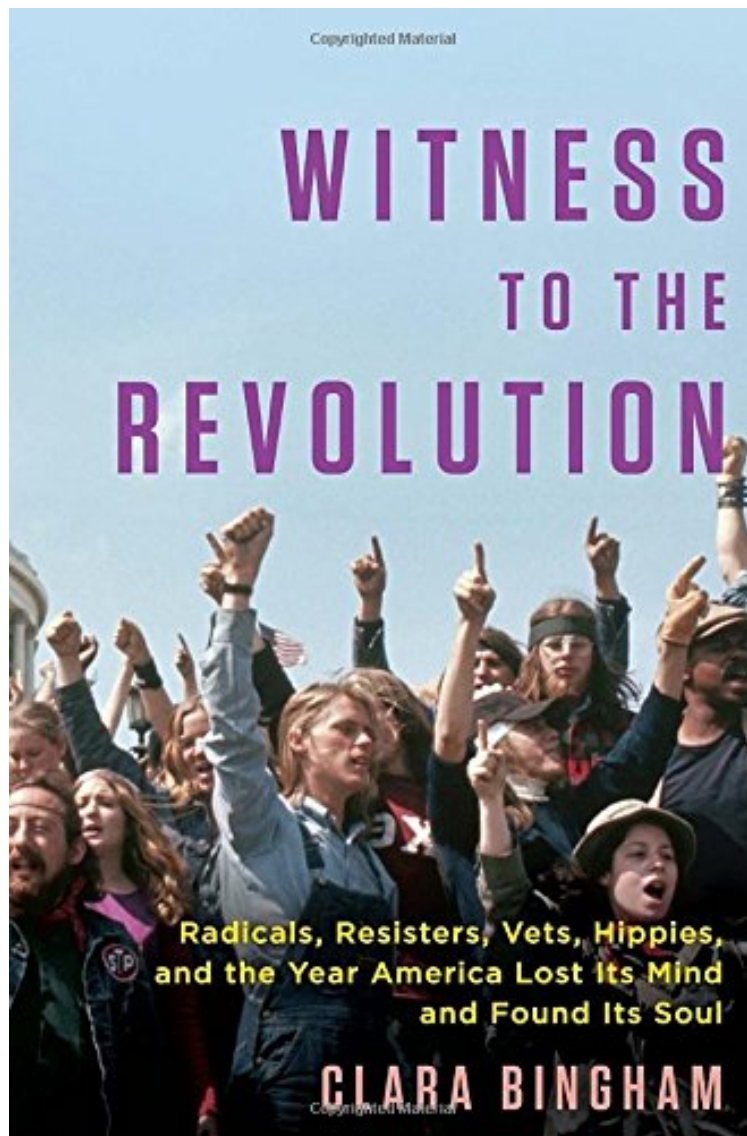


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Witness to the Revolution: Radicals, Resisters, Vets, Hippies, and the Year America Lost Its Mind and Found Its Soul

Clara Bingham

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Clara Bingham : Witness to the Revolution: Radicals, Resisters, Vets, Hippies, and the Year America Lost Its Mind and Found Its Soul before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Witness to the Revolution: Radicals, Resisters, Vets, Hippies, and the Year America Lost Its Mind and Found Its Soul:

33 of 33 people found the following review helpful. Witness to the Revolution unleashes a flood of memories while sounding a warning about the possible coming darkness. By Michael Birman. Understanding the significance of the sixties requires grasping just how pernicious the endless (1954-1975) Vietnam War was. How it created much of the fractiousness and political controversy that is still so visible today. The war fostered a volatile climate that led to increasingly violent demands for equality on multiple social, racial and sexual fronts. And a vast baby-boom generational transition caused an upheaval in social norms which functioned like gasoline tossed onto a fire. Towards the end of the revolutionary 1960s events became darker, increasingly violent and rebellious, despite rare peaceful anomalies like Woodstock, whose dried mud still clings to my old 1940s era bomber jacket (I just can't bring myself to clean it). During a college peace rally in September 1972, I seized an opportunity to ask Jane Fonda why she jeopardized her film career by engaging in what many Americans considered a treasonable response to the war (she had recently gone to Hanoi). Her reply reflected the same kind of insularity one might witness today in a combative response towards our current conflicts: incomprehension about the question's premise and a dismissal of the opinions of the opposing side. It is hardly a stretch to say that the sixties created the modern world. Witness to the Revolution is an indispensable overview of that era, the book focusing on the final year of the sixties (1969-1970) when each day seemed to contain more rage and even greater uncertainty. Clara Bingham, a former Newsweek White House correspondent, has created a first-person narrative arranged into a series of paragraphs, each one labeled with the name of a famous sixties rebel. The first-person recollections and observations exert a visceral immediacy. This 656 page book is nearly cinematic in scale, its scope expanding as the book progresses. As name followed name in a tapestry of political and social upheaval, I experienced an overwhelming flood of memories accompanied by a series of newly urgent questions: Did we really live through this insanity? Was I actually there? Was this really how it happened? When history and memory collide, two-dimensional written history often leaves us feeling empty and craving some living and breathing humanity. Bingham's relentless use of first person narratives - which she staples together with excellent chapter introductions, footnotes and biographical sketches of each rebel voice - animates her history, bringing it to life without sacrificing either continuity or momentum. The voices act like a Greek chorus of memory, filling in all of the details that no one individual could possibly recall or witness. It is first-person history just the way many of us experienced it and it is often both thrilling and frightening. All of the major events and so many indelible memories