On Looking Back: An Aging Activist Reflects on His Wake

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Holland Professional Club
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Willy-nilly, I am very much a product of the 1960s. More specifically, I am a product of the forces that energized a generation of college students, mostly although not exclusively white, and, at least initially, mostly male. A recent editorial by one of my favorite *New York Times* opinion writers, Michelle Goldberg, brought that reality home to me. She was eulogizing Todd Gitlin, one of the founders of Students for a Democratic Society (known as SDS) and a former sociologist, who recently died at age 79. Gitlin, along with his colleague Tom Hayden, had been central players in the anti-war movement. Gitlin chronicled my generation's angst and anger in a book entitled *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*.[1]

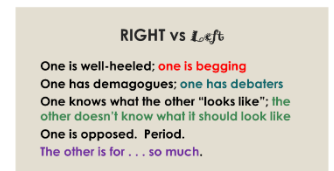
In her editorial, Michelle mourns the lack of lasting effect of The Movement, as we so proudly termed our activism of the day. Its most evident

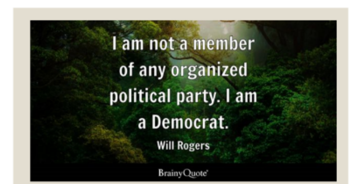
[1] Michelle Goldberg, *NYTimes* (February 7, 2022).

consequence, she suggests, has been the contemporary Right's virulent rejection of

all things "liberal." If it's true, that's especially ironic, for the New Left, as The Movement was also called, was hypercritical of "liberal" do-nothings, including Old line Leftists. The latter were accused by the New Left of sitting around in cafes, reading Allen Ginsberg's opaque poetry, and wearing turtleneck sweaters while they blew smoke rings and rhetoric into the noxious air.

Ms. Goldberg may be right on the lasting **institutional** legacies of our efforts—there is nothing that is nationwide and comparable on the Left to the extensive apparatus of well-financed polemicists, PACS, and demagogues on the Right. Moreover, the Left is a fractious group, never fully united around any single message—whether the climate, racism, classism, or sexism, to name a few. Will Rogers' quote echoes down through the century: "I am not a member of any organized political party. I am a Democrat." Much the same can be said of the New Left that happily reflects a myriad of special interest progressives representing a rainbow of stripes.



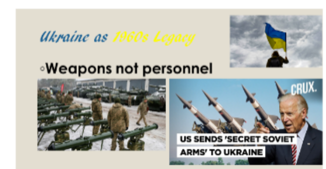


At the same time, the Right is busily opposing whatever it is that the Left stands for. Since the Left can't always agree on its own agenda, the Right will make one up for it: critical race theory, rampant transgenderism, grooming

children to be abused by pizza-parlor pedophiles. The Right no longer says what it stands for, only what it stands against.

Having said this, however, I would disagree with Ms. Goldberg and firmly maintain that there have been lasting and irrefutably positive cultural and structural legacies of those years of hopeful activism and days of occasional rage. This will require taking many of you "back" to the 1960's—and some of you to a time about which you have read in history books or have heard about from your cranky elders.

Also, permit me the narcissistic opportunity to inject some of my own life experiences as a case study while I make my argument. I trust that my own account—necessarily unique and circumstance-specific—was not all that unusual. The options I confronted in my life's choices were issues that confronted most of my peers. My responses, too, were idiosyncratic, but not far out of the mainstream. So bear with me, and I hope to spin a web that envelops all of us in that time of US history.



As I write these words, the turmoil in Ukraine is brutal and bloody. Russia has made grim inroads, but the valiant Ukrainians are fighting back. Their president pleads with the West for more than just military weaponry; he wants us to maintain a veritable "No Fly" zone over

Ukraine. President Biden, knowing his Baby Boom generation, responds by promising more weaponry but no "direct" US involvement. We've been to war before, and don't want it again. At least, not against fellow white Europeans. By all moral reasoning, Russia's aggression against Ukraine is aggression against all of the West, and there is ample justification to throw ourselves into the fray. Yet we resist engaging. Why? I would suggest that the 1960s provide an answer.

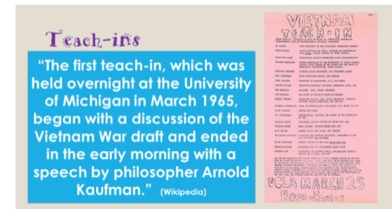
I was a college student at Hope between 1965 and 1969, the very heart of the Vietnam War years. Like today, but even more personally for draft-age young men, that war dominated our national consciousness. From the three-channel television analyses (there were only ABC, CBS, and NBC to turn to) to the songs we sang and the movies we watched, the war insinuated itself into our lives at every juncture. Every night, on his *CBS Evening News* broadcast, Walter Cronkite, the most trusted person in the country, would give us updates on the casualties in the war. We could count on the "fact" that the US and South Vietnamese forces would suffer only a fraction of the casualties that were inflicted on the North Vietnamese. Indeed, the Viet Minh or Viet Cong, as the Northerners were called, allegedly suffered at such a rate that one began to suspect there was no one alive above the 17th parallel DMZ. When it became clear that General Westmoreland and the

military brass were duping us, they lost a warehouse of credibility that had been built up by two world wars and other popular military engagements.

