As you may have guessed from those documents, morale over Vietnam was dangerously low. Black soldiers especially chafed at disproportionately high casualty rates, leading many to conclude that they were being sent on the most dangerous missions. At home, public support for the war also evaporated, especially as pictures of dead or wounded Americans showed up on the nightly televised news. Although most college students did not participate in antiwar demonstrations, these too, showed up in American living rooms. Teach-ins about the war grew to include anti-government, as well as antiwar, rhetoric. Larger and larger numbers showed up at antiwar rallies. Pacifist organizations like the Fellowship of Reconciliation and the Catholic Worker movement took high-profile stands against the war. Chicano groups and civil rights groups like SNCC soon followed. Some civil rights groups built on the idea that black Americans were fighting overseas for rights for others that they themselves didn’t enjoy here—namely, the right to participate fully in government and society and the right to self-determination. In April of 1967, Martin Luther King denounced the war as well.

Acts of civil disobedience grew, and grew more disconcerting to many Americans. From white middle class students, who we’ll look at later when we consider students as a whole, to veterans themselves, many different parts of society appeared vocally opposed to the war. When 35,000 protestors attempted to surround the Pentagon and shut down operations, the government reacted harshly with mass arrests. Draft resisters burned their draft cards, medal winners returned their medals, and some fifty to one hundred thousand fled to Canada. LBJ grew increasingly isolated, empowering the CIA to spy on antiwar protestors and the FBI to infiltrate and disrupt the antiwar movement.

1968 became a flashpoint as failed domestic and international initiatives came together and wreaked havoc on the American consciousness. **What two major assassinations were in 1968?** Besides the assassinations of MLK and RJK, in January, North Vietnam and their allies in the South launched the Tet Offensive, attacking targets throughout South Vietnam simultaneously. **Even though it failed, it had a huge impact on Americans and led to decreased support for the war—why?** Although the offensive was beaten back, it came at a high price; public trust in U.S. war strategy eroded—if the USA was winning, how was the North so strong they could even mount something like Tet in the first place—and Johnson’s popularity dropped precipitously. It didn’t help that the response to Tet was a request for even more troops.

Within the Democratic Party, a number of opponents emerged ready to challenge LBJ for the 1968 presidential nomination. Antiwar candidate Eugene McCarthy had a strong showing at the New Hampshire primary, capturing the idealism—and hard work—of many college students and intellectuals. Later, Robert Kennedy entered the race as well, marshaling the old Kennedy charisma along with a renewed commitment to civil rights. Clearly, Johnson saw the writing on the wall; in March 1968, he announced that he would not be running again, shocking the nation.

The early sixties were marked by a new questioning of old authority that manifested itself in a variety of ways. Jane Jacobs, in The Death and Life of the Great American Cities (1961), wrote how urban renewal destroyed existing city neighborhoods, ripped communities apart, and led the way to increased alienation from the physical and social landscape. Her charges helped to lead the way toward redevelopment of existing neighborhoods. Rachel Carson, in Silent Spring (1962), described the effects of pesticide use on the environment, helping to usher in new regulations on DDT and other chemicals with far-reaching effects, although the science in her book has come under fire in recent decades. Also published that year was Michael Harrington’s The Other America, which described the effects of urban and rural poverty. It sold over a million copies and helped to awaken America to the human face of the very poor. 1963’s The Feminine Mystique, by Betty Friedan, chronicled the effects of the middle class lifestyle on women. Describing the “problem that has no name,” Friedan wrote of suburban enclaves as “comfortable concentration camps.”

Films and music also reflected new sensibilities. Many films employed increasingly graphic levels of violence to make their points, while others, such as Stanley Kubrick’s Dr. Strangelove, depicted national and international leaders as megalomaniacs intent only on their own self-aggrandizement. Folk music and folk music idioms underwent a revival, as listeners sought a new simplicity that was itself a response to the over-produced and formulaic music of the fifties that continued to be popular with some Americans into the sixties. Artists such as Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, Jimi Hendrix, Pink Floyd, and the Grateful Dead gained popularity. Change, protest, social disunity, and disengagement were increasingly reflected in film and song.

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By the 1960s, American colleges and universities were filled with more young people than ever before. They, too, sought ways to break free of older idioms and assert themselves. Students for a Democratic Society, a student activist group that protested social and political issues, formed in 1960; its Port Huron Statement two years later underscored the level of discomfort many young people felt about living in a world dominated by brinksmanship politics and complacency. **What’s the conservative counterpoint to this? Sharon Statement.** In the fall of 1964, a group of students at the University of California at Berkeley launched the Free Speech Movement in response to university restrictions on fundraising for off-campus civil rights organizations. Later, students at Berkeley under the leadership of Mario Savio occupied the university’s administration building for two days until they were arrested. Other campuses across the country soon reflected Berkeley’s activism and unhappiness with the status quo. Young Americans for Freedom was the much larger but much quieter (by comparison) conservative response to social change.

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Inspired in many respects by the strategies and successes of the civil rights movement, the late 1960s and 1970s were marked by a new militancy from women. Many were upset by their poor treatment in the same civil rights organizations that they had come out to support, being denied leadership positions or relegated to domestic duties within the organization. Other women sought political positions, running for office and winning elections. By the end of the sixties, younger women started consciousness-raising groups, demonstrating impatience with the tendency of older women to attempt to “work within the system.” The federal government also supported women who filed a class action suit against university discrimination. Younger women like **Germaine Greer** and **Gloria Steinem** began activist careers at the end of the sixties, while African American women organized their own militant groups. It was during this period that the marriage-neutral term “Ms.” came into wide usage, replacing “Mrs.” and “Miss.” Women lobbied to make abortion legal, and the Supreme Court decision in ***Roe v. Wade*** declared the procedure legal in the first two trimesters of pregnancy. Using federal laws against workplace discrimination, women also entered nontraditional careers.

Meanwhile, leaders of the **National Organization for Women (NOW)** were determined to revive the drive for an Equal Rights Amendment, first proposed by the Women’s Party in the 1920s. The ERA passed both the House and Senate, and President Nixon endorsed the amendment. But in the end, it fell victim to a much-changed political atmosphere.

For many gay and lesbian people, the seventies also represented a time of increased militancy. After a group of police raided a gay bar in Greenwich Village, a number of men fought back in what came to be known as **Stonewall**.It was a liberating experience—or example for many—encouraging many to “come of the closet.” Soon, gay liberation would become a political movement, building on the earlier homophile movement. Pressure from both within and outside the American Psychological Association caused it to remove homosexuality from its list of psychiatric disorders in 1973. Openly gay people began to be elected to public offices. (Cousin Pat Steadman ☺ )

Look for extra credit to come from “Debating the War in Vietnam, on pages 916-917!