

SURPRISES

"THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'," sang Bob Dylan in the 1960s. Dylan wrote powerful songs of protest. In "Masters of War," he imagined the deaths of the men who organized wars and profited from them. But Dylan also sang personal songs of freedom and self-expression. His music captured the mood of the United States in the 1960s and early 1970s.

It was a time of revolt. The civil rights movement and the movement against the Vietnam War were part of a larger movement for change. People lost faith in the Establishment—the big powers like business, government, the schools, and the medical industry. They questioned what they were told. They believed that they should be free to think for themselves, and they experimented with

new ways of living, teaching, working, and making art.

Unexpected new currents began to flow through American society, moving in surprising directions. Two of the biggest surprises came from women and Indians.

Women's Liberation

By 1960, more than a third of all women age sixteen and older were working outside their homes for wages. Yet only 2 percent of working mothers had nurseries for their children, and women earned a lot less than men. Society saw women as wives, mothers, housekeepers. Many men viewed women as emotional and impractical, not able to do difficult jobs.

Even in the civil rights movement, where women played an important role and stood up to danger, some women knew that men did not regard them as equals. Ella Barker, who had worked for civil rights in Harlem before going to

the South to help organize protests, said:

I knew from the beginning that as a woman, an older woman in a group of ministers who are accustomed to having women largely as supporters, there was no place for me to have come into a leadership role.

But women resisted. In 1964, civil rights workers were living in a Freedom House in Mississippi. The women went on strike against the men, who expected them to cook and make beds while the men drove around organizing the movement.

The times were a-changing. The National Organization for Women formed in 1966. The following year, women's groups convinced President Johnson to ban discrimination against women in jobs related to the federal government.

By that time, women in the civil rights and anti-war movements were organizing their own meetings and taking action on women's issues. In early 1968, a women's antiwar meeting in Washington, D.C., marched to the Arlington National Cemetery and declared "The Burial of Traditional Womanhood." That same year a group called Radical Women made headlines when they protested the Miss America contest and threw




STUDENT RIGHTS

A "SHY," "ETHEREAL," PEACEFUL FIFTEEN-YEAR-OLD boy named John Tinker won a crucial legal battle on behalf of civil rights during the height of the Vietnam War, the period between 1965 and 1968, when the country was in an uproar. John, his thirteen-year-old sister Mary Beth, and their fifteen-year-old friend Chris Eckhardt were all expelled from school after they wore armbands in school to protest the war. "When people are getting killed, it's important to me," John Tinker later said. But school district board president Ora Niffenegger disagreed, saying, "We must have law and order. If we don't we have chaos."

John, Mary Beth, and Chris eventually decided to stop wearing the armbands so that they would-

not be thrown out of school. But they sued the Des Moines school system to protect the right to protest as a form of expression. The judge ruled against them in favor of the school's right to ban armbands.

John, Mary Beth, and Chris appealed, and when the appellate court ruling ended in a 4-4 tie, they appealed right up to the US Supreme Court. By the time the Supreme Court ruled, on February 24, 1969, John was a freshman at the University of Iowa. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of John, Mary Beth, and Chris, by a 7-2 majority. They had won their case! That ruling still protects freedom of expression today. It means that school officials can't just stop students from



expressing their thoughts and opinions because they may disagree with them.

Supreme Court Justice Abe Fortas wrote the opinion for the majority. Here are some of the things he wrote in his eleven-page opinion, short for a constitutional case:


School officials do not possess absolute authority over their students.

Students in school as well as out of school are persons under our Constitution.

[Neither] students or teachers shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate.

State-operated schools may not be enclaves of totalitarianism.

[Education works best when practiced with] a robust exchange of ideas which discovers truth out of a multi-



tude of tongues, [rather] than through any kind of authoritative selection.

Source: Johnson, John W. *The Struggle for Student Rights: Tinker v. Des Moines and the 1960s*. Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1997.

bras, false eyelashes, and wigs into a Freedom Trash Can.

Hoping to change the U.S. Constitution to ensure full equality of the sexes, many women worked to get an Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) passed by the states. Yet it seemed clear that even if they succeeded, the law alone would not be enough to change people's ideas about women's place in society. Shirley Chisholm, a black congresswoman, said:

The law cannot do it for us. We must do it for ourselves.

Women in this country must become revolutionaries. We must refuse to accept the old, the traditional roles and stereotypes. . . . We must replace the old, negative thoughts about our femininity with positive thoughts and positive action. . . .

