ABSTRACT

SONGS IN THE KEY OF PROTEST: HOW MUSIC REFLECTS THE SOCIAL TURBULENCE IN AMERICA FROM THE LATE 1950S TO THE EARLY 1970S

By Katie M. Laux

The Vietnam War polarized the American public. From the late 1950s to the early 1970s, the American public debated nuclear policy, foreign policy, and the war at home. As a result, two social movements emerged, one dedicated to end the war in Vietnam, and the other committed to anti-communism and halting the counterculture. As these two groups battled on American campuses, American musicians on both sides of the debate wrote and performed songs that tried and succeeded in persuading the American public. Their music provides another perspective of the chaos in America caused by the Vietnam War.
SONGS IN THE KEY OF PROTEST: HOW MUSIC REFLECTS THE SOCIAL
TURBULENCE IN AMERICA FROM THE LATE 1950S TO THE EARLY 1970S

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By
Katie M. Laux
Miami University
Oxford, Ohio
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Advisor __________________________
Dr. Allan M. Winkler

Reader __________________________
Dr. Daniel M. Cobb

Reader __________________________
Dr. Amanda K. McVety
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Introduction

Popular music provides a window into society. Songs often reflect people’s views of the past and hopes for the future.\(^1\) They provide a way to air grievances and point out social, economic and political wrongs.\(^2\) The music from the late 1950s to the early 1970s reflects the turbulence of the time. Just as different groups of Americans debated the course of the country, questioned American nuclear policy, and deplored the tendency to become involved in wars around the world, so too did musicians embrace these issues and add their own views in rhythmic and melodic terms. As the American public became increasingly aware of America’s involvement in Southeast Asia, American musicians battled on the home front to try to sway the American people. Radical and conservative musicians had very different perceptions of the war in Vietnam, the New Left, the counterculture and the havoc of the era. Their contributions provide another perspective to this loud, boisterous, violent and sometimes tragic debate.

Musical Roots

The music of the 1960s was very different from the songs of decades before. The types of music broadcast over the radio waves in earlier years included big-band jazz, gospel and blues.\(^3\) The big-band jazz music, creating a new, up-beat dance craze in the 1920s, remained influential and popular until the 1930s, when the country fell into depression. At that point crooners such as Bing Crosby began to play a larger role. Jazz artists, recognizing the shift in musical tastes, adapted to the country’s sentiment, and began playing a new style called swing jazz, which possessed a noticeable swing time rhythm and is best exemplified in Duke Ellington’s 1932 recording of “It Don’t Mean a Thing If It Ain’t Got That Swing.” The new swing jazz became nationally popular in 1935 due, in large part, to its air play on late night radio programs.\(^4\)

While swing jazz became a part of the mainstream during the 1930s, local markets catered to their own audiences. Southern radio stations in the 1930s, for instance, played a combination of gospel, bluegrass, blues, and swing. While not nationally broadcast, these genres appeared on radio stations throughout the South, eventually combining to create another type of musical sound, country and western music.\(^5\) Country and Western musicians possessed vocal rawness and the bands relied on the twang sound of a guitar. Country music, in pre-war America, held a wide, but largely rural, audience. In the 1930s and 1940s, the fan base for country music spread to include not only rural Southern white Americans and those Southerners who moved to urban areas, but also rural whites all over the United States with no connection to the South.\(^6\) After World War II, the popularity of country music grew and artists such as Hank Williams gained national attention.\(^7\)

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\(^4\) Ibid., 252.
\(^6\) Kingman, 173.
\(^7\) Hitchcock, 296-297.
Mainstream popular music shifted after World War II, from jazz sounds to rock music. The new rock genre was a merger of the newly popular country music and rhythm and blues music from African American musicians such as Muddy Waters, Nat “King” Cole and Willie Mae “Big Mama” Thornton who crossed the cultural musical lines and served as inspiration for white rock artists such as Elvis Presley.\(^8\)

This shift was, in large part, dictated by the new youth culture in the 1950s. The top artists of the 1950s, Bill Haley and the Comets, Elvis Presley, and Chuck Berry, appealed to the rebelliousness of the youth culture, and the youth culture responded by listening to traditionally African American dance music.\(^9\) Disc jockeys for white radio stations, in reaction to the wants of this youth culture, began playing rhythm and blues music, a blanket term that described music performed and listened to by African Americans, including jazz, swing and urban blues. Additionally, these white disc jockeys began marketing rhythm and blues records on their programs. Likewise, the record companies responded by commissioning white artists to cover and mimic African American rock and rhythm and blues songs and artists in order to appeal to an even larger audience. The popularity of the new rock sound was evident in 1953 when the first rock song, Bill Haley and the Comets’ “Crazy Man Crazy,” appeared on *Billboard*’s list of top selling pop music records.\(^10\)

Meanwhile, folk music became increasingly popular in the late 1950s.\(^11\) Folk music, prior to the 1920s, had a predominantly rural audience, but by the 1920s and the 1930s, it developed an urban audience and commercial outlets. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, Americans consciously adopted folk music, using it to make social and political statements and force changes specifically for workers and advocates who were using traditional rural music to unite workers. For example, Aunt Molly Jackson, a woman from Harlan County, Kentucky who lost her husband, son and brother in the coal mines, performed songs that urged workers to join Unions.\(^12\) Woody Guthrie, like Aunt Molly Jackson, used folk music as a tool to unite common Americans negatively influenced by the Great Depression, yet Guthrie’s music had an even broader appeal. The folk music movement from the 1930s through the end of World War II in 1945 was associated with the left, including Communist hardliners, and that association threatened folk music during the age of McCarthyism, when such views, according to reactionary critics, undermined the values of the United States.\(^13\) Indeed, in her songs, Aunt Molly Jackson lamented that her fellow Kentuckians called her a “Rooshian Red.”\(^14\) Folk musicians persevered, however, and artists such as Pete Seeger and the Weavers and later Peter, Paul and Mary and the Kingston Trio became popular in Greenwich Village in New York City, then performed nationally, and in the process gained mainstream popularity. By the late 1950s and early 1960s, folk music, including protest music, had

\(^8\) Ibid., 296-297.
\(^9\) Ibid., 288, 299.
\(^10\) Ibid., 297-298.
\(^11\) Ibid., 299.
\(^12\) Kingman, 87-88.
\(^13\) Ibid., 85-93.
\(^14\) Ibid., 88.
become widely popular. This popularity was evident when, from 1960-1963, nearly one hundred folk songs received mainstream attention or appeared on the record charts. Music, specifically African American spirituals and freedom songs, became part of the civil rights movement, beginning with the Montgomery Bus boycott in 1956. Soon after, folk music engulfed the movement. Through folk music albums such as The Nashville Sit-in Story, music connected southern civil rights workers to the music. This connection moved north as mostly white civil rights workers listened to freedom folk songs while campaigning and striving for equal rights in the south.

African American southern civil rights workers gained support in their efforts from a small number of southern whites, specifically those affiliated with the Highlander Folk School. The Highlander Folk School, originally organized to assist the labor movement, moved to the civil rights movement in the early 1950s. Guy Carawan, in 1959, sought to connect music to the civil rights movement. Carawan, a former student with a Master’s degree, was a dedicated leader, traveling to southern black colleges, where the student body denied their rural musical background, instead preferring traditional hymns. Carawan introduced new folk music to southern audiences at Fisk, for example. At first, audiences were reluctant to accept Carawan and his music, but with songs such as “We Shall Overcome,” rearranged and revised by Pete Seeger and sung by Carawan, southern African Americans connected with folk music. “We Shall Overcome” became the anthem of the Civil Rights struggle.

The Highlander Folk School became the premiere training ground for civil rights workers by 1959, after Carawan met with Martin Luther King at the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in Columbia, South Carolina. By 1960, Carawan was teaching civil rights folk music to many civil rights workers and protestors at demonstrations.

By 1961, northern, white folk musicians recorded civil rights songs on recording labels such as Folkways and Vanguard, producing records like We Shall Overcome: Songs of the “Freedom Riders” and the Sit-ins, and Freedom in the Air: A Documentary on Albany, Georgia 1961-1962.

Folk musicians like Pete Seeger and Bob Dylan raised money for civil rights organizations. Seeger was so dedicated to the movement that he funded a trip to Albany, Georgia in order to perform in front of a full audience at a black church. His performance was met with indifference from the audience, until his last song, “We Shall Overcome.” After the trip, Seeger began integrating freedom songs into every performance.

Post-War America

The turbulence of the Depression and instability of World War II gave way to an “American Dream” that focused on economic prosperity. Thus, the 1950s ushered in economic prosperity for many middle-class, white Americans, and also saw growth in materialism, conformity and fear of nuclear attack, leading the burgeoning youth culture to rebel against the status quo. After World War II, the American economy boomed.

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15 Ibid., 97.
18 Ibid., 184-186.
creating a prosperous middle-class and a seemingly content society. This prosperity was centered around domesticity, purchasing cars, homes and appliances for the home. Young men and women who moved to the suburbs purchased new appliances at a steady rate just so they owned the latest technology.

The emerging youth culture also drove the consumer culture. The baby-boomers, entering their teenage years during the late 1950s, possessed more spending money and power than any other generation before, and the consumer industry responded, marketing items towards this new, lucrative demographic cohort.