are here: the endless demonstrations, Kent State, the Weather Underground, SDS, Black Panthers, Daniel Ellsberg and the Pentagon Papers, Nixon and the secret and illegal war in Cambodia, Hippies, draft-dodgers, political fugitives, the bombing of the University of Wisconsin, the bombing of historic Fraunces Tavern in lower Manhattan, the 1970 Greenwich Village townhouse bombing (accidentally set-off by the Weather Underground) with that famous photo of Dustin Hoffman fleeing with a painting over his head as he was desperately trying to save it from destruction. It all seems incredibly surreal yet eerily timely and familiar. If you survived those years, Witness to the Revolution will probably generate a flood of powerful memories that might just provide some context for who you are now. If these events are merely someone else's memories and your understanding of their importance eludes you, this book may serve as a warning of where we are heading as events continue slipping inexorably out of control. "Those who forget history are doomed to repeat it." That admonition has never seemed more relevant. I strongly recommend reading Witness to the Revolution during these uncertain and dangerous times. If nothing else, it may help to provide a blueprint for survival as the wheel of history makes another fateful spin.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Especially meaningful for someone who was a student at that time. By thomas connors. 1969-70 was my freshman year in college so this was a trip back to a key year in my life. Bingham did a wonderful job of re-creating the timelines and chronological relationships of the many interrelated political milestones and historic events during this turbulent year. The overviews at the beginning of each chapter helped reinforce this. Even for someone who lived through it it was impossible at the time to absorb or fully appreciate the radical changes that were taking place. For instance, the narrative created through these interviews puts special emphasis on how important Kent State was in changing the attitudes of so many. The candid responses she elicited from such a variety of key actors of that time is impressive. She also attempted, and for the most part achieved, to present a balance between commentary not only by the radicals and protesters but also from White House staff and other government officials. Many of these voices speak to disillusionment and much 'second guessing' on both sides but some others, of the principal players, though not all, weigh in as being as passionately committed to their respective beliefs today as they were back then.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Another time. By Barbara Keller. I was in college 1963 to 1967. Lots of changes. I then returned to New York City, was not a hippie (shopped in Bloomingdale's and East 53rd St. boutiques, mainly French clothes), but did get involved in Feminist movement. We really believed we could change the system. Young, naive, idealistic. However, this period changed my perception of many issues, such as marriage, choice, career advancement, one of my most vivid memories was marching down Fifth Avenue in a Women's March. Most of us were dressed in business attire. The most virulent comments were from businessmen standing on the sidewalk. We ended up at the park behind the 42nd St. Library. Betty Friedan spoke, as well as many others. That evening on prime time news, only the radical lesbian was shown. And let us not forget Vietnam Nam, Nixon, and the aftermath. Been there, done that. Read this book. I cried.

