



The Vietnam War

Student Protest and
the Anti-War
Movement



Rise of Student Activism in the 1960s

Why were students more politically active in the 1960s?

- By the beginning of the 1960s, the Baby Boom generation just graduating high school.
- The increased wealth of Americans in the years after WWII meant that young people had many opportunities that previous generations didn't have.
 - Rather than going into the workforce after high school, many could afford to go to college = college enrollments increased in the 1960s as a result
- After the conformity of the 1950s, many young people of the 1950s were unsatisfied with their parents' values and wanted a change

The 1960s were a radical time on college campuses. In part inspired by the Civil Rights Movement, many college students borrowed non-violent tactics (sit-ins, marches, etc.) to call attention to issues they cared about.

What were these issues?

U. Cal. Berkeley was the most radical campus but students at colleges around the country also protested against:

- Rules/policies that they thought limited their freedom.
 - social restrictions (such as the hours when men and women could visit each other's dorms)
- Wanted to be more involved in college policy-making.
- Tried to change schools' curriculum (adding minority studies like African-American studies and women's studies)
- Wanted colleges to make more of an effort to help the people in the cities surrounding the colleges.

All over the country, students began taking over administration buildings, holding sit-ins and issuing lists of demands.



Berkeley
in the
Sixties

People's Park



Many students left their college campuses to work to improve conditions in the inner city. Protests were often met with police brutality.

- In one notorious scenario, students and residents of Berkeley, California turned a dusty campus parking lot into a "*People's Park*", liberating it and fixing it up for the use of the community.
- In response, the governor called in the National Guard who fenced off, and guarded the park. When the people took to the streets to protest this action, they were met with a hail of bullets that killed and injured many students and citizens.

***"If it takes a bloodbath, let's get it over with!" -
Gov. Ronald Reagan***

People's Park



Students were one of the first groups to protest the Vietnam War.

- What objections did students have to the war in Vietnam?
- Students protested the war in a number of ways:
 1. teach-ins
 - First teach-in happened at the University of Michigan in March 1965 faculty members decided to make a public statement against the war > roughly 50-60 professors taught a special night session where issues concerning the war could be aired. > Several thousand people showed up and made the night a success.
 - Initially, supporters and opponents of the war both attended teach-ins, but as the war carried on, anti-war voices took over the sessions.



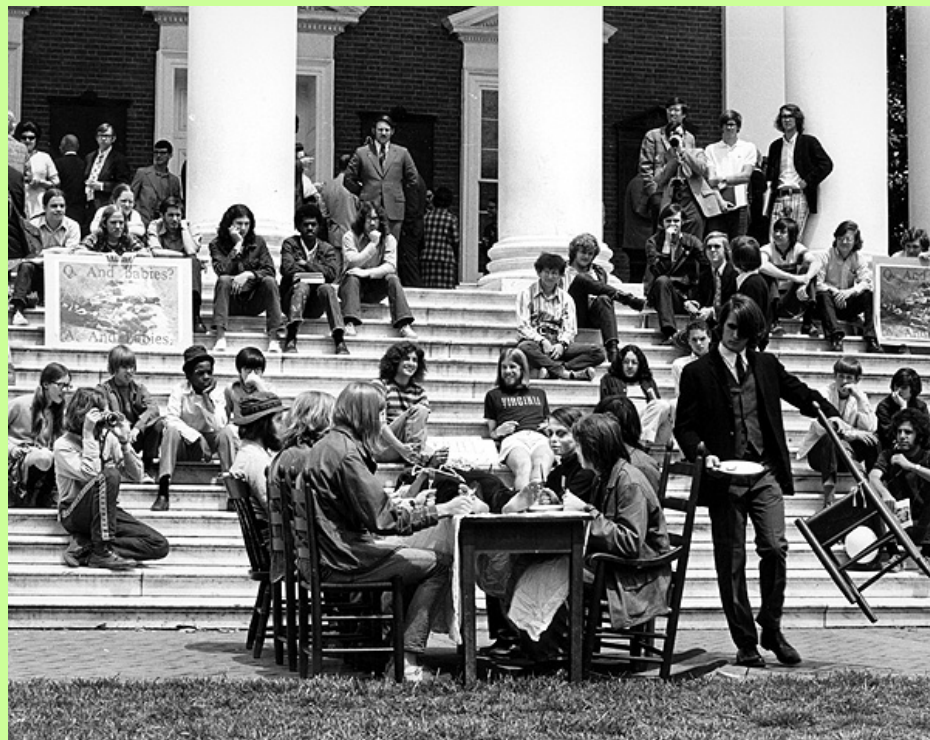
Student protest (cont.)

