



I Adult Ed January 23rd, 2011

Jewish Radicalism of the Sixties

(Or “When Abbie Met Jerry”)

Welcome to the JCS Adult Education, our first class of the 2011 – 2012 year. Our discussion today will focus on Jewish radicalism in general and in particular as a force for social change during the decade of the 1960s. I usually begin these discussions by explaining the relevance of the topic to be discussed or what I like to call the “Why you should care” portion. Jewish radicalism is a part of our cultural legacy. I often liken Jewish culture to a tapestry. If you start removing threads, the whole thing is diminished.

No one is born a radical. You become one when you are confronted with a situation or circumstance that offends your moral values. That depends on what each person values. Moreover, the individual’s response has to be so great as to overcome their obedience to authority. Let me illustrate this with the stories of two men, each of whom would become famous.

Our first story is about a young man, not Jewish, whose life-changing moment occurred at Forward Base Hammer in Iraq in 2009. While he works in the military intelligence section, his job is hardly exciting. In fact it is really boring. He describes it as follows: “You had people working fourteen hours a day, every single day, no weekends, no recreation. Everyone just sat at their workstation watching music videos, car chases, buildings exploding and writing more stuff to CD/DVD.”¹ Then one day this young man comes across a video, filmed from the camera in the nose of an Apache helicopter, showing the events that took place on the morning of July 12th, 2007.

Two Apache helicopters were on patrol in East Baghdad searching for insurgents. They see a group of men on a street. The behavior of the group seems relaxed. A voice from the American gunship calls out “He’s got an RPG” meaning a rocket-propelled grenade launcher. The helicopter loses sight of the group as it swings around a building. As the group comes in sight again, a voice orders “Let’s shoot. Light ‘em all up.” Another voice calls out “Come on, fire!”

The gunship starts firing, heavy caliber weapons. The bodies of the group on the street explode under the barrage of 30-millimetre cannon shells. One man tries to run and is cut down. The crew on the gunship can be heard celebrating “Oh, yeah, look at those dead bastards!” “Nice. Good shooting.”

As the gunship turns, the crew spots a survivor trying to crawl away. The U.S. Rules of Engagement only allow a wounded man to be shot if he is armed. You can hear the gunship saying “Come on, buddy! Just pick up a weapon!” But instead a dark colored van pulls into view. It stops to pick up the wounded man. As he is being carried to the van, the helicopter opens fire again. The crew exults “Oh yeah, look at that. Right through the windshield!”

It is clear that the crew of the two helicopters believed that they had killed group of armed insurgents whose weapons included an RPG. But here is the reality. We don’t know if any of the men on the street ever had any weapons. We do know that the two men that they went to meet

¹ Andrew Fowler, *The Most Dangerous Man In The World* (Skyhorse Publishing, Inc., 2011)

were Saeed Chmagh and Namir Noor-Eldeen, reporters for the Reuters news agency, there to conduct interviews. What was believed to be an RPG was a camera case. Inside the van that tried to pick up the wounded man were a father and his two children. The father was killed, while the children lived, injured but protected because their father shielded them with his own body.

You would think that the killing of two journalists would create a sensation. It didn't...for quite a while. The video was released to Reuters in 2007 under FOIA, but they never showed it. David Finkel, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist who worked for the Washington Post, the same paper that had broken the Watergate story and toppled President Nixon, was embedded with the U.S. troops in the area. He would cover the story in his 2009 book *The Good Soldiers*. But both the book and the reporting in the Washington Post were seemingly intended to downplay the deaths.

The incident on the streets of Iraq might have been forgotten in a conspiracy of silence...except that the young man at Forward Base Hammer became obsessed with it. His name is Bradley Manning. Manning would, allegedly, violate both the law and his oath of allegiance and steal the video and leak it. He would, again allegedly, steal numerous other documents, numbering in the hundreds of thousands. He did it by bringing in a CD hand labeled as containing Lady Gaga music and, while lip-syncing to the song "Telephone" he was actually copying files on to the disk, new files each day. He would eventually take the stolen files and give them to Julian Assange for publication on the internet site WikiLeaks as well as www.collateralmurder.com



Manning has a history of mental instability, including problems with authority figures and violence. Let me be clear: we are talking about punch someone in the nose violence, not shoot someone in the head violence. Manning has had emotional difficulties, including problems around his homosexual orientation. At the time that he actually leaked the documents, he had just broken up with his lover. All that adds up to a most unlikely hero, if he is a hero at all. Did I mention that he is also short? But Manning's life changed because he can into contact with something that he just could not countenance.

Manning would not have been able to do anything with what he had stolen if Assange had not created the WikiLeaks site. And among the other inspirations for the creation of that web site was the work of another man from another generation who also came into contact with secrets that he was not willing to keep, secrets about another war.

Daniel Ellsberg was born in 1931 in Chicago, to ethnic Jewish parents who had converted to Christian Science. He was raised in Detroit where he attended the Cranbrook Kingswood School. By all accounts, the home in which he was raised was



devoutly Christian and so any ties of the Ellsberg family to Jewish beliefs and values should be considered ephemeral at most.²

Daniel graduated from Harvard with a B.S. in economics in 1952, summa cum laude. He would then continue his studies at Cambridge and then back to Harvard. In 1954 he left Harvard to enlist in the U.S. Marine Corps. He would graduate first in his class of 1,100 lieutenants who completed their training at Quantico. After serving as first a platoon leader and then as company commander, he would receive his honorable discharge and return to Harvard to complete his Ph.D. He would interrupt his studies to begin work for the RAND Corporation, preparing studies on nuclear strategy. He would finally earn his Ph.D. in 1962.

In 1964, Ellsberg would join the Pentagon, serving directly under Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara. He was on duty and would report to the secretary on the night of August 2nd 1964 when the USS Maddox would engage with three North Vietnamese torpedo boats in what become known as the Gulf of Tonkin incident. On August 4th a second confrontation was supposed to have taken place; however in 2005 a National Security Agency historical study was released concluding that while there was a confrontation on the 2nd, the second confrontation never happened. Regardless, the two incidents formed the rationale for the U.S. direct military involvement in Vietnam in order to turn back “communist aggression.”

Ellsberg would serve for two years in Vietnam as a civilian working for the State Department. In 1967, he would return to the States and resume work for RAND. He would begin working, along with others, on a top-secret study of the Vietnam War that would become known as the Pentagon Papers. By 1969, Ellsberg had become disenchanted with the war and, with the aid of his RAND colleague Anthony Russo and the staff of Senator Edward Kennedy, would begin to make secret and illegal copies of the Pentagon Papers. These documents would show that the President of the United States had lied to the American people, had lied to Congress, was in possession of studies that show that the anticipated casualties of the war were much, much higher than had ever been disclosed and that, from the very beginning, experts had expressed doubts about whether the war could ever be won. In 1971, the New York Times broke a promise made to Ellsberg and began publishing the Pentagon Papers. After the Nixon administration succeeded in getting a court order to stop the Times, Ellsberg would leak the Pentagon Papers to the Washington Post.

The Nixon administration, including many of the same figures that would later be convicted during the Watergate investigation, broke into Ellsberg’s house, tapped his phone and tried to cast doubts about his mental state. They even considered dosing him with LSD in order to render him incoherent.

Ellsberg would be one of the inspirations for Assange to create WikiLeaks. In 2005, Ellsberg would be arrested for trespassing as part of a protest of the Iraq War. In 2010, appearing on the *Colbert Report*, Ellsberg would comment that the existence of WikiLeaks helps build a better government.

Let me summarize with two points: Individuals embrace radicalism when they come into contact with facts or behaviors that contradict their morality. If you share their moral position, they become heroes. If you don’t share their position, they can be villains. Secondly, the roots of today’s protest movement are founded in the radicalism of the Sixties.