The electrifying story of the turbulent year when the sixties ended and America teetered on the edge of revolution. NAMED ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY THE ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH. As the 1960s drew to a close, the United States was coming apart at the seams. From August 1969 to August 1970, the nation witnessed nine thousand protests and eighty-four acts of arson or bombings at schools across the country. It was the year of the My Lai massacre investigation, the Cambodia invasion, Woodstock, and the Moratorium to End the War. The American death toll in Vietnam was approaching fifty thousand, and the ascendant counterculture was challenging nearly every aspect of American society. Witness to the Revolution, Clara Bingham's unique oral history of that tumultuous time, unveils anew that moment when America careened to the brink of a civil war at home, as it fought a long, futile war abroad. Woven together from one hundred original interviews, Witness to the Revolution provides a firsthand narrative of that period of upheaval in the words of those closest to the action: the activists, organizers, radicals, and resisters who manned the barricades of what Students for a Democratic Society leader Tom Hayden called the Great Refusal. We meet Bill Ayers and Bernardine Dohrn of the Weather Underground; Daniel Ellsberg, the former Defense Department employee who released the Pentagon Papers; feminist theorist Robin Morgan; actor and activist Jane Fonda; and many others whose powerful personal stories capture the essence of an era. We witness how the killing of four students at Kent State turned a straitlaced social worker into a hippie, how the civil rights movement gave birth to the women's movement, and how opposition to the war in Vietnam turned college students into prisoners, veterans into peace marchers, and intellectuals into bombers. With lessons that can be applied to our time, Witness to the Revolution is more than just a record of the death throes of the Age of Aquarius. Today, when America is once again enmeshed in racial turmoil, extended wars overseas, and distrust of the government, the insights contained in this book are more relevant than ever. Praise for Witness to the Revolution: Especially for younger generations who didn't live through it, Witness to the Revolution is a valuable and entertaining primer on a moment in American history the likes of which we may never see again. Bryan Burrough, The Wall Street Journal. A rich tapestry of a volatile period in American history. Time. A gripping oral history of the centrifugal social forces tearing America apart at the end of the 60s . . . This is rousing reportage from the front lines of US history. O: The Oprah Magazine. The familiar voices and the unfamiliar ones are woven together with documents to make this a surprisingly powerful and moving book. New York Times Book Review. [An] Enthralling and brilliant chronology of the period between August 1969 and September 1970. Buffalo News. [Bingham] captures the essence of these fourteen months through the words of movement organizers, vets, students, draft resisters, journalists, musicians, government agents, writers, and others. . . . This oral history will enable readers to see that era in a new light and with fresh sympathy for the motivations of those involved. While Bingham is one of many retrospective looks at that period, it is one of the most immediate and personal. Booklist

In her excellent oral history of the tumultuous events of 1969 and 1970, . . . [Clara Bingham] does a fine job conjuring the sense of a looming apocalypse. . . . Its surprising to be reminded how many of the decades signature events occurred in a single year. Woodstock. The trial of the Chicago Eight. The My Lai massacre. The first efforts to publish the Pentagon Papers. Altamont. The rise of the Weather Underground. The invasion of Cambodia. Kent State. The bombing of the Army Math Research Center in Madison, Wis. Witness to the Revolution offers an impressive list of actual witnesses to these events and more, including some sharp contextual asides explaining the rise of the antiwar movement and the fallout from its messy end. . . . Especially for younger generations who didn't live through it, Witness to the Revolution is a valuable and entertaining primer on a moment in American history the likes of which we may never see again. Bryan Burrough, The Wall Street Journal. A rich tapestry of a volatile period in American history. Time. A gripping oral history of the centrifugal social forces tearing America apart at the end of the 60s . . . This is rousing reportage from the front lines of US history. O: The Oprah Magazine. [An] Enthralling and brilliant chronology of the period between August 1969 