The women's movement of the 1960s was called Women's Liberation, or sometimes feminism. Its deepest effect might have been what was called "consciousness raising." Women read or talked about issues that affected them. This led them to rethink old roles, to reject the idea that women were inferior, and to feel a new confidence and sense of sisterhood with other women.

(left) Former New York Congresswoman Bella Abzug (2nd from right) joins marchers celebrating the 60th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, 1980.



One of the first and most influential books of the women's movement was *The Feminine Mystique*, by a middle-class housewife named Betty Friedan. The "mystique" was society's image of women finding complete satisfaction as mothers and wives, giving up their own dreams. In trying to live up to that image, many women felt empty and lost. Friedan wrote, "The only way for a woman, as for a man, to find herself, to know herself as a person, is by creative work of her own."

Poor women had urgent concerns. Some of them wanted to eliminate hunger, suffering, and inequality right away. Johnnie Tillmon worked with other mothers on welfare to form the National Welfare Rights Organization. It wanted women to be paid for work such as housekeeping and child-rearing, saying, "No woman can be liberated, until all women get off their knees." Tillmon explained:

Welfare's like a traffic accident. It can happen to anybody, but especially it happens to women. And that is why welfare is a women's issue. For a lot of middle-class women in this country, Women's Liberation is a matter of concern. For women on welfare it's a matter of survival.

The control of women in society was not done by the state. Instead, it happened inside the fam-

ily. Men controlled women, women controlled children, and sometimes they did violence to each other when things weren't going right. But what if it all turned around?

If women liberated themselves, and men and women began to understand each other, would they find that both of them were being kept down by something outside themselves? Maybe families and relationships would become pockets of strength and rebellion against the larger system, and men and women—and children, too—would work together to change society.

An Indian Uprising

THE INDIANS WERE ONCE THE ONLY INHABITANTS of America. Then the white invaders pushed them back. The last massacre of the Indians took place in 1890 at Wounded Knee Creek in South Dakota. When it was over, between two and three hundred Indian men, women, and children were dead.

The Indian tribes had been attacked, beaten, and starved. The federal government divided them up by putting them on reservations where they lived in poverty. An 1887 law tried to turn the Indians into American-type small farmers by breaking up the reservations into individually owned plots of land. White real-estate speculators got hold of most of the land, and the reservations remained, although young Indians often left them.

For a time, it seemed that the Indians would disappear or blend away into the larger society. At the beginning of the twentieth century, only three hundred thousand of them were left. But then, like a plant that is left to die but refuses to do so, the population started to grow again. By 1960 there were eight hundred thousand Indians. Half of them lived on reservations. The other half lived in cities and towns all over the country.

As the civil rights and antiwar movements took shape in the 1960s, the Indians were also thinking about how to change their situation. They began to organize.

Indians started approaching the U.S. government on an embarrassing topic: treaties. The government had signed more than four hundred

(left) Fear Forgets leads other Sioux in "Liberation Day" ceremonies on Alcatraz Island, 1970.



treaties with the Indians. It had broken every single one. Back when George Washington was president, the government signed a treaty with the Iroquois tribes of New York that gave certain property to the Seneca nation. But in the early 1960s, under President Kennedy, the government ignored that treaty and built a dam on this land, flooding most of the Seneca reservation.

But Indians in all parts of the country were starting to resist. In the state of Washington, an old treaty had taken land from the Indians but left them fishing rights. As the white population grew, whites wanted the fishing to themselves. After state courts closed river areas to Indians, the Indians held "fish-ins" there. They went to jail, hoping to get publicity for their protest.

Some Indians at the fish-ins were Vietnam veterans. One of them was Sid Mills. In 1968, Mills was arrested on the Nisqually River. He said, "I am a Yakima and a Cherokee Indian, and a man. For two years and four months, I've been a soldier in the United States Army. I served in combat in Vietnam—until critically wounded. . . . I hereby renounce further obligation in service or duty to the United States Army."

A dramatic event in 1969 drew more attention to the Indians' complaints than anything else had done. Alcatraz was an abandoned federal prison on an island in San Francisco Bay. It had been a hated place nicknamed "The Rock." One night seventy-eight Indians landed on Alcatraz and took it over.

Among the group's leaders were Richard Oakes, a Mohawk who directed Indian studies at San Francisco State College, and Grace Thorpe, a Sac and Fox Indian who was the daughter of Jim Thorpe, a famous football star and Olympic athlete. Their plan was to turn the island into a center for Native American environmental studies.