If the media's constant drumbeat about the war wasn't enough, each of us males sported a Selective Service card with our draft-ability status stamped clearly on the front. Being college students gave us immunity—at least for a time—from the draft, and we clung to that status with whatever machinations we could muster. To a man, we didn't want to be sucked into a war we didn't understand or support. Some of us burned our cards; others, less bold, merely applauded the card-burners.

Our music screamed out our protest. Long before the Beatles pleaded to "Give Peace a Chance," Pete Seeger had queried, "Where have all the flowers gone?" "The Sounds of Silence" seemed to drown out our demands for answers. The movies "Dr. Strangelove" and "Fail-Safe" chilled us to the bone. "2001: A Space Odyssey" projected an apocalyptic future controlled by run-amok robots lording it over humans who had blown their chance. Counter voices—"The Ballad of the Green Berets," and other odes to the gallantry of the military—were also there, but largely drowned out in the college dorms. We weren't going to be fooled by those Rambo Wannabes. John Wayne was good for Westerns, but he didn't get it when it came to Vietnam.

We were presumptive scholars and wanted to make intellectual sense of it all. We engaged in so-called "teach-ins," impromptu lectures or discussions on what was happening around the world. In the spring of 1967, at Hope College, junior Glenn Pontier announced that the college would shut down all classes the following Thursday. He had arranged for half a dozen professors to give lectures in large classrooms on topics ranging from the history of Indochina to the Christian pacifist movement, to "Just War" theology. Unfortunately, Glenn had not sought any approval for his day of enlightenment (beyond securing the promise from the six professors that they would be willing to give lectures and lead discussions). The college community scrambled to respond. When Thursday rolled around, no one went to class. Most of us went to the lecture halls; some slept in; others took a day at the beach. Hardest hit were the biology and chemistry labs that were traditionally held on Thursdays. Schedules were upended, and for a change, students really learned useful information. Like how to apply for conscientious objector status or how to engage in political debate. On the day after this successful hiatus, Glenn went to the college treasurer and demanded a pro-rata kickback on his tuition because Hope had been effectively closed that day. Even in this serious moment, humor wasn't dead. Sadly, Glenn didn't get his money back.



Seminars were held around the country on what constituted wars of national liberation; on how colonialism still shaped much of the Third World; on how our “military-industrial-complex” (Eisenhower’s immortal words) was hell-bent on sending us into the jungles with machine guns blazing. I attended one such conference on an unforgettable weekend in Ohio Wesleyan University, struggling to understand why the French had become entangled in Indochina, and why they handed it over to the US, and why Eisenhower was gulled into the Domino Theory, and why John F. Kennedy had played along, and why LBJ was scared to be the first president to preside over an American defeat. The Bay of Pigs and Che Guevara were alive and well in our debates, although the full complicity of the CIA in the Cuban invasion fiasco was not yet clear. JFK’s stand-offs with Nikita Khrushchev, from the Cuban Missile Crisis to Krushchev’s bizarre shoe-pounding tirade in the UN, were a constant *leitmotif* in our ideological conversations. How much did Karl Marx get right? How much of his prognostications was pure fluff?

“From the early 1950s until 1967, the international program of the NSA, and some of its domestic activities, were underwritten by clandestine funding from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) as revealed by Ramparts magazine.” (Wikipedia)

Kennedy and Khrushchev and Cuba

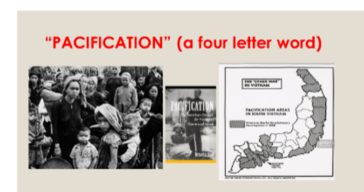
There was a growing sense throughout the decade that something had to be done, and our generation, the volatile Baby Boomers, would have to do it. Enter Tom Hayden, Todd Gitlin, and others. When it was proposed that a chapter of SDS be founded on Hope’s campus, more moderating voices argued for

membership in the National Student Association, a less militant intercollegiate society and one that soon slithered meekly into well-deserved oblivion with its reputation in tatters. The SDS, which itself barely lasted the decade, at least had national cache as a vehicle for true social confrontation. Interestingly, the SDS was reborn in the early twenty-first century when a new generation of undergraduates tried to revive the glory days.

