meeting in 1969, "that if we did all things in proper and approved fashion, we could be acceptable to the white people."

A liturgical upheaval accompanied the political one. Many parish priests quickly applied the new ideas about worship that emerged from the Vatican Council. They began reciting the mass in English (or Spanish) instead of Latin, faced the flock instead of turning their backs to them, and encouraged parishioners to get off their knees, greet one another in a "kiss of peace," and join together in singing hymns and reading the Bible. Before Vatican II, a pastor who allowed any one of these activities would have been courting excommunication. By the 1970s, they had all become standard practice.

At the same time, groups of laymen and laywomen were fulfilling their spiritual needs with only occasional aid from a priest. In the early '60s, some Mexican-American laymen in California (the fastest-growing group of Catholics in the U.S.) began meeting on their own to study Scripture and discuss how the Holy Book might improve their lives and address the problems of their ethnic community. These cursillos, or "little courses," soon grew in popularity and emotional intensity, attracting farmworkers' leader Cesar Chavez, among others. The male-centered movement spawned a larger "charismatic" revival among Catholics nationwide, who tearfully displayed a personal connection to God, in the fashion long practiced in Pentecostal churches. At least one archbishop, Joseph McGuken of San Francisco, publicly regretted a singular result of the cursillo movement; in Mexican-American parishes, it was decreasing the number of people receiving Communion—still the core ritual of the Catholic mass.

But the archbishop's misgivings were small compared to those of conservatives who dissented from nearly everything Vatican II had wrought. "What in the Name of God Is Going On in the Catholic Church?" asked National Review in a 1965 cover story. In its erudite fashion, the magazine spoke for a fair number of lay Catholics who felt the new liturgy, in the rush to be worldly, was shattering the sublime mysteries of their faith. "Where else can
one find robed priests like purple kings holding cups of silver and gold?" mused writer Garry Wills, who had once considered joining their ranks. Journalist Richard Rodriguez complained, "The [vernacular] mass is less ornamental; it has been 'modernized,' tampered with, demythologized, deflated. . . . No longer is the congregation moved to a contemplation of the timeless."16 In a small-town Wisconsin parish, an anonymous writer lampooned the changes, "Latin's gone, peace is too; singin' and shoutin' from every pew. Altar's turned around, priest is too; commentators yellin': 'page 22.' . . . rosary's out, psalms are in; hardly ever heard a word against sin."17 However, according to opinion polls, more than two-thirds of the laity welcomed the new rituals.

The embrace of social activism elicited a more negative response. Conservative intellectuals like William F. Buckley, Jr. were predictably outraged at figures like the Berrigan brothers for sympathizing with a Godless revolution in Vietnam. On the right, priests and nuns who marched in anti-war demonstrations and cheered on Black Power were seen as fools: Why enlist in a Left that had always despised their church and all its works? A growing number of ordinary white Catholics also bristled at the demand that they support the civil rights movement. One Cleveland woman wrote to her diocesan paper that the sight of marching nuns made her "sick at heart." "Instead of public protests," she wrote, the sisters "should be down on their knees . . . praying."18

A flash point in this intrachurch conflict occurred in Milwaukee, a city whose white population was almost half Catholic. In the mid-'60s, James Groppi, white pastor in the mostly black parish of St. Boniface, led a lengthy series of peaceful marches that aimed at the full integration of the city's schools and neighborhoods. Television coverage made Groppi a well-known figure around the country. Some of his coreligionists regarded him as a hero. One Boston priest hailed Groppi for "unmask[ing] the hypocrisy of the lily-white Catholic community. . . . St. Boniface is prophetic voice of the Church—not only the Catholic Church but religion itself."19 Black leaders, including Martin Luther King, Jr., praised him too. And Groppi's protests bore fruit. After 200 straight days of marches, the Milwaukee City Council finally passed an open housing ordinance.

However, many white Catholics in Milwaukee despised Groppi and his followers. Like their counterparts in such cities as Chicago and Detroit, they believed integration would mean a sharp rise in violent crime and sexual tension, and a quick drop in property values. For these immigrants and second-generation Americans of eastern and central European ancestry, the neighborhood parish was both a cultural refuge and a base from which to rise. They had built the Catholic community, literally and figuratively, and saw no reason to open it up to poorer Americans of a different race and, usually, a Protestant faith.
In Milwaukee, the fact that a man in a clerical collar was leading the assault occasioned cries of anguish that, at times, spilled over into a critique of recent changes in the church itself. ‘I am a very strong Catholic,’ Mae Baxtis wrote to Father Groppi, ‘I should say, I was, but demonstrations like yours sicken me.’ Referring to Vatican II, she bewailed ‘what 2000 men could do to a 2000 year old Church.’ The crowds who harassed Groppi’s marches with fists, spit, and racist slurs failed to dent his determination. But a self-described ‘old scrub lady’ who told him that ‘Instead of making converts you are making enemies for our Religion’ could not be so easily dismissed. She spoke for many American Catholics upon whom the new dawn of pluralism had somehow failed to shine. In questioning the authority of liberal priests and bishops, she was invoking the greater authority of the stable faith she remembered.

On one major issue—sex—the church hierarchy refused to break with the past. In the wake of Vatican II, American Catholics hoped, or feared, that Pope Paul would soon extend his liberal outlook to the most intimate of matters. Millions of laywomen and laymen were already engaging in premarital sex, using birth control devices, and even having abortions (illegally, in most cases). In private, priests and nuns often looked the other way, while a growing minority chafed under their vow of celibacy.
Science was making it easier to flout tradition. A Catholic doctor, John Rock from Massachusetts, had been instrumental in developing the birth control pill. Amid much controversy, he claimed that Catholic women who took the pill were not really violating church teachings. Unlike such “artificial” means as condoms and diaphragms, the chemicals, he argued, did not impede the act of intercourse.

In 1968 Pope Paul VI stepped in to reassert the old-time morality. His encyclical *Humanae Vitae* barred Catholics from using contraceptives of any kind and suggested that abstinence was preferable to the “rhythm method.” The Pope’s reasoning echoed one element of the feminist critique. Sexual freedom, announced the pontiff, was just a means of exploiting another human being. Men who take advantage of birth control devices “lose respect for the woman and... come to the point of considering her as a mere instrument of selfish enjoyment.” Paul VI neglected to discuss abortion or the vow of celibacy.

In the United States, many priests, nuns, and theologians publicly protested his encyclical. The archbishop of Washington, D.C. ordered 51 outspoken priests to recant or never again be allowed to minister to the laity. On the other hand, conservative Catholics hailed the pope for standing by his principles and began to build what became a powerful “pro-life” movement.

But most ordinary Catholics acted as if the encyclical had never been written. By the mid-70s, Catholic women used “artificial” birth control as frequently as did Americans of other faiths. Abortion opposition remained strong among parishioners, yet this did not stop many Catholic women from seeking medical help to end their pregnancies, particularly after the Supreme Court’s 1973 Roe v. Wade ruling struck down state laws banning the procedure.

Among Protestants in the ’60s, doctrinal conflicts led to the growth of larger, more vital conservative denominations. But Catholics had only one Church, and the shattering of that rock could only diminish its size and ability to inspire men and women to make a life-long commitment. The Vatican Council had emboldened Catholics to think for themselves. Many priests and nuns felt they deserved more personal freedom and concluded that church discipline would never allow it. So, with a mixture of sadness and rage, thousands abandoned their vows and left their orders. By 1980, the number of women in religious orders had declined 30 percent from its height in 1966. Only a third as many men were training for the priesthood as in the mid-’60s. In some parishes, full-time, married lay ministers were taking up the slack.

For American Catholics in the 1960s, the fires of “modernization” both cleansed and destroyed. What had been a church of immigrants wary of Protestant America changed into an institution as flamboyant, disputatious, and troubled as any other pillar of the postwar establishment. In their forms of worship and personal behavior, Catholics now resembled the majority of their fellow citizens. It was an ironic conclusion to a spiritual revolution.
In the mid-'60s, Jews were a tiny piece of America's religious mosaic—only 3 percent, according to pollsters. The heyday of immigration from eastern Europe that had established a vibrant Jewish presence, both pious and secular, in major U.S. cities was half a century in the past. The nightmare of Hitlerism was more recent, but most American Jews had lost no immediate relative in the Holocaust. And, in the wake of Auschwitz, public anti-Semitism was no longer acceptable. As beneficiaries of a newly tolerant ethnic order, Jews were thriving in nearly every profession and most lines of business.

Synagogues affiliated with all three main branches of the faith (Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform) burst with members and donations. In 1960 more than half of all American Jews belonged to a temple, double the percentage before World War II. But spiritual content often seemed secondary to the sparkling new gift shops, secular music performances, and athletic programs offered by many Reform and Conservative congregations. Most Jews denied that their religion separated them from other Americans. In the official Conservative prayer book one could find “America the Beautiful” as well as English translations of the traditional services. And the bar mitzvah, the coming-of-age ritual for males usually celebrated at age 13, often became an occasion notable as much for the conspicuous consumption of food, liquor, and gifts as for an adolescent's skill at reading and interpreting a portion of the Torah.

Then, during six days in June 1967, Israel fought and won a war against the armies of its Arab neighbors. The swift, complete victory was followed by a long and wrenching occupation of Palestinian lands. For many American Jews, the 1967 conflict awakened and inspired passions that did much to transform the meaning of their identity. No longer was Israel just a reason for Jewish pride, a desert miracle of orange groves and thriving kibbutzim, whose creation was romanticized in Exodus—a popular novel and film of the late '50s and early '60s. Israel was now the homeland of fellow Jews who had fought alone for their survival and were resigned to living in perpetual danger. The threat came not just from Arab militants but from Communist powers, their Third World allies, and these American leftists who were eager to prove their “anti-imperialist” credentials. In the face of extinction, Israel became “the ultimate reality in the life of every Jew living today,” as a graduate student at Brandeis University put it, “In dealing with those who oppose Israel, we are not reasonable and we are not rational. Nor should we be.”

This combative urgency did more than spur a huge increase in donations and travel to Israel as well as a new resolve to help shape its future. The Six-Day War turned many American Jews back to the sources of their religion, to a proud sense of themselves as belonging to a “people” who had been maligned and persecuted through most of recorded history yet had kept intact a distinctive faith and cultural style. The war heightened interest in the Holocaust itself, adding to the renown of articulate survivors like the writer Elie
Wiesel and spawning the militant Jewish Defense League, whose slogan was “Never Again!” It also kindled a spiritual renewal among younger and more intellectual Jews, many of whom had joined the New Left and were now reconsidering the secular cast of that commitment.

This renewal took a variety of forms. Some individuals and families began to observe the Jewish Sabbath the way their grandparents had—lighting candles and eating challah (a traditional bread) on Friday evening and then refraining from work until sundown on Saturday. Others kept kosher homes or studied Yiddish in an effort to recapture the texture of life in the European shtetl (villages) their forebears had fled. By 1970, almost 400 colleges offered programs in Jewish studies, often financed by wealthy donors and staffed by academics engaged with topics like Qabbalah (mystical texts) once relegated to the margins of scholarship. Forty Jewish student newspapers were being published.

Young people returning to Judaism did not necessarily abandon the heretical spirit of the counterculture. The Jewish Catalog, a 1973 book that sold more than 200,000 copies, offered an eclectic menu of ritual, politics, and the arts, liberally sprinkled with wit. One section was entitled, “Using the Jewish Establishment—A Reluctant Guide.”

A more profound, if less popular, feature of the renewal consisted of new communities of believers dubbed havurah (Hebrew for fellowship). Started by Jews in their twenties who sought a spiritual intensity unavailable in the synagogues of their youth, the havurah were egalitarian and emotional places where traditional blessings and the interpretation of religious texts mingled with sexual openness and popular music. As such, they posed a stark alternative to what one New York City participant called “the oppressive dullness and standardization of feeling ... [the] artificial politeness and even-temperedness” of mainstream Jewish life.

These communities borrowed much from the larger realm of hip culture and radical politics. Rabbi Itzik Lodszer, founder of the Boston havurat, credited psychedelics for generating the same “feeling of the true oneness of God and man” experienced by earlier Jewish mystics. When Paul Cowan left SDS to build a new kind of Judaism, he did not abandon his political values. Both the New Left and the havurah movement, he wrote, “encouraged intimacy and virtually outlawed authority. . . . Both organizations. . . . arrived at all their decisions by consensus, not by votes or by the decree of some central committee.” As in the secular Left, women in the new collectives set forth their views and capacity for leadership, claiming a role still unacceptable in most synagogues.

But Judaism gave the new fellowships a binding power that SDS and most hippie communes had lacked. Anchored in the Torah and a shared identity both ethnic and religious, thousands of young Jews now felt equipped to raise families and engage in politics in a more grounded and reflective manner.
Their rejection of assimilation—either into middle-class America or its radical alternative—echoed lines from the film Exodus that Paul Newman, playing a Jewish guerrilla fighter, threw at his Christian lover, played by Eva Marie Saint: “People are different. They have a right to be different. They like to be different. It’s no good pretending that differences don’t exist.” The assertion of Jewish distinctiveness articulated the same hunger for an authentic, moral life that was moving many Christians away from liberal churches and back to a living God.

In one way, the ’60s reformation was quite unlike earlier episodes of mass religious zeal in U.S. history: it burst through the confines of what mainstream commentators fondly called “the Judeo-Christian tradition.” A small but growing minority of Americans, most of them young, no longer felt comfortable with faiths allegedly drenched in the polluted stream of the commercialized, competitive, power-hungry West. They looked instead for fulfillment from traditions rooted in Asia that seemed to promise an affinity with nature and the cosmos—one that did not rely on the medium of psychedelic
drugs. A larger number of people attached themselves to homegrown guides who mingled the familiar ideology of self-help with the new language of “enlightenment.” The consequence was a dizzying fragmentation of the religious landscape; many people browsed freely among unconventional theologies and subcultures without committing themselves to any one for very long. Best-selling books by such authors as Hermann Hesse and Carlos Castaneda popularized notions of reincarnation and of a “second consciousness” that might enable one to speak with animals and to fly.

The names of groups, gurus, and rituals that sounded exotic to most Americans conveyed the dizzying instability of the alternative religious marketplace. There were Tibetan Buddhists and Zen Buddhists, Moslem Sufis and Hindu Hari Krishnas, devotees of yoga and transcendental meditation (TM). Disciples flocked around such “teachers” (some living, some dead) as Meher Baba, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Gurdjieff, Maharaj Ji, Oscar Ichazo of Arica, Ron Hubbard of Scientology, and Werner Erhard of EST. Some Americans practiced witchcraft to link themselves to a nonpatriarchal past, ate peyote buttons to glimpse a holistic present, or “threw” the I Ching (title of a Chinese mystical text) to divine the future. One of the most popular rock groups of the era, the Grateful Dead, took its name from a Tibetan Buddhist guide to the afterlife. Other famous musicians like George Harrison of the Beatles communed with Indian gurus and learned to play the sitar.

Of course, such spiritual alternatives never attracted more than a small fraction of the Americans who adhered to one variety or another of Judaism and Christianity. Even in the San Francisco Bay Area, mecca for unorthodox faiths, fewer than 10 percent of the population seems to have taken part in any manifestation of the new religions. Still, they drew a good deal of attention from journalists and theologians alike who agreed that a “New Age” might be at hand. Part of the reason was that the devotees tended to come from highly educated, economically comfortable backgrounds; they spoke easily with academics and the media and had the resources to create and sustain an impressive array of spiritual communities and businesses. And what they were communicating was a more elaborate version of the same longing for an honest, compassionate, “meaningful” life that was animating the larger counter culture. The “Great Refusal” of what was perceived as a system addicted to making war and profits was finding a counterpart in the emerging faiths of the affluent young.