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel_Ellsberg

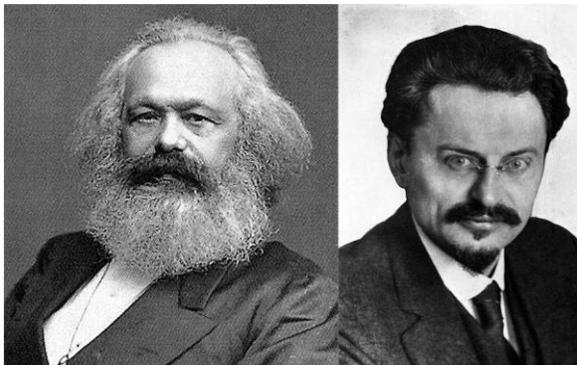
Why You Should Care

The 1960s was a decade of profound change, politically and culturally, and many of the key figures of this time were Jewish. It was not the upheavals in the streets; we saw radical changes in the institutions that affect our lives on a daily basis, including the founding of the Jewish Cultural Society in Ann Arbor in 1965. Should the founding of a group that believes that there can be a study of the history, culture and values of the Jewish people outside of a religious context be considered a radical act? Certainly it was a radical idea at the time.

What is radicalism? Michigan State University publishes the Journal for the Study of Radicalism³ which defines radicalism as follows: “*we loosely define "radical," as distinguished from "reformers," to mean groups who seek revolutionary alternatives to hegemonic social and political institutions, and who use violent or non-violent means to resist authority and to bring about change.*” Let me emphasize that that definition encompasses both the bomb-throwing anarchist who wants to overthrow the government by any means necessary and people who support radical ideas like everyone having the right to vote or to live free. Wikipedia, in an article of the historical roots of Radicalism, notes that the original Radicals were a political party in England of the early to middle 19th century that espoused ideas such as universal male suffrage. Significant philosophical influences of early radicalism include Thomas Paine, author of the 1791 book *The Rights of Man*⁴, which puts forth the idea that political revolution is justified when a government does not safeguard the natural rights of its people. By 1859 the Radicals would be incorporated into the Whigs to form the Liberal Party.⁵ In Europe, Radicalism has always been associated with the Left and it is predominantly in the United States that we use the word to refer to Right Wing radicals as well as those of the Left.

Espousing radical ideas puts a person at odds with their government and, usually, at odds with the majority of people around them. It is often dangerous. Why does a person become a radical? As said before, comes about when an individual encounters an injustice so at odds with a person's core beliefs and values that the person feels that they have no choice but to oppose it.

That might seem like a simple statement but if you think about it, there are multiple underlying assumptions. The person needs to have a strongly developed sense of right and wrong; they need to have a sense that injustice needs to be opposed by action. And they have to believe that the actions of individuals can make a difference. While not exclusively Jewish, these beliefs are often held by Jews and by secular Jews in particular.



Karl Marx, coming from a long line of rabbis of the town of Trier in Prussia, espoused the revolution of the proletariat to oppose the injustices of industrial capitalism. He broke with other philosophers of his time by advocating active opposition to the governments and economic powers around him. In an early work he would write "the philosophers have only interpreted the world, the point is to change it".⁶ In Russia, Lev

³ <http://msupress.msu.edu/journals/jsr/index.php?Page=home>

⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Rights_of_Man

⁵ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radicals_\(UK\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radicals_(UK))

⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl_Marx

Davidovich Bronshtein, the son of a wealthy Jewish farmer, would embrace the ideas of Marx and, as a revolutionary, would assume the name “Trotsky.”⁷

Jewish radicals were not confined to Europe. In 1772, Haym Solomon would come to America from Poland and would immediately join the Sons of Liberty. An astute merchant and auctioneer, he would use his wealth to help finance the American Revolution and to negotiate supplies from Europe. During the Civil War, Judah Philip Benjamin would support the Confederacy and would be named first Attorney General, then Secretary of War and finally Secretary of State by his friend Jefferson Davis. On the Union side, banker Joseph Seligman would negotiate the sale of \$200 million in bonds to finance the Union’s war effort. Both Benjamin and Seligman would have been considered radical in their opposition or support for the Union.

The Jewish radical tradition in America would continue in the last decades of the 19th century and into the 20th century as evidenced by Jewish leadership of the labor and Civil Rights movements. The involvement of Jews in the labor movement comes out of the European socialist tradition of the General Jewish Labour Bund in Lithuania, Poland and Russia⁸ more commonly known as the Bund. Support for fundamental rights for laborers, a radical idea at the time and, I fear, becoming again a radical idea, was given new urgency by the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire of March 25th, 1911⁹. One



hundred and forty six workers would die as a result of the fire in a factory owned by two Jewish entrepreneurs, Max Blanck and Isaac Harris. Most of the workers were not Jewish. Despite these facts, the sorrow and rage in the aftermath of the fire would resonate most strongly in the Jewish community of the Lower East Side. Twenty-two of the dead would be buried by the Hebrew Free Burial Association in a special section at Mount Richmond Cemetery.

Rose Schneiderman, a prominent socialist and union activist, gave a speech at the memorial meeting held in the Metropolitan Opera House on April 2, 1911. “I would be a traitor to these poor burned bodies if I came here to talk good fellowship. We have tried you good people of the public and we have found you wanting. ... This is not the first time girls have been burned alive in the city. Every week I must learn of the untimely death of one of my sister workers. Every year thousands of us are maimed. The life of men and women is so cheap and property is so sacred. There are so many of us for one job it matters little if 146 of us are burned to death.”

This was not the first example of Jewish radicalism in the garment workers union. In 1909, prior to going out on a strike that would become known as The Uprising of the 20,000, workers took an oath in Yiddish, “If I turn traitor to the cause I now pledge, may this hand wither from the arm I now raise.”

All the early leaders of the ILGWU were Jewish (Benjamin Schlesinger, Morris Sigman, David Dubinsky, etc.) and many were unequivocally radical.¹⁰ Members of the ILGWU would split from the union to form the Socialist Party in America; members of that group would in turn split off to form the Communist Party USA. Not only would the union be involved with radical politics, the union would also be involved with organized crime. When the union went on strike

⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leon_Trotsky

⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/General_Jewish_Labor_Union

⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triangle_Shirtwaist_Factory_fire

¹⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Ladies'_Garment_Workers'_Union

in 1926, the owners would hire muscle from gangster “Legs” Diamond to serve as strike breakers. The union responded by hiring their own thugs from a gang run by “Little Augie” Orgen. When these thugs weren’t enough, the unions consulted with retired manufacturer A.E. Rothstein, who suggested that the unions seek help from his son, Arnold Rothstein. This would further open the door for organized criminals like Louis “Lepke” Buchalter, Jacob “Gurrah” Shapiro, Emanuel “Mendy” Weiss and others. The mixture of Communism and criminality around the unions pushed them even further outside of normal society and politics during the first half of the 20th Century. Today, Jewish support for labor continues through organizations such as the Jewish Labor Committee (<http://www.jewishlabor.org/>).

Perhaps because of the long history of Jewish ostracism in both Europe and America, Jews have been very involved in the Civil Rights movement in America¹¹. In 1909, Henry Moscowitz would join with W.E.B. DuBois and other civil rights leaders to found the NAACP. Jewish philanthropist Julius Rosenwald funded the creation of dozens of primary schools, secondary schools and colleges for black youth during segregation. The Sachs family (of Goldman Sachs) provided major financial supporters of the Civil Rights movement. Jewish involvement was not limited to financial support.

On June 21, 1964, three young civil rights workers were murdered near Philadelphia, in Nashoba County, Mississippi¹². One, a 21-year-old Mississippian, James Chaney, was black and the other two were white, Jewish New Yorkers, Andrew Goodman, 20, and Michael Schwerner, 24. They had been in town investigating the burning of a church that supported civil rights. The FBI would investigate the murders and would arrest 18 men in connection with the deaths. The State of Mississippi would refuse to prosecute any of them. At that time, segregation was the law of the land and anyone who opposed it was a radical.



It was his involvement in the civil rights movement that would first make Abbie into a radical.