My activism during that period was minimal. In May 1966, as the War was expanding (American troops jumped from around 200,000 in 1965 to almost 400,000 in 1966), a group of Hope students broke into the annual Tulip Time parade carrying banners demanding that we get out of Vietnam. Then, as today, the Holland High School band played "Tiptoe through the Tulips." In those days, the parade began at the Civic Center and marched east on Eighth Street. WHTC had a team of commentators stationed on a raised platform near the entrance to the Warm Friend. Knowing that position, the students broke into the parade at the corner of Central and Eighth Streets so the radio audience would benefit from their sudden appearance. The announcers were predictably aghast: "Who the hell are those kids?!" they demanded over the air, a rare use of honest profanity in Holland at the time. The police were waiting in front of Skiles to reprimand the protestors and remind them that they were in America where their

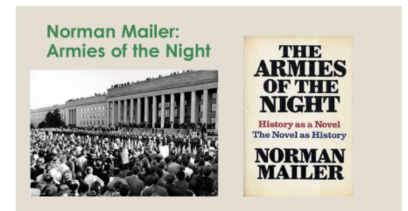
commie-inspired slogans weren't welcome, whatever the First Amendment might hold. "Go back to Moscow," was the favorite refrain of the folks that lined the parade-route. The following week there was a major debate in Winants Auditorium of Graves Hall. The eight or nine students who had marched were called upon by the rest of us to explain themselves. They did so very effectively, and most of us were sorry we hadn't known about their protest in advance so that we could have joined in.

In general, the response to the Vietnam War at Hope was much more tempered than that action. I participated in a fund-drive called "Hope, Holland, Hamlet," a sop thrown at the local Holland community under the guise that, as an academic, Christian institution, we were vitally concerned with the humanitarian debacle in Vietnam. While we reserved judgment on the righteousness of the Vietnam War, the drive said, we were justifiably concerned about the wellbeing of the poor citizens of that country. Unlike incendiary protestors in Berkeley and Ann Arbor, we were reasonable and responsible students at Hope. Going door-to-door we solicited donations for an elementary school to be erected in a "hamlet" of Vietnam, the mystical town ironically named Le Loi, "The Law." I think we raised nearly $6,000, which would be about $52,000 in today's dollars; not a bad haul. It was only years later that I learned,

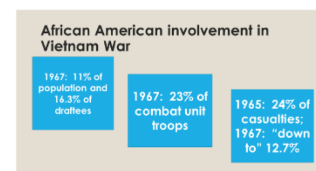


through the student leader of that drive, that the money had all been sucked into the US Army's "pacification" program that uprooted entire "hamlets" from the battle zones of eastern and northern South Vietnam and forced their inhabitants to relocate in "pacified" sections around Saigon. There, our money bought a school building behind barbed wire, one that was quickly abandoned when the war ended.

In October 1967, thousands of protesters marched on the Pentagon to challenge the legitimacy of the War. Norman Mailer famously recounted that episode in a book entitled *Armies of the Night: History as a Novel/The Novel as History*. The ubiquitous Glenn Pontier led a busload of students to that sometimes-bloody encounter. Happily, they all returned unbloodied, but these peaceful warriors were instant subjects of wonder and admiration—and occasional attacks—from their peers on campus.



By the late 1960s, it had become apparent that a disproportionate number of African Americans were serving and dying in Vietnam. As the Wikipedia site on *Military History of African Americans in the Vietnam War* points out: "Though comprising 11% of the US population in 1967, African Americans were 16.3% of all draftees." Moreover, "African American troops were more likely to be assigned to combat units: 23% of such troops in Vietnam were African Americans." "In the Vietnam War, African



American troops initially had a much higher casualty rate than other ethnicities, though this declined somewhat throughout the course of the conflict." "In 1965, nearly a quarter of troop casualties were African American. By 1967, it had fallen to 12.7%." [2]

The number of willing conscripts from African American ranks declined dramatically through the 1960s. As Lyndon Johnson continued to increase the troop counts (more than 9 million soldiers and sailors served on active duty during the Vietnam Era, 3.4 million in Southeast Asia), the military had to broaden the draft to fill its quotas (much like the Russians are doing today). It ran up against a deferment system that favored college and graduate students and married males. These were disproportionately white males. The draft system only accentuated the stark disparities between white and non-white military personnel. Rightly, the Pentagon began to suspect that we white males were being protected by colleges and universities, using our student deferments even when they may not have been warranted. Suspiciously few white males were flunking out of school. Profs knew that expulsion meant military service. Grade inflation had begun.