Two distinct paths ran through this thicket of holy quests and fantasies. One required a disciplined regimen of thought and practice and separation from the world of work, family, and individual competition. Converts to Hare Krishna gave all their money and possessions to the temple, took a Sanskrit name, donned orange or yellow robes, and typically spent hours each day chanting and playing music on urban street corners.

The second path offered a quicker and easier salve for the soul, group therapy garbed in the language of Oriental spirituality. Groups such as EST and
Arica promised adherents a happier and less alienated existence through mastery of a few basic exercises for mind and body. EST asked each “trainee” to devote two weekends, at a cost of $250 per head, to seminars where they were alternately cajoled, shouted at, and embarrassed into what founder Werner Erhard called “an expanded state of consciousness, without judgment—what is actually so with regard to specific areas in his life.” Such tactics, shorn of their controversial edges, soon became common elements of a “human potential movement” adapted by corporations seeking to mold a happier and thus more efficient workforce. But their root was spiritual. According to the Sufis, Muhammad had counseled that, “The one who knows his self knows God.”

The Zen Center in San Francisco represented a more diligent break with Western norms. Shunryu Suzuki, a Japanese “roshi” or Zen master, arrived in the United States in 1958. The slight, middle-aged teacher soon attracted a nucleus of students in the city where Beat writers like Kenneth Rexroth and Allen Ginsberg had already seeded curiosity about his esoteric creed. By the late ’60s, hundreds more had joined. Located in a former synagogue, the center taught the acceptance of one’s thoughts and sensations through the arduous repetition of spiritual exercises. The primary exercise was zazen—collective meditation for long periods each day (up to three hours) in a seated mode known as the “lotus position.” The goal of all this sitting was to transcend worldly desires and fears, the insistent needs for love or fame or security that allowed one no permanent rest or satisfaction.

At the end of the ’60s, philosopher Jacob Needleman spent several weeks at the Zen Center and at Tassajara, a mountain retreat Suzuki and his students had bought and renovated 150 miles south of San Francisco. He was won over. “The principal difference between the monastic society and ours,” wrote Needleman, “is surely not that ours is more real, but that in this monastery everyone has a common aim . . . to awaken to his true nature, each to find his own way.” He met the roshi and discovered that he was neither glum nor authoritarian. “One’s overwhelming first impression is of openness and warmth. He laughs often, noiselessly—and when I was with him, trying to discuss ‘profound questions,’ I found myself laughing with him throughout the interview.”

Most members of the Zen community came from privileged backgrounds. Overwhelmingly white and college-educated, many had been part of the antiwar movement; most had at least dabbled in psychedelics. About half were raised as Jews. Zen seemed to appease their common yearning for a life pared down to intimate essentials. Instead of pursuing professional careers, members served the center as cooks and gardeners, printers and carpenters. After working for three years as head cook at Tassajara, one Zen devotee in his twenties wrote a book of baking recipes that quickly found a place in thousands of countercultural kitchens. But, by then, the author (who donated all earnings to his community) had become “exhausted of food” and was busy erecting stone walls at the mountain retreat.
A more worldly beneficiary of the eastward gaze was Transcendental Meditation. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi traveled from India to the United States in 1959 to promote TM as a Hindu form of spiritual therapy. “Expansion of happiness is the purpose of life,” he wrote, predicting that anyone who followed his method could achieve it. To become “well-intentioned, warm, loving and clear,” a student had only to accept a mantra (sacred sound) from a TM “initiator” and then learn to concentrate on it while sitting for 20 minutes each morning and each evening before meals. The maharishi believed his simple teaching could do more than help one individual at a time. “The wars that break out,” he claimed, “are the result of the build-up of tension generated by tense, irritable people” rather than economic or political conflicts. TM might liberate the world!

Such blissful pronouncements earned the maharishi the derision of skeptics. But they also helped make him a celebrity, one who gained disciples at a rapid clip after cameras recorded the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, and several actors (Mia Farrow, most notably) arriving for brief periods to sit by his feet and imbibe his wisdom. The Indian was fully aware of his allure as a man from the “mysterious” East. As Jacob Needleman reported, “Here was a ‘classic’ guru, delivered by Central Casting: the flowing hair, the white robes, the floral cascades, the gnomelike twinkly eyes and the ‘Eastern serenity.’”

Early in the 1970s, the maharishi, who had returned to India, engineered a shift away the counterculture and toward a more practical, even rationalistic appeal. He and his disciples began to describe TM as the “science of cre-
ative intelligence” rather than a religion in any traditional sense. Affluent be-
lievers and large speaking fees financed the establishment of Maharishi
International University in the small town of Fairfield, Iowa. There, on a
bucolic campus, students using medical instruments discovered that medita-
tion slowed down the heart rate and relieved stress; others sought to trans-
late sensations described in sacred Hindu texts into the discourse of human
biology.35

Despite its commercial trappings, TM was more than an exotic fad, the
soft and superficial fringe of the ‘60s Reformation. The meditation method
helped Americans from diverse backgrounds—as many as half a million by
the mid-1970s—to focus, in a relaxed manner, on their emotional troubles
and, perhaps, to begin to solve them.36 At the beginning of the century, the
philosopher William James dubbed a similar kind of faith “the religion of
healthy-mindedness.” He wrote, “If a creed makes a man feel happy, he al-
most inevitably adopts it. Such a belief ought to be true; therefore it is true—
such, rightly or wrongly, is... the religious logic used by ordinary men.”37

Two common elements stand out from the bewildering mix of religions
that characterized spiritual life in the ‘60s. First, many Americans were
developing and others were coming to accept styles of worship and piety that
would have been considered bizarre, even demonic, as recently as the 1950s.
Sermons in favor of civil disobedience, jazz music played from the altar, Torah
study mixed with LSD, and the belief in quiet sitting certainly had their vociferous critics. But even such fundamentalist detractors as Campus Crusaders
for Christ sometimes adopted one or another rite of the youth culture, if only
to attract more of the young. Increasing numbers of Americans turned away
from the religious communities of their parents and sought personal, therapeu-
tic routes to the divine.

Second, a new kind of division was emerging among faithful Christians
and Jews. Denominational lines had less and less salience in a nation split
between theological liberals and conservatives.38 The former tended to be
college-educated and to support the new social movements that advocated
equality among the races and between men and women; the latter were con-
vinced that such beliefs were wrenching American culture away from its moral
roots and risked destruction of the sacred realm. Here lay the immediate roots
of the culture wars—over abortion, public art, affirmative action, and other
issues—which did much to define American politics during the last quarter
of the twentieth century. The fires of that conflict continued to burn.
CHAPTER 14

"No Cease-Fire"

1969–1974

WASHINGTON, JAN. 23—America is moving out of Vietnam after the longest and most divisive conflict since the War Between the States.

... There has been a sharp decline in respect for authority in the United States as a result of the war—a decline in respect not only for the civil authority of government, but also for the moral authority of the schools, the universities, the press, the church and even the family.

There was no cease-fire on this front.

—James Reston, New York Times, January 24, 1973

By the time Richard Nixon was sworn in as thirty-seventh president of the United States, it seemed to many Americans as though “the Sixties” had been going on forever. As the 1960s drew to an end, the war in Vietnam was costing the lives of hundreds of young Americans every week; American communities were torn with racial conflict; and the political and cultural gap between the generations had widened into what many believed was becoming an unbridgeable chasm. “I foresee the rest of this century as a dangerous time,” Cornell University political scientist Andrew Hacker predicted in an essay in Newsweek in 1970. “We can no longer be a single nation, possessed of a common spirit. Neither ‘class struggle’ nor ‘civil war’ entirely describes the contours of this discord. Suffice it to say that increasingly we will encounter one another as enemies.”

Richard Nixon had promised Americans upon his election in 1968 that he would act decisively to “bring us together.” This was an unlikely promise from a politician whose rise to national prominence had been based upon his willingness to create and exploit raw political division. But after the recent national traumas of having one president gunned down and another politically destroyed, many voters were eager to believe that the man they had just elevated to the White House was a “new Nixon,” who would restore harmony and decorum to the nation’s political life.

Born in 1913 in the small farming community of Yorba Linda in southern California, the second of five sons of pious Quaker parents, Richard Nixon
grew up a solitary and unsmiling child. His father, Frank Nixon, owned a general store and gas station, where his sons put in long hours. His mother, Hannah Milhous Nixon, was loving but distant; she discouraged any open display of affection by her sons. Money was scarce and family tragedies all too frequent; two of his brothers died of painful illnesses before Nixon reached 20. Early on he concluded that life was a grim and no-holds-barred struggle, in which success came only to those who persevered at any cost.

Unable to afford a more prestigious education, Nixon attended the local Quaker college in Whittier, California, and then, thanks to a scholarship, went on to earn a law degree from Duke University in North Carolina in 1934. After graduation, and military service in the South Pacific, Nixon returned to practice law at a small firm in Whittier.

In 1946 he ran for Congress. His Democratic opponent, incumbent Jerry Voorhis, was a staunch liberal, and also an anticommunist. But Nixon pilloried Voorhis as an advocate of “Communist principles.” Two years earlier, such charges might have fallen flat, but in the Cold War atmosphere of 1946 they proved effective. Nixon’s victory also reflected the emergence of southern California as a well-heeled bastion of conservative politics, its prosperity fueled by federal defense spending and real estate speculation. Nixon was taken up as a political champion by a group of wealthy patrons in the district, eager to roll back the political legacy of the New Deal.

Having been elected to Congress primarily on the issue of anticommunism, it was natural for Nixon to take a seat on the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). In 1948 he got his biggest break when he helped reveal that Alger Hiss, a former State Department adviser in the Roosevelt administration, had been mixed up in the 1930s with a self-confessed Communist spy named Whittaker Chambers. Hiss was eventually sent to prison for perjury. The case brought Nixon national notoriety, which he parlayed into a successful campaign for a U.S. Senate seat in 1950 (during which he attacked Democratic opponent Helen Gahagan Douglas as a pro-Soviet “pink lady”).

Two years later Eisenhower offered him the vice-presidential nomination. Although almost dropped from the ticket when it was revealed that he had accepted questionable if not illegal cash donations from wealthy contributors, Nixon managed to save his political career with a nationally televised speech, known as the “Checkers speech” ever after for its sentimental non sequitur reference to the Nixon family’s cocker spaniel, also a gift from a political admirer (“Whatever they say,” Nixon announced gravely, “we are going to keep her.”). During the campaign, Eisenhower stayed above the fray while Nixon hammered away at the Democrats for supposedly coddling Communists in government. Democrats retaliated by sticking the combative Nixon with the nickname “Tricky Dick.”

Nixon’s ambitions for moving on to the White House were thwarted in 1960. But in 1968 a “new Nixon” returned to the fray, with a carefully crafted
image of mature statesmanship. He left his customary rabid partisanship to running mate Spiro Agnew (in the course of the campaign Agnew would call Democratic candidate Hubert Humphrey “squishy soft” on communism). When Nixon took the oath of office, he placed his hand on his family Bible on the page that contained the reassuring lines from Isaiah, “They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.” And in his inaugural address, a celebration of good feeling and tolerance, he called on Americans to “lower our voices” and step away from “angry rhetoric that fans discontents into hatreds.”

There was one week in the year that followed that seemed to live up to the promise of the new president’s call for national unity. That was the seven days in mid-July that witnessed the Apollo XI mission. Three American astronauts flew to the moon on the spacecraft Columbia, and two of them, Neil Armstrong and Edwin Aldrin, landed on its surface on July 20 in the module Eagle. People around the world watched live televised images of Armstrong and Aldrin standing before an American flag planted on the moon’s surface, redeeming the pledge that John Kennedy had made eight years earlier. Before reboarding their landing module, Armstrong and Aldrin left behind them a plaque bearing the words “We came in peace for all mankind.” Nixon flew to the South Pacific to be on hand on the U.S. aircraft carrier Hornet when Apollo XI splashed down three days later. Understandably elated,
the president declared the past few days had been "the greatest week in the history of the world since the Creation."  

But if for one week in 1969, Americans were able to put aside the conflicts of the past decade, there were 51 others in which the old battles continued to rage. Of all the issues raising voices in the first year of the Nixon presidency, none was as divisive as the war in Vietnam. Nixon acknowledged in his memoirs that, had he chosen to do so, he could have ended the war shortly after coming into office. He did not need to worry about being labeled the president who "lost Vietnam," as Truman had supposedly "lost China." It would have been easy for Nixon to blame the fiasco on his Democratic predecessors and refuse to send more young Americans to die in a lost cause. "If I brought our troops home [in 1969]," Nixon would later write, "I would be a hero regardless of what happened to South Vietnam and its people."  

In the spring of 1969, the new president announced a phased withdrawal of American forces from South Vietnam. The administration committed itself to the "Vietnamization" of the war, putting renewed emphasis on training and equipping the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) to fight its own battles against the Communists. In July 1969, 814 men of the Third Battalion, Sixtieth Infantry, Ninth Division of the U.S. Army assembled on the tarmac of Tan Son Nhut airport in Saigon and boarded planes to return to the United States. They were the first of some 65,000 Americans withdrawn from Vietnam that year. Nixon announced at a press conference in Washington that he expected all U.S. troops to come home from Vietnam before the end of the following year. His national security adviser, Henry Kissinger, pleaded privately with the administration's critics to suspend their opposition, promising that the war would soon be over. "Be patient," he told antiwar congressmen in the spring of 1969: "Give us another sixty or ninety days."  

Nixon promised peace, but he craved victory. As he stated on many occasions, he did not intend to be "the first President of the United States to lose a war." Well aware of the unpopularity of the war, he understood that the only way he would be allowed to prolong it in pursuit of something he could label an American victory was if he was able to give the appearance at the same time of winding down the conflict.  

Nixon made a deliberate policy of taking few members of his cabinet into his confidence; indeed, he often deceived them regarding his real plans. He relied for advice almost exclusively on his national security adviser Henry Kissinger, a former Harvard academic with a taste for grand international designs. Kissinger was a master of bureaucratic infighting and saw to it that other potential advisers, like Defense Secretary Melvin Laird, and Secretary of State William Rogers, enjoyed only limited access to the president. Kissinger's instincts were, in any event, completely in tune with those of the
president he served. In a dangerous world, the leaders of the United States could not afford to be overly burdened with either candor or moral scruples. Like Nixon, he also relished the prospect of forcing others to do his bidding. Kissinger would tell NSC staff early on in the Nixon presidency to draw up plans for a “savage, decisive blow” against the enemy in Southeast Asia: “I refuse to believe that a little fourth-rate power like North Vietnam doesn’t have a breaking point.”

Two months after coming into the White House, Nixon ordered American B-52s to begin bombing North Vietnamese supply routes that ran through the border regions of neutral Cambodia, as well as to locate and destroy what proved to be an elusive, if not mythical, North Vietnamese command center in Cambodia. Nixon probably would have preferred taking the war directly to the enemy, by immediately resuming bombing of North Vietnam itself, but that would have revealed too clearly to a restive American public his intentions of prolonging the war. The Cambodian operation, in contrast, allowed Nixon the means to step up the war without drawing a negative reaction. Coordinated by Kissinger, the bombing campaign was so secret that its existence was concealed even from top Air Force leaders; official records were falsified to make it seem that the B-52s dispatched to Cambodia were actually hitting targets in South Vietnam.

