

full of war and oppression into a utopia of peace and love. It was more than coincidental that the years in which the hippie movement attracted its greatest following were also the years of the great expansion of American armed forces in Vietnam. Many young Americans believed that their country's participation in the war in Southeast Asia was morally indefensible, and their hatred of the war was a major factor in their feelings of alienation from the whole prevailing system of society.

### Black Radicalism

About the time when student radicals had shifted their main attention to opposing the Vietnam War, and away from the black civil rights movement, that movement itself had taken a new and radical turn. In the autumn of 1966, the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense was founded in Oakland by two young black militants, Huey P. Newton and Bobby G. Seale. They had met as students at the old Grove Street campus of Merritt College, a community college drawing many of its students from predominantly black areas in west and north Oakland. Newton and Seale were influenced by the writings of Black Muslim leader Malcolm X and Algerian political theorist Frantz Fanon, and later by those of Marx, Lenin, and Mao Tse-tung. But their strongest feeling, growing out of their personal experience, was a hatred of the frequently prejudiced and cruel treatment of African Americans by white police. Newton and Seale established a system of patrol cars; carrying law books and guns, they trailed police cars through the Oakland slums to protect the constitutional rights of African Americans.

One of the new party's first and most important converts was Eldridge Cleaver, a vigorously articulate black man who had twice been in prison. His first term, beginning when he was 18, had been spent in the California state prison at Soledad for possession of marijuana. After his release, according to his widely read memoir *Soul on Ice*, he was burning with resentment and had turned to the raping of white women as a symbolic act of "insurrection." This brought him another and longer term in prison, during which he came to repudiate the act of rape and to regard his own resort to it as a symptom of the "dehumanization" that he had suffered; however, he resolved to fight by more effective means against the social system that he felt had brutalized and degraded black people like himself.

In prison Cleaver had become an admirer of Malcolm X, who was assassinated in 1965. Early in 1967, the widow of Malcolm X made a visit to San Francisco, and Cleaver, recently released on parole, wanted to meet her. A squad of Black Panthers appeared at the airport and acted as her bodyguards while she was in the city. They wore paramilitary black uniforms and black berets and carried guns. The sight of them was an exhilarating experience for Cleaver, and he threw himself into the cause of the new party. He became its minister of information. Seale was chairman, and Newton was minister of defense and later supreme commander.

Intense fear and hostility between police and Panthers soon led to many tragic shooting affrays. Gunfire erupted in October 1967 after an Oakland police car stopped

an automobile driven by Huey Newton. One officer was killed; another policeman and Newton were wounded. In April 1968, also in Oakland, there was more shooting in which two policemen were wounded, a young Panther was killed, and Eldridge Cleaver was wounded and arrested.

Though their beliefs and tactics were radical, the Panthers did not share the extreme separatism of the black *cultural nationalist* groups and ridiculed their advocacy of wearing African styles of dress and studying Swahili and other aspects of African culture. In January 1969, during an argument over such issues at a meeting of the Black Students Union at UCLA, two young leaders of the Black Panther movement in Los Angeles were shot and killed by members of a cultural nationalist faction, in a dispute partly fomented by undercover agents of the FBI. Black radicalism was further divided and weakened when a bitter quarrel developed between Cleaver, who issued periodic calls for revolutionary guerrilla warfare, and Newton, who favored much more moderate tactics including free breakfasts for children and free medical clinics.

### The Decline of Radicalism

By the fall of 1970, the volcano of student rebellion had become dormant, if not extinct. By 1971 even radical students at Berkeley began to speak of "the old New Left of the 1960s" and to debate why the movement died. Foremost among the reasons for the decline in student radicalism was the gradual winding down of the Vietnam War. Other factors were the extreme political reaction of taxpaying voters against the disruptive tactics of the student demonstrators, the dampening effects of the economic recession, and the growth of interest among young people in the possibilities of "working within the system." Mass disruption on the campus was an idea whose time had come and gone.

Although the radical era ended, it left some positive and permanent aftereffects. The decade of protest had generated a greater awareness of the rights of racial minorities, and the liberalization of public attitudes had resulted in some legislative reforms. Possession of small amounts of marijuana, for example, had been reduced from a felony to a misdemeanor comparable to a traffic citation, and state laws forbidding various sexual activities between consenting adults were repealed. One of the most sweeping reforms was the Twenty-Sixth Amendment to the United States Constitution, ratified in 1971, which lowered the voting age from 21 to 18. Some observers also credited the student-based antiwar movement with hastening an end to the nation's ill-fated war in Vietnam in 1975. Without question, many young people who had been part of the movement in the 1960s carried their earlier values with them as they entered the professions, assumed greater responsibilities, and began the task of rearing a new generation of Californians. Berkeley activist Michael Rossman, observing the 40th anniversary of the 1964 Free Speech Movement, was convinced the decade's crusading spirit had endured: "As an aging hippie, I hope I will be pardoned for thinking that those sixties are still going on. . . ."