In the spring of 1967, word came down that all males would have to take an SAT-like exam to prove our worthiness of college standing. I well remember sitting for that exam in Graves Hall and learning of a couple of my classmates who

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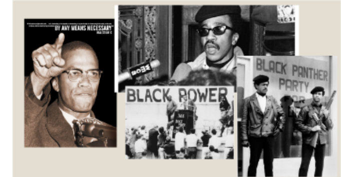
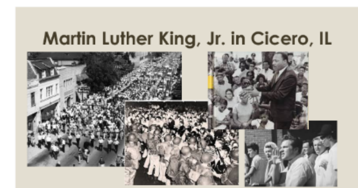
[2] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_history_of_African_Americans_in_the_Vietnam_War

had returned to their dorm, collected their belongings, and then made for the Canadian border by nightfall. The war was rasping in all of our ears. We each had to decide what to do.

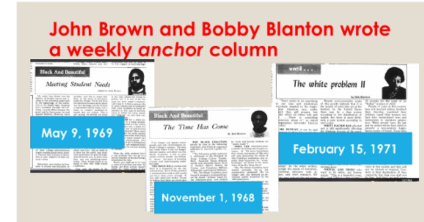
Parallel to this anti-war sentiment, but not unrelated to it, was the growing intensity of the Civil Rights Movement. Martin Luther King, Jr. marched in the South in the 1950s and early 1960s; but by the late 1960s, he was disturbing the peace in Cicero, Illinois. South Holland and Roseland, centers of Dutch ethnic exclusivity for almost a century—and traditional sources of Hope students—were experiencing white flight; churches were being abandoned as entire congregations fled from inner cities and moved to the suburbs. Black Power and Black Is Beautiful were watchwords on and off campus. While MLK presented a moderating voice in the Civil Rights Movement, Malcolm X was fire breathing on 125th Street and Broadway in Harlem until his assassination in 1965. H. Rap Brown and Stokely Carmichael began calling for more confrontational approaches to the intractable challenges of racism. The Black Panthers, with their threatening assault rifles, distinctive Afro 'dos, and threats about taking out Whitey, were a media favorite and right wing target of choice. Black college students who were on largely white campuses were in the awkward position of having to "represent" all Blacks to the



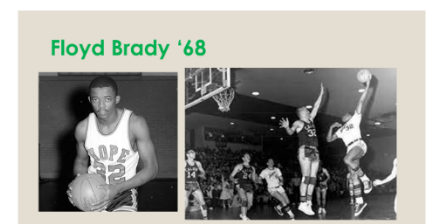


white community, while at the same time having to justify their presence in racist institutions to their Brothers and Sisters back home.

Of the 1,800 or so students while I was at Hope, roughly 100 were African American. Inevitably, their voices echoed the larger Civil Rights Movement, and regular columns in *the anchor*, the student newspaper, regaled the rest of the student body with the legitimate complaints of this minority community. Complicating their efforts, half of the African American students came from the inner cities of the North, and half from more rural settings in the South. The restive urgency of the former clashed regularly with the more reticent style of the latter. Black females found themselves at a double-disadvantage because their male peers could date white females but few white males asked them out. "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner" and "The Lost Man" were being played out in real life. In miniature, Hope's campus reflected the fractures in the larger African American Community.



Hope's best ever basketball player, Floyd Brady, was an icon on campus. Handsome, articulate, incredibly athletic, and warmly charismatic, he wafted through campus with ease. Yet, when he traveled outside the campus, or outside Holland,



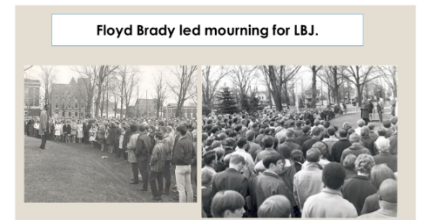
his blackness defined him. The ire directed toward him from opposing teams was especially dire, as he was often the only Black person in the entire gymnasium. On Spring Break trips to Florida with his fraternity mates, he sometimes wore a *dashiki* as they drove through the Deep South. He would effect a British accent and be introduced by his white classmates as an exchange student from Africa.

The fateful year of 1968 began with a concerted attack across South Vietnam by the supposedly undermanned North Vietnamese in what became known as the Tet Offensive. In mid-March, anti-war candidate and erstwhile poet, Senator Eugene McCarthy, defeated LBJ in the New Hampshire primary, and he was now being taken seriously. On Sunday night, March 31–the eve of April Fools Day so that many of us were skeptical–LBJ announced that he would not seek reelection. The Democratic race was wide open. Bobby Kennedy announced his candidacy, and many were hopeful that his election would end the bloody war begun under his brother. Although he started his political career as a Farm/Labor quasi-socialist from Minnesota, and therefore should have been allied with the anti-war protestors, VP Hubert Humphrey had stood foursquare behind LBJ, thereby antagonizing the left wing of the Democratic Party.