The bombings were ineffective in slowing the pace of North Vietnamese resupply and reinforcement. Their chief impact was to inflict heavy casualties on the civilian population living along the border regions, which led to increased support for the Khmer Rouge, the Cambodian Communist movement that was attempting to overthrow the neutralist government of Norodom Sihanouk. But the bombing of Cambodia was intended to be only the prelude to further attacks—hence its code name “Breakfast.” Nixon planned to use the spring and summer of 1969 to secure sufficient public support for his policies in Vietnam to permit an open reescalation of the war in the fall. If all had worked out as planned, the secret bombings in Cambodia were to be followed by a vast and open expansion of the air war in an operation code-named Duck Hook, tentatively scheduled to be launched at the beginning of November. American aircraft would then unleash the heaviest bombing of the war against North Vietnam, including among their targets the two principal North Vietnamese cities, heavily populated Hanoi and Haiphong. Nixon also planned to mine North Vietnam’s ports and bomb the dikes that channeled water to North Vietnamese farmers. If the Communists still refused to capitulate, the bombing would be followed up by a land invasion of North Vietnam, and by the use of nuclear weapons against the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

Nixon hoped the mere prospect of such escalation would force North Vietnam to concede. He ordered Kissinger, who had already begun meeting secretly with North Vietnamese representatives in Paris in the spring of 1969, to inform them that he was contemplating “measures of the greatest conse-
quences” should there be no progress in negotiations by November 1. He explained to White House aide Bob Haldeman his “madman theory” for winning the war in Vietnam:

I want the North Vietnamese to believe I’ve reached the point where I might do anything to stop the war. We’ll just slip the word to them that, “for God’s sake, you know Nixon is obsessed about Communists. We can’t restrain him when he’s angry—and he has his hand on the nuclear button”—and Ho Chi Minh himself will be in Paris in two days begging for peace.¹⁴

Nixon and Kissinger, however, underestimated the resolve of their enemy. The Vietnamese Communists did not doubt the ability of the United States to deliver the “savage blows” the American leaders contemplated. But they were prepared to endure such blows for as long as it took to reach their own objective. As North Vietnam’s chief military strategist Vo Nguyen Giap told an American journalist after the war, “If we had focused on the balance of forces, we would have been defeated in two hours.”¹⁵ Giap, Ho Chi Minh, and other North Vietnamese leaders had outlasted the French; they had outlasted American presidents Kennedy and Johnson; and they were confident that they would outlast Nixon.

For all the talk in 1969 of the war “winding down,” Americans were still dying there by the hundreds every week. In a so-called mini-Tet offensive in February 1969, Communist forces killed over 1100 Americans. Nearly 9500 Americans would die in Vietnam in 1969—5000 fewer than the previous year’s record casualties, but more than had died in the heavy fighting of 1967.

As Nixon marshaled his forces for implementing his “madman theory” in November, the antia war movement was also preparing for the fall. The movement had fallen on hard times in the months after the 1968 Chicago Democratic convention. Although the campuses remained restive, there were no antiwar marches of the scale of earlier years in the first nine months of the Nixon presidency. Most Americans were willing to give the new president a chance to carry out his stated intention of ending the war quickly. In addition, the New Left wing of the antia war movement was beginning to fragment, at least as a nationally organized movement. While Students for a Democratic Society grew to perhaps a hundred thousand loosely affiliated members in the 1968–69 academic year, SDS leaders became increasingly enamored of such Old Left diversions as theory mongering and internal heresy hunts.

Matters came to a head at the SDS national convention held in Chicago in June 1969. The organization splintered into rival factions, each proclaiming itself the true vanguard of the revolution. The best-known of the splinter groups to survive the crackup were the Weathermen, who took their name
from a Bob Dylan lyric, “You don’t need a weatherman to know which way
the wind blows,” and believed that New Leftists had to shed their “white skin
privilege” by joining Third World revolutionaries in the violent overthrow of
the American empire.

Weathermen assembled a few hundred militants in Chicago in early Oc-
tober 1969 with the avowed intention to “bring the war home.” They held
several days of street demonstrations marked by random vandalism and run-
ning battles with the police. Within a few months, Weatherman’s most promi-
inent leaders, including Mark Rudd and Bernadine Dohrn, “went under-
ground,” and launched a bombing campaign that went on sporadically for
several years. Weatherman’s embrace of violence did little to end the war. It
did help destroy the largest radical student organization in U.S. history, and
contributed to a durable myth that all student radicals in the 1960s were
crazed terrorists. (The only casualties in the bombing campaign proved to be
three of the Weathermen, who accidentally blew themselves up while con-
structing bombs in a Greenwich Village townhouse in March 1970.\(^{16}\))

Since the student movement had always relied as much upon local initia-
tive as central direction, the demise of SDS did not spell an immediate end to
the New Left. In cities and college towns across the country, radical communities thrived in the late 1960s, centered around underground newspapers, coffeehouses, food co-ops, and local antiwar and community organizing projects. A national poll of college students taken in 1970 found that fully 11 percent of them described their politics as "radical or far left." When students were polled on political attitudes, rather than asked to adopt labels with possibly negative connotations ("far left"), the potential radical constituency on campus grew even larger. A full 75 percent of the students polled believed that "basic changes in the system" were necessary in the United States, while 45 percent agreed that social progress was more likely to come from "radical pressure from the outside" than through established procedures and institutions.17

Such political sentiments in the majority of cases proved ephemeral. The New Left made few recruits outside college campuses, and despite repeated efforts to form "adult" left-wing groups that would provide a vehicle for postgraduate activism, most of the would-be revolutionaries of 1968-1970 would sooner or later drift away from the ideological stances and organizational commitments of their student years.18 But the moderate majority of the antiwar movement was nonetheless drawn into direct action by the example set earlier in the decade by SDS, and by others on the Left, who had collectively broken down inhibitions against mass public displays of dissent over foreign policy. The presence of the radicals also raised the question for those in power of what would happen if the moderate majority of the peace movement swung round to their point of view. "The reaction of noisy radical groups was considered all the time," Admiral Thomas Moorer, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the Nixon years, would recall. "And it served to inhibit and restrain the decision makers."19

In the fall of 1969, as it became apparent that the dying was going to go on indefinitely in Vietnam, the antiwar movement not only revived but attained its greatest breadth of support and legitimacy. A new antiwar coalition, the Vietnam Moratorium Committee, came into existence, drawing upon the support of student government leaders, liberal Democratic activists, clergy, trade unionists, and veterans, among other mainstream groups. More than a million people nationwide participated in the Moratorium's first activity, a day of protest against the war on October 15. There were demonstrations, vigils, and other antiwar activities in hundreds of communities across the country.

Among those taking part in the protests were the children of White House aides Bob Haldeman and John Ehrlichman, as well as Defense Secretary Laird. Vice President Agnew was the administration's point man in its offensive against the antiwar movement; that fall he had described antiwar protesters as "an effete corps of impudent snobs." But even Agnew's own household wasn't solidly in the administration's camp; his 14-year-old daughter, Kim, wanted to participate in the Moratorium, but her father wouldn't let her.20

A subsequent antiwar demonstration in mid-November brought a record-breaking half million protesters to Washington, D.C. The participation in the
days of protest by American soldiers serving in South Vietnam was another unprecedented development. In October the New York Times reported that a combat platoon from the Americal Division had worn black armbands on patrol in solidarity with the Vietnam Moratorium demonstrators at home. (Four of the protesting soldiers were wounded by booby traps on the patrol, a grim reminder of the unrelenting carnage of the war.) And in November, more than a hundred GIs serving in a field evacuation hospital in Pleiku boycotted Thanksgiving dinner in November to display their opposition to the war.21

Nixon was furious at public opposition to his policies. He struck back by questioning the patriotic loyalties of his critics. In a televised address to the nation on November 3, he appealed to the “silent majority” of pro-war Americans: “North Vietnam cannot defeat or humiliate the United States,” he declared. “Only Americans can do that.”22 Many Americans agreed with Nixon. If the war was increasingly unpopular, so was the antiwar movement, which could not shake the unfavorable imagery generated by its more radical wing. But popularity, as measured in public opinion polls, is not necessarily a reliable measure of political effectiveness.

The protests in the streets were a continual reminder to Nixon of the political fate suffered by his predecessor in the White House. In the fall of 1969, the antiwar movement spoke more loudly than Nixon’s silent majority.23 Fearing the consequences of stepping up the war as they had planned the previous spring, Nixon quietly shelved plans for Operation Duck Hook. From that point on, although the killing went on for the next three years, Nixon no longer had any grand strategy for bringing the war to a successful conclusion. There was little he could now accomplish in Vietnam, except stave off Communist victory for a few more years.

When Nixon forgot in the spring of 1970 just how limited a mandate he had been granted for conducting the war, he was given a swift, sharp reminder by antiwar Americans. In April the president announced plans for the withdrawal of an additional 150,000 American troops from Vietnam in the coming year. At the same time, he decided to send American forces into Cambodia in a hastily concocted mission supposedly designed to root out the North Vietnamese supply depots and command centers that had survived a year of secret bombing unscathed. Nixon also intended the invasion to demonstrate support to the new military ruler of Cambodia Lon Nol, who had overthrown the neutralist Prince Sihanouk in March. Many of Nixon’s advisers were skeptical about the likelihood of military success and worried about the political consequences of the invasion, but the one man who really guided the president’s thinking on foreign policy matters, Henry Kissinger, encouraged him to go through with it. Nixon steeled his resolve before giving his final orders for the invasion by heavy drinking, and by sitting through repeated private screenings of Patton, his favorite World War Two epic.24

On the evening of April 30 President Nixon went on television to announce his decision to send U.S. ground forces into Cambodia. The stakes
he said, could not be higher: "If, when the chips are down, the world's most powerful nation, the United States of America, acts like a pitiful, helpless giant, the forces of totalitarianism and anarchy will threaten free nations and free institutions throughout the world."25

But this latest crisis supposedly testing American resolve existed only because Richard Nixon had manufactured it. The war was supposed to be winding down, not moving on to new territory. The argument that the war had to be prolonged and even expanded in order to protect American credibility no longer persuaded many Americans. The response to the invasion of Cambodia was immediate and dramatic, and included a national student strike that swept up hundreds of thousands of students on over 700 campuses, ranging from such hotbeds of New Left sentiment as Berkeley and Madison to community colleges, religiously affiliated schools, and southern state universities previously untouched by antiwar activism. A hundred thousand protesters poured into Washington for a march on the White House.

On a number of campuses protests turned violent; four students were shot dead by Ohio National Guardsmen on the campus of Kent State University on May 4, and two more died at Jackson State College in May when Mississippi state police let loose a hail of gunfire into a crowd of black students. Several dozen ROTC buildings were burned down on campuses across the nation. On the overwhelming majority of campuses, however, the protests were peaceful.

And it wasn't just students who were protesting. Antiwar GIs demonstrated at many bases in the United States; former Peace Corps volunteers occupied offices in the Peace Corps headquarters in Washington, D.C.; United Auto Worker president Walter Reuther, the foremost labor liberal, criticized the invasion, as did a member of Nixon's own Cabinet, Secretary of the Interior Walter Hickel; and the Senate passed a bill prohibiting the deployment of U.S. ground forces in Cambodia after July 1.26 Henry Kissinger recalled the atmosphere in the circles in which he traveled in Washington in those May days as that of “a besieged city,” with “the very fabric of government ... falling apart.” Kissinger worried about Nixon's stability; the president, he would later write, “reached a point of exhaustion that caused his advisers deep concern.”27

Nixon did find support from one quarter. On May 8 a group of about 200 hard-hatted construction workers attacked antiwar protesters in New York City, assaulting them with fists, boots, and hammers, chanting "Love it or Leave it." A few weeks later tens of thousands of building trades workers marched through the city's streets in support of the war. A delegation of building trades leaders was invited to the White House to receive thanks from the president, presenting him with a hard hat labeled "Commander in Chief."28

Although Nixon found such gestures of support from his "silent majority" gratifying, he was quick to back down from the Cambodian invasion,
withdrawing all U.S. ground forces from the country by the end of June. In
a self-fulfilling prophecy Nixon had indeed revealed himself as a "pitiful, help-
less giant," and despite claims that the U.S. invasion was the "most success-
ful" military operation of the war, few Americans felt cheered by the adven-
ture.29 If North Vietnamese leaders had any doubts in April 1970 on the
question of just how far the American people would allow Nixon to reesca-
late the war, thanks to Nixon's hasty pullback from Cambodia, they now had
their answer.

Still the war dragged on. Although the ultimate fate of South Vietnam
stirred few Americans, many cared passionately about the harsh conditions
endured by American prisoners of war in North Vietnamese captivity. Nixon
accordingly recast his public justifications for the war so that it sometimes
seemed the only reason the United States was fighting in Vietnam was to
gain the release of the POWs—a circular argument, since the longer the coun-
try fought, the more American POWs there were who needed release from
captivity.

With the continued withdrawal of American forces, American casualties
decreased; just over 6000 died in 1970 and under 3000 in 1971. Military
morale, however, declined even more precipitously. Drug abuse, including
heroin addiction, was rampant. Thousands of soldiers had deserted or gone
AWOL for extended periods of time. The number of instances of enlisted
men attempting to kill their own officers—so-called fragging incidents, be-
cause they frequently involved the use of fragmentation grenades—climbed
into the hundreds in 1970–1971. There were also many incidents of indi-
viduals and, on occasion, entire units refusing orders to go into combat.30

On the homefront, there was another flurry of antiwar protests in the
spring of 1971. There were scattered protests around the country in Febru-
ary, when South Vietnamese troops ferried by American helicopters made an
ill-fated foray into neighboring Laos. April and May saw much larger demon-
strations, including an encampment on the Capitol Mall in Washington by
over a thousand members of Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW).
Many of the antiwar veterans who gathered for that protest were in wheel-
chairs, or missing limbs, or wearing Purple Hearts on their combat fatigue
Hundreds tossed the medals they had received in Vietnam onto the Capitol
steps. John Kerry, former lieutenant (j.g.), U.S. Navy, and decorated veteran
of the war, spoke on behalf of VVAW in testimony before the Senate Foreign
Relations Committee. Noting President Nixon's avowal that he wouldn't be
the first president to "lose a war," Kerry demanded to know: "How do you
ask a man to be the last man to die in Vietnam? How do you ask a man to
be the last man to die for a mistake?"31

As important as Vietnam was as an issue dividing Americans in the late
1960s, it was racial conflict that made Richard Nixon president. Nixon came
to see in the nation's endemic racial problems not only an opportunity to se-
cure his own reelection in 1972, but to create an enduring Republican majority in the United States.

On coming into the White House in 1969, he enjoyed a record as a racial moderate. As vice president in the 1950s, Nixon had publicly endorsed the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* (something President Eisenhower never did), and supported proposals before Congress for civil rights legislation. He also met with Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1957 and assured the civil rights leader of the administration's goodwill. In 1964 Nixon maintained a studied silence about President Johnson's Civil Rights Act, since Republican presidential nominee Barry Goldwater was among the bill's opponents, but after the election Nixon endorsed the act, as he did the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

In the company of close associates, Nixon vented less tolerant views; according to White House aide John Ehrlichman, Nixon "thought, basically, blacks were genetically inferior. ... He thought they couldn't achieve on a level with whites." But unlike other practitioners of the politics of divisiveness such as George Wallace, Nixon did not allow his prejudices to define his racial politics. When Nixon embraced a "southern strategy" that involved turning his back on the civil rights movement, his actions were dictated more by a cool calculation of political advantage, than by any personal racial animosities.