and September 1970. Buffalo News. The familiar voices and the unfamiliar ones are woven together with documents to make this a surprisingly powerful and moving book. New York Times Book Review. [Bingham] captures the essence of these fourteen months through the words of movement organizers, vets, students, draft resisters, journalists, musicians, government agents, writers, and others. . . . This oral history will enable readers to see that era in a new light and with fresh sympathy for the motivations of those involved. While Bingham is one of many retrospective looks at that period, it is one of the most immediate and personal. Booklist. An engrossing oral history of the youth rebellion of the 1960s . . . [A] remarkable account of the anti-war movement . . . There are revealing stories about Weathermen on the lam, government sabotage and surveillance, courtroom theatrics, police riots, President Richard Nixon's late-night meeting with protesters at the Lincoln Memorial, the Pentagon Papers, and the incessant organizing behind events that would profoundly and permanently change the nation. The cast is a who's who of the 60s: Daniel Ellsberg, Jane Fonda, Julius Lester, and others, from undercover FBI agents to rock musicians, most of whom offer sharp insights into the period. . . . People like Bingham (b. 1963), who missed the party, may be astonished by aspects of this tumultuous story. Baby boomers will find themselves infuriated once again by vivid accounts of the My Lai massacre, the Kent State and Jackson State shootings, and other tumultuous events. Kirkus. s Witness to the Revolution is vivid, compelling, and addictively readable. Clara Bingham has captured

the lightning of the 1960s in a jar, where it blows the readers socks off. Whether you lived through this period or want to know what you missed, this is a popular history everyone should read. Jane Mayer, author of *Dark Money* For those who missed the sixties (like most of us, whether demographically or spiritually), this vital book goes a long way toward explaining the original wound that festers in our culture wars still. *Witness to the Revolution* is to the counterculture what *Howell Raines My Soul Is Rested* is to the civil rights movement, a pageant of humanness that induces throat-clogging wonder at then and now. Diane McWhorter, Pulitzer Prizewinning author of *Carry Me Home* At once reliving and reflecting on the end of the 1960s, the voices in *Witness to the Revolution* provide a compelling history and an authentic testimony of a turbulent time. As we live through a new moment of political turmoil, its critical that we revisit an era when arguments over politics and culture were palpable, urgent, and revolutionary. Clara Bingham takes us there. Gay Talese, author of *A Writers Life* The cities and campuses were blowing up, the races and generations were at war, sex, drugs, and violence gripped our young. How the hell did that happen? Clara Bingham, a gifted reporter with a great sense of story, tells us in this moving, funny, horrifying, clarifying book. This is the best sixties book since Edie. Evan Thomas, author of *Being Nixon* In her compelling and dramatic oral history of that fleeting moment when America seemed to be a nation on the brink, Clara Bingham directs the choir of Woodstock Nation an artfully composed collection of voices of those who went up the country or on a long strange trip, those sent off to Southeast Asia and others who stayed home and were driven mad by the Vietnam War. Singing a song of would-be revolution, this collection of antiwar veterans, Black Panthers, radicals, rock stars, and others who let their freak flags fly, not to mention a few Nixon intimates and fellow travelers, defies the notion that if you remember it, you werent there. Vivid, vibrant, and crackling with energy, *Witness to the Revolution* takes you to the exact spot where the wave of the sixties, the Movement, and the Age of Aquarius crested. You can almost smell the tear gas. Nick Turse, author of *Kill Anything That Moves* *Witness to the Revolution* is a remarkable oral history, deftly weaving together vivid characters, traumatic events, and fractious movements. As we stand again as witnesses to a vertiginous period of change and challenge, Bingham's book is powerfully relevant. Above all, it is a vibrant and critical guide to a time that changed our nation forever. Katrina vanden Heuvel, editor and publisher of *The Nation* About the Author Clara Bingham is the author of *Class Action: The Landmark Case That Changed Sexual Harassment Law* (with Laura Leedy Gansler) and *Women on the Hill: Challenging the Culture of Congress*. She is a former Newsweek White House correspondent, and her writing has appeared in *Vanity Fair*, *Vogue*, *Harpers Bazaar*, *Talk*, *The Washington Monthly*, *Ms.