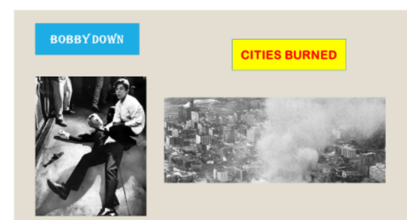
LBJ -- April Fools Day, 1968

- "I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your President."

For some time, MLK had been speaking eloquently about the cannon fodder that was the current military grunt—more often than not a soldier of color. He contrasted the economic and social disadvantages facing African Americans in the US with the sacrifices they were making in the unending war in Vietnam. His speeches were echoing through all of our minds when we learned that he had been assassinated in early April at the Lorraine Hotel in Memphis. For many of us, that was a wake-up call that the US cauldron was in full boil. Several hundred Hope students gathered in Centennial Park to mourn MLK's passing. Led with a eulogy by Floyd, we were devastated. However, as we mourned, the reality of racism once again reared its ugly head. Riders in cars passing by the park yelled obscenities and jeered: "Martin got what he deserved!" My wife, Peg, was doing student teaching in West Ottawa Middle School, and when she expressed her sorrow at MLK's death, her students echoed that jeering: "He shouldn't have meddled in the war or economics!"



Before the full impact of MLK's assassination had been absorbed, Bobby Kennedy—on the heels of winning the California primary—was gunned down by Sirhan Sirhan. Hope seemed in short supply. And cities began to burn.



Los Angeles. Detroit. Chicago. Newark. Harlem. Across the country, the loss of hope exploded into violence throughout the hot summer of 1968. Neither Muskegon nor Grand Rapids was spared. One of the candidates for the Democratic nomination was a widely admired Black comedian, Dick Gregory. In March 1968, he came to Hope and gave a rousing address. When introduced to the photographer from the *Muskegon Chronicle*, he opined, "Oh, yeah. That's the city that tried to stage a riot."

Dimnent Hall was packed for Gregory's presentation. A group of Calvin students, learning that Gregory was to be speaking at Hope (and knowing that his travel expenses would be covered by us), sought to bring him to Calvin. Their request was summarily dismissed by the administration because Gregory was deemed too profane. In gest, the editor of *the anchor* "invited" Calvin students to come to Hope. Taking him seriously—but not informing Hope of the decision—*The Chimes* arranged for a bus to bring fifty students at the appointed hour. When they showed up, there was no room in Dimnent, so the choir loft was opened to accommodate them. Dick Gregory was not amused by this phalanx of white faces arrayed behind him. It has been reported that the editor of *The Chimes* subsequently wrote an editorial in which he compared the profanity of Dick Gregory with the language of an approved Calvin speaker. Arguing that two

damns were worth one hell, he tallied up the profane words used by each speaker and concluded that “Dick Gregory was one damn better speaker than the approved one.” He was sacked the next day.

Everywhere, riots were ruthlessly repressed. The ultimate clash focused on the Democratic Convention in Chicago in late August. With the death of Bobby Kennedy and the lack-luster campaigning of McCarthy, the nomination of Hubert Humphrey was a foregone conclusion. The optimism and hope of the early Movement had devolved into the selection of this milquetoast, uninspiring man from the upper Midwest. “Dump the Hump” became the watchword, but lost its impact because “Tricky Dick” was soon the nominee of the Republicans. Improbably billing himself as the anti-war candidate, Nixon was seen by many college students as the better bet to end the Vietnam tragedy. George Arwady, then editor of *the anchor*, announced his support for Nixon two weeks before the election. Most of us were enraged. A classmate of ours wrote a bitter rebuttal for the next issue, and I penned the forgettable title, “Nix on Nixon!”

Long before she became “Hanoi Jane” and starred with John Voigt in “Coming Home,” Jane Fonda was known as Henry’s daughter and Peter’s provocative little sister. While Peter had starred in the counter-culture epic, “Easy Rider,” Jane headlined the risqué sci-fi

flick called "Barabella." Sexiest of sex symbols, she embodied one image of the modern femme. Sexy and available.

The other image of females was captured in the slogan that, "a women's place was in the home." Phyllis Schlafly was the standard-bearer for this shopworn model. "Barefoot, pregnant, and in the kitchen" was the prevailing ethos behind her successful anti-ERA campaign.

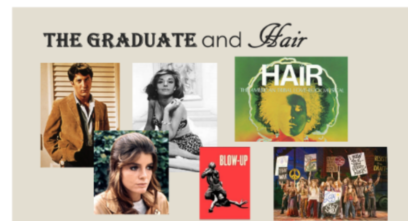
SDS, late of Gitlin's creation, was one of the organizations that prominently displayed female participants in their publicity shots. Every photo reflected a near balance of males and females, suggesting an inherent egalitarianism. However, what became increasingly clear was that even in such progressive organizations as the SDS, women were regularly relegated to pour coffee for angry white male activists and to type their radical position papers that denounced "The Man" (capital "M"). "The Man" was the Left's easy punching bag, but it turned out that The Man lived within these progressive organizations unaware of His own oppressive impulses. That was about to change; Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem, and *MS* magazine were hovering on the sidelines.