The conformity of the 1950s, much like the materialism, ran rampant in the suburbs. Postwar America was a time of abundance. Cars and homes represented achievement, happiness and the “American Dream.” To facilitate this American Dream, suburbs, such as Levittown, were constructed. In these neighborhoods, houses were mass produced, similarly built and looked alike, inside and out. These suburbs, the houses and the families who inhabited them, represented the conformity of the 1950s. Indeed individuality existed, but superficially. To onlookers, the young men and women living in Levittown looked alike, acted alike and shared the same problems and concerns as their neighbors.

Meanwhile fear of nuclear holocaust grew. After the first nuclear bombs fell on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, the American public believed that America’s nuclear arsenal would prevent future wars. When Russia successfully tested a nuclear bomb in 1949, and American officials knew that they were not alone in nuclear capabilities, American’s security disappeared. Talk about nuclear power moved from preventing future wars to preventing Russians from increasing their nuclear arsenal. As a response to Russia’s successful nuclear test, President Harry S Truman ordered the development of the hydrogen bomb, with its first test completed in 1952. The Soviets followed with their own successful test in 1955. An arms race was underway, with weapons now having more explosive power than that expended over Japan. This arms race concerned many Americans, creating an environment of fear.

In the early 1950s, public support for the bomb was high, as reports and television crews recorded test explosions in the Nevada desert. In 1954, however, the public became aware of the dangers of nuclear fallout when a Japanese radio operator on the ship, the Lucky Dragon, suffered radiation poisoning and later died from fallout from an American tested hydrogen bomb. In order to calm the American public, the government began to advocate building fallout shelters and practicing “duck and cover”

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22 Halberstram, 131-140.
24 Ibid., 67.
25 Ibid., 72-73.
26 Ibid., 73-76.
27 Ibid., 64.
28 Ibid., 91-94.
drills in schools. These governmental measures, while managing to calm some of the public, led to public outcry over nuclear fallout.

Nuclear fear fostered a new rebelliousness and activism in the late 1950s. Social upheaval reflected a breakdown of consensus. Some elements of the youth culture, who found it impossible to maintain clean-cut appearances, latched onto the rebelliousness of Beat authors such as Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg, and painter Jackson Pollock, rejecting the uniformity and paternalistic nature of 1950s society.

The growing nuclear fear forced some to act. One group which publicly protested nuclear fallout and called for nuclear disarmament was the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE), which was established in 1957. In May, 1960, SANE organized a rally at Madison Square Garden, with speakers such as famous First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt.

Other protest organizations developed in the late 1950s. In the fall of 1958, a radical pacifist group, the Committee for Non-Violent Action (CNVA) began protesting United State’s nuclear policy. Soon after the Madison Square Garden rally, SANE’s membership split over whether or not to purge communist members. While SANE’s membership decreased after the Madison Square Garden rally, CNVA’s membership grew.

CNVA targeted the Mead ICBM base in Nebraska. Denied access to the workers, conference rooms and media, members decided to take action. One member, longtime radical A.J. Muste, climbed over the fence surrounding the base and was arrested. Fellow CNVA members used his tactic and, for days after Muste’s arrest, protestors daily climbed the fences and were also arrested. The judge suspended their sentences, but protestors again climbed the fence and were sentenced to six months in prison for their second offense.

College students also began to protest nuclear warfare by the late 1950s. In 1959, Midwestern students organized the Student Peace Union (SPU), an organization promoting pacifism, and by 1960, had 5000 members. The number of rallies organized by the SPU grew as students from Berkeley and Harvard began advocating disarmament.

College campuses became hotbeds for nuclear protests by the early 1960s, as universities in the North East began predicting nuclear attacks and the increased likelihood of nuclear holocaust. In May 1960, students at the City College of New York protested the “duck and cover” drills. Those who participated included old leftists as well as a new group of students who were proud of their involvement in such an important cause.

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29 Ibid., 109, 114.
30 Ibid., 102.
31 Ibid., 105-106.
33 Ibid., 262.
34 Ibid., 258.
35 Ibid., 262.
36 Ibid., 267.
American Involvement in Vietnam

The issue that really tore Americans apart and sparked both political debate and musical reaction was the war in Vietnam. While the United States maintained a hard-line nuclear policy in the 1950s and the American public began to protest the use of nuclear weaponry, the United States came involved in what would be the most contentious war in American history. It had such a profound connection with protest music that it is necessary to describe the war in some detail.

In 1940, France, which had colonized Vietnam in the late 19th century, was occupied by Nazi Germany and, the next year, Japan invaded Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh and his followers resisted the Japanese occupation, and, as World War II ended, America and Ho Chi Minh forces were allies. The year after the war ended saw Ho’s Vietnamese independence force, the Vietminh, battling with France, and in February 1946, Ho Chi Minh approached the United States, believing that the Truman administration would offer assistance against French colonization. Truman never responded. By the fall of 1949, Mao Zedong’s Communist forces came to power in China and began aiding the Vietminh.

After June, 1950, when Communist forces in North Korea invaded South Korea and Truman committed military forces to defend South Korea, the United States began to provide military support to French forces in Vietnam. By 1954, the United States provided eighty percent of French support. In March 1954, the Vietminh took charge and cut off French garrison supplies at Dien Bien Phu, an isolated fortress in the north. American forces attempted to assist the French, but two American pilots were shot down in the process. Debates over action ensued in Washington, with some advocating attacking the Vietminh through air strikes and even nuclear power, while others, such as Senators John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson, opposing any further action. President Dwight D. Eisenhower decided against a forceful response in Vietnam, and the French garrison surrender in May. After the surrender at Dien Bien Phu, Western and Communist leaders met in Geneva and forged an agreement to end the fighting. The agreement called for a division of Vietnam, with Communist forces in control in the North and French ally Emperor Bao Dai in the South. Elections in the North and South scheduled for 1956 would reuniﬁy the country.

In 1954, Ngo Dinh Diem became the Prime Minister of South Vietnam under Emperor Dai, and in 1955 Diem created the Republic of Vietnam and became the first President. In 1956, he defied the Geneva accords by refusing to hold reunification elections. Without aid from the United States, Diem’s leadership would have fallen.

In the mid-1950s, America’s involvement in South Vietnam was limited to political and military advisors who were in charge of training the South Vietnamese police, and the American advisors had to overlook violence, torture and the murders of suspected Communists under Diem’s regime. By 1957, former Vietminh soldiers living

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39 Ibid., 71.
40 Ibid., 71-72.
41 Ibid., 72.
42 Ibid., 73.
in South Vietnam counter-attacked the South Vietnamese police and village leaders. Ho Chi Minh and North Vietnamese Communist leaders did not aid these South Vietnamese rebels until 1959, when Vietminh soldiers traveled along what would later be called the Ho Chi Minh trail to offer assistance. In late 1960, South Vietnamese rebels formed the political National Liberation Front (NLF), and its military arm, the Vietcong.

President Kennedy continued Eisenhower’s policies in Vietnam, believing that the United States could not leave South Vietnam without it falling to Communism, initiating what Ike called the domino effect. In the early 1960s, America’s involvement was limited to special ops officers, the Green Berets, fighting in South Vietnam, in addition to the military advisors training the South Vietnamese police. By 1962, American helicopters were providing air support and air cover for the soldiers. American soldiers were soon involved in land battles with the Vietcong who were attempting to overthrow Diem.

By 1963, the Diem regime began crumbling. In August, after Diem persecuted Buddhists, refused to terminate the abusive actions of his oppressive brother and political advisor Nhu, and broke promises to the United States, the Kennedy administration decided to take action. After intense debates among Kennedy advisors, the President sent two officials to Saigon on a fact finding mission, and in October, they recommended that the United States apply “selective pressures” to Diem, including cutting off money and aid to South Vietnam in order to force him to end the persecution of the South Vietnamese people.

While the United States implemented economic pressure to help stabilize the South Vietnamese government, generals in the South Vietnamese army decided to take action, forming the Military Revolutionary Council, and overthrowing the Diem government on November 1. They captured Diem and Nhu and, despite promises of their safety, killed them. The United States was aware of the coup plot, but did not prevent the takeover, and, when Diem looked to the United States for aid in the final hours of the coup, the United States did not respond.

After the coup that overthrew Diem and President Kennedy’s assassination, President Johnson inherited a tumultuous situation in South Vietnam. North Vietnam sought to negotiate with the new South Vietnamese government, but it refused to come to the table. The NLF then began to increase political agitation in South Vietnam and to escalate its military commitment, believing that the United States would withdraw from South Vietnam. In late June, 1964, the South Vietnamese experienced another coup, where officers, led by General Nguyen Khanh, overthrew the Military Revolutionary Council. The United States was aware of the second coup, but did nothing to prevent it.

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43 Ibid., 75-76.
44 Ibid., 76-77.
45 Ibid., 78.
46 Ibid., 81.
48 Ibid., 122-123.
49 Ibid., 125-126.
50 Ibid., 124-126.
51 Ibid., 132.
As Khanh took on his leadership role, the NLF increased attacks and South Vietnam’s atmosphere turned towards discontent.\textsuperscript{52}

Despite growing domestic unrest about Vietnam and instability in Southeast Asia, President Johnson did not change his foreign policy. Arguing that withdrawal would weaken the image of the United States, he still hesitated to increase the military presence in South Vietnam for fear that it would undermine his domestic policies and South Vietnamese self-reliance. The numbers of American troops increased only from 16,300 to 23,300 throughout 1964.\textsuperscript{53}

In Vietnam, the NLF controlled the countryside and the South Vietnamese Army faced increased desertions. Despite aid from the United States, Khanh’s popular support waned, as students protested the government and Catholics and Buddhist battled each other. With the situation in South Vietnam bleak, North Vietnam believed that an increase in support for the NLF would cause the South Vietnamese government to fall, forcing the United States to withdraw.\textsuperscript{54} The increased support for the NLF, however, proved futile, as the North Vietnamese underestimated the resolve of the United States.