Once in the White House, Nixon's handling of racial issues continued to be dictated by political considerations. He hoped to head off or blunt a possible Wallace electoral challenge in 1972, while extending Republican inroads into formerly Democratic constituencies in the South and in white working-class neighborhoods in the North. A young Republican strategist named Kevin Phillips published a book in 1969 entitled *The Emerging Republican Majority*, in which he argued that the days of the New Deal coalition were numbered by the growing population and conservatives of the Sunbelt states of the South and Southwest, and by the disenchantment of ethnic working-class whites with Democrats' racial policies. Nixon read the book over Christmas 1969 and took its prescriptions to heart.

Nixon's new urban affairs adviser, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, suggested to him in a memo a few weeks later that the problems of blacks had been "too much talked about" in recent years. It may be, Moynihan suggested, that "the issue of race could benefit from a period of 'benign neglect.'" ("I agree!" Nixon scribbled in the margin of his copy of the memo.)

Economic issues had provided the underpinning of the New Deal coalition. Republicans could attract a majority of voters only if they changed the nature of the political debate. As presidential speechwriter Patrick Buchanan argued, Republicans had to "focus on those issues that divide the Democrats, not those that unite Republicans." The Nixon administration's social policies
should be attuned to the issues that divided Americans into quarreling interest groups. "When RN [Nixon] comes out for aid to parochial schools," Buchanan wrote in a memo circulated within the administration, "this will drive a wedge right down the Middle of the Democratic Party. The same is true of abortion [meaning Nixon should oppose abortion]; the same is true of hardline anti-pornography laws."36

And the same was true of race. Already, in 1969, the strategy the Nixon administration would follow on racial issues was clear. With Nixon's approval, Attorney General John Mitchell sought to delay the enforcement of court-ordered desegregation of Mississippi's school districts. "Do only what the law requires [on integration]," Nixon ordered officials in the Justice Department and HEW, "not one thing more."37 Government officials who sought to enforce desegregation too zealously, or who protested the new administration's delaying tactics, were purged. Nixon sought legislation in Congress to impose a moratorium on court-ordered busing. The administration also sought, unsuccessfully, to persuade Congress not to renew the Voting Rights Act of 1965, due to expire in 1970.

Nixon found the Supreme Court a convenient foil for his southern strategy. To fill vacancies on the Court, he nominated conservative judges from the South, who he knew would not win Senate approval. When nominee G. Harrold Carswell of Florida was rejected by the Senate, Nixon welcomed the vote as an opportunity to fan regional resentments. He declared himself in sympathy with "the bitter feeling of millions of Americans who live in the South about the act of regional discrimination that took place in the Senate yesterday."38

The Nixon administration introduced one new policy seemingly at odds with the entire thrust of the southern strategy, and that was federally mandated guidelines for "affirmative action" hiring of minorities in private employment. In 1969 Nixon's secretary of labor, George Schultz, announced the introduction of the Philadelphia Plan (so-called for the city where it was first to be put in practice). This plan required contractors on government-funded building sites to hire minority workers in skilled trades to fit government-determined quotas (euphemistically referred to as "numerical goals and timetables"); in 1970 the program was expanded to cover all federally funded hiring and contracting.

The term "affirmative action" had first been used in the Kennedy administration, and was enshrined in a section of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. However, throughout the presidencies of the two liberal Democrats in the 1960s, the term was understood to require color-blind principles in hiring. If a job applicant could prove that racial discrimination had denied him or her a given position, there was to be legal redress available. The Nixon's administration's approach, which involved setting aside a certain number of po-
sitions that could be filled only by black or other minority candidates, turned
the original definition of affirmative action on its head.

Nixon liked affirmative action for several reasons. Compared to job-
training programs, or public works, it was a low-cost strategy for the gov-
ernment to boost black employment. It also fit in with his belief that “black
capitalism” would prove the solution to America’s racial problems; govern-
ment regulations also required the “set-aside” of a percentage of government
contracts for minority businesses. The new black middle class who were the
beneficiaries of federal largesse, might well decide that economic self inter-
est dictated a vote for Republican candidates in the future.

Finally, Nixon was delighted at the prospect of presenting the Democ-
rats with an apparently insoluble political dilemma. If they supported affir-
mative action, they would offend their labor allies (building trades unions
in particular vehemently opposed the plan, since it challenged their control
of the hiring process on building sites). And if they opposed it, they would of-
fend their black constituency—although it is worth noting that the NAACP,
mistrusting Nixon’s motives, opposed the Philadelphia Plan. In the end, De-
omocrats would come down strongly in support of affirmative action—and it
would soon be forgotten by those who resented the policy that it was Richard
Nixon who first put it into practice. By 1972 Nixon was condemning the De-
omocrats for frightening Americans with “the spectre of a quota democracy”—
as if he had never heard of a Philadelphia Plan.*

Nixon’s southern strategy was intended to score points with white vot-
ers. What he did not intend (and could not have achieved had he wanted to)
was to turn the clock back on civil rights to the 1950s. The gains of the 1960s
as enshrined in the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act were secure.
Jim Crow—the legally enforced separation of the races—was dead. Through-
out the South, public schools, public transportation, and public accommo-
dations were opening up to black and white alike. Blacks were registering
and voting in record numbers in the region, and electing scores of political
officials, from the county to the federal level. Even George Wallace began to
sound new themes in response to the new political arithmetic. In 1971, in a
speech to the National Press Club, the man who had eight years earlier vowed
to support “Segregation forever!” now declared himself in favor of “public
accommodations open to all.”

Blacks also made significant political gains in the North during these
years. A new generation of black urban politicians challenged the power of
the old white ethnic political machines; in 1967, for the first time, black men
were elected as mayors of major northern cities: Carl Stokes in Cleveland,
and Richard Hatcher in Gary, Indiana. Black voters in cities like Detroit,
Newark, and Philadelphia would soon follow suit. But these proved am-
biguous victories, hastening the flight of white voters to the suburbs, and
leaving the new black mayors to attempt to cope with the problems of ever
greater and more concentrated poverty in the inner cities, with ever dwindling resources. The combination of the end of Jim Crow in the South, and deteriorating economic and social conditions in northern cities brought the "great migration" of blacks northward in the twentieth century to an end. Between 1970 and 1975, for the first time in the history of the nation, more black Americans moved to the South from the North than the reverse.41

While a new black leadership took seats in city councils and in the halls of Congress, the "old" black leadership of the civil rights era faded into obscurity or irrelevance. King was dead, and the SCLC, under the uninspired direction of King's successor, Ralph Abernathy, survived only on the fading glory of the memories of Birmingham and Selma. SNCC collapsed in the early 1970s, with the flamboyant leaders of its later years either in jail, like H. Rap Brown, or living in self-imposed exile in Africa, like Stokely Carmichael.

The Black Panther Party continued to make headlines through Richard Nixon's first term in office; J. Edgar Hoover pronounced the organization a major threat to national security, and the group's shoot-outs with police became the stuff of radical legend. But Huey Newton's increasingly erratic leadership disenchanted many of the Panthers' former admirers, both black and white. Released from prison on appeal in 1970, Newton soon wandered into cocaine addiction and megalomania; the most interesting part of each new issue of the Black Panther Party newspaper was learning what title Newton had decided to award himself that week (ranging from "Supreme Commander of the People" to "Supreme Servant of the People"). Though they continued to be regarded as folk heroes by many on the white New Left, and as dangerous adversaries by the FBI and local police agencies, by 1972 the Panthers were reduced to a hard core of fewer than 200 members in Oakland, California. There they dug in and survived for a time, operating more as a protection racket for black businesses than as a revolutionary movement.42

The greatest setback the civil rights movement suffered in these years was not so much a question of organization as it was one of moral legitimacy. The movement had lost its claim to speak for a larger vision of an inclusive and democratic America. Increasingly it was seen, at least by whites, as simply another "special interest" group, looking out for the selfish interests of its own members. The last years of the civil rights movement, John Lewis would later write, were a time of "groping lostness."43

As some of the old social movements waned, new ones came to the fore. Other ethnic and racial minorities were inspired by the "Black Power" movement to redefine their own places in American society. In East Los Angeles, thousands of Mexican-American students in the city's public schools staged a walkout in the spring of 1968, calling for "Chicano Power" and better schools. Some young Mexican-American activists went on to form a militant group modeled on the Black Panthers. They called it the Brown Berets, named for their distinctive headgear, which according to the pledge required of new
members "signifies my dignity and pride in the color of my skin and race." Just as the black militants of the late 1960s distanced themselves from the nonviolence preached by Martin Luther King, Jr., so the Chicano militants felt they had to go beyond the tactics associated with Farmworker leader Cesar Chavez. "We support Chavez," a young Chicano in East Los Angeles told a journalist from the National Catholic Reporter in the spring of 1969, "but we're not interested in that nonviolence thing. Our people are being shot and killed and beaten every day—we're not gonna take that any more. Chavez is a good man, we owe a lot to him, but working within the system hasn't gotten me anywhere, so we'll deal with oppression in whatever way is necessary." The Brown Berets were most famous for their role in organizing the Chicano Moratorium, an antiwar protest that attracted thirty-thousand protesters in East Los Angeles on August 29, 1970. The demonstration was attacked by Los Angeles police, killing three people, including a popular Hispanic newspaper reporter, Rubén Salazar.

In Chicago, a Puerto Rican street gang called the Young Lords reinvented itself in 1969 as a militant political group, the Young Lords Organization. It
spread to New York City’s Spanish Harlem, home to the largest Puerto Rican population on the mainland, where the group renamed itself the Young Lords Party. The group’s politics were a mixture of Puerto Rican nationalism, Black Panther-style theatricality (complete with their own berets), and community organizing. The group’s nineteen-year-old “Minister of Information” told a reporter from the New York Times in 1970 that the Young Lords “are on duty 24 hours a day. . . . In the street, in the homes, in stores, they talk to the people to show them how it is the capitalist system that keeps them poor.”

Young people of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Filipino backgrounds began to find common ground in describing themselves as “Asian-Americans,” and espoused “Yellow Power.” A number of them, particularly in the San Francisco Bay Area, were drawn into militant groups, sometimes identifying with the Chinese Communists as well as the Black Panthers. Asian-American students participated in “Third World” strikes at the Berkeley campus of the University of California, and at San Francisco State University in 1969, demanding the establishment of ethnic studies programs, similar to the black studies programs being created on many campuses. They were also active in protests against the Vietnam War, which they denounced as racist and imperialist. Mason Wong, one of the student strikers at San Francisco State, challenged the “fiction” that “the Chinese have never suffered as much as, say, the black or brown communities. . . . The only thing different that [Chinatown] has is some neon lights and a few tourist restaurants, which is all that white people want to know about our community. Yet these restaurants are staffed by illiterate Chinese who work 14 hours a day 6 days a week for starvation wages.”

Native American too displayed a new militancy, calling for “Red Power.” Their protests in the late 1960s and early 1970s differed from that of other minority groups in one significant way: they often centered on issues of tribal sovereignty and treaty rights that had been festering since the nineteenth century. But the old issues had a way of intertwining themselves with the new. In the state of Washington, Indians from the Puyallup, Yakima, and other tribes mobilized to defend traditional fishing rights. Sidney Mills, a Yakima tribe member and private first class in the U.S. Army who had been wounded in Vietnam, announced in 1968 that he was resigning from the military: “My first obligation,” he declared, “lies with the Indian people, fighting for their lawful treaty rights. . . . The defense of the Indian people, and their chosen way of life . . . is more compelling than any duty to the U.S. military.” In 1969 a group of Native American college students and supporters took over Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay, home to the recently closed-down federal prison. They demanded the creation of a Native American cultural center on the island. Meanwhile in Minneapolis, young Native American activists founded a group called the American Indian Movement (AIM), which soon grew into a national organization. They had a flair for theatrical protest, tak-
ing over a replica of the original Mayflower in Plymouth Harbor on Thanksgiving Day 1970. Their most famous protest took place in 1973 when they occupied the village of Wounded Knee in South Dakota, site of a massacre of Sioux Indians by the U.S. Cavalry in 1890. An armed standoff between AIM supporters and FBI agents resulted, with casualties on both sides.

The new calls for “power” and “pride” resonated with other minorities. Male homosexuals, long the victims of derision, physical attack, and police harassment, took to the streets of Greenwich Village in June 1969 in response to a police raid on a gay bar known as the Stonewall Inn on Christopher Street. For four nights they battled police in what became known as the Stonewall Rebellion. This was an event notable for two reasons: first, because it was the only riot of the 1960s that included a Rockettes-style chorus line (with rioters mocking the police by kicking their heels in the air, and singing, “We are the Stonewall girls/We wear our hair in curls/We wear no underwear/We show our pubic hair.”). And second, and more importantly, the Stonewall events sparked the organization of a new activist-oriented homosexual rights movement. Lesbians, too, were beginning to organize. Many of them had first been drawn into radical activism through the women's liberation movement; by 1969–1970 they were organizing openly as gay women, sometimes joining forces with gay men in local “Gay Liberation Fronts.” Of all the minorities inspired by the Black Power example, gays were the most successful in translating “pride” into “power.” In some cities, especially gay meccas like San Francisco, the new movement developed impressive electoral clout.49

Another insurgency making headway in the years of the Nixon presidency was the environmental movement. In September 1969, Wisconsin Senator Gaylord Nelson, proposed that a national “teach-in” be held the following spring on environmental issues. Planning for the event soon took on a momentum of its own, as politicians and youthful volunteers around the country began planning their own activities for what came to be called Earth Day, scheduled for April 22, 1970. Earth Day was modeled on the decentralized organizational strategy pioneered by the antiwar movement, in the campus teach-ins of 1965, and the Moratorium activities of 1969. But in contrast to the antiwar protests, Earth Day was intended by its national organizers to be a strictly nonpartisan, nonconfrontational event, one that stressed the common interests of all Americans in a healthy environment. For its part, the Nixon administration was eager to back Earth Day, in part because of the popularity of the environmental issue, in part because it hoped that relatively innocuous sentiments associated with the movement would drain youthful support from more radical causes. As Nixon proclaimed in his State of the Union address in January, Americans must “make our peace with nature” by means of “reparations for the damage we have done to our air, to our land and to our water.”50 Corporations, including some major polluters,
also jumped on the bandwagon, providing financial backing, advertising, and speakers for the teach-in.

Earth Day proved an enormous success. Twenty million Americans participated in one or more local observances, which often took such forms as parades, street fairs, and tree plantings. But the environmental issue was not as easily tamed as some of Earth Day's sponsors hoped. Administration and corporate spokesmen were booed off the stage in some cities; and there were also sit-ins, picket lines, and other disturbances sponsored by more radically inclined groups. The influence of 1960s protest movements lived on through the 1970s, in the anticorporate rhetoric and civil disobedience tactics embraced by youthful environmentalists, particularly those involved in attempts to shut down the nation's nuclear power industry.51

Perhaps the most enduring legacy of the Nixon presidency was the relegation of liberals to the margins of American politics. But their fate was not apparent at the start of Nixon's presidency. The Republican recapture of the White House seemed to liberals an aberration, a product of the exceptional circumstances of 1968, rather than the harbinger of a long-term rightward shift in American politics. In that year's congressional races, Nixon's coattails proved very short, gaining the Republicans only four seats in the House of Representatives and five in the Senate, making the new president the first since the 19th century to enter the White House without his party controlling either house of Congress. In the 1970 midterm elections, the Democrats would lose two more seats in the Senate (while still retaining control of that body), but gaining nine in the House of Representatives, as well as picking up eleven governorships around the nation. If there was an "emerging Republican majority" in American politics, it was emerging at a sedentary pace.

No prominent Democratic opponents of the war in Vietnam lost their House or Senate seats in 1968. Freed of the albatross of "Johnson's war," Democrats emerged from the election more united on foreign policy issues than they had been since 1965. In a symbolic show of strength in April 1970, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee voted unanimously to repeal the Gulf of Tonkin resolution that President Johnson had cited as the "functional equivalent" to a declaration of war in Vietnam.