Meanwhile, the Sexual Revolution was gaining steam. Conventional mores were upended when birth control became widely available. Beginning with

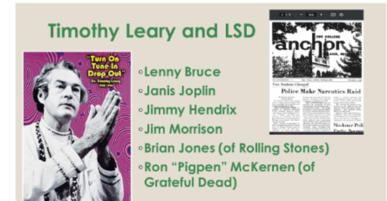
married women in 1960, it wasn't long before the pill was widely distributed. Removing the threat of pregnancy shattered one of the strongest social control mechanisms locking women in their place. Birth rates plummeted, marriages were postponed, and the very rigid fabric of the American family was beginning to fray around the edges.

Other conventional standards, sometimes only tangentially related to sexuality, were under assault. Lenny Bruce and George Carlin were famously incarcerated in Chicago for obscenity, using seven outlawed words portrayed as threats to public morality. Each word had to do with a sexual organ or sexual action; curiously, most were only four letters long. Bruce retorted that the most threatening words to the social order were "love" and "peace." Richard Pryor added his pointed rhetoric to the conversation, often using the "N word" to accentuate his script. Traditional social norms related to sexuality and profanity were falling or being ignored.

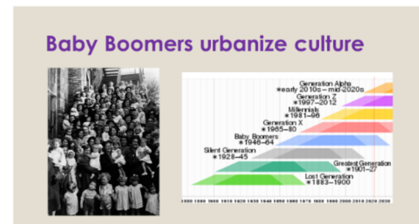
Anne Bancroft's exposed breast in the unforgettable "The Graduate" movie so shocked Dustin Hoffman, that he almost lost Katherine Ross. If that wasn't enough, the Age of Aquarius, became distinguished as a sexualized era,



highlighted by the First Act-ending nude scene in the rock musical *Hair*. Vanessa Redgrave lit up the screen in “Blowup,” giving new reasons to experiment with long-range camera lenses.



Among the other social norms that came crashing down during this period were social—if not political—constraints on the use of hallucinogens. Timothy Leary, an erstwhile professor at Harvard no less, called on us to “Turn on, tune in, drop out” and “think for [ourselves] and question authority.” Many did, and those that didn’t were envious of those that did. Tragically and inevitably, the rash of drug use claimed countless lives, including those of significant musicians and leaders of the counterculture.



Threaded through all of these changes was a subtle shift in the defining orientation of American self-perception. This was the steady rise of a cosmopolitan, heterogeneous urban culture across the country. Even small towns and rural areas were exposed to urban culture, whether through travel or exposure to television. Fueled as it was by the outsized Baby Boomers—the first time that an entire generation was seen as sharing the same social dynamics and cultural references—this rising urbanism

dealt a deathblow to the idealized image of the US as largely an extension of rural, small town life. The machine overcame the garden.

"The Last Picture Show" epitomized the nostalgia, ennui, and boredom that small town and rural life had come to represent. With this shift came a major change in the culture's orientation, from church-going Peoria and the iconic "Middletown" to the secular, polyglot, cosmopolitan coasts, where the centers of mass media overwhelmed traditional culture standards. Everyone wanted to have "Breakfast at Tiffanies" with Audrey Hepburn or stay with Walter Matthau in the luxury of a "Plaza Suite" or share a comb with Connie Stevens and Edd "Kookie" Byrnes at "77 Sunset Strip." Cities began to become youth preserves, so that today the average age in urban areas is 36 as compared to 43 in rural areas. The city was where it was happening, from Greenwich Village to Haight-Ashbury, from Motown and the Second City to the Big Easy, tied together for the first time by an intricate, big-city-to-big-city, interstate highway system.

As the 1960s came to a close, the themes that were to transform society—often for the distinct improvement thereof—were well in place. The pervasive skepticism of our current age was well planted and nurtured in the

Seeds well planted

- Suspicion of Social Institutions and Social Conventions
- Led to authoritarianism for some, expanded opportunities for others
- Technology abetted change
- War is second thought—not first

1960s. With mixed results. On the one hand, it has meant that some folks have fearfully sought comfort and solace in absolutes, whether fundamentalist religion or authoritarian politics. On the other hand, there are now a multiplicity of competing interpretations of reality out there. We have enjoyed an explosion of popular options for developing our understanding of reality. That explosion in media options has been fueled by technological innovations unimagined in the 1960s.