In August, 1964, while the USS Maddox was spying on the coast of North Vietnam, it encountered North Vietnamese torpedo boats. Both sides exchanged gunfire, and the torpedo boat retreated. While the United States ordered no counter-attacks, President Johnson authorized the USS Maddox to resume its work in the Gulf of Tonkin. On August 4, the Maddox and a destroyer, the Turner Joy, falsely reported that they were under attack. Johnson ordered retaliatory air strikes and received support from Congress on a resolution to take “all necessary measures” to protest American soldiers in Southeast Asia. After the initial air strikes, the United States did not continue the attacks, but North Vietnam escalated its attacks in South Vietnam and went to the USSR and China seeking assistance. As a result of the intense fighting and increased public discord in South Vietnam, Khanh resigned.\textsuperscript{55}

Johnson did not intensify involvement in South Vietnam until after the 1964 election, when he ordered bombing in North Vietnam, and committed ground troop to the jungles.\textsuperscript{56} This escalation occurred secretly because Johnson feared that a public debate on Vietnam would detract from his domestic agenda. In December, 1964, Johnson agreed to launch covert bombings in Laos, and retaliatory air strikes and offensives in North Vietnam, but only when the South Vietnamese government was stabilized. Stability within the South Vietnamese government, however, was not realized as another coup took place in early 1965.\textsuperscript{57} Civil discontent and military failures continued in South Vietnam with an increase in student and Buddhist protest and the NLF winning battles, forcing President Johnson to resume patrols in the Gulf of Tonkin. In early February, 1965, the NLF attacked American troops, killing nine, and, in response, the United States began Operation Rolling Thunder, an already planned massive bombing campaign. In March and April, President Johnson increased the bombings and committed more ground

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 133-134.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 137-139.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 140-141.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 143-146.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 147.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 149-151.
troops. Given the escalation, the President could no longer conceal his actions from the American public.\(^{58}\)

The intense fighting and escalation of the war polarized the country, and college campuses began protesting the war. For example, professors at Harvard, University of Michigan and Syracuse organized teach-ins, and, on April 17, 20,000 anti-war protestors gathered in Washington DC and marched against America’s involvement in Vietnam.\(^{59}\) As anti-Vietnam war demonstrations increased in the summer, President Johnson again increased the bombings, and in July he committed 50,000 more ground troops, with another 50,000 scheduled for deployment at the end of the year.\(^{60}\)

**Anti-Nuclear, Pacifist, and Anti-Vietnam War Folk Music**

Pop culture in the late 1950s and early 1960s reflected a new sense of political activism. Folk music, which typically reflected political sentiments, grew in popularity. While folk music was not a new genre in the late 1950s, its increasing popularity advanced its political message. This anti-war sentiment was new to the American people, as the political songs most commonly heard before this time told of the importance of patriotic duty.\(^{61}\)

In 1955 Pete Seeger, the prolific folk raconteur wrote “Where Have All the Flowers Gone.” He based the song on a passage from the Soviet novel *And Quiet Flows the Don*, by Mikhail Sholokhov. Seeger completed the song in twenty minutes, and immediately began performing the song. He recorded the song in 1956, but stopped publicly playing it one year later, believing that the song was unpopular. The leader of the Oberlin College Folksong Club, Joe Hickerson, reworked the song, giving it rhythm and new verses that appealed to college students. Hickerson’s version moved its way to Peter, Paul, and Mary in Greenwich Village.\(^{62}\) In 1962, *The Kingston Trio*, in a departure from previous material, recorded the pacifist ballad.\(^{63}\) Seeger received a phone call from his manager, informing him that *The Kingston Trio* had recorded the song, and Seeger contacted the band, which immediately deleted its name from the writing credits.\(^{64}\)

As anti-nuclear sentiments grew among leftists and students across the United States, *The Kingston Trio*’s version of “Where Have All the Flowers Gone” reached number twenty-one on the pop charts.\(^{65}\) The song tells of a cyclical relationship. Young girls pick the flowers, and then marry men who choose the army, the army chooses war, which leads to graveyards. The graveyards lead to the earth, which provides a home for all of the flowers.

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\(^{58}\) Ibid., 153-157.  
\(^{59}\) Ibid., 159.  
\(^{60}\) Ibid., 164.  
\(^{64}\) Seeger, 167.  
The Kingston Trio’s rendition begins with a single acoustic guitar, playing quietly. As it is joined by other instrument, the immediately becomes a memorable and catchy tune. When the lyrics begin, the guitar again recedes to the background, allowing the words to clearly shine through the instrumental accompaniment. The lyrics follow a simple pattern, always asking a question for the first three lines of each verse, answering the posed question in the fourth line of the verse, and then repeating the same question in the final line of each verse, “When will they ever learn, when will they ever learn?”

The song reveals a pacifist agenda in the fourth verse:

And where have all the soldiers gone, long time passing?
Where have all the soldiers gone, a long time ago?
Where have all the soldiers gone?
Gone to graveyards, every one!
When will they ever learn, when will they ever learn?

The pacifist message comes through as the song implies that war can only lead to the death of the soldiers, and sorrow for the women who love them. War touches every strand of human existence, not just the troops, but the families who grieve for them. When Pete Seeger writes, “When will they ever learn,” and in the last chorus, “When will we ever learn,” he seems to ask, not when will the soldiers learn not to fight, or when will the girls learn to stop picking the flowers, but rather when will the government learn that war must necessarily end in death and devastation.

“With God on Our Side,” written by Bob Dylan in 1963, moves beyond the pacifist sentiments in “Where Have All the Flowers Gone.” In this lengthy song, Dylan highlights the history of American atrocities, beginning with the mass killings of American Indians. Throughout the beginning of the ballad, Dylan laments the irony that America’s murderous actions were morally acceptable because the United States defined itself as having God on its side. Thus, Dylan effectively illustrates that America used God as justification for its colonialism. He moves through other conflicts, culminating with a critique of warfare in the nuclear age. Dylan suggests that after World War II and the development of nuclear weaponry, all future wars would lead to nuclear attacks. And as a result, no war is worth fighting.

Dylan begins the lyrics by emphasizing that American children learn that their nation is morally superior to other, and especially Communist countries, because God has blessed the United States and its actions. As the song progresses, the lyrics become increasingly satirical, even toxic. In the second and third verse, Dylan writes about the Spanish American War and the Civil War and the First World War, ultimately implying that he never understood the reasons behind any of those conflicts. The fourth verse, where Dylan addresses World War II, provides the clearest example that murder, in the context of the Holocaust, is often forgiven when Americans can convince themselves that God somehow endorses Christian countries. Dylan states:

When the Second World War came to an end
We forgave the Germans and then we were friends
Though they murdered six million, in the ovens they fried
The Germans now too have God on their side

The irony is not lost, nor is the pacifist message that Dylan reiterates verse after verse. Dylan is stating that America – as a government and as a people - were attempting to justify past atrocities for no other reason than it had divine sanction.

In the fifth verse, Dylan emphasizes the American fear of Communism, and the inevitability of a war with the Russians. It is clear, at least to Dylan, that America’s hatred of Communism will lead to the next world war, between Russia and the United States, as America continues to teach and perpetuate a lethal combination of fear and patriotic duty.

I’ve learned to hate Russians all through my whole life
If another war comes it’s them we must fight
To hate them to fear them, to run and to hide
And accept it with bravery with God on my side

In the sixth verse, Dylan begins his discussion of nuclear bombs, and the obligation to use them, stating that the next war would not be won by Russia, because, as Dylan repeats throughout the entire song, “God’s on our side.” Dylan, through satire and irony, expresses the devastation of nuclear warfare and the effects of anti-Soviet sentiments:

But now we have weapons of the chemical dust
If fire them we’re forced to, then fire them we must
One push of the button and a shot the world wide
And you never ask questions with God on our side

“With God on Our Side” ends with Dylan stating that he is “weary as hell/the confusion I’m feelin’ ain’t no tongue can tell.” Dylan, in the final line of the song, confesses, “If God’s on our side He’ll stop the next war.” Dylan’s confusion derives from the combination of his patriotic teachings during his youth and the strident pacifist message deep in his soul. In the end, his pacifism and fear of nuclear holocaust win.

“I Ain’t Marchin’ Anymore,” written by Bob Gibson and Phil Ochs, appeared in 1965. While radio stations did not play the song over the airways, it fared well in the national market. Like “With God on Our Side,” “I Ain’t Marchin’ Anymore” utilized the history of American military encounters in a pacifist cause. Gibson and Ochs wrote the song from the first person perspective of a soldier who fought in almost all American conflicts, including the American Revolution, Little Big Horn, the Mexican American War, the Civil War, and World War I. The chorus is most significant in this song, as it points out the difference between “the old” who initiate war, and “the young” who fight. It then questions the moral price of bombs and warfare.