2. Draft resistance

- About 1.8 million men were drafted between 1964-1973 - young men between the ages of 18-26 were impacted.
- Students in particular spoke out against the draft - WHY? (Recall who could get deferments and who couldn't...)
- Methods of draft resistance: burning draft cards as a public sign of protest, fleeing the country for Canada



Anti-War Protests



Protests increased in number each year...

1966 - 100,000 demonstrated against the war in New York City

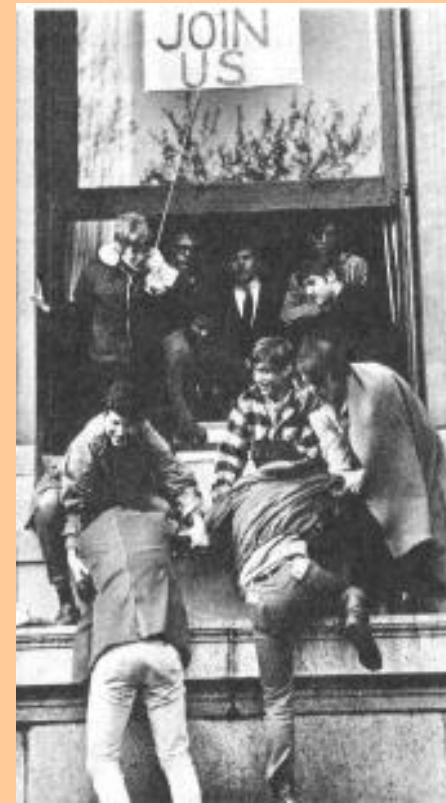
1967 – 350,000 anti-war demonstrators marched to the U.N. building in NYC

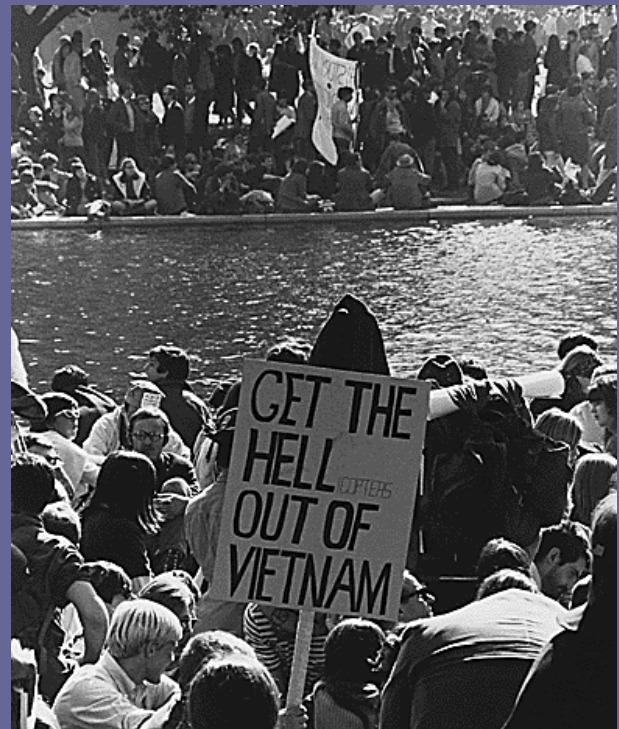
-- 700 people were arrested when 50,000 peace demonstrators stormed the Pentagon building