At the same time, the proliferation of media sources was boosted by and in turn energized individualism, the cultural notion that each of us is the final arbiter of how we make sense of our world. Groupthink was defined and outed as never before. In the face of this hyper-individuality, we have had to learn to adapt to the resulting uncertain cultural narrative. It has not been a uniformly wonderful adaptation, but it has brought each of us a new awareness of our personal value and innate human consequentiality.

Other changes have come from the cultural seedbeds of the 1960s. One has to do with our country's attitude toward war. On any of the subsequent military engagements in which the US has been embroiled—from Granada to Gulf Wars 1 and 2 to Afghanistan to Ukraine—the '60s generation scores lowest on support for US military involvement. Thinking for ourselves has made many of us less receptive to knee-jerk, military solutions to diplomatic problems. One of the

telling responses to the war in the Ukraine is that so many Americans are in disbelief that such nonsense could be under way in the twenty-first century. War doesn't solve anything, we learned. It didn't then, and it won't now; but war somehow feels inevitable. *Déjà vu* all over again.

It hasn't always been a smooth ride. The 1970s opened with the shootings at Kent State in which four teenage anti-war activists were gunned down and another nine were wounded by dozens of teenage conscripts serving in the National Guard. It would be a toss-up to guess who was more frightened, the teenage targets or the teenage conscripts. The Weather Underground and other ineffectual splinter groups from The Movement, such as the bombers of the lab at the University of Wisconsin, resorted to violence that was inevitably countered by more violence from civil authorities and self-appointed vigilantes.

After much political maneuvering and massive protests, including numerous marches on Washington (I went on several of them), the Vietnam War finally sputtered to a halt in 1975. Beaten and disillusioned, the Pentagon resolved never again to use the draft for its personnel. All subsequent wars have been fought by volunteers—either from the states' National Guards or from federal ranks.

Incentives have kept the slots mostly filled, and we haven't been beneath providing mercenary-like opportunities for non-citizen soldiers, such as fast-track citizenship.

The legacy of the Civil Right Movement is more pronounced and lasting—and more problematic. While anti-critical race theorists denounce supposed efforts to imbue children with a sense of guilt for slavery, most Americans no longer question the existence of racially driven inequities. The debate hinges more on how much impact racism has had and is having, rather than whether or not it exists.

Legacy of Civil Rights Movement

- Very uneven.
- Recognition of institutional racism
- Critical Race Theory is largely correct
- Most people see the Right as wrong
- *De jure* forces *de facto* change
- Barack Hussein O'bama gave new meaning to "Black Irish"

The transition from blaming racism on malignant individuals to understanding that structures can be equally—or even more—debilitating, has been on-going. Despite the blather that comes out of the mouths of the governor of Florida and a senator from Texas, the pervasiveness of institutional racism is broadly acknowledged throughout the country. A 2021 Gallup Poll survey reported that 64% of Americans say that "racism against Black people is [still] widespread in [the] US."[3] The 1960s spurred on that process of growing self-awareness. MLK spoke forcefully about changing the law first, *de jure* justice, and then assuring us that minds and hearts would follow, *de facto* justice. Work first on those institutionally embedded inequities, he felt, and the mindset among individuals will change to accommodate the new reality.

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[3] https://news.gallup.com/poll/352544/larger-majority-says-racism-against-black-people-widespread.aspx

At the same time, the "face" of race is undergoing a massive metamorphosis. According to David Brooks in a recent *NYTimes* article:

> About three in 10 Asian newlyweds were married to someone from a different race or ethnicity in 2015, as were around one in four Hispanics and roughly one in five Black Americans. Six years earlier, 35 percent of Americans said that one of their close kin was married to someone of a different race.[4]

These data portend a very brave, new world characterized by growing racial ambiguity!

Title IX of the federal civil rights law was an example of the value of pushing *de jure* change first and waiting for hearts to follow. Mandating that recipients of federal dollars comply with a policy of equality based on sex, the 1972 statute absolutely transformed the visibility and activity of girls and women on school and college campuses throughout the country. Its full ramifications continue to work their way through the body politic. However slowly, Title IX's mandated changes have been inexorably incorporated into our lives. Witness the shift in funding for men and women's Final Four basketball tournaments between 2021 and 2022! Not perfect yet, but on the right track. The rise of women's involvement in everything from business to politics can be seen as having roots in the 1960s.