In the final lines of the song, Gibson and Ochs do not apologize for their stance, nor do they hide their disillusionment, as they describe the mixture of feelings toward their song:

Call it "Peace" or call it "Treason,"
Call it "Love" or call it "Reason,"

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But I ain't marchin' any more,
No I ain't marchin' any more

An anti-nuclear song that represents groups such as the Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy is “Eve of Destruction,” by Barry McGuire. The song also encapsulates the growing anger at the likelihood of American involvement in another war. In July 1965, this song was released and appeared on the pop charts as the American public knew of American involvement in Southeast Asia. And while the song has connections to the Vietnam War, at least chronologically, it actually represents the growing concern about nuclear holocaust.

Throughout the song, Barry McGuire’s gruff voice and soft acoustic guitar highlight his concern about nuclear holocaust. He succeeds in communicating the obvious: that nuclear weapons deployed in the heat of battle only cause total annihilation. The young soldiers who possessed no voting rights in the United States, and those who the young men sought to save would be dead in a hail of dust. McGuire sings:

If the button is pushed, there’s no running away
There’ll be no one to save with the world in a grave
Take a look around you, boy, it’s bound to scare you, boy

McGuire, like Dylan at the end of “With God on Our Side,” discusses his feelings toward war, yet, unlike Dylan, McGuire is not confused, he is angry. This anger comes through in, not only his tone, but also his words:

Yeah, my blood’s so mad, feels like coagulatin’
I’m sittin’ here, just contemplatin’
I can’t twist the truth, it knows no regulation
Handful of Senators don’t pass legislation

Even though “Eve of Destruction” was not specifically about the Vietnam War, the anger in Barry McGuire’s voice reflects the growing frustrations of the Americans who began protesting against American involvement in Vietnam. While some protests occurred in 1964, in 1965, as the news of America’s involvement in the war in Vietnam spread, political activists began large scale demonstrations against America’s military involvement in Southeast Asia. Three thousand University of Michigan professors and students held the nation’s first teach-in. Likewise, university students across the nation organized marches and rallies, and some of the concerned faculty at Berkeley signed a full page advertisement in the New York Times denouncing Lyndon Johnson’s escalation of the war. Initially, the protestors at the first sit-in at the University of Michigan, like the marches and rallies in 1965 and early 1966, remained relatively peaceful, and united in education of the war and demonstration against it, but in time that changed.

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70 Polluck, 4, 62.
71 Sarah Brash and Loretta Britton eds., Turbulent Years: The 60s (Richmond, VA: Time Life Inc, 1998), 128.
72 Lytle, 179.
Folk music accompanied the growing number of anti-Vietnam War protest demonstrations, marches, petitions and teach-ins. Folk music in 1964 began to shift, from an anti-war and anti-nuclear focus to an anti-Vietnam War critique, as musicians, such as Joan Baez and Phil Ochs, began writing material specific to American involvement in Vietnam, illustrating the evolution of topics in folk music.

Joan Baez was a popular folk musician who wrote and performed songs with political appeal. Baez dropped out of Boston University and began performing folk music at coffee houses around Boston. In 1959 she performed at the Newport Folk Festival, and when she returned in 1960 she was famous. Her album *Joan Baez* was the most popular female folk album recorded after 1960.\(^{73}\)

Baez was committed to pacifist principles. She sought to use folk music to advance her own political agenda.\(^{74}\) She remained committed to folk music, unlike Bob Dylan, and believed in the causes of the pacifist movement so passionately that she marched with SANE in 1965, and refused to pay the portion of her tax bill designated for defense spending.\(^{75}\) With Baez’s deep belief in pacifism, it was no surprise that she made public her disdain for the Vietnam War. In 1967, she commercially released the song “Saigon Bride,” where she sings from a male soldier’s point of view. This seems slightly strange and haunting, given Baez’s slow acoustic guitar and her high, feminine voice.\(^{76}\)

Baez writes in the first person, as a soldier who leaves his wife to go to war. The soldier leaves to fight the Communist threat, but that threat, according to Baez, is insignificant compared to the likely outcome. Her voice illustrates that military involvement in Vietnam merely signals death for those soldiers who are brought to fight. Baez sings:

> Farewell my wistful Saigon bride  
> I’m going out to stem the tide  
> A tide that never saw the seas  
> It flows through jungles, round the trees  
> Some say yellow, some say red  
> It will not matter when we’re dead

In the next verse, Baez wonders how many wars must occur and lives lost before peace is achieved:

> How many dead men will it take  
> To build a dike that will not break?  
> How many children must we kill  
> Before we make the waves stand still?

Phil Ochs was another popular and prolific protest song lyricist. Like Baez, he was passionate about his politics. Ochs dropped out of Oberlin College in his senior

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\(^{74}\) Polluck, 23.  
year, moved to New York and its burgeoning folk scene. He received his break at the 1963 Newport Folk Festival, releasing his first solo album in 1964. By the 1964 Newport Folk Festival, Ochs’ popularity grew to new heights, and in 1965, he began performing at protest rallies across the United States, including the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in 1968.

In 1965, Phil Ochs released “Draft Dodger Rag,” which, through the first person voice, tells of a young man’s efforts to avoid the draft. With satirical music and lyrics, Ochs tells of his lies to the draft board, making up physical ailments in order to avoid service in Vietnam. Through dark humor, he sings of the anxiety that many young men felt towards the draft and service in Vietnam. During the chorus, Ochs reveals the excuses he tells the draft board:

Sarge, I’m only eighteen,
I got a ruptured spleen and I always carry a purse,
I got eyes like a bat and my feet are flat,
My asthma’s getting worse.
O, think of my career, my sweetheart dear,
My poor old invalid aunt,
Besides I ain’t no fool,
I’m a going to school,
And I’m working at a defense plant.

At the end of the song, Ochs reveals the reasoning behind his insistence on avoiding service. The young man lies, not because he is not patriotic or because he is a communist, but rather out of the fear of violence.

I hate Chou-En-lai and I hope he dies,
But one thing you gotta see:
That someone’s gotta go over there
And that someone isn’t me.
So I wish you well,
Sarge, give ‘em hell,
Yeah, kill me ‘thousand or so.
And if you ever get a war
Without blood or gore,
Well, I’ll be the first to go.

Joan Baez and Phil Ochs reflect a shift in both politics and the evolution of folk music, from anti-war and anti-nuclear bomb to anti-Vietnam War. Indeed, with the escalation of American involvement in Southeast Asia, folk musicians applied their political beliefs to world affairs.

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77 Schumacher, 41-43.
78 Ibid., 67-71.
79 Ibid., 84, 97-98, 189.
After World War II and the Korean War, the American people and government were weary of war. Because of this weariness, the American government only minimally supported South Vietnam, giving money and political and military aid. Musicians performed songs that directly advocated this isolationism, preaching pacifism. Musicians such as Pete Seeger, who wrote his anti-war song “Where Have All the Flowers Gone” in 1955 and recorded it in 1956, reflected this isolationist feeling. When The Kingston Trio popularized the song, the United States merely increased its financial support and advisors, refusing to commit ground troops or bring America to the forefront of war.

By 1965, the United States increased its military involvement in South Vietnam, with President Johnson increasing air strikes. The American escalation of the war increased every year after with more money and ground troops pouring into South Vietnam. The American public was aware of the situation in South Vietnam in 1965, causing anti-war demonstrations to break out across the United States. Folk music reflected this escalation, and the public’s awareness of the war, the its discontent with it. When Joan Baez wrote and performed “Saigon Bride” in 1967, she reflected not only American pacifism and rebelliousness, but America’s discontent with the war in Vietnam.

**American Involvement in Vietnam, 1965 - 1967**

America went to war in 1965 believing that its military power was too great for the Vietcong, and that the United States would win quickly. By 1967, however, 500,000 American soldiers were in Vietnam and America was spending $2 million per month to sustain a war with no end in sight.

In 1965, the American military plan for success in Vietnam hinged on two key notions, winning the ground war, and stabilizing the South Vietnamese government and society. The plan for winning the ground war was simple. The United States would continue bombing North Vietnam, and while the bombs wrought havoc, the American military would increase the level of ground troops. When the United States finally defeated the North Vietnamese on the ground, the stable South Vietnamese government would gain control over the countryside and America would negotiate with the North Vietnamese. In order to implement this plan, the military needed more ground troops, most of which were provided by America, not South Vietnam. Thus, as the American bombing campaign increased, so too did the ground war.