Other Indians came to join them. By the end of November there were more than six hundred people from fifty tribes. The government cut off telephone, electric, and water service to the island. Although many Indians had to leave, others insisted on staying. They were still there a year later, when they sent out this message:

We are still holding the Island of Alcatraz in the true names of Freedom, Justice and Equality, because you, our brothers and sisters of this earth, have lent support to our just cause.

We have learned that violence breeds only more violence and we have therefore carried on our occupation of Alcatraz in a peaceful manner, hoping that the government of these United States will also act accordingly. . . .

We are Indians of All Tribes! we hold the rock!

Six months later, federal forces invaded the island and physically removed the Indians.

Other Indian demonstrations took place—to protest strip mining on Navajo land in New Mexico, to reclaim land taken by the Forest Service in California. At the same time, Indians were doing something about the destruction of their culture. An Oklahoma Indian named Evan Haney recalled that though half the kids in his school had been Indians, “nothing in school . . . taught anything about Indian culture. There were no books on Indian history, not even in the library. . . .” Haney knew something was wrong. He found books and started learning his own culture.

As more books about Indian history came into being, teachers started to rethink the way they taught the subject. They avoided old stereotypes and looked for new sources of information for their students. Students became activists, too. An

elementary school student named Raymond Miranda wrote to the publisher of one of his books:

Dear Editor,

I don't like your book called *The Cruise of Christopher Columbus*. I didn't like it because you said some things about Indians that weren't true. . . . Another thing I didn't like was on page 69, it says that Christopher Columbus invited the Indians to Spain, but what really happened was that he stole them!

In March of 1973, the Indians of North America made a powerful statement on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. Hundreds of American Indian Movement members occupied Wounded Knee village at the site of the 1890 massacre. The occupation was a symbol of their demand for Indian rights and Indian land.

Within hours, federal agents, marshals, and police surrounded the town. They began firing with automatic weapons. The protestors inside the town were under siege. When Indians in Michigan sent them a small planeload of food, the authorities arrested the pilot and a doctor who had hired the plane. A few weeks later other planes dropped food for the protestors. When the Indians ran to gather

it, a federal helicopter fired down on them. A stray bullet hit a man inside a church. He died.

After more gun battles and another death, the Indians and the authorities agreed to end the siege. A hundred and twenty Indians were arrested. But they had held out for seventy-one days, creating a community inside Wounded Knee and receiving messages of support from all over the world.

The 1960s and early 1970s brought many changes to American society, some large and some small but significant. People felt free to be themselves. Gays and lesbians felt less need to hide the truth about themselves, and they started organizing to fight discrimination. Men and women alike dressed less formally. Comfortable clothes such as jeans became normal for young people of both sexes. Students, parents, and teachers questioned traditional education, which had taught whole generations the values of patriotism and obeying authority while ignoring or even disrespecting women and people of color. Disabled people became a force, campaigning for legislation that would protect them from discrimination.

In those years, as part of what became known as a "cultural revolution," people became more conscious of what was happening to the environment. In 1962 Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring*, a book that shocked people into realizing that chemicals used in modern technology were poisoning the air, the water, and the earth. The book became a bestseller and sparked a movement for environmental cleanliness. In 1978, a woman named Lois Gibbs, whose children had become ill in the neighborhood of Love Canal, New York, and who saw other people suffering, became a leader in the struggle against corporations that were endangering people's lives in their pursuit of maximum profit.

Hundreds of thousands of people joined organizations like the Sierra Club, the Wilderness Society, and EarthFirst! On Earth Day in 1970, 100,000 people marched down Fifth Avenue in New York, and students at 1,500 colleges and 10,000 schools throughout the country demanded protection of the environment. Soon after, Congress passed a number of laws: the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, and the Endangered Species Act. They also created the Environmental

Protection Agency. Enforcement of these acts was not a priority of the national government, and in the presidency of Ronald Reagan, funds were cut for the E.P.A. Nevertheless, the environmental movement continued its campaigns.

America had never had more movements for change in such a short time. But the Establishment had learned a lot about controlling people in its two hundred years of existence. In the mid-1970s, it went to work.

CHAPTER TWENTY UNDER CONTROL?

"IS THE GOVERNMENT RUN BY A FEW BIG interests looking out for themselves?"

In 1972 a research center asked Americans that question. More than half the people who were asked said, "Yes." Just eight years before, only about a quarter of them had answered yes. What had happened?

America was changing in the early 1970s. The system was out of control. People had lost faith in the government. A lot of them were hostile to big business, too.

The Vietnam War created a lot of distrust and anger. It killed fifty-eight thousand Americans, and the people had discovered that their government had lied to them and had done terrible deeds. Americans also lost faith in the system