Legacy of change in women's status

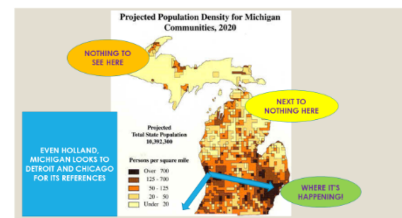
- Again, uneven
- Title IX led to tremendous changes
- "Women's place is in the House and Senate, and White House"
- The notion that "Women are inferior" or "weaker" sounds dissonant, embarrassingly dated and quaint

[4] https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/13/opinion/la-city-council-racism.html?nl=todaysheadlines&emc=edit_th_20221014

The current reactionary rumblings about LGBTQ+ and transgender threats to American society are an ironic testimony to the distance that we've come as a culture on matters related to sexuality. These rants, while painful to hear, sound increasingly like what they are—desperate efforts to stem an inevitable tide. According to a recent Gallup survey, more than seven percent of adults identify themselves as part of the LGBTQ+ community. Among the youngest adults—those 18-35—that number jumps to more than twenty percent. And they are not going away. And they are not going to keep quiet—even if it means taking down Mickey Mouse and Governor Goofy. The seeds for this massive cultural change were planted in the 1960s.

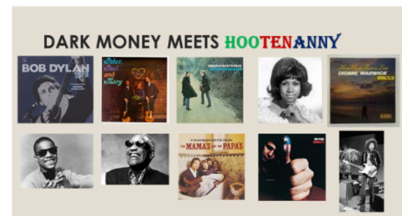
Legacy on matters of sexuality
- "The Graduate" is quaint. "Hair" is even quainter.
- "The L Word" (and countless other "mainstream" shows—I'm thinking of you, "Bridgerton") makes them look like kiddie-lit.
- Shifts in marriage rates, birth rates, number of births, frequency of divorce and second marriage.
- LGBTQ+ rights are still a matter of significant struggle, but the curve of this issue is clearly bent on justice.

Finally, the reality of the urbanization of culture is reasserted every day. Transportation and communication hubs, centers of entertainment and enterprise, focal points for personal identification, cities are a defining reality in our lives as they never were. Holland is "west of Grand Rapids"; Hollanders are fans of the Chicago Cubs or the Detroit Tigers; the bad times that the Detroit Lions have suffered are felt deeply in West Ottawa and Overisel, in Borculo and Drenthe. Don't believe it? Listen to the plaintiff pleas from callers into the "Michigan



Sports Network" on local radio. Ask a college student where she or he is going after graduation, and with few exceptions, they'll name cities. Later in life, a small town refuge may be desirable, but right out of college, they're bustin' loose in the big time. They're heading to cities; the bigger the better. I've heard that the HR folks in a local company, seeking engineers, wrote to graduates of the state's engineering schools who had been 10-15 years in big city firms. Come to Holland, they offered, because your kids will love the safe neighborhoods and excellent schools. Those recruits, inevitably, brought their big city experiences and expectations back to Holland, and demanded specialty cafes, craft beer breweries, and trend-setting clothiers.

I'm not a Pollyanna. We're not in Eden. Yet. The forces of repression and regression are better funded and better organized, and they'll strike back with every dime they can squeeze out of Ponzi-scheming businesses. They may win a battle or two, but their cause is lost in the long run. As Karl M. would say, the seeds of their own destruction are already planted in their structures. Militarism, racism, sexism, classism—even ageism—in all their guises are less hidden today. When they rear their ugly heads, they will continue to be called out in a chorus of rejections.



That chorus was first heard at a hootenanny in the 1960s, when Bob Dylan joined Peter, Paul, and Mary, Paul and Art, some one-name-wonders, a couple of Mamas and Papas, a lover of Vincent and American pie, and a crazy, brilliant guitarist who transformed the humdrum national hymn into an anthem for all ages, and invited us all to dance along. Paul, John, George, and Ringo joined in from afar, pleading with us to heed the tragic assault we were making on the Yellow Submarine we called our home. And even King Elvis found reasons to fret about the impact "The Ghetto" had on future generations.

Snarky, loud, vulgar, counterintuitive, happy Abbie Hoffman was a generational fellow traveler in the 1960s. He came to public prominence with a chronicle of *The Woodstock Nation*, a paean to the extraordinary 1969 musical extravaganza and wild love-in that unfolded on a farm outside Woodstock, New York. Striking out from the more staid hippies, Abbie formed with Jerry Rubin a sideshow that they called "Yippies." Notorious for streaking naked through meetings of the DAR and other rightwing enclaves, yelling "Yippie" as they bounced along, they set the stage with humor and intentionality for their be-ins that pilloried The Establishment. Abbie coined the term "Do It!" (Nike added "just") and penned a book emblazoned with the taunting title, *Steal this Book*. When we

did, steal it that is, the publisher pulled it from the shelves. At some point in his storied career—perhaps just before he was tried for sedition and conspiracy to overthrow the US government during the protest outside the Democratic Convention in Chicago—Abbie wrote, “Beware, parents. We’ve got your kids!” That became my credo as a professor for four decades. That meme, and my beard, are lasting testaments to my formative years. The 1960s. Just as I can’t get away from that epoch, our culture today can’t get away from what we set ablaze way back then. And much of that has been resoundingly to the good.