This vague and arrogant military strategy was unsuccessful. It never took control of the countryside or defeated the Vietcong or NLF. The American military continued its Rolling Thunder bombings, gradually increasing the power and number of bombs dropped in North Vietnam from 25,000 in 1965 to 79,000 in 1966 and to 108,000 in 1967. The bombs targeted the Ho Chi Minh trail and North Vietnamese transportation routes and industry, and by 1967, American bombs destroyed much of the infrastructure of North Vietnam. Even with the destruction, the bombings had little effect on the North Vietnamese military. Rather, this gradual escalation of the war allowed

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81 Herring, 171.
82 Ibid., 172.
83 Ibid., 179-181.
84 Ibid., 188.
85 Ibid., 173.
time to organize and strategize.\textsuperscript{86} The North Vietnamese evacuated civilians, concealed important industries, built tunnels and quickly repair damaged roads and bridges, as they escalated their own war efforts.\textsuperscript{87}

In addition to the failure of the military strategy, there was no plan in place to stabilize the South Vietnamese government. The South Vietnamese government was in turmoil as the country was at the verge of civil war in 1966, with Buddhists, wanting economic and political independence, and supporters of the South Vietnamese leader and the United States fighting each other. Leaders used violence to quash the dissent.\textsuperscript{88}

President Johnson saw the message of the Buddhists and their supporters, and thus implemented a campaign to win over the Vietnamese people. Washington developed the Revolutionary Development program where people would go to the villages, live with the villagers and spread America propaganda. The program saw little success.\textsuperscript{89}

\section*{Anti-Vietnam Rock Protest Music}

The anti-Vietnam War rock music and demonstrations between 1965 and 1967 were indicative of America’s involvement in Vietnam. Here, too, there was a gradual escalation in anger and violence.

The politically-driven folk genre remained separate from the rock genre, which, in the beginning of the decade, appealed to the fun-loving middle class. This separation was not accidental; the early part of the 1960s saw the largely acoustic folk community shun the shallowness of rock music. When the political climate in the United States shifted, rock music began to change from immature, light-hearted lyrics, to a more adult, socially and politically aware musical tone.\textsuperscript{90} This transformation of rock music in the mid-1960s was apparent when rock’s leader, Elvis Presley, went six years without a top 40 hit song. Elvis no longer represented the youth of the decade.\textsuperscript{91} The transformation of the music on the radio waves and the shifting definition of popular music was important because it underscored the influence that pop culture and politics had on one another.

“I Feel Like I’m Fixin’ to Die Rag,” recorded, released and sold by Country Joe and the Fish at protest rallies in 1965, embraced the anti-Vietnam War message.\textsuperscript{92} Joe McDonald, the lead singer of the band, joined the army in 1959, and was discharged in 1962. He enrolled at the University of California at Berkeley in 1965 and began writing anti-Vietnam War music, forming Country Joe and the Fish with Ed Denson. Soon after the formation of the band, they recorded “I Feel Like I’m Fixin’-to-Die-Rag,” making one hundred records and selling them at Berkeley teach-ins. Vanguard Records signed them, but the label refused to put the song on this first record because of alleged profanity. Commercial release did not come until 1968.\textsuperscript{93}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{86} Ibid., 174.
\bibitem{87} Ibid., 176, 183.
\bibitem{88} Ibid., 192-193.
\bibitem{89} Ibid., 193-195.
\bibitem{90} Starr and Waterman, 277.
\bibitem{91} Lytle, 143.
\bibitem{93} Joe McDonald quoted in \textit{Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered From All Side}, 196-197.
\end{thebibliography}
Joe McDonald, through satirical humor, sings from three different perspectives, the patriotic soldier trying to rally the troops, the war profiteer, and a fanatic anti-communist. The tone of the music is lighthearted, similar to a jug band with kazoo's and whistles punctuating the verses, but the content of the song focuses on death, pain and greed. Indeed, the light musical tone and morbid lyrics of “I Feel Like I’m Fixin’ to Die Rag,” are ironic, yet McDonald combines war-mongering with the loss of a child, profoundly questioning the motives behind America’s involvement in Vietnam.

When performed live, the song begins with a crowd chant, with the band yelling, “Gimme an F, gimme a U, gimme a C, gimme a K. What’s that spell?” In unison, the whole audience yells, “FUCK!”

A cheerful musical introduction, reminiscent of a carnival, begins, with McDonald’s voice painting the picture of a war-mongering soldier, who only wants to shoot his gun in order to assist in the fight:

Well come on all you big strong men
Uncle Sam needs your help again,
He’s got himself in a terrible jam,
Way down yonder in Vietnam,
So put down your books and pick up a gun,
We’re gonna have a whole lot of fun

The song’s darkness comes out in the chorus, as the satirical nature of certain death in the jungles of Southeast Asia truly comes alive. The music continues in its child-like playfulness, which emphasizes the irony and fear in the song.

And it’s one, two, three what are we fighting for,
Don’t ask me I don’t give a damn, next stop is Vietnam.
And it’s five, six, seven, open up the pearly gates.
Well, there ain’t no time to wonder why,
Whoopee we’re all gonna die.

The second verse outlines the greedy motives behind America’s involvement in Vietnam:

Come on Wall Street don’t be slow.
Why, Man, this is War a-Go-Go.
There’s plenty good money to be made
By supplyin’ the Army with the tools of its trade.
But just hope and pray that if they drop the bomb,
They drop it on the Viet Cong.

In the final verse Country Joe and the Fish overwhelm listeners with death and the sadness that the Vietnam War would bring:

Come on Mothers through the land,
Pack your boys off to Vietnam
Come on Fathers, don’t hesitate,
Send your sons off before it’s too late.
And you can be the first ones in your block
To have your boy come home in a box.

94 Ibid. In the recorded version, the chant is actually “FISH,” so that radio stations could play the song without problem.
The song ends with the sound of machine gun fire fading into silence.

Throughout 1965 and 1966, the protest rallies where Country Joe and the Fish performed and sold their music remained relatively peaceful. Then in 1967, the cultural landscape in American shifted, and demonstrations grew increasingly more violent. The turning point came in October 1967, when protestors organized a full week of anti-Vietnam war protests. The week remained mostly non-violent until Friday, when ten thousand demonstrators gathered at army induction centers across the United States. At some of the centers, police and protestors clashed, resulting in bloodshed. And the violence did not end. The next day, after most of the demonstrators left and organized a march in Washington DC, uniformed soldiers violently dispersed the few hundred remaining demonstrators. The domestic clashes in October marked a tragic turn towards violence in 1968.

**Vietnam, 1968 - 1970**

On January 30, 1968, the NLF launched the Tet Offensive as the Lunar New Year began. Nineteen NLF members infiltrated the wall surrounding the American embassy in Saigon. The 19 NLF soldiers bombarded the embassy with rockets and exchanged small arms fire with a small cadre of military police inside. After six hours, the NLF members were overpowered, and all were killed or wounded. The attack on the embassy is only one example in a well organized plan to attack many urban targets in South Vietnam. The United States military called the Tet Offensive a failure for the NLF, and from a military standpoint, that was true. The NLF lost many lives, but while Tet was a political and psychological victory for the NLF, it showed the United States that the war was only winnable at the expense of money and American lives.

After debates between military leaders and civilian Pentagon advisors, Johnson deployed 22,000 more ground troops, keeping reserves in the wings, to force the South Vietnamese leadership to take more responsibility for the war.

In 1968, Richard Nixon won the presidency of the United States, and in 1969, he implemented his strategy for an “honorable” end to the war in Vietnam. Nixon’s plan, similar to Johnson’s, included no withdrawal. Instead it proposed to negotiate a plan allowing South Vietnam a chance at independence. Nixon, while publicly calling for peace, increased the bombings against the North Vietnamese in neutral Cambodia. He kept the bombings in Cambodia from the American public, and when the story appeared in the media, Nixon ordered wiretaps on federal employees suspected of leaking to the press.

Nixon then initiated a public relations campaign, went to the North Vietnamese with a peace proposal, announced the immediate withdrawal of 25,000 troops, and gave tough speeches targeting Congressional doves and anti-Vietnam War protestors. Nixon’s popular approval and Congressional support declined further after North Vietnam declined his peace proposals. He then tried to equate Congressional war dissenters with

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95 Lytle, 243.
96 Ibid., 244.
97 Herring, 225-226, 268.
98 Ibid., 238.
99 Ibid., 274.
100 Ibid., 275-277.
anti-war radicals, and publicly prosecuted the leaders of the demonstrations at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in 1968. Vice President Spiro Agnew launched a verbal assault on the anti-war protestors and the “liberal” media who supported them. Nixon’s administration viewed the anti-war movement as hostile, and to counter his perceived enemies he ordered wiretaps, the FBI and CIA to increase illegal surveillance on anti-war groups, and the IRS to harass anti-war leaders.  

In the summer of 1969, Nixon contacted a North Vietnam diplomat in order to engage in secret peace talks outside the public Paris peace talks. Nixon, however, with the invitation, inserted the caveat that progress must be made by November 1 or the United States would implement forceful military blows. North Vietnamese and American diplomats met for secret talks in August, but each side remained married to party lines, and before his death on September 2, Ho Chi Minh rejected the American ultimatum, and no progress was made. Nixon decided against forceful military blows. 

With no viable military prospect, Nixon relied on Vietnamization - replacing American soldiers with Vietnamese fighters - and the continuation of military and economic support in South Vietnam. Even though the American public by and large agreed with Vietnamization, American military leaders and the South Vietnamese believed that it was a step toward abandonment of the entire effort. With Vietnamization, the United States provided weapons, planes, boats and helicopters, and worked to advance the South Vietnamese army and increase military schooling. In addition to the Vietnamization program, the United States expanded the Accelerated Pacification Campaign in 1969 and 1970 to include village elections and training for elected officials. America spent money improving the roads, schools and agriculture. In 1970, Vietnamization was at its height, and was superficially successful, but South Vietnam was still economically dependant on the United States. 