Reunited on foreign policy issues, liberals also continued to set the agenda for the nation's domestic policy during Nixon's first term in office—with what, ironically, proved in some ways a stronger ally in the White House than they had known during the last embattled years of the Johnson presidency. Nixon may have despised liberals as political opponents, but he was by no means a doctrinaire conservative. He didn't care much about domestic policy issues, and did not have strong principled objections to the many liberal domestic programs that had been initiated over the past decade. Just as John Kennedy had been content to allow domestic policy to drift along in
essentially the same directions it had taken in the preceding Republican administration, so Nixon allowed those policies to drift further along the liberal lines of the past half-decade. Moreover, Nixon was impressed by the argument made by his urban policy adviser, Democrat Daniel Patrick Moynihan.

Moynihan urged Nixon to conceive of his role as that of an enlightened conservative reformer, on the order of the nineteenth century British Tory leader and prime minister Benjamin Disraeli. After reading a biography of Disraeli, at Moynihan’s suggestion, Nixon would opine: “Tory men and liberal policies are what have changed the world.” Herbert Stein, who joined the Nixon administration as an economic adviser in 1969 and became chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers in 1971, would later note, somewhat ruefully, that “more new regulation was imposed on the economy during the Nixon administration than in any other presidency since the New Deal.”

In Nixon’s first term in office, he signed into law acts creating such new federal regulatory agencies as the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). (Nixon’s newly developed interest in environmental issues may have had something to do with the fact that his most likely Democratic challenger in 1972 was seen as being Edmund Muskie, who had spent the past half-decade forging a strong environmental record in the Senate.) Nixon also went along with congressional initiatives to increase spending on social welfare programs, from AFDC to food stamps to Social Security.

No one could plausibly suggest that the era of big government came to an end during the Nixon first term in office. "Vigorously did we inveigh against the Great Society," Nixon's archconservative speechwriter Pat Buchanan would complain in 1975, "enthusiastically did we fund it."54

With Nixon personalizing the flattery of stealing their programs, their return to control of the White House seemed a strong possibility as a new election cycle began. In 1972 as in 1960, "liberal" remained an honorific in Democratic Party circles. There was a big change, however, in the process through which the Democratic Party would choose its presidential candidate in 1970. In a sop to the party's liberals in 1968, the same Democratic convention that nominated Hubert Humphrey also established a commission under the direction of Senator George McGovern to reform the way the party selected its delegates for future conventions. The McGovern Commission sought to wrest control of delegate selection out of the hands of the old party bosses by requiring state party organizations to hold primaries or other open forms of delegate selection, such as well-advertised caucuses. The commission's recommendations were adopted by the Democratic National Committee (DNC) in 1971, and as a result 60 percent of convention delegates the following year were chosen by primary voters, as opposed to only 40 percent so chosen in 1968. The new rules also established quotas for the number of blacks, women, and young people chosen as delegates, requiring their numbers to be "in reasonable relationship to [the group's] presence in the population of the State."55

In August 1968 McGovern had been put forward as a last-minute presidential candidate by some of Bobby Kennedy's political supporters, including Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. In the next three years, he emerged as the favorite of Democratic liberals, if not of the party establishment, who would have preferred either to run Humphrey again, or his 1968 vice-presidential candidate, Senator Edmund Muskie of Maine.

More conservative Democrats favored the unreconstructed cold warrior Henry "Scoop" Jackson of Washington, or George Wallace (whose own campaign for the Democratic nomination came to an abrupt end in a Maryland parking lot when he was shot and left paralyzed by a young man named Arthur Bremer—yet another in the string of deranged lone gunmen who had become a familiar feature of American political life over the past decade).

The new party rules, plus a widespread resentment among rank-and-file Democratic activists against the old party regulars, worked to McGovern's advantage. The number of women and minority delegates tripled from 1968 to 1972, the number of delegates under the age of 30 increased tenfold. The delegates to the 1972 convention were also inordinately well-educated; although there was no formal quota on graduate degrees, nearly 40 percent of the delegates held one. The Reform Democrats had finally come into their own. Going in to the climactic primary campaign in California in June,
McGovern led Humphrey by 560 delegates to 311; with his victory there, McGovern secured an additional 271 delegates, and a lock on the party nomination when the Democrats met in their national convention in July in Miami Beach.

After fielding a tightly organized and smoothly run primary campaign, McGovern stumbled badly in the general election. Among the most famous gaffes of the campaign was McGovern’s decision to first offer the vice-presidential nomination to Senator Thomas Eagleton of Missouri, and then, after it was revealed that Eagleton had been hospitalized for mental problems (and after McGovern pledged to stand “one thousand percent” behind his nominee) to dump Eagleton for Sargent Shriver. The Eagleton affair struck hard at McGovern’s public image as a man of high principle, making him look instead like just another poll-driven, waffling politician. As a liberal standard-bearer, McGovern also lacked the stage presence of a John or Bobby Kennedy. The son of a Methodist minister, McGovern came across to many listeners as a kind of mild and ineffective pastor, disappointed in the worldly ways of his flock. Rolling Stone’s political correspondent Hunter S. Thompson, who admired McGovern, nonetheless brooded over his lack of charisma: “Crowds seem to turn him off, instead of on.” To be a viable candidate, Thompson thought, “McGovern would need at least one dark kinky streak of Mick Jagger in his soul.”

There were constituencies energized by the McGovern campaign, primarily drawn from the ranks of younger cause-oriented liberals—antiwar activists, feminists, environmentalists, and the like, who had come to be known collectively as advocates of the “new politics.” The 1972 campaign was the first time since the constitutional passage of women’s suffrage that an organized feminist movement played an important role in a national presidential campaign. The newly founded Ms. magazine endorsed McGovern’s primary candidacy, calling him “the only candidate who consistently makes women’s concerns a part of his campaign.” Feminists were so well represented at the Miami convention that they came close to nominating one of their own, Frances “Sissy” Farenthold, a former Texas legislator, as McGovern’s running mate. The 1972 election was also notable as the first in which 18-year-old American citizens were given the vote (as a result of the Thirty-sixth Amendment to the Constitution, adopted the previous year). McGovern strategists banked heavily on the youth vote, and the political campaign was staffed in good measure by men and women in their early twenties (among them a politically ambitious 26-year-old named Bill Clinton, who codirected McGovern’s Texas state campaign).

But McGovern did considerably less well among traditional Democratic constituencies. With the exception of some of the more liberally oriented industrial trade unions, like the UAW, and public-sector unions like the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME),
organized labor stood aloof from his campaign. The bosses of important big city machines were similarly unenthusiastic. Many traditional working-class Democratic voters were put off by televised scenes from Miami of McGovern's youthful, shaggy-haired backers, and by gestures of political retribution like the unseating of Mayor Richard Daley in a credentials challenge. ("Anybody who would reform Chicago's Democratic Party by dropping the white ethnic," wrote Chicago newspaper columnist Mike Royko, "would probably begin a diet by shooting himself in the stomach.") A number of Democratic southern governors, including Jimmy Carter of Georgia, refused to endorse the national ticket. And so did the "neoconservatives"—a small but influential group of formerly liberal intellectuals, writers, and editors who had grown disenchanged with Great Society social programs, black militancy, and the New Left, and would soon depart the Democrats for the more congenial company of the Republican party.

The prospective "new politics" majority proved an illusion—to a great extent, the victim of political mistakes committed by the McGovern camp in 1972. But McGovern was also doomed by contingencies that were beyond his control—or, for that matter, any other potential Democratic nominee that year. It seems unlikely, in fact, that Muskie, Humphrey, or any other of the leading contenders for the Democratic nomination in 1972 could have prevailed over Richard Nixon, although someone else might have held down the magnitude of Democratic defeat—or perhaps not, since the nomination of any candidate other than McGovern would likely have precipitated a third party effort by disgruntled Democratic liberals. Richard Nixon enjoyed a virtually unassailable political position in 1972.

Nixon had both peace and prosperity going for him in 1972—a quite remarkable political phenomenon, considering the fact that the country was at war and its overall economic situation increasingly precarious. But Nixon, who had stumbled so badly over so many issues in 1969–1971, hit his stride in 1971–1972, and masterfully wielded the advantages of incumbency.

Nixon was able to bring his first-term record in international relations to a triumphant conclusion in the spring of 1972 by boldly seeking the normalization of relations with the People's Republic of China. For nearly a quarter century, the United States had tried to isolate the Communist regime in China, pretending that the legitimate seat of Chinese government was lodged in exile on Taiwan, where the anticommunist generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek had been forced to flee in 1949. As tensions with the Soviet Union eased after the Cuban missile crisis, China emerged in the minds of many Americans as the most dangerous adversary that the United States had to confront abroad. The Soviet Union and China, locked in rivalry to lead the international Communist movement, had vied with each other to provide the most military aid to North Vietnam. But since China shared a border with Vietnam, many prowar Americans assumed that Ho Chi Minh was merely a pawn of Mao
Zedong. As late as 1965, Nixon was calling the war in Vietnam in reality a war against Red China.\footnote{60}

Once in office, however, Nixon reversed course, sending diplomatic signals through intermediaries that United States was ready to fashion a new relationship with Communist China. This dramatic shift in Nixon’s thinking was part of a broader vision that he and Kissinger shared, of a new world firmly based upon the principles of geopolitics rather than ideology. The world’s superpowers would cooperate in a system of international trade and peacekeeping, respecting one another’s regional interests, and accepting the differences in their official political philosophies. Nixon hoped that in exchange for diplomatic recognition and trade with the United States, the Chinese would see it in their own interest to force the North Vietnamese to settle the conflict in Indochina. He also hoped that a U.S.–Chinese rapprochement would serve to make the Soviet Union more amenable to cooperating with the United States, since the last thing Moscow wanted was to have to face the combined might of Beijing and Washington.

The Chinese were interested, although they made it clear that their price for better relations would be the withdrawal of U.S. military forces from Taiwan, and the handing over of the United Nations seat currently held by the Taiwanese to the government in Beijing. It took three years of subtle diplomatic interplay (including, famously, an invitation to American ping-pong players to visit China) to reach the threshold of open contact. Nixon and Kissinger both delighted in this kind of intrigue. Nixon’s public announcement of the proposed opening to China created a sensation, and his 10-day visit to the nation in February 1972 was a political and public relations triumph. Americans were fascinated by their first extensive televised view into the mysterious land of Red China.

Mao and Nixon got along in Beijing like two old political cronies. In their bantering exchanges there was a sense of pragmatism—heavily laced with cynicism—that rendered irrelevant the tired ideological formulas of the Cold War. Upon their first introduction, Mao claimed he had “voted” for Nixon in 1968, to which Nixon responded that he had obviously “voted for the lesser of two evils.” “I like rightists,” the old revolutionary responded. Nixon understood perfectly. “I think the most important thing to note is that in America, at least at this time, those on the right can do what those on the left can only talk about.” Mao agreed.\footnote{61}

As Nixon hoped, the Chinese–American rapprochement thoroughly alarmed the Russians and made them even more eager to have him visit Moscow for a long-scheduled summit. Nixon flew to Moscow in May, and signed agreements with the Soviets banning deployment of antiballistic missile systems, as well as an interim agreement limiting the development of offensive nuclear weapon systems. Both sides found ways to increase their nuclear arsenals in the years that followed, but the Strategic Arms Limitation
Treaty (SALT) set an important precedent as the first treaty placing any limitation on the spread of nuclear weapons. Nixon also was able to announce a deal with the Soviets to purchase large supplies of American wheat—welcome news to the United States farm belt, and to Republican political strategists.

Meanwhile, a few thousand miles to the east, American bombers were attacking cities in North Vietnam for the first time since 1968 in response to a North Vietnamese offensive that, for awhile that spring, seemed on the verge of toppling the Saigon regime. The North Vietnamese were beaten back by heavy United States air attacks, and the war dragged on through the summer of 1972. But in early October, the long-stalled peace negotiations in Paris were finally making progress, as American negotiators were instructed by Kissinger to make a key concession. For four years, the United States had insisted that there could be no settlement of the war that left North Vietnamese soldiers still operating in South Vietnam. A month before the U.S. presidential election, over the objections of South Vietnamese president Thieu, the United States dropped that condition. The warring Vietnamese sides would now simply declare a cease-fire, leaving their troops in control of whatever territory they controlled at the war’s end. The Americans would complete their own withdrawal of forces from Vietnam. In exchange, the North Vietnamese made a concession of their own, accepting Thieu as interim leader of the South Vietnamese government until elections could be arranged in which the Communists would be free to participate. Nixon also pledged to provide vast military supplies to South Vietnam (which would soon have the world’s fourth largest air force as a result), and secretly assured Thieu that in the event of a new Communist offensive the U.S. would renew bombing of North Vietnam. In reality, none of the parties involved expected that the proposed peace agreement could possibly work in practice, although it served the interests of both Richard Nixon and the North Vietnamese leaders to pretend for awhile that it would. The war would not so much come to an end as be put on hold.

There was still one more spasm of violent destruction in store for Vietnam before even this sham peace could be achieved. Immediately following the election, Nixon ordered Kissinger to present stiffer terms to the North Vietnamese than those already agreed upon. Then, arguing that it was North Vietnamese recalcitrance that was preventing a final peace settlement, he launched a new offensive against North Vietnam. For 12 days U.S. B-52s engaged in massive around-the-clock bombing attacks on Hanoi and Haiphong. Fifteen bombers and 93 U.S. airmen were lost before the offensive was finally called off. The "Christmas bombing," coming so close upon the promise of a peace agreement, sparked outrage around the world and in the United States. Even some Republican senators wondered aloud if Nixon had taken leave of his senses.62

Although Nixon claimed that the bombing had been necessary to bring the North Vietnamese back to the bargaining table, the peace treaty as finally
signed in mid-January differed in no essential degree from the one previously agreed upon. As one of Kissinger’s aides remarked to a friend, “We bombed the North Vietnamese into accepting our concession.” Nixon made the most of the settlement, declaring on the day the peace accords were signed: “We have finally achieved peace with honor.” There were no victory parades in American cities, but 591 POWs returned home from Vietnam shortly afterward to a tumultuous welcome. About 2500 Americans remained listed as missing in action. Total U.S. dead in the war came to over 58,000. Of those, 20,492 had died during the four years since Richard Nixon became their commander-in-chief.

When Nixon entered the White House, he inherited a troubled national economy. The Vietnam War, initially a boon to the economy as the government pumped money into defense industries and unemployment dropped to record low levels, was beginning to have other, less desirable economic effects. Johnson’s tax increase succeeded, at least temporarily, in eliminating the budget deficit. It did not, however, have much impact on inflation. American consumers, schooled by now to expect the prosperity of the postwar years to last forever, hardly noticed the loss of disposable income. They kept spending on new cars and new houses at presurcharge levels. Inflation, averaging under 2 percent from 1961 to 1965, and still running at less than 3 percent in 1967, was up to 4.5 percent by 1971, with no end in sight. The war in Vietnam would come to an end long before its economic consequences stopped being felt.