The Hoffman Family

Often when I research historical topics the original sources are not accessible. Learning about Abbie, I was able to read *Run, Run, Run: The Lives of Abbie Hoffman* written by Abbie’s younger brother Jack and *The Best of Abbie Hoffman*, an anthology of Abbie’s own writings. In reading these books, one is immediately struck by how Jewish the family is; not just in terms of their history, but in how they perceived it. For example, before Abbie was born, the family had suffered two tragedies: the death of a young man who would have been Abbie’s uncle, who died in a car accident driving home from buying an engagement ring. Not long afterwards, Abbie’s Aunt Rose suffered a mental breakdown and would be given a frontal lobotomy. When Abbie is born, his birth is perceived as part of the healing process. But listen to how Jack Hoffman describes Abbie’s birth: “An ancient Hebrew aphorism goes “Where life is, death is not; where

¹¹ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African-American_Civil_Rights_Movement_\(1896%E2%80%93931954\)#The_American_Jewish_community_and_the_civil_rights_movement](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African-American_Civil_Rights_Movement_(1896%E2%80%93931954)#The_American_Jewish_community_and_the_civil_rights_movement)

¹² <http://todayinafricanamericanhistory.com/african-american-history/june-21st-in-african-american-history-james-chaney-andrew-goodman-and-michael-schwerner/>

death is, life is not.” And as at the close of the evening prayer, Abbie arrived with the archangel Michael at his right hand, Gabriel on his left, Uriel before him, and Raphael above him. In the commotion, Malakh-hamoves, the Angel of Death, vanished. My brother came as a consoling messenger who chased death from the house, and for the rest of their lives, our parents would look to him in expectation of more great good news.” Abbie was born in 1936, Jack in 1939.

Despite the religious references in the quote, the Hoffman family was not overly religious. They attend High Holy Days, we know that because Abbie and Jack speak of accompanying their father to services, but not much else is part of their story. But it is clear that Judaism provides the cultural context for their lives. In his book *“Revolution for the Hell of It”* Abbie writes of his visions after taking LSD: “Behind Billy the Kid stands Abraham. Grand old man of 9,000 years, striding across the desert lands, sweat crushed against his brow by a huge sun-baked forearm of golden fleece, the same golden fleece that hung from his head and face in cascading waves of hard times.”

Like so many of us, the Hoffman family saga begins at Ellis Island. Abbie’s maternal great-grandfather arrives at Castle Garden in Lower Manhattan from Ellis Island in either 1881 or 1882. He had left his wife and two children in Galicia, which was still a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Saul Shanberg would find work on the Lower East Side in the junk trade. His oldest son, Jacob, would be sent to join him, but when he sent for his wife and youngest child, his wife would refuse to make the journey. He would obtain a rabbinical divorce and would remarry a much younger woman and start a new family. In either 1896 or 1898, Saul of a dam being built in Clinton, Massachusetts and would head north to seek his fortune. In 1900, Jacob would join him there. Two years later, in 1902, Jacob would meet and marry a Jewish girl named Ida.

Born into a wealthy Jewish family in Pskov in Western Russia, Ida thought of herself as being better than the shtetl Jews around her. On the census, for example, she identified herself as “Russian-German” and she was very proud of her fluency in German.

Why did Ida marry Jacob? One reason may be that Jacob, like many American Jews, had started with nothing and built a successful business out of junk...literally in his case. Saul had started a junk business and his son Jacob had built it into the Shanberg Wrecking Company. Ida and Jacob would have five children together, including a daughter named Florence, who would marry a man named John Hoffman.

Back in Russia, his name probably wasn’t John, but then the family name wasn’t Hoffman. It was Shapoznikoff. According to family lore, Hoffman was the name of a dead neighbor back in the old country. Whatever the name may have been before Ellis Island, John Hoffman was his name when his family came out.

Supposedly, little John had pneumonia when the family arrived, a condition that, if detected at Ellis Island, would have resulted in his being sent back. His mother, Bubbe Anna, stuffed rags into his mouth so that no one would hear him cough. The trip back would have killed him.

The family stayed only briefly in New York before moving on to Fall River, Massachusetts and then to Malden and finally Worcester. They picked Worcester because of the close-knit Jewish community there, a place where Jews looked out for one another. There was also a thriving economy and a man could find work. Zayde Morris made a living buying produce from the nearby farms and selling it in downtown Worcester from a horse drawn wagon. But he wanted his son to do better.

When he met Florence, John had a good job. He worked as an assistant at Kanef's Pharmacy and aspired to take over the business when his time came. He would take the Pharmacy Board Exam...over and over again. He never passed. Anti-Semitism may have been a factor; perhaps the town did not want yet another Jewish-owned pharmacy. Eventually, old man Kanef would die and leave the business to his son. John would go on to found the Worcester Medical Supply, a business that thrived in the town and made him a comfortable, if not affluent, living. But he never forgave or forgot. His son would go to college.

Abbie Comes of Age

As a child, Abbie is remembered as being rambunctious, but charming. He would get into trouble and charm his way out. His younger brother Jack and younger sister Phyllis have both written about him with love and admiration, although Abbie, by his own admission, was not a role-model as a sibling. He writes in his autobiography, "Jack is my younger brother. Not an easy thing. If we were building a tree hut and the hammer fell, Jack's head was somewhere beneath, waiting." Jack remembers that if Abbie would hurt him, accidentally or by intent, he would make it up to him by taking him upstairs to their shared bedroom and teach him to play chess. Jack said "In chess he taught me to think seven moves ahead. When you are playing a guy who only thinks three moves ahead, you are going to beat...out of him."

As a teenager, Abbie was the kind of kid whose attitude gets him into trouble and whose charm gets him out of it. He is strong and cocky, but he also suffered from asthma. He grows up as a Jew living in a Christian community. Worcester had a Jewish community and was relatively liberal. Starting at age 8 or 9, Abbie and later Jack go to religious classes after school four days a week and on Saturdays to prepare for their b'nai mitzvahs. All the Jewish kids in town go. There is an Orthodox shul in town, a Conservative congregation and a Reform temple. At various times, the Hoffman boys go to all three. At the same time, kids sing Christmas songs in school and Jack remembers silently mouthing the words "little Lord Jesus, asleep in the hay." Jack also remembers the boy who had been his best friend punching him in the nose for killing Jesus. The family remembers the time they stopped at a restaurant that refused to serve them because they were Jewish, an incident that stays with them. Partially as a reaction to the anti-Semitism around them and partially because it was his nature, Abbie becomes a "tough Jew." Even though he is only 5'7" he would never back down from a fight. Along with two Jewish friends, Paul Cotton and Haskell "Hack" Morin, Abbie becomes a real juvenile delinquent, stealing cars for joyrides. One night, he sends his father's station wagon into Coes Pond. Abbie is also very attractive to the girls in town.

Despite his behavior, young Abbie never gets into serious trouble. In 1953, Abbie gets into an argument with a biology teacher and is expelled from high school. His parents enroll him in the Worcester Academy, a private prep school. At age 16, Abbie meets Herbie Gamberg, Jewish, a bit of a jock but also a bit of an intellectual. Five years older than Abbie, Gamberg attends nearby Brandeis College. When Abbie applies to college, he applies to three schools: Columbia, Tufts and Brandeis. His test scores are very good, but his grades uneven. Only Brandeis accepts him.

Brandeis, located in nearby Waltham, has a reputation as a Jewish college. It was founded as a Jewish secular college by Rabbi Israel Goldstein. Albert Einstein was associated with the school, only briefly, but lending prestige to the university. It is at Brandeis that Hoffman would study psychology under Abraham Maslow and Marxist theory under Herbert Marcuse. Hoffman would say that Marcuse had a profound effect on his life. Bear in mind that Hoffman is studying at

Brandeis at the same time that the McCarthy hearings are being televised and not long after the Rosenbergs had been executed for espionage.