In March 1970, in response to growing tensions on American soil, Nixon announced the withdrawal of 150,000 troops within the year. After a coup in Cambodia, where a pro-American leader gained power, Nixon decided to deploy troops into Cambodia in order to attack a North Vietnamese base. On April 30, in a speech to the American public, Nixon justified the invasion of Cambodia as a necessary response to the North Vietnamese attacks. The escalation of the war from 1968-1970 further polarized the American public, causing violent attacks and, therefore, an angry musical response.  

While some protest leaders believed that this violence would not further their cause, others believed that the bloodshed was effective, and battles on Main Street America grew more commonplace, as both protestors and police clashed over Vietnam. For example, at the Democratic National Convention in August 1968, serious violence ensued. As the media’s cameras recorded, police indiscriminately clubbed all in the streets, and the protestors retaliated by throwing rocks and garbage and screaming, “Fuck the pigs.” While debates on the floor of the convention raged, the media publicized the violence on the news, further politicizing America.

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101 Ibid., 277-279.
102 Ibid., 280-281.
103 Ibid., 285-286.
104 Ibid., 288-291.
105 Ibid., 259-263.
The violence during the anti-war movement continued into 1969, with the publication of evidence about the My Lai massacre. On March 16, 1968, American soldiers murdered 500 non-enemy combatants, including women and children, in My Lai village. The army covered-up the massacre, writing in its that only Viet Cong militants were killed. A United States soldier, Ron Ridenhour, who was not present at My Lai, but heard first-hand accounts from five witnesses, wrote Congressmen, the Pentagon, the State Department, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Those letters led to an investigation into the massacre and finally to the arrest of platoon leader Lieutenant William Calley and eighteen other officers. Calley was the only army official convicted in the murders. He was sentenced to life in prison, but, due to President Nixon’s influence, Calley was released from prison, serving less than four years of his life term. He, instead, was given house arrest.\textsuperscript{106} For anti-Vietnam War protestors, My Lai was direct evidence of the immorality of the Vietnam War.\textsuperscript{107}

On November 12, the media publicized the My Lai massacre. Accordingly, after news of My Lai surfaced, anti-Vietnam War protests increased. On November 13, a large-scale demonstration in Washington DC took place. While marchers peacefully walked to the White House by candlelight, the Weathermen, a militant protest group, marched to the Justice Department, vandalizing property and lighting fires, further highlighting the more radical wing of the anti-Vietnam War movement.\textsuperscript{108}


As the anti-Vietnam war protest movement grew more violent, so too did the music. Bands such as The Doors, in both lyrics and musicality, began singing of the hopelessness the Vietnam War brought home.

As protestors and police clashed in Chicago, Jim Morrison’s haunting voice in “The Unknown Soldier” sang, not only about the tragic death of an American soldier but also the effects of that death at home.\textsuperscript{109} The song begins with a dark tone, as Morrison’s voice goes through the first two lines of the song without musical accompaniment. Then, a slow organ and drum punch in and join Morrison’s melodic voice singing to the families who lost loved ones in the war, recognizing that their grief is too immense to return to the daily routine. The families try to pick up the pieces of their life, but become the “unborn living, living dead.” In order to emphasize the idea that the families of fallen soldiers relive death daily, Morrison repeats the line, “And it’s all over/For the unknown soldier.” Then, in the middle of the song, the music stops, to be replaced by a military drum line and marching. As the marching fades, a drum roll begins and the sound of a gun cocking emerges. The drum roll grows faster and then stops, leaving two seconds of silence, then one gun shot. Four seconds of silence again passes, followed by an eerie guitar line and Morrison’s voice, which reiterates the families anguish, slowly sings:

\begin{verbatim}
Make a grave for the Unknown Soldier
Nestled in your hollow shoulder
The Unknown Soldier
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{106} Appy, 343-346.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., 344.
\textsuperscript{108} Lytle, 351.
Morrison repeats, “All over, all over baby” while the organ continues its fast, yet dismal tune and an audience fervently cheers, illustrating that, not only was the life of the “Unknown Soldier” taken, but so too was the life of those he left behind.

Another song illustrates the next step in anti-Vietnam protest movement. In 1969, as the use of violence grew in the movement, another band, Jefferson Airplane, released the song “Volunteers” in order to unite demonstrators, ostensibly to protest against the Vietnam War, but primarily to encourage revolt against those who brought on this war. In “Volunteers,” Jefferson Airplane, to upbeat music, begins a call to action, highlighting the ongoing revolution in America:

Look what’s happening out in the streets
Got a revolution, Got to revolution
Hey I’m dancing down the streets
Got a revolution, Got to revolution

Later in the song, the band attempts to further unite the anti-Vietnam War movement, through legitimizing the message, the demonstrators and the cause, pointing out that the revolution must grow to become more effective:

Pick up the cry
Hey now it’s time for you and me
Got a revolution, Got to revolution
Come on now we’re marching to the sea
Got a revolution, Got to revolution
Who will take it from you
We will and who are we
We are the volunteers of America

By April 1970, the anti-war movement had become more militant. Nixon’s announcement that he had sent troops into Cambodia sparked widespread protest across the nation. These demonstrations were not peaceful, as buildings were destroyed and protestors targeted military facilities. Then, in perhaps the most tragic incident throughout the anti-Vietnam War protest movement, National Guardsmen killed four students and wounded nine others at Kent State University in Ohio. In response to Nixon’s escalation of the war into Cambodia, students at Kent State destroyed a Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) building on campus. As a result, Ohio Governor James Rhodes called in the National Guard. For days the students and the National Guardsmen engaged in a stand-off. Eventually, students gathered to demonstrate and the guardsmen, in an attempt to disperse the crowd, began throwing tear gas. Minutes later, from the top of a hill, the guardsmen opened fire on both activists and students walking to class. As the smoke cleared, two demonstrators and two bystanders lay dead and others wounded. The shootings at Kent State University caused 450 colleges to shut down and over two million students to protest the government aggression and state-sanctioned murder.

The music industry also responded to this violence, not protesting the war in Vietnam, but rather protesting the now-deadly war on college campuses. David Crosby,

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110 Lytle, 352-353.
111 Ibid., 353-355.
Stephen Stills, Graham Nash and Neil Young wrote and released “Ohio” shortly after the killings at Kent State University in an attempt to remind Americans that protest in the United States was a right, while hostile fire was not.\textsuperscript{112} In “Ohio,” Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young clearly illustrate that those students who, while at college, try to exercise their right to independence and protest, are quickly and violently brought down. When Young asks, “How can you run when you know,” he is not asking how other students could run from the gunfire, but rather how could Americans run away from the Kent State University tragedy with their eyes covered.

Tin soldiers and Nixon’s coming
We’re finally on our own
This summer I hear the drumming
Four dead in Ohio

In the chorus the mournful memorial continues, with Neil Young singing:

Gonna get down to it soldiers are cutting us down
Should have been down long ago
What if you knew her and found her dead on the ground
How can you run when you know?

While the musical tone of “Ohio” is not as angry or militant as “The Unknown Soldier,” the lyrics are profound, telling of independent college students who never resigned their beliefs until they were violently silenced.

**The Conservative Movement in the Early 1960s**

As the anti-nuclear warfare and anti-Vietnam War protests garnered attention from media outlets and authors, a conservative movement also existed and influenced the music. The growth of the conservative movement and the music that it spawned further reflected the politics of a polarized country.

While students and organizations like SANE protested the use of nuclear weaponry, conservative students mobilized. For example, in 1958, Congress passed the National Defense Education Act. It provided loans for college students who majored in technology fields in order to encourage American youth to become more proficient in math and science. To receive the loans, the students had to sign a loyalty oath to the country. The loyalty oath immediately drew protests from universities such as Yale and Harvard, which withdrew from the program. Meanwhile, two college students established the National Student Committee for a Loyalty Oath. Its propaganda focused on anti-Communist rhetoric. The formation of the National Student Committee for a Loyalty Oath marked the first stirrings of an activist conservative movement.\textsuperscript{113}

Conservative activism grew in 1960 when, at the Republican National Convention, young conservatives tried to persuade Richard Nixon, the Republican presidential nominee, to name Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater as his vice presidential candidate. Nixon, instead, named Nelson Rockefeller as his running mate, a move that

\textsuperscript{112} Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, “Oh,io,” in *Four Way Street* (Atlantic:1971). Crosby Stills, Nash and Young recorded “Ohio” one week after the Kent State University shootings, releasing it on the radio. They did not record the song as a part of a full length album until 1971.

young conservatives saw as catering toward moderate Republicanism and liberalism. Nixon’s rejection of the young conservatives’ demands led groups like the National Student Committee for a Loyalty Oath and Youth for Goldwater to form their own organization, Young Americans for Freedom (YAF).  

Young Americans for Freedom was one of the most forceful and influential activist organizations throughout the 1960s and early 1970s. The Sharon Statement outlined its mission and agenda, emphasizing conservative values such as protecting economic and political freedom, national defense and a hard anti-Communist line that extended globally and domestically. YAF, because of its anti-Communist beliefs, rejected SANE and its goal of nuclear disarmament.

YAF began to mobilize conservative students on college campuses across the United States. YAF’s first public battle was on January 2, 1961, when it picketed against liberals protesting the House Un-American Activities Committee in front of the White House.