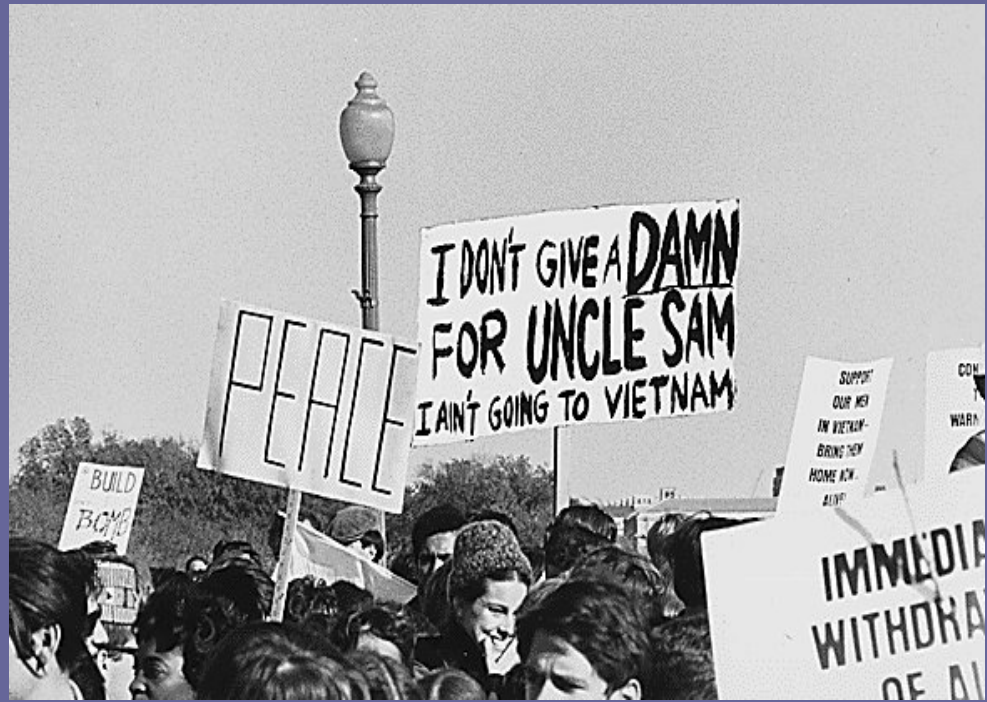


1968 – In the first half of the year, there were more than 200 demonstrations at colleges around the U.S. By the end of the year, there had been more than 735 cases of protestors clashing with police at schools and universities.

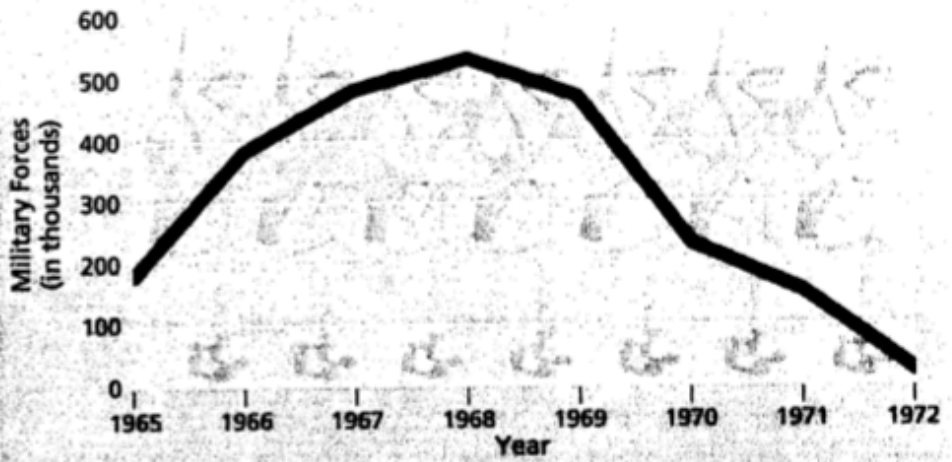
-- At Columbia University, 2 student groups united to change university policy. Students took over the president's office. Finally the president of Columbia University called the police and 100s of students were arrested. A student strike followed and the university closed early that spring.