After Brandeis, Abbie attends the University of California, Berkley. He was seeking his master's degree in psychology. It is while at Berkeley that Abbie gets his first taste of politics. He takes part in a protest to block the execution of Caryl Chessman, who had been convicted of rape in 1948 based on circumstantial evidence. Many people, including Shirley MacLaine and Marlon Brando participate in the protest. Chessman is executed anyway. Not long afterwards, a protest by Berkeley students of a HUAC hearing in San Francisco turns violent. The protestors are denied entrance to the hearing, pushing and shoving ensues, a police officer is knocked down, and the police armed with billy clubs and hoses wade into the crowd. While this teaches Abbie an important lesson, he does not immediately become radical. Part of the reason is that Abbie learns that his girlfriend, Sheila Karkli, is pregnant and he leaves school in 1960 to marry her.

The couple returns to the East. Abbie is able to talk his way into a job as a psychologist at Worcester State Hospital. His father is unimpressed, but Abbie's mother, whose sister Rose had the frontal lobotomy, is overjoyed. But right from the beginning the marriage is ill-starred. Abbie has driven back home in his Volkswagon. He doesn't have insurance and, only weeks after the wedding, he gets into an accident. Insurance is not required in California but is required in Massachusetts. Abbie is arrested, his first arrest, but not his last. Abbie and Sheila aren't happy together and begin to argue. Just before midnight in December 31st, 1960, their son Andrew is born. Sheila stays home with their son, while Abbie throws himself more and more into his work. He begins to hang out with a psychologist named Eli Strum. Beginning with conversations about psychology, the talk soon turns to Strum's other passion, film. In 1961, Abbie talks a friend of his father's into financing an art movie theater. That becomes Abbie's new career. He might have been one of those people who drifts from thing to thing in life, if everything hadn't changed on November 22nd, 1963...the day that President Kennedy was shot.

Abbie would say of that day "Kennedy heated our passion for change, and when he was killed that chilly day in November, we mourned. Kennedy often lied to our generation, but nevertheless he made us believe that we could change the course of history." From that day forward, Abbie would dedicate his life to change. He would become active in the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (the NAACP) and soon after he joined that chapter began to recruit large numbers of supporters. Abbie set up a Direct Action Committee to bypass the national leadership. Soon meetings that previously had been attended by dozens were attracting hundreds. Abbie started up a local chapter of the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE.) He organized dozens of protests and demonstrations, including one against the Wyman-Gordon Defense plant, one of the area's largest employers and a major customer of Abbie's father's business. Abbie began publishing an activist news letter. In 1964, Abbie was recruited by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC.)

Abbie's political involvement actually brought him closer to Sheila. The couple has a second child at this point. Sheila shared Abbie's political views. On Fridays, Abbie and Sheila led a discussion group, with Abbie explaining Maslow's theories of self-actualization and Sheila discussing Betty Friedan's book *The Feminine Mystique*. In the summer of 1965, Abbie goes down South to Mississippi and Georgia to teach as part of the civil rights movement and to register voters. It is at this time that Abbie's name first appears in FBI reports, including mentions of a wire tap on Abbie's phone.

Also beginning in late 1965 and continuing into 1966, Abbie starts experimenting with drugs. He first tries LSD with a friend, Manny Schreiber, who is a US Army psychologist. The army was experimenting with LSD at this time for possible wartime use. By 1966, Abbie is occasionally taking LSD and smoking marijuana.

Sheila had been instrumental in getting Abbie into political activism, but by late 1966 the couple started divorce proceedings. The divorce would not be final until May 1, 1967, but in September 1966, Abbie would leave Sheila, his family and his old life behind.

Abbie would summarize this period as follows: “The things that I learned in the early sixties in the social movements were lessons that I carried with me throughout my career...how the ball of wax is put together, and more importantly, how to take it apart; how power structures control people and how they divide people, how the gaps are between the mythology of what is said and reality as it exists; the hidden oppression and the hidden resistance to oppression.”

Abbie would enter this period, between 1963 and 1967, as a young man adrift, with no particular focus. He had gone to Brandeis because he had met Herbie Gamberg, because the school was close, the school had Jewish roots and his grades were not good enough to get him into Columbia. He starts and drops out of Berkeley because of his relationship with Sheila. He opens a movie theater because he started hanging out with a guy who liked movies.

What happened to make Abbie radical? As with so many of Abbie’s generation, the assassination of John F. Kennedy was a life-changing event. The mood of the country was about to change. Abbie’s involvement in civil rights movement would also change him. The days of Martin Luther King’s non-violence were giving way to more radical voices, such as Malcom X and Abbie’s one-time friend Stokely Carmichael, partially as a reaction to the fierce and violent opposition they were facing.



Sheila had introduced Abbie to politics, but she was no longer a part of Abbie’s life. Abbie would try at various times to bridge the gap, but he would never be close to the children from his first marriage.

All of these factors contributed to the change in Abbie. He had discovered that he was a leader, with strong organizational skills. He had a passion for social change. All he needed was a cause, a direction for his life. And that would come in the opposition to the growing war in Vietnam.

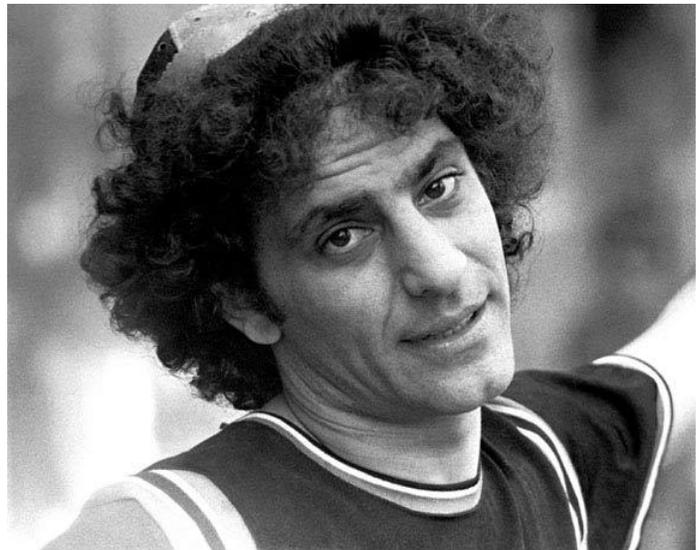
Back to the New York Roots

In 1966, Abbie would move to New York City, to the same Lower East Side that was the first home to Jews arriving in the New World, including Abbie's relatives. He shared an apartment on 11th Street and Avenue C with a roommate. Their rent was \$49 per month. Abbie called himself a Marxist.

He would open a shop called Liberty House in the West Village. This was a continuation of a project he had started in Worcester. Liberty House sold handicrafts made by the Poor People's Corporation in Mississippi and send the money back down South to help start other worker-owned enterprises. This was under the auspices of SNCC. But in the winter of 1966, SNCC decided to purge all white members. This decision would effectively end decades of Jewish activism within the Civil Rights movement. Abbie would publicly argue with his friend Stokely Carmichael, the leader of SNCC, about the decision. Abbie's position, as explained in a series of pieces published in the newspaper *The Village Voice*, was that most of the poor in the United States were white and that the struggle needed to be framed along class lines, not race. While Abbie would continue to work with and be friends with Stokely (Carmichael once publicly said of Abbie "he's white and he's beautiful") he would give over the management of Liberty House and focus on anti-war efforts. The articles in the Voice had given Abbie some notoriety in New York radical circles.

Abbie had been reading the works of Marshall McLuhan on communication and the media. He said around this time that in seeking a forum for social change "a modern revolutionary group headed for the television station, not the factory." On the West Coast, the San Francisco Mime Troupe and other members of the Haight Asbury community were combining street theater with social action to call attention to problems. To call attention to the growing rat problem in the Haight, they protested in front of City Hall dressed as the Pied Piper and blowing penny whistles. They opened a soup kitchen in Golden Gate Park, but added music and dance to make it a social event. They called themselves "the Diggers" after an 18th century British uprising. A branch of the Diggers would come to New York and there Abbie would meet them.