YAF, in the early 1960s, began to outline its policy for the Vietnam War. In 1962, a young conservative described the conservative agenda in an editorial, arguing that if South Vietnam fell to Communism, and the Russians won, they would gain all of Southeast Asia. To prevent this situation, the writer argued, the United States must fully support South Vietnam and its leader, Diem. Thus, conservatives wanted to give more support to Diem rather than see him and South Vietnam fall. After Diem’s assassination, YAF condemned Kennedy, and argued for a strategy of a total commitment in South Vietnam. The conservative philosophy about American foreign policy implied that a defeat for the United States was a victory for Communism. This philosophy depended on publicly supporting American foreign policy and defeating anti-Vietnam War protestors in the war at home. YAF, therefore, created a two-fold strategy, simultaneously supporting the Vietnam War, and working against the anti-war movement.

The protests against anti-Vietnam war protestors and the counterculture began in 1965 when YAF chapters in New York, Washington, DC and Cleveland picketed radical groups like the Student Peace Union (SPU) and Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). Other YAF countermeasures took place through the winter of 1965, including picketing anti-Vietnam War demonstrations in New Haven, Connecticut.

Throughout the next year, YAF followers called on the youth of America who supported Johnson’s policies in Vietnam to show their support, and they continued challenging anti-Vietnam War protestors. For example, in New York, a group of hunger strikers protesting the war were met by YAF demonstrators with signs reading, “Better Fed than Red.”

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115 Lytle, 92.
116 Ibid., 91.
117 Andrew, 75.
120 Ibid., 95-96.
121 Ibid., 96-97.
By January, 1966, YAF members organized rallies across the United States in support of American policy in Vietnam. The thousands who attended honored soldiers who died in Vietnam and listened to speeches from influential supporters of the war. In St. Louis, for example, the attendees listened to conservative activist Phyllis Schlafly, television actor James Drury and baseball player Lou Brock proclaim their support for victory in Vietnam.122

While YAF and anti-Vietnam War protest groups battled throughout the 1960s, the height of the conflict came in 1968. In 1965, David Franke, the editor of YAF’s newsletter, New Guard, argued that the goal of YAF should be to weaken and immobilize the New Left. Franke sought to win the war at home in order to win victory in Vietnam. YAF did not implement Franke’s strategy until 1968 after the anti-war movement turned toward violence. YAF grew disappointed with its failure to influence foreign policy, and the TET Offensive, when coordinated North Vietnamese attacks during a lunar New Year truce shattered American confidence and exposed the lies of the Johnson administration.123

The YAF national board’s first tactic against the left was intellectual position papers, but the local YAF chapters took more vigorous action. The local chapters sought support from other anti-radical students. For example, at Columbia University, the YAF chapter joined Students for a Free Campus, which supported a policy that allowed corporations to recruit on campus, in direct opposition to anti-war groups which opposed on-campus recruitment by the Defense Department. The anti-counterculture protests continued throughout 1968. YAF member Ronald Docksai, a St. John’s University student, organized a twenty-one member sit-in at the offices of the National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam (MOBE) in New York City. Docksai demanded a statement from MOBE denouncing its actions at the Democratic National Convention. After no response and a night in the offices, the protestors left. Later in 1968, Docksai and YAF leader James Farley, along with other YAF members, went to the offices of SDS in Greenwich Village in order to liberate them. After a complaint from the building’s owner, YAF members left the offices, but the protest gained some media coverage. One week later, YAF members went to the Boston offices of the anti-war group the Resistance. Resistance members reacted adversely, calling the Black Panther Party and the media. The YAF protest leader, Don Feeder, in a statement, argued that they occupied the Resistance offices to show radical organizations that their intrusive acts could be used against them.124

By 1969, the national YAF board decided to take action just as the local chapters had. The national organization developed the Young America’s Freedom Offensive, which included direct action, joining with other conservative groups, recruiting high school students and educating people in conservative ideology. After the National Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam scheduled anti-war demonstrations for October 15 and November 15, with 600,000 attendees expected, conservatives acted. YAF leader Ron Dear, in response to these rallies, organized a counter-rally named “Tell It to Hanoi,” in order to show Communists that the anti-war protestors were not representative of American youth. The rally, which included a series of demonstrations at 600 campuses

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122 Ibid., 97.
123 Ibid., 110-112.
124 Ibid., 116-117.
across the United States, occurred December 13, 1969, Veterans Day. YAF prepared 1 million brochures relaying the atrocities of North Vietnam and the New Left’s aid in those atrocities through their support of Communism. While the turnout at the YAF rallies was not as large as the demonstrations organized by MOBE, it was successful in showing that American youth was divided over the Vietnam War.\footnote{Ibid., 120-123.}

The anti-counterculture aspect of the pro-Vietnam sect was so significant that YAF members Lee Edwards and Ed Butler organized the Square movement. The Square movement published its own magazine, \textit{Square}, organized conferences and had a television show featuring Square entertainment such as John Wayne. In 1969, at a YAF Freedom Rally that promoted victory over Communism, 15,000 Squares sang the Merle Haggard song, “Okie from Muskogee.”\footnote{Klatch, l46.}

In 1970, YAF’s direct action campaign, for both the national and local chapters, shifted despite increased protests after Nixon’s escalation of the war and the shootings at Kent State. After Kent State, the YAF national board, rather than countering the anti-war movement, pursued legal action against universities which failed to end campus unrest. For example, at the University of Wisconsin, a YAF member filed a lawsuit, arguing that the administration was denying its students a right to education, and at George Washington University, a YAF member sued for tuition reimbursement because the university cancelled classes. By the fall of 1970, with the shift in direction, and the decrease in anti-Vietnam War protests, YAF distanced itself from its reactionary protests.\footnote{Schneider, 123 -125.}

\textbf{Conservative Music, 1965-1970}

Musicians seized on to the pro-Vietnam War and anti-counterculture segment of the protest movement, creating music that first sought to emphasize pro-American foreign policy before promoting an anti-counterculture message.\footnote{Storey, 85.} The pro-Vietnam War music first appeared in 1965, closely followed by music countering the anti-war demonstrators and anti-counterculture music. This new music appeared well after anti-nuclear bomb and anti-Vietnam War protest songs emerged and reached the top 40 charts, and the anti-Vietnam War and pro-Vietnam War protest movements began polarizing the country. Artists such as Barry Sadler, Dave Dudley, Victor Lundberg and Merle Haggard were not pioneers of a new musical style, but rather artists reacting to the anti-Vietnam War musical movement. This created a polarized musical community where the anti-Vietnam War musicians sought to legitimize the anti-Vietnam War movement, and the pro-Vietnam War and anti-artists sought to destroy it.

In 1965, Barry Sadler, a former member of the Special Forces who was injured in Vietnam, recorded “Ballad of the Green Berets.”\footnote{Staff Sgt. Barry Sadler, “Ballad of the Green Beret,” in \textit{Ballad of the Green Beret} (New York: Cimino Publications, 1966).} While Sadler’s record label believed that the song would have a limited audience, it soared to number one on \textit{Billboard}’s rock play list and reached number two on the country music charts, as it resonated with Americans who lived through World War II and who believed in fighting an evil
“Ballad of the Green Berets” is one example of the pro-Vietnam War music, before it evolved.

“Ballad of the Green Berets” begins with a military drum line, as Sadler compliments the bravery of the soldiers, specifically those strong enough to become a Green Beret. The song also serves as Sadler’s plea for other Americans to support the soldiers:

Fighting soldiers from the sky
Fearless men who jump and die
Men who mean just what they say
The brave men of the Green Beret

In the final two verses, one of the soldiers about whom Sadler sings dies while fighting for the noble cause. This soldier’s last request was that his wife pass the silver wings and the Green Beret legacy on to their son, further pulling at the emotions of Americans, emphasizing the importance supporting those soldiers who fight, through recognizing the sacrifices of both the soldier and his family.

Put silver wings on my son’s chest
Make him one of America’s best
He’ll be a man they’ll test one day
Have him win the Green Beret

Another artist, Dave Dudley, used music in order to promote the war effort by taking a soldier’s point of view. “What We’re Fighting For,” appeared to be a letter to his mother from an American soldier serving in Vietnam. Dudley justifies the war in Vietnam, stating that America must fight against evil in Vietnam so that the United States will never be taken by another nation. Dudley, like Bob Dylan, uses America’s war history, yet Dudley applies it to combating the enemy, not to illustrate the tragedies of war like Dylan. Dudley continues:

Tell them that we’re fighting for the old Red, White and Blue
Did they forget Pearl Harbor and Korea too
Another flag must never fly above our nation’s door
Oh Mama tell them what we’re fighting for

“What We’re Fighting For” is Dudley’s attempt to unite the pro-Vietnam War movement. Like Dylan, Dudley uses America’s tragic history, but Dudley uses the past to illustrate the dangers of Communism.