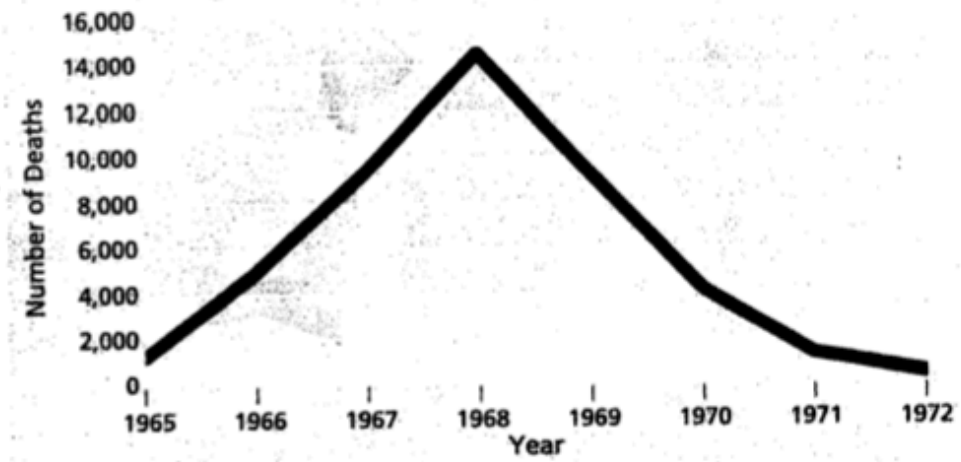


United States Military Forces in Vietnam, 1965-1972



Source: Statistical Abstract of the United States

United States Battle Deaths in Vietnam, 1965-1972



Source: Statistical Abstract of the United States

Public Opinion of United States Involvement in Vietnam

"Do you approve or disapprove of the way President Johnson is handling the situation in Vietnam?"

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
December 1965	56%	26%	18%
May 1966	41%	37%	22%
April 1967	43%	42%	15%
July 1967	33%	52%	15%
December 1967	39%	49%	12%
February 1968*	35%	50%	15%