At this time, Abbie had founded and was running the Free Store on the Lower East Side. Clothing, often used, was received as donations and given away to those that needed it. The local New York media loved it and Abbie even got to appear on *The David Susskind Show*. The New York Post dubbed Abbie a "happy" to contrast him with Hippies. The difference was that Abbie *did* stuff. After meeting the Diggers, Abbie began to stage media events. He illegally blocked off St. Mark's Place in the East Village to hold a music-filled pedestrian street party as part of community activism. Abbie was making a statement about the streets belonging to the people that lived there, not the commuters passing through. The party lasted until the police broke it up.



On another occasion, Abbie led a group into Macy's where they tried to give shoppers free (if used) clothing. The shoppers refused to accept. In an interview after he had been thrown out of the store, Abbie called the action a complete success. It provided a contrast between the misery of the shopper's lives, held down by their preoccupation with material things, and the generosity of the Digger lifestyle.

Abbie's activities had brought him the attention of the local police. The district captain for the East Village neighborhood was a Jew named Fink. According to Abbie, when Fink found out that Abbie was Jewish and even spoke a smattering of Yiddish, he treated him like a rabbi. One day, the local police arrested about 20 African-American kids for smoking pot. Abbie responded by pulling on his cowboy boots and heading down to the police station, where he demanded to be arrested as well. When he couldn't find anyone willing to arrest him, Abbie laid down in front of the station house door, blocking entrance and exit. The police summoned Captain Fink. Fink took Abbie aside and told him that he shouldn't be making a fuss as the arrested youths weren't hippies like him. Abbie went off "What do you mean "hippie?" I'm a n----- and I was smoking pot with them. Arrest me or let them go." Fink refused and tried to walk away. Abbie followed him into the main lobby shouting "Am I under arrest or not?" Again Fink ignored him. Abbie turned to a shining glass trophy case in the lobby, lined with trophies and medals. He carefully lifted his boot and kicked the case to pieces. At last Fink turned and screamed "You're under arrest!" Abbie responded "It's about f'n time!" As Jack Hoffman would put it "that earned him another night in The Tombs (the men's house of detention in New York) sleeping the untroubled sleep of the just."

As an aside, according to Abbie's own writings, marijuana was not just a recreational drug for him. Pot was a means to bridge the gaps between Hippies, African American activists and street people, Puerto Ricans, the white poor, etc. Of course, marijuana was not the only drug of the Sixties.

In 1967, Anita Kushner would meet Abbie at the Liberty House. Anita had been attending Columbia University as a graduate fellow in English. She had become interested in psychology and had transferred to Yeshiva University. She worked as a volunteer for the ACLU and that led her to volunteer at Liberty House. Here is how Abbie describes their meeting:

"We got to talking about civil rights, the South and so on. She asked me about drugs. I asked if she had ever taken LSD. When she responded that she hadn't, I threw her a white capsule. She juggled it the way that you would a lighted firecracker. That night we made love and have been doing it ever since." On June 8th, Abbie and Anita were married by their friend Linn House in a field in Central Park behind the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Anita would follow Abbie through all his major protests.

Abbie would organize the first Be-Ins in Sheep's Meadow in Central Park attended by tens of thousands of people. It was the Summer of Love. Around the corner from where Abbie and Anita were living, Bill Graham had opened the Fillmore East and was introducing New York to the music of the Grateful Dead, the Jefferson Airplane, Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin and Jim Morrison.

These several seemingly disparate events in Abbie's life created his identity. His early marriage had led him into politics through the Civil Rights movement. His divorce led him to New York. He was thrown out of the Civil Rights movement and transferred his enthusiasm to the anti-war movement. His rift with Stokely Carmichael was conducted in the pages of the Village Voice and on New York television, making Abbie into a media darling. He would read McLuhan and Abbie

would incorporate the street theater of the Diggers, along with his own political beliefs and McLuhan's concepts of the media influencing the message into something new, something that turned the media and television in particular into tool for revolution.

But Abbie might have remained a purely local figure, not known outside of New York, had it not been for his meeting Jerry Rubin. Abbie had staged yet another street theater event. He collected around \$300 by panhandling. On August 24, 1967 day, Abbie, Anita, and a small group that included Jerry Rubin, who they had just met, shut down the New York Stock Exchange by throwing the money to the floor of the exchange from the gallery. Chaos broke out as traders began scrambling for the bills. Guards grabbed the group and forced them outside. But no law had been broken. Abbie had let the media know that something was going to happen that day. Cameras and correspondents awaited. Abbie, Anita and Jerry set the remaining bills on fire for the cameras. The story would soon achieve legendary proportions.

When Abbie Met Jerry

Jerry was not just a spectator. In the summer of 1967, a wide variety of anti-war groups had joined together under the banner of the *National Mobilization Committee to End the War* or Mobe for a huge protest in Washington. Jerry had been asked by David Dellinger to assume the role of project organizer. And he had come to New York to recruit Abbie.

Jerry was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1938, two years after Abbie. Jerry's father, Bob, had driven a truck for a bread delivery company and been an organizer for the Teamsters Union.¹³ Jerry's mother, Esther, had worked as a nurse's aide until she became a full-time homemaker. Jerry edited the school newspaper at Walnut Hills High School, graduating in 1956. He attended and would graduate from the University of Cincinnati. Both Jerry's parents died within 10 months of each other, leaving Jerry as the caretaker his 13-year old brother, Gil. Jerry wanted to show Gil the world, starting with India. His relatives forbid him to take Gil there and threatened to rescind his custody of Gil. So Jerry took Gil to Israel instead. Jerry would enroll in Hebrew University to study sociology; Gil would stay in Israel and join a Kibbutz.

When Jerry returned to the U.S., he would enroll at UC Berkeley. In 1964, he would participate in his first protest, picketing a grocer who would not hire blacks. By 1965, Jerry was an organizer in the Berkeley Vietnam Day Committee (or VDC), holding the world's largest teach-in against the war¹⁴. Also in 1965, Jerry would violate U.S. law by traveling to Cuba, where he would meet with and interview Che Guevara. Rubin would tell Che that he wanted to stay in Cuba, but Che would tell him to take the revolution back to America.

By 1967, when they met, Jerry had established credibility with the national Vietnam War protest movement, whereas Abbie was a relative unknown, despite his media attention. But it would be Abbie that would shape the 1967 Washington protest. Jerry invited Abbie to speak at a press conference announcing the October protests.

Abbie had come up with an idea to gather a number of people to encircle the Pentagon and perform an exorcism to drive out the evil spirits that had clearly infected it. At the press conference Abbie took the idea even further, announcing that as a result of the exorcism the

¹³ <http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/Chicago7/RubinJ.htm>

¹⁴ <http://www.answers.com/topic/jerry-rubin>

Pentagon would levitate and rise 100 feet into the air. The press ignored all the “serious” protestors and focused on Abbie.

As the date for the protest drew closer, the Washington D.C. police announced that, if provoked, they would not hesitate to use MACE on the crowd. In response, Abbie held a press conference to introduce a fictional compound called LACE. He “sprayed” it on four couples sitting on a coach, spontaneously causing them to tear off their clothes and begin to make love. Abbie threatened to retaliate by spraying it on the police.

When the protest began on October 21st, 1967, Abbie (dressed as an American Indian and wearing an Uncle Sam hat) accompanied by Anita (wearing a Sgt. Pepper outfit) were the unquestioned focal points of the day. Tuli Kupferberg and the Fugs played from a truck to help the exorcism. On the first night, the Washington police waited until late in the evening, when the camera crews left, before attacking and beating other protestors who had camped in a park. But facing Abbie and the other protestors on the Pentagon steps were soldiers of the 82nd Airborne division. As the night drew on, soldiers and protestors began to develop camaraderie. After all, they were largely of the same age. In general, the protests at the Pentagon were considered the most successful and Abbie was the media darling on a national scale.

YIPPEE!

