
The 1960s: The Chaotic Decade For World Politics

The 1960s was a chaotic decade for world politics. Major political assassinations, desegregation, and the Vietnam War are all events that encouraged culture to go outside of what is generally agreed upon to be normal. Young people would gather around, do all sorts of socially inept things, and talk about their politics. (Hill, 2019) This is one of the reasons the Hippie movement came into being. The baby boomer generation was rebelling against the status quo and the old morality of their parents. Over time, censorship became less common because societal taboos changed, so bands such as The Beatles were able to exercise more creative freedom over their art.

When The Beatles came to America they wedged themselves into some deep cultural change. They encouraged rebellion against almost anyone in power and helped to inspire America's newfound fascination with drugs. These were two things the younger generation in America really enjoyed. Whatever the Beatles said was something the people wanted to hear. The Beatles always seemed to preach a message that resonated with young Americans. This only boosted the already popular hippie movement. (Tomasky, 2014)

Ending racial segregation was a massive rejection of the old ways in America. The desire to separate people based on race was something that was no longer desirable. Many saw how horribly this affected black Americans. After some anti-segregationist protesters were repressed by police in Alabama, somebody had to do something. So, President John F. Kennedy decided to quickly propose a new anti-discrimination bill in 1961. The bill wouldn't pass until 1964, but segregation became illegal nationwide through the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The Civil Rights Act stated that no one would be segregated based on race, religion, or national origin. (Hasday, 2007)

The leader of the free world being shot and killed shook the American people to their very core. Many young people had a distrust of the government. The assassination of John F. Kennedy was a big part of how young people saw the government. There were hundreds of theories on why John F. Kennedy was shot and killed. "I think we came to look upon the presidency in an entirely different way. Up until that point, we thought our president was somehow this superhuman individual. ... We were reminded of the vulnerability not only of our president but for everyone. We were reminded of the preciousness of life." said Bob Schieffer. Schieffer also theorizes that it changed the way we looked at media, and how the news can be disorderly and confusing depending on the situation. Schieffer also believes that the John F. Kennedy assassination actually changed how the American people consumed news media. "Most people in America depended on the printed word for their news. From that weekend on, with the country — for the first time in its history — all focused on one news story at the same time ... television would be the place most people would get their news."

Many young people had a distrust of the government. The assassination of John F. Kennedy was a big part of how young people saw the government. There were hundreds of theories on why John F. Kennedy was shot and killed. Part of this distrust influenced a protest against American involvement in the Vietnam war. People felt like they were tampering with something they shouldn't be tampering with. The politics of Vietnam was not of any concern to the

average American citizen at that time. Young people disagreed with the idea that they had to fight a war and potentially lose their lives for a cause on the other side of the world that was so irrelevant to their daily lives. To the young people, communism wasn't an issue that was large enough for them to want to fight against it. The protests initially began on college campuses as the war particularly affected young college-aged men who were being drafted, but as casualties and the expenses of the war began to skyrocket, so did support for pulling out of the war. Protests in public places became commonplace. Many of the larger demonstrations were in front of memorials or important landmarks such as the Lincoln Memorial and the Pentagon. The American people's hatred for the war was so intense that in 1969 men started to move to Canada to avoid the draft. Eventually, the American government finally decided to cater to their people and ended the Vietnam war shortly afterward in 1970. This was a massive victory for the American people. (HISTORY, 2010)

The result of the Cuban Missile Crisis was to create fear in the American populace and it cemented the idea that nuclear weapons are a threat to human existence. The concept that humans can completely wipe themselves out of existence struck terror into the hearts of many. America's national security was threatened by Cuba in 1962 when the Cuban government pointed their nuclear weapons straight at the United States so close to our shores. Additionally, the Soviets were showing off their new and improved nuclear weapons on their northern islands close to America's North American Treaty Organization (NATO) allies. There needed to be some kind of reasonable compromise, the threat of nuclear warfare and the testing of nuclear weapons wasn't safe for the natural environment or the political environment. Because of this, multiple nations negotiated to limit the testing of nuclear weapons. To ensure the protection of the global population, a new treaty would be formed. This new treaty would be called the Partial Test Ban Treaty. This was a treaty in which many nations agreed to restrict the testing of nuclear weapons in our atmosphere. (HISTORY, 2009)

The events of the 1960s changed the world's public opinion forever. Some hated war, some loved drugs, and some loved each other. That generation chose to fight against those who were in charge. A generation that had a utopian vision for how they would shape America. 1960's revolutionary Abbie Hoffman said, "This is a revolution in human history; a personal and cultural revolution arguably more profound and far-reaching than most political ones. And in the scheme of things, it's quite new. That your average person even had a "self" to express was hardly recognized for centuries. For most of history, most people just worked, feared God's wrath, raised their children, and died." (Tomasky, 2014) For better or for worse, societal change is inevitable as long as you give people the freedom to change who and what they can be.