*, and other publications. Bingham produced the 2011 documentary *The Last Mountain*. She lives in Manhattan and Brooklyn with her husband, three children, and three stepchildren. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Chapter 1 The Draft (1964-1967) We are people of this generation, bred in at least modest comfort, housed now in universities, looking uncomfortably to the world we inherit. Port Huron Statement, Students for a Democratic Society, 1962 The roots of the Vietnam antiwar protest movement can be traced to the American crusade for civil rights. In August 1964, Congress authorized the use of troops in Vietnam in response to the Gulf of Tonkin incident the alleged North Vietnamese attack on a U.S. naval ship. That same month, civil rights workers put their lives on the line for voter registration in the Mississippi Summer Project. Seven months later, on Sunday, March 7, 1965, John Lewis and six hundred protesters were filmed being beaten as they walked across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, at the start of their march to Montgomery for voting rights; the images of the attack on a nonviolent protest vividly dramatized the stakes of the struggle. Just one day after Bloody Sunday, the first U.S. combat troops landed in Vietnam. I dont see how President Johnson can send troops to Vietnam and cant send troops to Selma, Alabama, John Lewis, chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), remarked. The military draft followed soon after, ultimately calling 2.2 million men to fight in Vietnam. Skills learned on the battleground for racial equality in the South mass civil disobedience and grassroots organization were soon employed in the new campaign against the war in Vietnam. In reaction to the disproportionate number of black soldiers being killed in Vietnam, SNCC activists organized one of the first anti-draft demonstrations, at the Atlanta induction center in 1966, and coined the slogan Hell no, we wont go! The war over there was soon to become a war over here. David Harris (Stanford student, draft resistance organizer) I came from Fresno, California, where I was Fresno High School Boy of the Year in 1963. Several weeks after I got to Stanford, there was a meeting about volunteers going to Mississippi. This was the first time that the black students in Mississippi had issued an invitation to white students to come down, and they invited students from Stanford and Yale. In the fall of 64, I started classes and was meeting my girlfriend for dinner and she said, I was at a meeting. Theres a car going down to Mississippi tomorrow. They were running a parallel election in Mississippi called the Freedom Vote, to show what would happen if black people were allowed to vote, and they needed volunteers, so I said, Im going. I told my brother to call my parents after I was gone, and I got a seat in the car and left that night. Two days later, we were in Mississippi. I was worried about missing the great adventure of my time. You didnt have to have an ideology or politics to go to Mississippi in those days. You just had to have values. That summer of 64 we had all been watching what was going on in Mississippi, so it was a no-brainer for me. Campaigning for the right of black people not to be lynched for trying to vote was a pretty easy call. So I went. I was eighteen years old. Wesley Brown (Black Panther, draft resister) My family moved to East Elmhurst, right near LaGuardia Airport, in 1952. It was formerly an Italian neighborhood, but as

more blacks moved in, of course, the whites made their departure. By 1955 it was nearly an all-black neighborhood. These were working-class blacks trying to move up. They saved their money like my parents, and bought a home, and tried to enter the lower middle class. My father was a machinist at a tool and die factory in the Bronx, where he worked for about forty years. Queens at that time was called Gods country. If you could get out of the projects and buy a house in Queens, you were on your way. It was a very solid, tight-knit community where parents wanted to make a better life for their kids. In fact, Eric Holder, President Obamas first attorney general, lived on our block. My sister used to babysit him and his younger brother, Billy. So it was that kind of neighborhood. Everyone was trying to do the right thing, be responsible, and trying to make a way for themselves and their families. And of course, that leads to a certain amount of conservatism, a wish not to stir things up. These were black folks who knew their history, because they were only the second generation born after emancipation. My fathers grandmother was born into slavery and he knew her. She would show him her thumb, which was all splayed out and deformed, because when