As 1967 drew to a close, the national protest movement began to consider the next big thing, which was to plan to demonstrate at the 1968 National Democratic Convention in Chicago. During one of the planning sessions, Paul Krassner was recovering from a binge. Paul is a figure worthy of his own biography. A one-time child prodigy who played violin at Carnegie Hall when he was only six, Paul was a protégé of Lenny Bruce, a member of Ken Kesey’s Merry Pranksters and a well known satirist. Paul, in a somewhat altered state of consciousness, noted that when you throw up a peace sign, your fingers and your arm actually form the letter “Y” not a “V.” This observation was made in the living room of the apartment of Abbie and Anita with Jerry and Jerry’s girlfriend Nancy Kurshan in attendance. The observation about the Y led someone to say “Yip” which became defined as the Youth International Party. Paul responded by saying Yippie! The Yippies would replace the Hippies. Within a month, every underground paper and multiple traditional news outlets were carrying stories about the new Yippie! movement that was about to sweep the nation. Abbie had created a new myth.

Publicly, Abbie defined the Yippie! Movement as comprising “stoned-out warrior(s) of the Aquarian Age.” Privately and to family he described the Yippie! as a Jewish hippie.

Chicago



The 1968 Chicago protests and the subsequent Trial of the Chicago Seven represent, for me, the highs and lows of American politics. Before we can even begin to discuss what happened, we must put it in historical context. It followed the Tet Offensive in Vietnam, after which many Americans first began to doubt if the war could be won. On April 4th of that year, Martin Luther King had been assassinated, leading to riots in more than 100 American cities. On June 5th, Robert “Bobby” Kennedy was assassinated while walking through the kitchen of the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles. We all watched the aftermath as it had been filmed.

Kennedy had just finished speaking to supporters after winning the California Democratic Presidential primary.

It was in this context that 10,000 protestors, including those affiliated with the Yippee! Movement, the Students For A Democratic Society and the National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam. They were met by a force of 23,000 police and National Guardsman.

The mayor of Chicago at this time was Richard J. Daley, a machine politician who ran Chicago from 1955 until 1976. He could and did deliver the vote for many politicians, including John F. Kennedy. Many members of the Daley Chicago machine were convicted of political corruption, but Mayor Daley was never even formally accused. When asked why he had called in so many police and National Guard, Daley replied that he had received reports of plots to assassinate politicians, including himself.



Daley believed that the best way to stop the protest was to withhold permits. But rather than simply refusing to grant permits, an action that might have been legally challenged, he ordered the officials negotiating with the leaders of the protest groups to introduce delay after delay. Daley had said “No thousands will come to our city and take over our streets, or city, our convention.”¹⁵ Despite Daley’s efforts, thousands did come to Chicago and camped in the city’s parks.

On August 23, 1968, Jerry Rubin, along with folk singer Phil Ochs, and other activists held their own presidential nominating convention. Their candidate was Pigasus, an actual pig. When the Yippies paraded Pigasus at the Civic Center, ten policemen arrested Rubin, Pigasus, and six others. This resulted in Pigasus becoming a media hit.

The nomination of Pigasus may have been the most normal thing that happened that week in Chicago. For reasons that have never been made clear, a delegate from the state of Georgia was escorted from the convention by security guards. When national news correspondent Dan Rather tried to interview him, Rather was assaulted by security guards. Walter Cronkite turned the attention of the national news to what Rather was being confronted. Rather was wearing a headset microphone and could be heard saying on national television “don’t push me” and “take your hands off me unless you plan to arrest me.” Then the guards punched him in the stomach, knocking the wind out of him. The whole incident was broadcast live.

On August 28th, 1968, a young boy attending a legal rally (one which had been granted a permit) in Grant Park lowered the American flag there. What happened next was described by the Walker Report as a “police riot.” The police entered the crowd of ten thousand and began beating the boy. The crowd responded by pelting the police with food, rocks and pieces of concrete. The police responded with so much tear gas that clouds drifted through the city. At the behest of leader Tom Hayden, the crowd moved out of the park. The confrontation in front of the Hilton Hotel, where candidates including Hubert Humphrey were staying, provided the images that were most memorable. The crowd was clearly aware of the circumstances and chanted at the police and National Guard “The



¹⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1968_Democratic_National_Convention

world is watching.” Images of the police indiscriminately beating protestors, reporters, camera men and bystanders were broadcast around the world. Images of jeeps with barbed wire attached to the sides sweeping the parks were reminiscent of the Soviet takeover of Hungary.

Connecticut Senator Abraham Ribicoff used his nominating speech for George McGovern to tell of the violence going on outside the convention hall, saying that “with George McGovern we wouldn’t have Gestapo tactics on the streets of Chicago.” Mayor Daley’s response was also caught on camera, and despite having been originally bleeped, it was later analyzed by lip-readers as the Mayor saying “F--- you, you Jew son of a b----! You lousy mother-----! Go home!”



The fist within the glove had been revealed. If you watched the coverage on television, and most of America did, you saw demonstrators, reporters and by-standers beaten, gassed and sprayed with Mace by Chicago police. The picture to the left, as an example, was news anchor John Evans, a bloody bandage around his own head from being struck by a police officer with a nightstick, interviewing a young man with blood streaming from his head. You didn’t see acts of terrorism or violence initiated by the Yippies or any other group of protestors. Despite the visual evidence that came into our living rooms each night, most Americans blamed the protestors and

supported the Chicago police.

After the assassination of Bobby Kennedy, the Democratic primary came down to a choice between liberal candidate Gene McCarthy or Vice President Hubert Humphrey. (Lyndon Baines Johnson, made old by his time in office, had chosen not to run.) Humphrey would win the nomination, but would lose a three-way election against Republican Richard Nixon and third-party candidate George Wallace, who basically ran on the pro-racist platform. Nixon would win with 43.4% of the popular vote; Humphrey would place second with 42.7% of the vote and Wallace would play the spoiler with 13.5% of the vote. Wallace carried 5 Southern states that, had they voted the Democratic ticket, would have been enough to send Humphrey to the White House.

The Trial of the Chicago Eight

After the events on the streets of Chicago, Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin, Tom Hayden, David Dellinger, Rennie Davis, John Froines, Lee Weiner and Bobby Seale were charged with conspiracy and incitement to riot. Ironically, it was provisions that were part of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 that made it a Federal crime to cross state lines to incite a riot.

Judge Julius Hoffman, who had been appointed to the U.S. District Court of the Northern District of Illinois by Eisenhower, was chosen to preside. Among other important cases in Hoffman’s career was the obscenity trial of Lenny Bruce. In a survey of area lawyers that included questions regarding impartiality and potentially antagonistic attitudes toward defense lawyers, 78% of the attorneys questioned had an unfavorable opinion of Hoffman.¹⁶

The trial began March 20, 1969 and would last until February 18, 1970. The trial and the preliminary Grand Jury had been held off until President Nixon and Attorney General John Mitchell had taken office. America was treated to a year of truly bizarre court-room drama. In addition to the defendants, many notables of the left were called to testify, including folk singers

¹⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julius_Hoffman

Phil Ochs, Judy Collins and Arlo Guthrie, writer Norman Mailer, LSD-advocate Timothy Leary and Reverend Jesse Jackson. It was not just a trial of radicals; the entire counter-culture was on trial.



At the outset of the trial, Black Panther Party activist Bobby Seale had wanted a postponement so that his own attorney, Charles Garry, could represent him. Garry had had gallbladder surgery. The request for postponement was refused as was Seale's subsequent requests to be tried separately and to represent himself. When the trial began, Seale insulted Judge Hoffman by calling him a "fascist dog," a "honky," a "pig," and a "racist," among other names. Hoffman had Seale bound, gagged and chained to a chair. He would be carried into the courtroom. When he was still able to make noises,

Hoffman had more chains added and then ropes. Finally, Seale was sentenced to 4 years in prison for contempt of court. The Trial of the Chicago Seven would proceed.

Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin and the other defendants, as well as their attorneys William Kunstler and Leonard Weinglass, viewed the trial as a unjust and the verdict a foregone conclusion. They were right. Documents that have only recently come to light under the Freedom of Information Act revealed that, on April 14th, 1969, months before the trial would actually start, the Special Agent in charge of the FBI's Chicago office reported to J. Edgar Hoover that Judge Hoffman intended to hold the defendants and their attorneys in contempt of court. On February 18th, 1970, all seven defendants would be cleared of the conspiracy charges; however Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin, Tom Hayden, David Dellinger and Rennie Davis would be convicted of crossing state lines to incite a riot and each would be sentenced to five years imprisonment and fined \$5,000. It is interesting to note that the jury originally was split, with eight jurors voting to convict defendants on both the conspiracy and intent to incite riot charges and four jurors voting to acquit on all charges. The foreman, Edward Kratzke, even went to far as to hand a hung-jury message to the marshal to take to Judge Hoffman. The judge's response: "Keep deliberating!" Eventually, the jury turned in the verdict that the judge wanted.¹⁷ Judge Hoffman would keep to his word by adding 159 counts of contempt of court citations, carrying prison time ranging from a few months up to four years, against the defendants and their two lawyers. It would take until 1973 for the original charges and the vast majority of the contempt citations to be thrown out by higher courts.

At the time of sentencing, Abbie Hoffman shouted at Judge Hoffman "You are a shande fur de Goyim [a disgrace in front of the Gentiles]. You would have served Hitler better."¹⁸

What Came Next

Despite the convictions, the Trial of the Chicago Eight could be considered a victory for the counter-culture revolutionaries. It provided Abbie and Jerry with national television exposure, with a forum to make the whole Establishment look silly. Judge Hoffman was the perfect foil,

¹⁷ <http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/Chicago7/Account.html>

¹⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julius_Hoffman

being so disagreeable and so unprofessional that he made the Chicago Eight look sympathetic and his bias would result in the convictions being overturned.

But as the decade of the Sixties turned into the Seventies, with the war in Vietnam not only continuing but actually escalating, things took a decidedly violent turn.

On March 4, 1970, a townhouse on West Tenth Street in Greenwich Village exploded, killing three members of the radical Weather Underground who had been making bombs inside. Allegedly, the bombs that were being prepared would have been used for the bombing of Columbia University. Abbie would later write that the explosion was “a blessing in disguise” as it saved potential innocent casualties. “People are flesh and blood, not symbols. Not only is this kind of terrorism an unworkable strategy, it is one that would only replace one heartless regime with another.”¹⁹ Those were Abbie’s words ten years after the explosion; at the time and for some time afterwards, both Abbie and Anita maintained close ties with the Weather Underground.

On March 27th, Abbie again made the news by appearing on the Merv Griffin Show wearing an American flag shirt. The majority of the audience never saw it; it was blacked out by the network in a very surrealistic bit of censorship. It did get Abbie back in the headlines.

On April 29, 1970, President Nixon invaded Cambodia. At this time, the secret and illegal daily B-52 bombings of North Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos were already reducing the region to an uninhabitable landscape. But the invasion triggered off student protests all across America.



On May 4th, 1970, the Ohio National Guard opened fire on a group of student protestors on the campus of Kent State University, killing four and wounding nine others. The picture of 14-year old runaway Mary Ann Vecchio kneeling in anguish over the body of Jeffrey Miller after he was shot to death would win a Pulitzer Prize. In addition to Miller, the other three students killed were Allison B. Krause, 20 years old; William Knox Schroeder, 19 years old; and Sandra Lee Scheuer, 20 years old. Krause, Miller and Scheuer were all Jewish; every year on the anniversary of the shootings, the Kent State Hillel recites the Kaddish for them. It speaks

volumes about Jewish involvement in the protests that while only 5% of the Kent State student population was Jewish, 75% of the victims were Jews.

During the early years of the new decade, Abbie and Jerry were both tied up in their various legal defenses. Not only were they on trial in Chicago, but they were summoned to appear before the House Un-American Affairs Committee (HUAC) twice. Both times, they mocked the committee, dressing up as Revolutionary War heroes and passing out copies of The Declaration of Independence (Rubin) or Santa Claus (Hoffman) or offering Nazi salutes, but the costs of travel and the time involved was driving them into bankruptcy.

At the same time, under direct orders from President Nixon through J. Edgar Hoover, the FBI and the CIA began a campaign of harassment. COINTELPRO (Counter Intelligence Program)

¹⁹ Abbie Hoffman, *Soon to be a Major Motion Picture* (Putnam Books, 1980)

conducted a series of covert, and often illegal, activities aimed at extremists. Founded in 1956, agents for COINTELPRO bugged phones, harassed friends and family members, conducted entrapment operations and basically used a series of dirty tricks. Customers of Abbie's father and brother were often stopped by FBI agents and asked if they knew of illegal activities. Agents tried to plant drugs. FBI undercover agents have been accused of inciting violence at demonstrations, which could then be used to prove conspiracy. In 1971, a group calling themselves the *Citizens' Commission to Investigate the FBI* burglarized an FBI field office in Media, Pennsylvania, took several dossiers, and exposed the program by passing this information to news agencies. Many news organizations initially refused to publish the information. Within the year, Director Hoover declared that the centralized COINTELPRO was over, and that all future counterintelligence operations would be handled on a case-by-case basis. Hoover lied. COINTELPRO continued on until 1976. The Church Committee (headed by Frank Church of Idaho) would summarize its findings as follows:

“Many of the techniques used would be intolerable in a democratic society even if all of the targets had been involved in violent activity, but COINTELPRO went far beyond that...the Bureau conducted a sophisticated vigilante operation aimed squarely at preventing the exercise of First Amendment rights of speech and association, on the theory that preventing the growth of dangerous groups and the propagation of dangerous ideas would protect the national security and deter violence.”²⁰

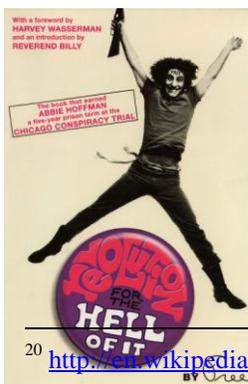
President Nixon had a special hatred for Abbie Hoffman. After the Nixon tapes came out during the Watergate hearings, The New York Times published a conversation between Nixon and his aide, H.R. Haldeman:

HALDEMAN: ...another of the Chicago Seven guys.
NIXON: Aren't the Chicago Seven all Jews? Davis's a Jew, you know.
HALDEMAN: I don't think Davis is.
NIXON: Hoffman, Hoffman's a Jew.
HALDEMAN: Abbie Hoffman is and that's so.

The harassment of Abbie had the desired effect; Abbie was penniless and desperate. The only thing that remained was to isolate him.

The Seventies

For Abbie and for America, the Seventies were a decade of transition, beginning as one thing and ending as quite another. That is more or less true of any decade, but seems to me especially true of the Seventies.



Despite, or perhaps in part because of, the trial, the Seventies must have seemed like the beginning of a bright new age for Abbie. From his own writings, we know that Abbie saw turmoil as creating opportunities for him.

Speaking of writing, Abbie had been supporting himself, and financing the movement, through his writing. In 1968, *Revolution for the Hell of It* was published, written by Abbie using the pseudonym of “Free.” In 1969, he wrote and recorded *Woodstock Nation: A Talk-Rock Album*. In 1971, Abbie

²⁰ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/COINTELPRO>

wrote his most successful and controversial title, *Steal This Book*. *Steal This Book* offered advice on everything from growing marijuana, how to start a pirate radio station, how to steal food, how to steal credit cards, how to get a free buffalo from the Dept. of the Interior. Practical stuff. The book also told revolutionaries where they could get weapons and armor that could be used to fight off law enforcement. Much of the information is outdated, but it served as a model for future books and underground magazines. In a way, it is a classic text. Abbie would comment about the book's success "It's embarrassing when you try to overthrow the government and you wind up on the Best Seller's List." As a footnote, Abbie was accused in a Rolling Stone article of having plagiarized sections.

In 1972, Abbie and Jack Hoffman both attended the Democratic National Convention, but this time as guests. Jack was part of Shirley Chisom's team and Abbie had officially endorsed George McGovern. It is doubtful that Abbie would have noticed a small story about a group of burglars arrested in the nearby Watergate building.