Another kind of economic bill was coming due in the late 1960s, and this, ironically, was a product of successful American foreign policy. In the years following the Second World War, international trade was a key component of U.S. strategy to contain the Soviet Union. A prosperous Europe and Asia would be a bulwark against the spread of communism, and the U.S., through generous lending policies and by providing easy access to U.S. domestic markets, helped rebuild the shattered industries and economies not only of its World War II allies, but also of its former enemies, Germany and Japan. When goods from those countries began appearing in American marketplaces in the 1950s, they were treated as curiosities—like the German Volkswagen and Japanese transistor radios, sprightly additions to the American-made cornucopia of consumer durables. What no one expected was how quickly or completely some foreign-manufactured goods would come to supplant those produced by their American competitors. The United States slipped into a deficit in trade with Japan for the first time in 1965; by 1971 its trade deficit with Japan had climbed to $3 billion. The boom in defense industry employment in the later 1960s obscured another consequence of the growing share of the U.S. domestic market taken over by foreign manufacturers, and that was deindustrialization. Between 1966 and 1971, the United States economy lost nearly a million manufacturing jobs in such core indus-
tries as steel, auto, electrical manufacturing, and garment manufacturing. The ranks of industrial unions, like the Steelworkers, began a precipitous decline, a loss in union strength only partially offset by the tenfold increase in the number of unionized public-sector workers between 1955 and 1970.65

Unemployment, at a postwar low of under 4 percent when Nixon took office, gradually crept upward over the next two years to over 6 percent as the nation slipped into recession. The stock market was jittery, and unions increasingly militant; there were major strikes against General Electric and General Motors during Nixon's first two years in office, as well as a wildcat strike by 250,000 postal workers that only ended only when Nixon sent in the army to move the mail. Gleeful Democrats began talking about "Nixonomics" and compared the president to Herbert Hoover.

Nixon had hoped that social issues would trump economic issues in the 1970s, allowing him to woo disaffected Democrats into his own new majority coalition. That didn't happen in the midterm elections of 1970, as blue-collar Democrats cast their ballots for Democratic congressional candidates. "The guy who is worried about crime and about the blacks moving into his neighborhood might...be tempted to vote Republican, but his paramount interest is his pay check," a Democratic adviser told the Wall Street Journal in the spring of 1970. "When he loses overtime pay, his standard of living is hurt, and he's going to blame the Administration for it. We'll see to that."66

In all fairness, there was little that Nixon could have done to stem the forces that soon would end a quarter-century of rising real wages. But politics is not about fairness, as Nixon understood as well as anyone. If the history of twentieth-century U.S. politics teaches any lesson, it is that incumbent presidents who face reelection during an economic downturn do not get reelected. And so in 1971 Nixon set about concocting a dramatic, if short-term fix for the economy. His New Economic Policy, announced in a nationally televised address in mid-August, included a 90-day federally imposed freeze on wage and price increases, a 10 percent tax on imports, and the end of the policy of allowing dollars to be traded for gold on the international currency market. The gold decision, taken without consulting of any of America's allies, destroyed the system of currency exchange that had functioned since the Bretton Woods agreements of 1944.

In taking these steps, Nixon was violating some fundamental canons of his party's free market orthodoxy; the influential conservative economist Milton Friedman predicted that the wage-price freeze would end "in utter failure and the emergence into the open of the suppressed inflation."67 But, in the short run, the measures helped damp down inflation and increase employment. So did increased government spending on Social Security, veterans benefits, and the like, put into place by the Democratic-controlled Congress over the past few years. Finally, Nixon ordered government agencies to stock up on supplies, with the Defense Department, for example, laying in several years worth
of everything from trucks to toilet paper. These measures temporarily reignited the economic boom. Unemployment fell to 5.5 percent, and workers' real earnings increased 4 percent between 1971 and 1972.

With peace and prosperity as well as McGovern's missteps all working for him, Nixon was free to follow the traditional "Rose Garden" strategy of incumbent presidents. He took every opportunity to appear in the role of the nation's elected leader rather than as a candidate in his own right. Nixon left most of the partisan mudslinging to surrogate campaigners, and refused to debate McGovern.

In the closing days of the campaign Nixon provided a philosophical justification for his reelection, offering a consistent conservative vision that had been lacking for most of the first four years of his presidency, a vision cast significantly in the form of a condemnation of "the sixties" and all they had wrought in American society. "What we have to realize," the president told a reporter, "is that many of the solutions of the sixties were massive failures. They threw money at problems and for the most part they failed."

Profligate government spending had created a host of other problems, including crime, drug abuse, and welfare fraud, by undermining American traditions of self-reliance. In "the thoughts of the sixties," Nixon declared, it was the government's job every time there was a problem, to make people more dependent upon it to give way to their whims. The welfare mess is an example. The escalation of the numbers of welfare, much of it is a result simply of running down what I call the work ethic.

The "leadership class" of the nation, particularly the "limousine liberals" of the Northeast were to blame. What they failed to recognize, Nixon suggested, in a telling image, is that the "average American is just like the child in the family. You give him some responsibility and he is going to amount to something." On the other hand, if "you make him completely dependent," it will only result in the creation of a "soft, spoiled and eventually a very weak individual." Nixon apparently intended in his second term in office to finally return to the conservative principles of government he had honored in rhetoric but not in action during his first four years in the White House.

On November 7, Nixon won his expected landslide, taking over 60 percent of the popular vote, and the electoral votes of every state except Massachusetts. Nixon's supporters included a majority of Catholics, a majority of blue-collar workers, a majority of members of union families, and more than a third of registered Democrats. Of the traditional Democratic constituencies, only blacks and Jews remained loyal to McGovern. Democrats, however, retained majorities in Congress, gaining two seats in the Senate, losing a dozen in the House.

Liberal politicians survived the 1972 election: even George McGovern went back to his seat in the U.S. Senate, and was reelected by his South Dakota
constituents two years later. But liberalism was fatally wounded, stuck not only with a reputation for promoting failed policies ("throwing money at problems" in Nixon's memorable phrase), but also as failed politics. For the remainder of the twentieth century, Democratic liberals could not shake the marks of their apparently decisive repudiation by the electorate in 1972. The term "liberalism" itself, proudly claimed by virtually every national figure in the Democratic party for a generation, fell into disrepute. It became the "L-word," and the "L" could just as easily have stood for "loser" as for "liberal." Though Republicans would continue to campaign against the memory of George McGovern (as generations of Democrats had campaigned against Herbert Hoover), the Democrats themselves would not choose another genuine "McGovernite" to run for the presidency in the twentieth century.

Republican strategist Kevin Phillips would argue that the Democrats had made the fatal mistake in the 1960s of abandoning "programs taxing the few for the benefit of the many (the New Deal)" to passing "programs taxing the many on behalf of the few (the Great Society)." That was something of an exaggeration since Medicare—the single most expensive Great Society program—was precisely the kind of universal entitlement that had secured the loyalty of previous generations of voters behind the New Deal. For his own part in 1972, McGovern sought to continue this New Deal tradition by including in his platform a proposal for national health insurance. But it was the perception of a changing and narrowing set of Democratic loyalties and priorities that counted, much more than the reality. In the public mind, liberals had become the partisans of "special interests"—blacks, feminists, the elderly, welfare recipients, and so on, while it was the Republicans who spoke confidently in the name of an overriding national interest.

Liberals suffered too from the declining faith Americans had in government. The "credibility gap" that Johnson unleashed with his escalation of the war in Vietnam in 1965 had a far-reaching impact in domestic affairs as well as foreign policy. The percentage of Americans expressing "a great deal of confidence" in the executive branch of government declined from 41 percent in 1966 to 19 percent in 1973; for Congress the figure dropped from 42 percent to 29 percent. Apathy and cynicism toward government was also measured by declining voter turnouts. In 1972 the voter turnout dropped 5 percentage points from the level of 1968, and the percentage continued to drop steadily over the next decade. The decline was greatest among lower-income groups who normally voted Democratic. The emerging Republican majority could almost as accurately be described as a shrinking Democratic electorate.

Triumph did not mellow Richard Nixon: indeed, as the election neared, he savored the prospects of revenge. On September 15, 1972, the president met in the Oval Office with White House counsel John Dean and aide Bob Haldeman to discuss political problems that had arisen from the arrest of five intruders in the Watergate hotel and office complex in Washington, D.C.,
that previous June. The five men, and two others found outside the building, G. Gordon Liddy and E. Howard Hunt, had been attempting to break into the Democratic National Committee headquarters. Liddy was an ex-FBI agent, Hunt an ex-CIA man. It was soon discovered by investigators and the press that the two and the other defendants, also had links to President Nixon's reelection campaign. Nixon's press secretary, Ron Ziegler, dismissed the incident as a "third-rate burglary attempt." President Nixon denied that anyone in the White House had anything to do with it. Although Democrats protested, and reporters from the Washington Post and a few other newspapers tried to unravel the Watergate mystery, the country as a whole took little notice during that summer and fall.73

Nixon had given John Dean the task of monitoring the Watergate scandal to make sure it did not do any further damage to his reelection prospects. Dean could report to the president in September that all seemed to be going well. The president was pleased and praised Dean for putting his "fingers in the dikes every time that leaks have sprung there."

The two men went on to discuss postelection plans. What the president knew, and Dean did not know, was that their conversation was being recorded by a hidden, voice-activated recording system that had been installed in the Oval Office in 1971. The president suggested "watching the McGovern contributors and all that sort of thing." Dean assured him that he was keeping a "hawk's eye" on the president's opponents:

DEAN: Well, that's, uh, along that line, uh, one of the things I've tried to do, is just keep notes on a lot of the people who are emerging as—

PRESIDENT NIXON: That's right.

DEAN: as less than our friends.

PRESIDENT NIXON: Great.

DEAN: Because this is going to be over some day and they're—we shouldn't forget the way that some of them (unintelligible)—

PRESIDENT NIXON: I want the most, I want the most comprehensive notes on all of those who have tried to do us in. Because they didn't have to do it.

Nixon, in other words, could understand why people would attack him if they expected to make personal or political gains by doing so. But since by this time no one could believe McGovern really had a chance to win, Nixon thought continued political attacks on his administration were illegitimate, perverse—and deserving of punishment.

PRESIDENT NIXON: They didn't have to do it. I mean, if . . . they had a very close election everybody on the other side would understand this
game. But now [they] are doing this quite deliberately and they are asking for it and they are going to get it. And this, this—we, we have not used the power in this first four years, as you know.

DEAN: That's true.

PRESIDENT NIXON: We have never used it. We haven't used the Bureau [the FBI] and we haven't used the Justice Department, but things are going to change now. And they're going to change, and, and they're going to get it right—

DEAN: That's an exciting prospect.

PRESIDENT NIXON: It's got to be done. It's the only thing to do.74

Coming into office, Richard Nixon had promised to bring the country together in healing the divisions of the 1960s. In reality, the Nixon administration embodied rather than resolved the decade's conflicts—and this was nowhere as evident as in the unfolding of the Watergate crisis of 1973–1974. The roots of the crisis could be found in the very first months of Nixon's administration, when he ordered the "secret bombing" of Cambodia. Enraged that news of the attacks had leaked to a reporter for the New York Times, Nixon ordered the FBI to wiretap several of Henry Kissinger's aides, whom he suspected as the leakers, as well as several newsmen. The taps, undertaken without legal authority, turned up nothing of substance; in any event, the Times report on the Cambodia bombing aroused little interest or controversy.

Not so the publication of what became known as the Pentagon Papers in the New York Times and other newspapers in several installments in June 1971. The Pentagon Papers, a 7000-page classified report on the origins of U.S. involvement in South Vietnam, had been commissioned by Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara shortly before he left office. Secretly copied and then released to the press by a disillusioned former Defense Department consultant named Daniel Ellsberg, the papers provided a devastating indictment of the shady practices and deceptions (including self-deception) that characterized policymaking toward Vietnam in the Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson administrations. Although there was nothing in the Pentagon Papers reflecting directly on the Nixon administration, the president was outraged by their release. He knew all too well what would happen if some of the darker secrets of his own administration began spilling out for public scrutiny. Invoking national security, the administration obtained a temporary injunction blocking publication of further installments, but it was soon overturned by Supreme Court decision.

Nixon's defeat in the Pentagon Papers case seemed to unhinge him. In the weeks that followed, he ranted in the Oval Office to a captive audience of political aides about the perfidy of Ellsberg, the press, antiwar activists, and liberals in general. On six separate occasions in late June and early July, the taping system in the Oval Office recorded Nixon as he ordered his aides...
to organize a break-in at the Brookings Institution, a liberal think tank in Washington, D.C., where he believed, incorrectly, that more pilfered classified documents were being stored. “Goddamnit, get in and get those files,” he raged at Haldeman in mid-June. “Blow the safe and get it.”

In this instance the president’s men showed better sense than their boss, and quietly ignored his orders. But that was the last time they showed such discretion. In July, E. Howard Hunt and G. Gordon Liddy, members of a secret administration operation known as “the plumbers,” organized at Nixon’s behest the previous year to “plug leaks” in the administration, were dispatched to Los Angeles to break into the office of Daniel Ellsberg’s psychiatrist, in the hope that they could turn up information useful in discrediting Ellsberg. Their mission was a failure; the inept presidential burglars turned up nothing of use. In September John Ehrlichman informed the president of the disappointing results—doing so in an elliptical fashion designed to maintain Nixon’s official ignorance of the commission of an illegal act on his behalf: “We had one little operation. It’s been aborted out in Los Angeles which, I think, is better that you don’t know about.” But, he hastened to assure the president, “we’ve got some dirty tricks underway. It may pay off.”

The ultimate payoff for the plumbers’ future projects was not exactly what Nixon and Ehrlichman had in mind. After the arrests at the Watergate, the president’s top aides, with Nixon’s knowledge, secretly funnelled tens of thousands of dollars to the defendants in bail money, legal fees, and other payments.

It wasn’t enough. With the conviction of the Watergate defendants in the spring of 1973, the cover-up of White House involvement in the break-in began to unravel. One of the defendants, James McCord, wrote to the trial judge John Sirica to reveal that “political pressure” from high places had led the defendants to perjure themselves during the trial. Meanwhile, McCord’s fellow defendant E. Howard Hunt escalated his own demands on the White House for payoffs to ensure his silence, not only on Watergate but on the Ellsberg break-in. John Dean went to the Oval Office on March 21 to warn Nixon of “a cancer on the presidency,” represented by “the problem of the continued blackmail” by Hunt and others, payments that would only “compound the obstruction of justice situation.” The president reassured him: “We could get that. . . . [I]f you need the money, . . . you could get the money. . . . What I mean is, you could, you could get a million dollars. And you could get it in cash. I, I know where it could be gotten.”

Time was running out on the president’s men. Six weeks later, Dean, Ehrlichman, Haldeman, and Attorney General Richard Kleindienst were all forced to resign their White House positions because of deepening evidence of their involvement with the Watergate cover-up. They and others, including former attorney general John Mitchell, would soon be under indictment for Watergate-related crimes—all of them were eventually convicted. A Sen-
ate committee investigating the Watergate break-in, under the chairmanship of a folksy Democratic Senator from North Carolina, Sam Ervin, opened hearings in mid-May, broadcast live over the next several months every weekday to an enormous television audience. John Dean had decided he was not going to be a scapegoat for the president’s crimes. When Republican senator Howard Baker asked Dean, “What did the President know and when did he know it?” the former White House counsel testified freely about what he knew about the Watergate break-in and cover-up, including the payoff conversation of March 21.70 And when, quite accidentally, a minor figure in the scandal named Alexander Butterfield revealed the existence of the White House taping system, the Watergate struggle shifted into a battle over the control of the tapes.