On the same album, Dave Dudley in “Vietnam Blues” tells a musical narrative that follows a Vietnam soldier on a trip to Washington, DC while protests are occurring. “Vietnam Blues” embraces a less understanding message than “What We’re Fighting For.” Throughout the song, Dudley merely criticizes the demonstrators. Dudley begins his story by first ridiculing the appearance of the protestors, singing, “It

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131 Ibid.
was a strange looking bunch but then I never could understand some people.” Dudley then moves on to criticizing the anti-Vietnam war effort and, categorizing all protestors as Communists, and, like Barry McGuire in “Eve of Destruction,” shares his anger and disappointment:

Oh a fellow came to me with a list in his hand he said we’re gathering names to send
The telegram of sympathy then he handed me a pen
I said I reckon this is going to kids and wives
My friends over there who’re giving their lives
He said ah ah buddy this is going to Ho Chi Minh
I said Ho Chi who, he said Ho Chi Minh, people’s leader, North Vietnam
Oh I wasn’t really sure I was hearing him right
I thought I’d better more before I got in a fight
‘Cause my ears were hurting and my pulse starting to hit the limit

Dudley’s anger increases, and his criticisms grow harsher throughout the song, as he implies that protestors march against the war because they are too cowardly to go to Vietnam and actually fight for freedom:

Another held the sign that said he won’t fight
I thought to myself boy ain’t that right
You’d rather let a soldier die instead
I said it’s a shame that every man who ever died up there in that far off land
Was dying so that you wouldn’t wake up dead

Dudley shows no restraint in his effort to delegitimize the anti-Vietnam War movement and message. The final line of the song emphasizes Dudley’s contempt for those who do not support the war in Vietnam: “So all I mean to say is that I don’t like dying either, but man I ain’t gonna crawl.”

Dudley’s sympathetic tone in “What we’re Fighting For” is a great departure from his song, “Vietnam Blues,” where he shares his hatred and contempt for the cowardly protestors who refuse to fight for the “good” cause. These two songs, with their two different messages, illustrate the changing face of the pro-Vietnam War movement as it sought to counter the anti-war movement music.

This focus on challenging the anti-Vietnam War protestors continued throughout 1967, as conservative musicians launched personal attacks on the anti-Vietnam War protestors. One song that illustrates this is Victor Lundberg’s “An Open Letter to My Teenage Son.” Lundberg wrote the song in 1967, as the anti-Vietnam War protest movement grew more violent. “An Open Letter to My Teenage Son,” a spoken word song, outlines the “traditional” values of the silent majority, highlighting that America has a patriotic and tolerant tradition that his son must fight for. With a military band playing softly in the background, Lundberg states:

You ask that I not judge you merely as a teenager,
To judge you on your own personal habits, abilities and goals.

This is a fair request and I promise you that I will not judge any person
Only as a teenager, if you will constantly remind yourself that some of my
Generation judge people by their race, their belief it the color of their skin,
and this is no more right than saying all teenager are drunken dope addicts
or glue sniffers.
If you judge every human being on his own individual potential,
I will do the same.

Lundberg’s patriotic and tolerant message abruptly shifts, however, as he emphasizes the
necessity for fighting against Communism in Vietnam, reiterating the idea that all
protestors against the Vietnam War are really protesting America’s capitalistic society,
making them Communist, and not worthy of living in a free land.

You ask my opinion of draft card burners.
I would answer this way,
All past wars have been dirty, unfair, immoral, bloody and second-guessed.
However history has shown that most of them necessary.

If you doubt that our free enterprise system in the United States is worth
protecting,
If you doubt the principles upon which this country was founded,
That we remain free to choose our religion, our individual endeavors, our
method of government
If you doubt that each free individual in this great country should reap
rewards commensurate only with his own efforts,
Then it is doubtful you belong here.

In the final verse, Lundberg chooses the loyalty of his country over the love of his son:
And I will remind you that your mother will love you no matter what you
do,
Because she is a woman.
And I love you too, son,
But I also love our country and the principles for which we stand.
And if you decide to burn your draft card,
Then burn your birth certificate at the same time.
From that moment on, I have no son.

Lundberg’s anger at and disdain for those anti-Vietnam War protestors is clear.
“An Open Letter to My Teenage Son” expresses hatred for those in the anti-Vietnam War
movement and ultra-patriotic message of the pro-Vietnam War movement. Lundberg, in
an attempt to delegitimize the protestors, does not criticize their appearance, but rather he
attacks their message and their methods, characterizing the movement as just a bunch of
lazy Communists who do not deserve the same rights as other Americans.

Another song that attempts to delegitimize the anti-Vietnam War movement is
Merle Haggard’s “Okie From Muskogee,” written in 1969.134 “Okie From Muskogee”

134 Merle Haggard, writer and performer, “Okie From Muskogee,” in Okie From Muskogee (New York:
captured the mood of Nixon’s “Silent Majority,” those Americans who rejected the anti-Vietnam War demonstrations, protestors, and the counterculture. The “Silent Majority” accepted “Okie From Muskogee” as an anthem. As seen in the Square movement, the song untied those whose political views and lifestyle were not as publicized as the counterculture. In “Okie From Muskogee,” Haggard sought to destroy the protest movement through ridiculing the protestors’ physical appearance and reducing them to Communists and drug addicts. In the first verse Haggard sings:

We don’t smoke marijuana in Muskogee
An’ we don’t take our trips on LSD.
We don’t burn our draft cards down on Main Street
We like livin’ right, an’ bein’ free.

In the third verse, Haggard continues his tirade against the protestors, again criticizing their dress and longing for quieter days on campus:

Hey, leather boots are still in style for manly footwear,
Beads and Roman sandals won’t be seen.
An’ football’s still is roughest thing on campus,
And the kids there still respect the college dean.

In the chorus Haggard lists the reasons why patriotic Americans from down home USA are more valuable than the protestors:

And I’m proud to be an Okie from Muskogee,
A place where even squares can have a ball.
We still wave “Old Glory” down at the courthouse,
And white lightnin’s still the biggest thrill of all.

By 1972, Merle Haggard became the public face of the anti-counterculture. In 1972, Haggard appeared at a televised fund-raiser with Ronald Reagan, and in 1973, he was invited by First Lady Pat Nixon to perform at her birthday party. Haggard performed at the White House in front of a somber crowd the same day that the press broke Nixon’s involvement in the Watergate scandal.135

Barry Sadler’s “Ballad of the Green Berets” and Dave Dudley’s “What We’re Fighting For” illustrate a purely patriotic message, one that emphasizes the importance of service members and their families. This pro-War message quickly shifted, and pro-America musicians such as Dave Dudley, Victor Lundberg and Merle Haggard attacked the counterculture, stereotyping all protestors as Communists, hippies and drug addicts.

**Conclusion**

Music reflected the extraordinary tumult of the 1960s. At the start of the decade, groups such as SANE began protesting against nuclear warfare and preaching a pacifist message. This small protest movement found a voice in popular music as folk groups and musicians such as The Kingston Trio and Bob Dylan lamented the dangers of warfare and nuclear policy. As 1964 began, and America’s increasing involvement in Southeast Asia became better known, protests across America became more frequent. This new wave of protest, through song, united the demonstrators with folk musicians such as Joan Baez and Phil Ochs who provided American youth with a foundation of protest.

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By the mid 1960s, as America escalated the ground war in Vietnam, protests around the United States broke out, and the music shifted in order to reflect the increased war effort. Rock musicians began providing political messages. Country Joe and the Fish performed the anti-Vietnam War song “I Feel Like I’m Fixin’ to Die Rag” as they sought to widen the anti-war effort and further spread the anti-war message. By 1968, as the anti-Vietnam War protest movement grew increasingly violent, so did the music. “Unknown Soldier,” with its dark melody, Jim Morrison’s haunting voice, and military gunfire offered a morbid lyrical and musical style, reflecting the violence and pain felt by Americans against the war.

By the 1970s, the anti-Vietnam War sentiment grew even stronger, and the violence of groups like the Weathermen, continued. In the midst of this chaos, rock music sought to unite the splintering movement. Jefferson Airplane’s “Volunteers” was but one of these efforts in a revolutionary time. In 1970, as the violence came to a head at Kent State University, the song “Ohio” by Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young protested, not the war in Vietnam, but rather the violence at home. The music of the late 1960s and early 1970s attempted to keep a splintering movement alive, but, in the end, the violence won out. According to the movement, the time for singing had passed.

The conservative protest movement, while not as widely publicized as the anti-war protest movement, was equally influential. Conservative musicians sought to support the Vietnam War and undermine the counterculture, performing songs such as the patriotic “Ballad of the Green Berets.” Yet, as the conservative movement shifted towards a more anti-counterculture tone, so too did the music. Dave Dudley, Victor Lundberg and, most popular, Merle Haggard, sought to unite their musical bases through denigrating and denouncing the anti-war movement. After the shootings at Kent State, YAF distanced itself from reactionary protests against the anti-war movement, and, like the rock protest music, the conservative musical effort ceased.

From the fall of 1970 until 1973, the United States and North Vietnam engaged in a cat and mouse game, with failed peace talks and retaliatory strikes against one another. Each time a peace talk failed or the United States increased its attacks against North Vietnam, the anti-war protests surged. Yet, for both the anti-Vietnam War and the pro-war and anti-counterculture movement, the time for singing was over.

For the anti-war movement, this meant that direct and violent action was the only way to produce results. For YAF, it meant placing more distance between itself and direct protest. The political music on both sides fell silent.

The power of music cannot be overlooked. It reflects political and social chasms within a society, giving people a medium where they can stand up and be heard. American music from the late 1950s through the early 1970s contributed to and captured the turbulence and alienation of the time. As the American people debated nuclear policy, foreign policy and the war at home, musicians, both radical and conservative, wrote and performed songs that tried, and succeeded, in persuading the American people to embrace their ends. The music and lyrics from these musicians reflected the chaos of the times.

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136 Lytle, 352.
137 Herring, 296-317.
138 Denisoff, xiv.
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