It is particularly ironic that just as Abbie was achieving mainstream acceptance, he was losing credibility with the Left. COINTELPRO had successfully planted disinformation that Abbie, and to a lesser extent Jerry, had profited hugely from book sales and movie rights. Nothing could have been further from the truth, Abbie was not only broke, he was deeply in debt. Abbie would blame Jerry for the rumors, ascribing them to jealousy. Not only did these rumors create rifts among the Yippie founders, they also cut Abbie off from any fund-raising opportunities. Perhaps this is what drove Abbie to dealing drugs. August 28, 1973, Abbie was arrested in a sting operation orchestrated by two NYC Narcotics officers, Robert Sasso and Arthur Nascarella. Abbie sold the two cops three pounds of cocaine that had been diluted or "stepped on" so hard that it had a purity of less than 17%. As Jack points out, if the cops had been real drug dealers, they probably would have killed Abbie for trying to sell that. That doesn't mean that Abbie was not guilty of selling drugs; he was just terrible at it.

In 1974, Abbie fled. For the next six years, Abbie would live under assumed identities. From 1976 until he resurfaced in 1980, he lived as Barry Freed, in Thousand Islands, N.Y. The degree to which Abbie was a sought after fugitive remains a matter of debate. According to the film *Steal This Movie*, Abbie at least felt himself to be a desperate criminal, being hotly pursued by the FBI, the CIA and other agencies. On the other hand, it has been pointed out that Abbie was interviewed on more than one occasion by national magazines, served as the travel editor for *Crawdaddy* magazine, had two books published and wrote 35 articles that appeared in print in one place or another. As Barry Freed, he had appeared on local television and radio stations, been commended by the governor of New York, testified before a U.S. Senate subcommittee, and been appointed to a federal water resources commission.²¹

In 1980, Abbie reappeared as Abbie, served one year in jail for the drug offence and his slate was cleared. Abbie would remain outspoken and politically active to one degree or another until his death in 1989. The coroner's ruling was that Abbie had taken a massive dose of Phenobarbital (the coroner found the residue of 150 pills) and alcohol and died in his sleep. In his last years, Abbie was said to have earned up to \$60,000 a year lecturing on the college circuit. He gave most of it away.

Jerry Rubin retired from the political scene in the 1970s. He moved to Echo Park in California and ran a legal and civil rights office. By the early 1980s, Jerry had turned into a business man

²¹ http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Abbie_Hoffman.aspx#1-1G2:3404703021-ful

and an entrepreneur. He became obsessed with self-improvement and tried, at one time or another, EST, Esalen, meditation, massage, acupuncture, hypnotism, health foods, tantric yoga, and rolfing. In 1980, Jerry became a stock broker. Jerry also was an early investor in Apple Computer. He founded the Business Networking Salons, Inc., a business that hosted parties at New York's Studio 54 where, for a fee, attendees could give other attendees their business cards. In 1992, Jerry joined a "multilevel sales" company called Omnitron International, which sold powdered drink mixes. That company and Rubin specifically were hit with a class action lawsuit for running a pyramid scheme. In 1994, Jerry was struck by a car and killed while jaywalking.

Summary and Epilogue

Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin were only two of the many Jewish radicals of the 1960s. We could easily add Meir Kahane forming the JDL in 1968; or the disenchanted former Trotskyites from New York who would form the neoconservative movement around 1970. Again, in America we refer to radicals of the Right as well as the Left. But for me, Abbie and Jerry seem almost archetypes of the Jewish American radical.

Abbie and Jerry both became involved in politics through participation in the Civil Rights movement of the late 1950s and early 1960s. As the political landscape changed, they shifted their focus to the anti-war movement. They became radicals because they refused to ignore certain facts:

The United States government was engaged in a long-standing war without a formal Declaration of War by our Congress.

In order to maintain support for the war from the American people, our Presidents lied about the reasons that we entered the war, about our likelihood of winning the war and about the numbers of civilian casualties that came about as a result of the war.

To protect the initial web of lies, additional lies and subterfuges were necessary. Anyone who broke the code of silence was branded a traitor.

The government further spied on our own citizens and authorized numerous illegal actions to suppress those who questioned the war efforts.

Here is where the real crux of the matter lies. It is perfectly reasonable, especially in time of war to guard military secrets from leaking to the enemy. It is not reasonable or legal to withhold information from the American people because, if they were in full possession of the facts, they would not support the war. That was true about Vietnam then and just as true about Iraq and Afghanistan. In all three cases, internal reports about the likelihood of winning the war (or winning the peace) were hidden and reports of civilian casualties were concealed. That is not strategic information...the people in Baghdad already know how many and how often civilians are killed. It is the American people that had to be kept in the dark or fed misinformation. Otherwise we wouldn't have supported the wars as we have.

On April 22nd, 2011, President Obama passed judgment on Bradley Manning, stating "He broke the law." This was clearly a misstatement made to the press since Bradley Manning has not yet been tried. President Obama explained his reasoning "So people can have philosophical views [about Bradley Manning] but I can't conduct diplomacy on an open source [basis]... That's not how the world works. And if you're in the military... And I have to abide by certain rules of

classified information. If I were to release material I weren't allowed to, I'd be breaking the law. We're a nation of laws! We don't let individuals make their own decisions about how the laws operate. He broke the law."²²

While this was probably just a slip of the tongue, Bradley Manning was certainly treated like he had already been found guilty. Manning was arrested on May 26, 2010, and held at first in a military jail at Camp Arifjan in Kuwait and then transferred to the Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia, and classified as a "maximum custody detainee" held under a "Prevention of Injury" assignment, which is just short of a suicide watch. He was held in solitary confinement, restricted to his cell 23 hours a day. Even his meals had to be eaten in his cell. According to his lawyer and confirmed by several human rights organizations, he was not allowed to sleep between 5 AM (7 AM at weekends) and 8 PM, and if he tried to, was made to stand or sit up. He was required to remain visible at all times, including at night, which entailed no access to sheets, no pillow except one built into his mattress, and a blanket designed not to be shredded. Until March 2011 he was required to sleep only in boxer shorts, and had experienced chafing of the skin from the heavy blanket. When told that this was to prevent him from killing himself, he joked that he could harm himself "with the elastic waistband of his underwear or with his flip-flops." This resulted in Manning being required to sleep without clothing and present himself naked outside his cell for morning inspection, which his lawyer described as ritual humiliation. On March 10th, 2010, he was finally given a wrap-around smock with Velcro fasteners to sleep in. The prison psychiatrist had described Manning as a low risk for suicide.²³

As the months dragged on, allegations of mistreatment grew. The United Nations Special Reporter on torture, Juan Mendez, submitted an inquiry to the State Department and later filed a complaint when he was denied an unsupervised meeting. Amnesty International filed a complaint, as did the British Government. In March, a US State Department spokesperson, Philip J. Crowley would comment to a small group that he thought Manning's treatment was "ridiculous and counterproductive and stupid." Two days later, he resigned.

It was in response to growing complaints that President Obama would begin to address the concerns at a news conference. "I have actually asked the Pentagon whether or not the procedures that have been taken in terms of his confinement are appropriate and are meeting our basic standards. They assured me that they are. I can't go into details about some of their concerns, but some of this has to do with Private Manning's safety as well."²⁴ He would later add that he thought Manning was guilty.

When asked about comparisons of Manning and Daniel Ellsberg, President Obama added "It wasn't the same thing. What Ellsberg released wasn't classified in the same way. So. Anyway. Alright."

Finally, 295 American scholars wrote an open letter, published in the *New York Review of Books* stating their belief that the conditions of Manning's detention violated both the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution prohibiting cruel and unusual punishment, and the Fifth Amendment's guarantee against punishment without trial. Bowing to growing pressure, Bradley Manning was transferred to a medium security wing at Fort Leavenworth. He has yet to be tried.

²² <http://www.forbes.com/sites/andygreenberg/2011/04/22/video-of-obama-on-bradley-manning-he-broke-the-law/>

²³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bradley_Manning#Complaints_about_detention.2C_government_response

²⁴ *ibid*

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