* During Tet Offensive

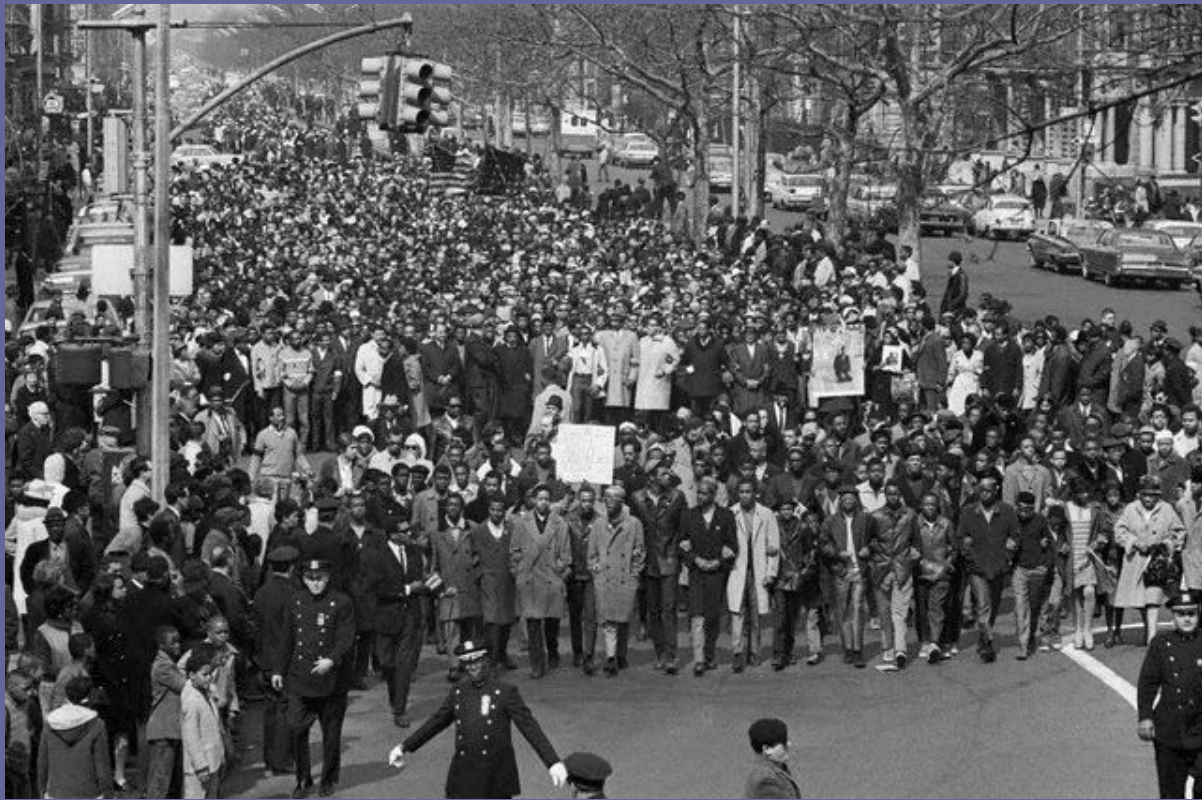
"In view of the developments since we entered the fighting in Vietnam, do you think the United States made a mistake sending troops to fight in Vietnam?"

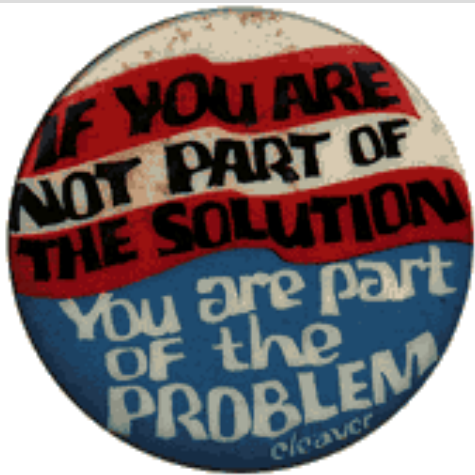
	Yes, made mistake	No, did not	No opinion
May 1966	36%	49%	15%
April 1967	37%	50%	13%
July 1967	41%	48%	11%
February 1968†	49%	41%	10%