she did something that the overseer didnt like, he would take a razor blade and split her thumb open, and it would never heal sufficiently before he would open it up again. My father was born in North Carolina and was the tenth of twelve children. These black folks knew what this country had been through with slavery and segregation and they werent prepared for their children being boisterous and assertive in a way that they couldnt afford to be. David Harris Four of us were working together in a team trying to register people for the Freedom Vote, in the black part of a town called Lambert. After working all morning, we came back to where the car was parked, and the three guys wanted to go to the post office to mail some letters and I said, Ill stay here by the car. Im standing by our car, and up pulls a pickup truck with two white guys in it. They get out. Ones got a shotgun; the other ones got a pistol. The guy with the shotgun sticks it right up against my nose and says, Nigger lover, Im giving you five minutes to get out of town before I blow your head off. Im an eighteen-year-old Stanford student. Well, what do you mean? Who are you? And he just says, Nigger, I said five minutes. At that point, the other three guys came back, took one look at the situation, and we all jumped in the car and left Lambert, Mississippi. Wesley Brown I remember vividly the photographs in Jet magazine of Emmett Till in his casket in 1955. His mother wanted an open casket so people could see what was done to him his misshapen face that was bludgeoned into nonrecognition. And I remember watching those kids in Little Rock in 57 trying to go to Central High and Eisenhower finally getting the National Guard to come in, so that they could go to school without being killed. The memory of those images and the virulent hatred directed at those kids was indelible for me. And of course, there were the Freedom Rides, the lunch counter sit-ins by those students from Shaw University in North Carolina, and the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott. We got our first television in 1949, so all of these images were a part of my coming of age. David Harris Everything that followed grew out of the Mississippi taproot. We learned how to organize by working with SNCC in Mississippi, and perhaps much more important was the spirit of Mississippi; there was a kind of inspiration in the heroism of the black people in Mississippi. Its really hard to recapture what that was like. For example, we were working in Quitman County; the county seat is called Marks. There was a seventy-five-year-old black woman there who walked into the registrar of voters office and said, I want to register to vote. They arrested her, threw her in jail, tortured her with an electric cattle prod, and then released her from jail. She walked out of jail and down the street to the registrar of voters office and said, I want to register to vote. These are people whose names are lost to history, but when you have that kind of encounter, somehow you get a whole new perspective on whats of value and how to behave in the face of oppression, and the strength that any single person or a group of people can bring with their own will. The third thing that came out of Mississippi was the experience of seeing America from a different perspective. You see what was being done to black people for simply trying to exercise the rights that we supposedly won with hard-fought battles a hundred years ago. And to see not only that that was going on, but how the rest of the country had turned a blind eye to it and talked bullshit about the southern way of life, and courtly manners. Isnt it sweet? These were mean, vicious, narrow-minded people, who were standing on the backs of people who were helpless to fight back. And everybody in America let that happen. So suddenly, you come back from that, and you cant look at it the same way. It was precisely that perspective that brought the Vietnam War into focus. Wesley Brown So I was at SUNY Oswego in January 1965, on Lake Ontario, in central New York, and some SNCC workers came to speak. I was already feeling that I wanted to be a part of something that was going on that I felt would make a difference. I was about twenty years old at that point. Their visit changed my life in many ways, and I decided to go to Mississippi. My parents couldnt believe that I would put myself in harms way, given what had happened in Mississippi the year before. They left the South in the thirties, as many blacks did, because of the Depression, to find work in the North as part of the Great Migration. They couldnt believe that I would return to a place that they left. I remember taking a Port Authority bus in June of 1965 to Memphis, about a twenty-eight-hour bus ride, and then having to get another bus to Holly Springs, Mississippi. So that began the four months I spent in northern Mississippi, right near the Tennessee border, working on voter registration. David Harris Right after I got back from Mississippi came the first major escalations of the Vietnam War, when all of a sudden we went from advisor status to deploying full combat units there, and the rise to six hundred thousand troops began. I marched in my first antiwar march about six months after I got back from Mississippi. My father was an officer in the Army Reserve for twenty years. My brother ended up a captain in the Eighty-second Airborne Division. Ive had ancestors in every war starting with the revolution. Like all