It would take another eventful year for the drama to play itself out—in the meantime, Vice President Spiro Agnew was forced to resign his office after he pleaded no contest to charges that he had accepted bribes while serving as governor of Maryland, House minority leader Gerald Ford was approved by congressional vote as Agnew’s successor, and Nixon’s personal approval rating in public opinion polls fell to 17 percent, an all-time low for an American president. The nation’s newspapers, making up for their general indifference to the Watergate scandal during the 1972 election campaign, now zealously pursued every Nixon misdeed over the past half-decade, from the Cambodia bombings to underpaying his personal income taxes. In June 1974 a grand jury investigating Watergate named Nixon as an “unindicted co-conspirator” in the cover-up that had already sent many of his aides to prison. The president’s popularity was not helped by the U.S. economy slipping into recession in 1973–1974, with unemployment climbing to over 7 percent, combined with the most rapid inflation since the immediate post–World War II period.

Finally, in late July 1974, the Supreme Court, headed by one of Nixon’s appointees, Chief Justice Warren Burger, ruled unanimously that the president’s taped conversations with aides were subject to subpoena by congressional investigating committees, notwithstanding any claim of “executive privilege.” The House of Representatives immediately began impeachment hearings. On August 5, the president turned over a tape to the House Judiciary committee from a meeting in the White House on June 23, 1972, six days after the Watergate break-in, which became known as the “smoking gun” tape. At that meeting, the president unambiguously instructed Haldeman to order the CIA to intervene with the FBI in the name of “national security,” asking them to curtail their investigation of the Watergate break-in because it supposedly had been a botched CIA operation.80

Even such formerly staunch supporters as Arizona senator Barry Goldwater and California governor Ronald Reagan now called for Nixon’s resignation. With his remaining political support crumbling, there were fears in
Washington that in desperation, Nixon might resort to military force to stave off his removal from office, either by provoking war abroad or by staging a military coup at home. Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger went so far as to instruct the U.S. military commanders not to respond to a call from the president for military action without first clearing it with him. In the end, Nixon went quietly, resigning on August 9. The country breathed a collective sigh of relief at the conclusion of its worst constitutional crisis since the Civil War. With Nixon gone, with direct American involvement in the war in Vietnam concluded, with campus protest and racial rioting fading into unpleasant memory, many Americans hoped that August 1974 would mark a new beginning for the nation, a time of healing, and an end to discord. As President Gerald Ford declared upon taking the oath of office as thirty-eighth president of the United States, “our long national nightmare is over.”

He proved mistaken.
CONCLUSION

Everything Changed

The past is never dead. It's not even past.
—William Faulkner

There are moments in history after which it seemed as if "everything changed." For Americans, the firing on Fort Sumter in 1861 was one such moment, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 another. The terrorist attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, is the most recent example.

The "Long 1960s"—from the mid-1950s through the early 1970s—constituted another turning point, albeit a more extended "moment," after which everything seemed different. For better or worse, Americans live in a post-'60s world, and there is no going back, any more than the lost world of the antebellum South could have been restored after 1865, for all the "lost cause" sentiment and "states rights" rhetoric that found expression in the century that followed.

In the early years of the twenty-first century, there remains a lively contest over the meanings of the 1960s. The battle is joined by Christian conservatives and homosexual activists, by proponents of English only and defenders of bilingual education, by ardent feminists and defenders of the "traditional" family, by advocates of pre-emptive war against hostile nations and critics of U.S. power and motives, by scholars who view America's past through the prism of multiculturalism and gender and those who argue that the thought and achievements of great national leaders ought to be the main focus of historical study.

Every Presidential election since 1992 has served as a referendum on current American attitudes toward the '60s. Bill Clinton was the first baby boomer to run for president as the candidate of a major political party, running against the incumbent President George H. W. Bush, a World War II veteran. In addition to persuading voters that he had responsible alternatives to offer in domestic and foreign policy, Bill Clinton also had to answer for his possible use of marijuana while an undergraduate, his opposition to
the war in Vietnam, and his successful avoidance of the draft. His wife, Hillary Rodham Clinton, also came under attack for her feminist views (her expressed reluctance to stay home and bake cookies instead of pursuing her own career as a lawyer surfaced as a campaign issue). In a three-way race, a plurality of Americans decided to give the nod to the baby boomer, notwithstanding his '60s-era baggage (afterward Richard Nixon complained that Clinton's election proved "it was all right to be against the goddamned war."). In 1996, when Clinton ran against another World War II veteran, Senator Bob Dole, he won by a more decisive margin. But the '60s issue would not go away, particularly after Republicans in Congress seized upon President Clinton's marital infidelities as an impeachable issue. Clinton had his own sins to answer for, but he carried the burden in the eyes of some for the sexual license and moral permissiveness of the years when he came of age.

The next election cycle pit two baby boomers, Vice President Al Gore and George W. Bush, against each other. Gore did not have the same liabilities as Bill Clinton when it came to his military service, for although he opposed the war, he had served in Vietnam as a combat photographer. His opponent, George W. Bush, has served in the Texas Air National Guard during the Vietnam War, a posting which kept him in the United States, and on light duty. And no one had ever accused Al Gore of being a sexual libertine. But he was never able to escape the shadow of the Clinton impeachment, and George W. Bush's ostentatious display of religious piety and promise to restore morality to the Oval Office, struck a resonant chord with many Americans. Still, in terms of the popular vote, the election was hardly a decisive repudiation of the Clinton legacy (and, indeed, in his last months in office, Clinton's popularity in public opinion polls soared).

Then came 9/11 and a "war on terror" that led first to Afghanistan, and then to Iraq. There were echoes of the Tonkin Gulf resolution in the unanimity with which Congress passed the resolution authorizing President Bush to use force in his quest to counter the threat he said was posed by Saddam Hussein's "weapons of mass destruction" (and when those weapons turned out not to exist, the situation was also reminiscent of the distortions that had framed the debate over the Tonkin Gulf incident back in 1964).

There were also major differences evident between the two wars. Americans did not fear an attack on their own country during the Vietnam War; after the attack on the World Trade Center, the comforting assurance of the invulnerability of the "homeland" to any attack short of a full-scale nuclear exchange between the superpowers was no longer possible to sustain. There was protest against the Bush administration's foreign policies, including massive demonstrations preceding the attack on Iraq. But leading Democrats held back, fearful of being accused of being soft on terrorism, and without a military draft in the background, college campuses were not the centers of antiwar protest they had been in the '60s.
Once again in 2004, memories of the '60s were used as political weapons. Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry hoped to capitalize on his record as a wounded and decorated veteran of the Vietnam War to neutralize George W. Bush’s advantage as a tough-talking “war president.” Instead, his Republican opponents managed to turn Kerry’s wartime service into a political liability, questioning whether he deserved the medals he had received, and denouncing his subsequent involvement with Vietnam Veterans Against the War. Kerry’s initial support for the Iraq War, which may have seemed a shrewd move in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, now hampered his ability to challenge the incumbent President’s policies. In 1992 and 1996, the first two elections since the fall of the Soviet Union, Americans indicated that a '60s war-protester was an acceptable choice as Commander-in-Chief, but in 2004, the first election since the collapse of the World Trade Center, the rules had clearly changed.

Or some of the rules. Policymakers in the Bush administration clearly wanted memories of the Vietnam War to be buried forever. They wanted the President to be free to make use of America’s massive military power in bold, unilateral initiatives overseas, and they expected the country to rally behind him. “United We Stand” was the watchword spread on billboards and bumper stickers. But it turned out that the unity proclaimed in the aftermath of 9/11 would hold only so long as the administration observed the main political lesson of the Vietnam era: Americans are prepared to fight short, decisive wars for clearly defined objectives. Long, bloody wars without clear objectives or “exit strategies” destroy presidential mandates. By 2006, the war in Iraq was more unpopular than the Vietnam War had been in the immediate aftermath of the 1968 Tet Offensive. As far as American foreign policy was concerned, the '60s weren’t over yet.²

Although Democrats and Republicans traded off control of the White House in the last decade of the twentieth century and the first decade of the new century, there was no denying that the conservative wing of the Republican Party emerged as the major political force in post-60s American politics. By the end of the 1970s, as the New Left and civil rights insurgencies lost numbers and energy, the Right could boast the largest and best-financed grassroots force in the land. Its influence, particularly among business executives and evangelical Protestants, did much to propel Ronald Reagan, George Bush, Sr. and George W. Bush into the White House and to establish a handful of conservative opinions as the conventional wisdom of American politics: antipoverty programs do not help the poor; taxes should always be lowered; “preferential treatment” for minorities is wrong; business is overregulated; and the size of government ought to be reduced—in every area but the military.

Widely blamed for the turmoil of the late '60s, liberals were unable to regain the aura of a political force that could master the future. Instead, their very name became grist for ridicule by those on the Right seeking to put an
opponent on the defensive. At the beginning of the new century, no Republican and only a handful of Democrats embraced it. Although Bill Clinton was attacked as a "liberal" throughout his presidency, two of his major accomplishments in office were ones that conservatives had long advocated: a balanced budget and the end of guaranteed welfare payments to single mothers with small children.

The coalition of wage earners and intellectuals of all races and most regions that Franklin D. Roosevelt forged in the 1930s cracked apart during the late '60s and has not been rebuilt. That alliance was forged during a period of economic growth and patriotic unity that ended in the debacle of Vietnam. Taking its place on the left of American politics was a mélange of social movements—feminist, gay and lesbian, black nationalist, Mexican American, environmentalist—that swelled in size and became skilled at defending the rights and cultural identities of people who, before the '60s, had been scorned or ignored. But conservatives usually set the terms of debate about economic and social policy—and usually wielded a voting majority on the Supreme Court, as the 5-4 ruling that resolved the 2000 election for George W. Bush made spectacularly clear.

The Right, however, did not have everything its own way in politics. Notwithstanding the resentment of "big government," millions of Americans clung fiercely to benefits they received as a result of programs initiated by liberal Democrats in the 1960s and early '70s: Medicare, Medicaid, food stamps, the Occupational Health and Safety Act, the Higher Education Act (which mandates equal treatment for women), and the Environmental Protection Agency. In fact, protecting the environment quickly became one '60s cause that no politician could afford to oppose—even though some on the Right grumbled, in the teeth of scientific consensus, that the danger of global warming was much exaggerated.

What is more, conservatives had little success in reversing larger social changes that the New Left and the youth culture had helped set in motion. The most obvious legacy was that of issues radical feminists made prominent at the end of the '60s. The central tenet of their ideology was that "the personal is political." The most intimate details of private life—housework and child care, sexuality and childbirth—were viewed as fundamentally linked to social and political power. By the mid-'70s, the media had stopped calling feminists "bra burners" and were giving their demands a respectful hearing. Mainstream politicians refused, despite the pleas of a growing right-to-life movement, to negate the Supreme Court's 1973 ruling in Roe v. Wade that essentially legalized abortion.

Thirty years later, feminists often had to defend themselves against charges that they were out to destroy "family values." But the embattled reputation of their movement obscured the fact that relationships between the genders had changed in fundamental ways during the last third of the cen-
uring. Most young women, at least in the middle class, expected to have access to the same careers and to receive the same compensation as men. It was no longer surprising to see women leaders in formerly “men’s” fields like television production (Oprah Winfrey), diplomacy (Secretaries of State Madeleine Albright and Condoleezza Rice), or the Supreme Court (justices Sandra Day O’Connor and Ruth Bader Ginsburg). Even conservative Republicans recruited female candidates and urged them to be as aggressive on the stump as men. The idea that husbands and wives (or unmarried partners) should share the housework and child rearing was all but universally accepted. So were suits for sexual harassment, which was not even considered a crime until the 1970s. Near the end of the century, a majority of American women under 30 agreed, in a national poll, that “The women’s movement has made your life better.” It was as if U.S. society had been waiting for decades, with mounting nervousness and impatience, for some group to have the courage to state the obvious about problems between the sexes.

Personal issues not directly linked to women’s equality remained more controversial—such as the teaching of sex education in public schools and tolerance toward homosexuals in the military and ministry. Many American parents wanted to retain a sphere of privacy about intimate matters and feared that gays and lesbians were out to “convert” the young. Still, the fact that millions of homosexuals were open about their sexual identity—and had a sizable movement to lobby for their interests—was a remarkable change from the Eisenhower years when police routinely raided gay bars and every state declared “sodomy” illegal.

What about the black freedom movement, inspiration for all the “liberations” that followed? After the black insurgency split into integrationist and nationalist camps late in the ’60s, its power and elan gradually declined. During the next decades, black activists railed against the Right’s ability to dismiss their cause as a selfish “special interest” but were unable to regain the political momentum. Meanwhile, deteriorating schools, inadequate transportation, and the disappearance of urban manufacturing jobs conspired to leave the black poor in worse shape than they had been during the heyday of the movement. By century’s end, “benign neglect” of the inner city had become, in fact if not rhetoric, the unofficial policy of the nation.

This is a dismal portrait. But it conceals a number of more encouraging realities. The landmark civil rights bills passed by lawmakers under the influence of the black freedom movement proved irreversible, and they helped to pry open opportunities for millions of African Americans. Since the ’60s, the number of black political officials, elected and appointed, skyrocketed; their ranks included mayors of the biggest cities, a southern governor, and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who later became Secretary of State. By the mid-1990s, young blacks were graduating from high school at the
same rate as whites (albeit usually from schools with fewer resources). With the aid of affirmative action, black graduates enjoyed access to every university in the land. Middle-class African Americans (the name itself popularized by Jesse Jackson, King’s former lieutenant) no longer occupied a mere beachhead on a vast Euro-American shore. They owned businesses and practiced professions in totals far beyond what earlier generations had achieved.6

For a growing number of black Americans, the cultural mainstream no longer seemed as alien as it had during the era of Jim Crow. In the 1990s, major newspapers ran cheery features about Kwanzaa alongside ones on other “ethnic” traditions, big corporations sponsored Kwanzaa Expos, and President Bill Clinton hailed “the meaning and energy of this inspiring festival.” A new generation of black politicians, who had often attended integrated schools, won voices from whites and new immigrants by speaking less about racism and more about promoting business and reforming education. Even hip-hop music, a quintessential creation of “the ‘hood,” gained a huge following among nonblacks, and spawned Eminem, a vengeful white lyricist whose popularity crossed racial lines.7

It was more difficult to tell how much racial attitudes had changed since the ’60s. Certainly, Americans had not attained the paradise of racial tolerance that white and black organizers dreamed about in the early years of the freedom movement. Most people socialized only within their own race, and blacks remained deeply suspicious of law enforcement, even when police departments were thoroughly integrated.

Meanwhile, old-fashioned styles of racism continued to fester. Numbers of real estate agents still steered black tenants away from white neighborhoods, and both talk radio and the Internet hummed with “darky jokes” and other forms of racist banter. In 1994 two conservatives wrote a best-selling book that argued, in sober tones, that African Americans were genetically less intelligent than whites and Asians.8 In response, some black nationalists railed against “white devils,” whom they accused of spreading AIDS and crack cocaine to inner-city neighborhoods.

Fortunately, millions of Americans rejected such talk. They made friends across the color line, particularly at work, and enjoyed a popular culture whose relaxed, multiracial character defied grim descriptions of a country deeply divided in the bad old ways. The study of the history and culture of minority groups became a staple of public and private education, especially in metropolitan areas. And a growing number of voices opposed viewing all issues, political and personal, through a racial mirror in which one must think and act as either black or white. In 1997, the sociologist Orlando Patterson, an immigrant from Jamaica, called on his fellow blacks to commit themselves anew to the “glorious ideal of America as the ‘beloved community’: free, egalitarian, and as integrated in its social life as it already is in the triumphant
global culture that Afro-Americans have done so much to fashion. But if black people followed his advice, would Americans of other races follow?