† After Tet Offensive

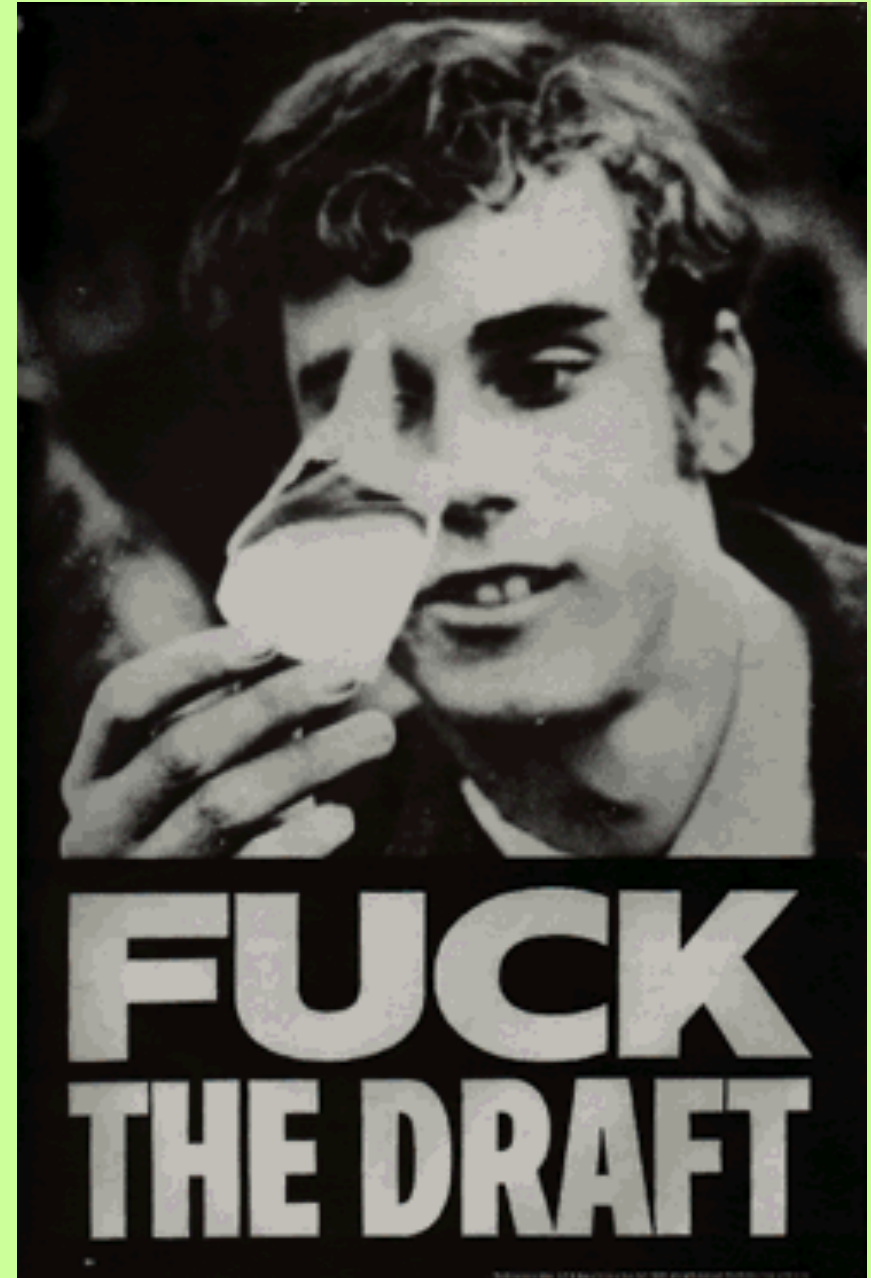
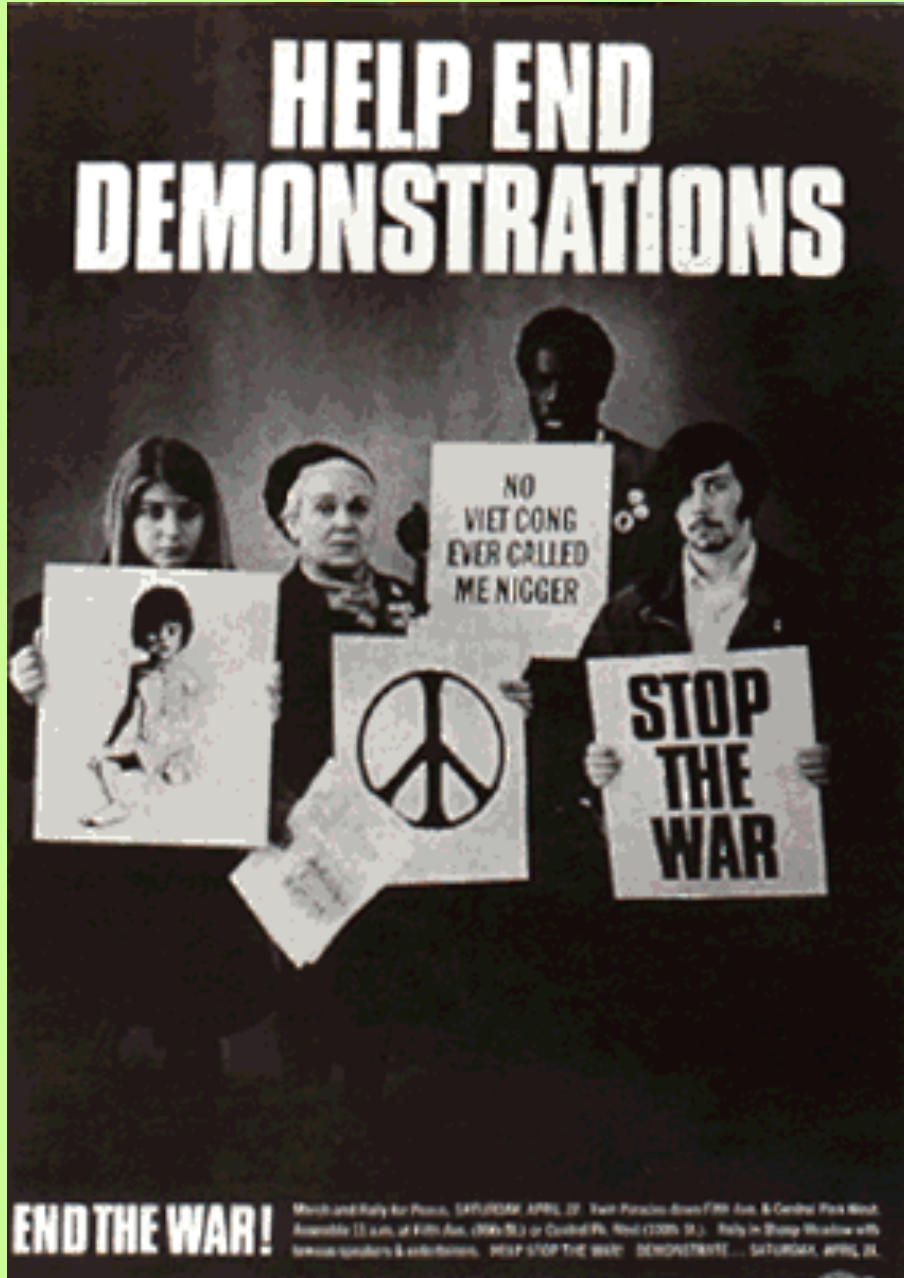
Source: The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1935-1971, by George H. Gallup







Anti-War Posters





Anti-War Music



In the words of Country Joe:

- I wrote "Fixin' To Die Rag" in summer of 1965 after I had been discharged from the US Navy for several years. I did not have a conscious purpose in mind although I had been working on another song about the Vietnam War for several days so I had the war on my mind.
- I was raised in a family of American Communists and so I knew a lot about Capitalism and Communism. During the Vietnam War many people joined because they thought it was the right thing to do. It was patriotic. Lots of people were drafted. Also lots of people were given the choice of volunteering for the military or going to jail on charges of getting into trouble with the police for one thing or the other. It was a kind of government black mail.
- The song attempts to put blame for the war upon the politicians and leaders of the US military and upon the industry that makes its money from war but not upon those who had to fight the war ... the soldiers. It expresses the thoughts of a person trapped in the military system and forced to go to war by the draft with the only other choice being jail or an attempt to "dodge the draft" for religious reasons or physical or mental reasons. It was very hard to get out of the draft because so many people were being killed in the war that they would take just about any one. The song attempts to address the horror of going to war with a dark sarcastic form of humor called "GI humor". GI humor is a way people have of complaining about their situation so it will not get them in trouble and keep them from going insane in an insane environment: war.



Creodance Clearwater Revival.