my generation, I assumed that we would have a war to fight. We grew up watching Victory at Sea on television. But when the war that they had for us came, it was obvious this wasn't what I thought I would be doing. This wasn't about freedom or democracy or wearing white hats or helping people. This was essentially keeping a bunch of scumbags in power and prolonging the French Empire. Coming back from Mississippi, I could believe it. Wesley Brown A few days after my arrival, I was sent to Jackson, Mississippi, for a demonstration with the intent of filling up the jails. Within minutes of getting out of the car in Jackson, I was arrested, and thrown into a field house with hundreds of protesters, because the city jails were full. Before bail was set, the lawyers were interviewing people, and they asked me, Do you want us to get in touch with your family to let them know where you are? It was Fathers Day, and this lawyer talked to my father, and wished him happy Fathers Day for me. After I got out a week later, I contacted my parents and I let them know that I was okay. It was a very emotional and not a happy time for them. Like any parents, my father and mother did not want their children to have to go through the things they had gone through when they lived in the South. They shared my beliefs but didn't want me to have to deal with the consequences of my beliefs. My father used to say, You can't get up in the face of the powers that be. You have to find a way to work around the system, but if you make too much noise and draw attention to yourself, you're just setting yourself up for a fall. David Harris I considered myself part of the movement from the day I left for Mississippi. What we call The Movement, capital T, capital M, was a commitment to justice and the values of democracy. They called us the New Left because it wasn't an ideology. There wasn't a specific politics attached to it. What it was, was a set of values finding ways to express themselves. I was in marches, I was in rallies and demonstrations. But there was always the larger question of the conscription system. In that era, when any male turned eighteen, he had to go to the post office and register for the Selective Service System. When you registered for Selective Service, they gave you two cards. One was proof that you had registered, and the other indicated your classification. Because under the Selective Service, there were various classifications, starting from 1-A, which meant you were cannon fodder, to you were going to get a notice soon in the mail saying Report to 4-F, which meant you were physically unable to perform and therefore exempt. In between that, the largest one was 2-S, which was the student deferment. Anybody in college making, quote, reasonable progress towards a degree had a temporary exemption until they finished their education. So that was the system that covered all of our lives all of the male lives, anyway. Always there was floating out there, what happens when they call your number? We understandably focused on that a lot. I mean there were people going to graduate school so that they wouldn't get drafted. There were people getting married so they wouldn't get drafted, because early on, being married was an exemption. They weren't going to draft family men. They thought if I want to take a year off and just go to Paris and write poetry, you're headed for the tall grass if you do that. This defined everybody's life. Wesley Brown After I left Mississippi and returned to college, I went to the school registrar with a friend and we asked that our student deferment classifications not be sent to the Selective Service, because we felt that it discriminated against blacks who didn't have the opportunity to go to college. The registrar went ballistic but honored my request, and my classification was changed to 1-A, which meant I was subject to be drafted. But because I had been arrested in Mississippi, my classification was changed to 1-Y, which meant that if you had an outstanding legal charge against you, you wouldn't be among the first who would be called.