While activists, politicians, and intellectuals continue to fight over the meaning of the '60s, other Americans retired from the fray. Thousands of military veterans and Robert McNamara, the former defense secretary, made pilgrimages back to Vietnam and were greeted warmly by their erstwhile enemies; Pete Peterson, the first U.S. ambassador to that nation since the war ended, had spent seven years as a POW. Toward the end of his life, George Wallace repeatedly apologized for the harm he caused black Americans. Like Union and Confederate veterans who staged joint reunions at the turn of the last century, such figures seek to end disputes that once set them and their fellow citizens at odds. Fortunately, this time around, abrogating the rights of black citizens has not been the price of reconciliation.

For their part, Americans born since the 1960s have grown up surrounded by a surfeit of images—musical, visual, and literary—that convey the polarized passions of the era but do little to explain them. The '60s hits of Marvin Gaye and James Brown, of the Rolling Stones and Bob Dylan, of Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, and the Beatles (not to speak of dozens of less famous artists) supply a mildly stimulating soundtrack that overwhelms memories of cultural and racial conflict. No wonder that when the U.S. Postal Service asked Americans, in 1998, to vote for “the subjects that best commemorate the 1960s,” the winners were a trio of cultural products whose enduring popularity (in legend and the marketplace) seems to transcend conflict entirely: the Beatles, Woodstock, and Star Trek.

One reason why young Americans show little inclination to refight the '60s is that they realize how much the nation has changed. The United States now exhibits a degree of ethnic diversity that defies the biracial model that reigned from the beginnings of the nation through the heyday of the civil rights movement and the backlash against it. Intermarriages—between all combinations of peoples—have steadily increased since the 1960s. In 2000, 6.8 million Americans (two percent of the total population) told the U.S. Census they belonged to more than one race; the government had never before included such an option on its questionnaire. Thanks in part to liberalized immigration laws, the numbers of U.S. residents from Central and South America, East and South Asia, and Africa mushroomed during the last third of the twentieth century. The 2000 Census reported there were more Hispanic Americans than black Americans. The Hispanic category itself, invented by federal officials in 1973, is somewhat artificial: What, besides the same mother tongue, does an Argentinian psychoanalyst in Washington, D.C., have in common with a Mexican laborer who crosses the border into California to harvest crops? But, in demographic terms, the United States has, since the '60s, become a different country. The political consequences may
prove significant, as both the massive “Day without Immigrants” demonstrations in the spring of 2006 and Congress’s decision to build a wall across the Mexican border suggest.

Newcomers have transformed the human face of the economy: the first language of most meatpackers in Iowa and Kansas is Spanish, immigrants from South Asia drive thousands of New York City taxicabs, and Chinese women are ubiquitous in the garment trades. By 2000, a majority of residents of the nation’s one-hundred largest cities hailed from non-European backgrounds. Unlike the European immigrants who flooded into industrial America at the turn of the last century, most newcomers can now stay in more or less constant touch with their homelands. Many travel back and forth on a regular basis. And the influence of Latinos, particularly those from Mexico and Cuba, in politics and popular culture is swiftly growing. They are a pivotal voting bloc in the populous states of Florida, California, and Texas—and make up about one-third of major league baseball rosters.

The comparative ease with which immigrants and U.S. citizens alike cross borders is but one feature of the global economy whose contours were just coming into view at the end of the 1960s. The quarter-century of growth following World War II delivered secure jobs for millions of Americans at rising wages in big corporations. Increasing numbers of these newly prosperous workers bought homes, paid taxes, and sent their children to colleges where alternative cultures and politics flowered. But after the ’60s, most of these workers and their offspring had to adapt, quickly, to an unstable world in which products and labor increasingly cut loose from their national moorings. The rapid computerization of a myriad of tasks also took a toll, even as it made life easier and smoother for many. During the 1970s, the number of long-distance phone calls made in the United States tripled, while the ranks of telephone operators assigned to handle them dropped by 40 percent. A gradual decline in the membership and economic clout of labor unions based in manufacturing, mining, and construction helped stretch the income gap between classes and reminded some historians of conditions during the Gilded Age that followed the Civil War.

Of course, some of the hype about computer capitalism was valid. Fewer Americans needed to work at jobs that were nasty, brutish, and shortened life—even if they still paid a union wage. As information became a commodity of universal value, more and more Americans rushed to learn new skills and subjects; as a result, cultural tolerance probably increased. Thanks to the Internet—created in the late ’60s by federal scientists to communicate with each other more efficiently—anyone with a modem could connect to vast storehouses of data. Some who gazed endlessly at their monitors were only pursuing loneliness, but others found new pleasures, profits, or a blend of the two.

The visions and perils of globalized capitalism may seem without precedent, but the emerging culture owes a good deal to aspects of the 1960s that
some critics considered selfish and amoral. During the Vietnam War, young rebels had opposed the draft with the cry, “Not with my life you don’t” and argued that society should prize the quality of life over laboring diligently for a brighter future. Since then, “postmaterialist values” of individual liberty, self-expression, and sexual relativism have gained around the world—in bad economic times and good.16 At the start of the twenty-first century, even the Communist rulers of a poor nation like Vietnam were encouraging their people to buy American goods associated with ease and luxury (often marketed by former compatriots who had crossed the Pacific and made it rich). The traditional morality of saving, diligence, and sexual self-denial was nearly everywhere on the run.

In the United States, neither the Right nor the Left that emerged from the ’60s was overjoyed by the triumph of this kind of “freedom.” Conservatives saw moral discipline breaking down under the assault of cyberpornography and the increasing acceptance of homosexuality. Liberals and radicals complained that the wealthy lacked any sense of social responsibility, particularly to their own workers. Neither camp welcomed the fact that the global marketplace was diluting the meaning of American citizenship—although, in contrast to earlier periods, hostility toward new immigrants failed to activate a mass movement.

The amoral economic order did help generate an alternative of sorts in the spiritual realm. The great awakening that began in the ’60s gained strength through the rest of the century. Every major world religion achieved a foothold in the United States, and fundamentalists—whether Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, or Hindu—gained adherents by preaching obeisance to the laws and texts of their faith.17 New Age religions grew as well, driven by a longing to understand the “inner self” that traditional congregations could not satisfy. For many Americans, writes sociologist Robert Wuthnow, “Faith is no longer something people inherit but something for which they strive.”18

The Civil War of the 1860s was a terrible and humbling experience. As Lincoln suggested in his second inaugural address, delivered in March 1865, it was the price the nation had to pay for the sin of slavery:

Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondman’s two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, “The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.”19

Lincoln himself would not live to see the end of the war. One night in early April he had a dream in which he foresaw his own death. A few nights later, on April 14th, 1865—Good Friday on the Christian religious calendar—he was struck down by an assassin’s bullet.
On another April evening, 103 years later, Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke of the possibility of his own death as he addressed a crowd of supporters gathered in a Memphis church. He reflected on the dramatic events of the 1960s, and how glad he was that he had been a part of them. Had he died before the start of the decade, he reminded his audience:

I wouldn't have been around here in 1960, when students all over the South started sitting-in at lunch counters. And I knew as they were sitting in, they were really standing up for the best in the American dream, and taking the whole nation back to those great wells of democracy which were dug deep by the founding fathers in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.20

Lincoln and King were kindred spirits living in kindred eras. They fashioned and spoke a language of civic virtue and redemptive sacrifice that continues to inspire new generations of Americans. We may not envy them for the difficult times in which they lived and died. But we should recognize that it is in just such eras of discord and conflict that Americans have shown themselves most likely to rediscover and live out the best traditions to be found in our national experience.
CRITICAL EVENTS DURING THE LONG 1960s

1946  War begins between France and the Viet Minh for control of Vietnam

1947  Jackie Robinson becomes first black man to play major league baseball in the twentieth century

1948  President Harry S Truman orders desegregation of the military

1954  French withdraw from Vietnam; Geneva accords provide for temporary partition of the country into North and South, with the U.S. supporting the latter (the Republic of Vietnam)
       In Brown v. Board of Education, Supreme Court rules that segregated schools violate the Fourteenth Amendment and are thus unconstitutional
       Elvis Presley releases first record on Sun label
       Senator Joseph McCarthy censured by his colleagues

1955  Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott begins
       Founding of National Review
       Merger of American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO); union membership at historic high
       Allen Ginsberg reads "Howl" in public for the first time

1956  After Supreme Court sides with Montgomery boycotters, buses in that city are desegregated
       Dwight Eisenhower wins reelection in a landslide
       Soviet armed forces crush the Hungarian revolution
       The first enclosed shopping mall opens in Minneapolis

315
The Platters become the first black group to have a no. 1 record on the popular music chart

1957 President Eisenhower sends troops to Little Rock, Arkansas to enforce school desegregation
Congress passes first civil rights legislation since the nineteenth century
Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) organized, with Martin Luther King, Jr. as president
Communist-led insurgency begins in South Vietnam
USSR launches Sputnik, initiating the space race

1958 Recession begins, boosting unemployment to postwar high of 6 percent
Democrats make big gains in congressional elections
Publication of John Kenneth Galbraith's *The Affluent Society*
Formation of John Birch Society

1959 Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev visits United States
Revolutionaries, led by Fidel Castro, take power in Cuba
First American soldiers die in Vietnam

1960 Founding of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS)
Founding of Young Americans for Freedom (YAF)
YAF issues the Sharon Statement
Black college students stage sit-ins at lunch counters in the South and then found Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)
Publication of Barry Goldwater's *The Conscience of a Conservative*
At Harvard, Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert begin experimenting with psychedelic drugs
John F. Kennedy narrowly elected president, first Catholic to hold that office; Lyndon Baines Johnson elected vice president
First birth control pill approved for sale by Food and Drug Administration

1961 Invasion of Cuba at Bay of Pigs a complete failure
Yuri Gagarin, of the USSR, becomes first human in space
Erection of Berlin Wall
Publication of Joseph Heller's *Catch 22*
Freedom Riders force integration of interstate travel facilities in the South
1962  SDS issues Port Huron Statement
Supreme Court, in case of Engel v. Vitale, rules against prayer in public schools
Pope John XXIII opens the Second Vatican Council
John Glenn becomes first American to orbit the earth
Cuban missile crisis
George C. Wallace elected governor of Alabama
Beatles attain their first no. 1 record (in Britain), “Love Me Do”
Release of Bob Dylan’s first album

1963  U.S. and USSR sign treaty banning atmospheric nuclear tests
Battle of Ap Bac in South Vietnam
SCLC stages mass protests in Birmingham, Alabama; Martin Luther King, Jr. writes Letter from a Birmingham Jail
Publication of Betty Friedan’s The Feminine Mystique
March for Jobs and Freedom attracts a quarter-million people to Washington, D.C.
Release of Stevie Wonder’s “Fingertips, Part 2” and the Kingsmen’s recording of “Louie Louie”
Four black girls are murdered in bombing of Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham
Fall and assassination of Ngo Dinh Diem in Saigon
Assassination of Medgar Evers in Jackson, Mississippi
Assassination of John F. Kennedy in Dallas; Lyndon Johnson becomes president

1964  Malcolm X breaks with the Nation of Islam
Congress passes landmark Civil Rights Act
Congress passes Economic Opportunity Act, initiating war on poverty
Mississippi Summer Project; three volunteers murdered by southern whites
Gulf of Tonkin resolution gives President Johnson authority to prosecute an unlimited war in Vietnam
Free Speech Movement at University of California in Berkeley
President Johnson reelected in a landslide over Barry Goldwater, but conservatives take over the Republican Party
Beatles’ first tour of the United States helps make them the most popular musical group in the English-speaking world
Nikita Khrushchev toppled from power in the USSR
Cassius Clay wins heavyweight championship of the world and then
announces he has joined the Nation of Islam and changed his name to
Muhammad Ali
Martin Luther King, Jr. awarded the Nobel Peace Prize

1965
First U.S. combat troops begin fighting in South Vietnam
In Washington, D.C., SDS stages the first large national demonstration
against the war
Teach-ins against the war begin
Twenty thousand U.S. troops intervene in the Dominican Republic
In Selma, Alabama, SCLC and SNCC lead marches for voting rights
Malcolm X is assassinated in New York City
Congress passes Voting Rights Act
United Farm Workers Organizing Committee launches a strike against
grape growers in California
Congress passes Immigration Reform Act
Insurrection in Watts section of Los Angeles

1966
Formation of the National Organization for Women (NOW)
Formation of the Black Panther Party
Stokely Carmichael, chairman of SNCC, begins popularizing the slogan
“Black Power”
SCLC undertakes a major civil rights campaign in Chicago which fails
to crack white resistance
Publication of Quotations of Chairman Mao, or “the little red book,” as
Cultural Revolution rages in China
Publication of Human Sexual Response by Masters and Johnson
Ronald Reagan elected governor of California

1967
Martin Luther King, Jr. begins speaking out against the Vietnam War
Antiar war protesters march on the Pentagon
Thurgood Marshall is appointed the first black justice of the Supreme
Court
Carl Stokes of Cleveland is elected the first black mayor of a major
American city
Israel defeats Egypt, Syria, and Jordan in a six-day war and takes con-
trol of formerly Arab lands
Large insurrections rock the black ghettos of Newark and Detroit
Publication of Robert Crumb's *Zap*, first underground comic book to gain a mass readership

“Summer of Love” in San Francisco

Muhammad Ali is stripped of his heavyweight championship because he refuses to serve in the armed forces

1968 Tet offensive throughout South Vietnam turns most Americans against President Johnson's policy

President Johnson announces he will not run for reelection

Massacre of Vietnamese civilians at My Lai

United States and government of North Vietnam begin peace talks in Paris

Assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. in Memphis

Assassination of Senator Robert F. Kennedy in Los Angeles

Black and white radicals take over buildings at Columbia University in New York City

Insurrection by students and workers shuts down France

USSR and its allies crush reformist government in Czechoslovakia

Mexican government crushes student movement in advance of Olympic Games there

Antiwar demonstrators clash with police at Democratic Convention in Chicago

Feminists stage a protest at the Miss America contest in Atlantic City

George Wallace mounts a serious third-party campaign for the presidency

Richard Nixon narrowly elected president, with Spiro Agnew as his vice president

1969 Huge rock festivals in Bethel, New York and Altamont, California

United States puts man on the moon

Soviet and Chinese troops clash along their Central Asian border

President Nixon initiates “Vietnamization” of the war and decreases number of U.S. combat troops in Indochina

Ho Chi Minh dies

Earl Warren retires as chief justice of the Supreme Court; he is succeeded by Warren Burger

SDS splits into competing factions

YAF throws out its libertarian faction
Moratorium draws largest turnout for an antiwar demonstration in U.S. history
Stonewall riot in New York's Greenwich Village initiates the gay liberation movement
In Denver, the first La Raza conference declares pride in the heritage of Latino-Americans
Internet begun (under a different name) by Pentagon scientists

1970
Earth Day inaugurates a mass environmental movement
Congress creates the Environmental Protection Agency and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration
U.S. invasion of Cambodia touches off student strikes at hundreds of college campuses
During protests, authorities kill four students at Kent State in Ohio and two at Jackson State in Mississippi
Congress repeals Gulf of Tonkin resolution
New York, Hawaii, and Alaska become first states to pass liberal abortion laws
Chicano Moratorium against the Vietnam War
New York City postal workers go on strike, the first in the history of the postal service; President Nixon breaks it with U.S. troops
Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin die from drug overdoses
The Beatles disband

1971
U.S. voting age is lowered to 18 by the Twenty-sixth Amendment
New York Times publishes the Pentagon Papers
Congress passes the Military Service Act, which gradually ends the draft and institutes an all-volunteer army

1972
President Nixon visits the People's Republic of China
The Watergate break-in
Last U.S. combat troops withdraw from South Vietnam
Richard Nixon defeats Democrat George McGovern in a 49-state landslide
Congress sends the Equal Rights Amendment to the states for ratification