



## **University District The 1960s, Civil Rights, and Vietnam**

### **Historical Context and Overview**

The 1960s was a decade of social and cultural change greater than any period since the “Roaring ‘20s.” Millions of postwar baby boomers became teenagers and young adults in the 1960s. Many young people in this generation challenged the traditional values of earlier generations. Those in this counterculture promoted individuality and challenged authority. Many experimented with new ideas about music, clothes, drugs, and personal relationships.

By 1968, public opinion was sharply divided over U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. The assassinations in 1968 of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Senator Robert Kennedy also increased tensions in the nation. Antiwar protesters marched on Washington, D.C. in 1969 to demand an end to the war. In 1970, many college campuses erupted in protest. College students staged demonstrations and displayed their resistance to the draft. Protests and riots on the Ohio State campus began on April 29, 1970 and continued until the University shut down on May 6. Two days before the shutdown at Ohio State, five students at Kent State University were killed by National Guardsmen during Vietnam War protests.

### **Standards Alignment**

#### **Ohio's New Learning Standards: K-12 Social Studies**

American History Content Statement 28: Following World War II, the United States experienced a struggle for racial and gender equality and the extension of civil rights.

American History Content Statement 31: Political debates focused on the extent of the role of government in the economy, environmental protection, social welfare and national security.

### **Learning Objectives**

- Analyze the social and cultural changes in American society in the 1960s.
- Describe the characteristics of the counterculture and how these characteristics were evident in the University District.
- Explain the reasons for the protests and riots on college campuses in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

## Discussion Questions

1. How did alternative groups, organizations, media, and businesses in the University District in the 1960s reflect the changes in the social fabric of America?
2. What types of protest movements emerged in the University District in the 1960s?
3. What major historical event fueled the protest movement at Ohio State? Why did students protest this event?
4. What forms of protest did students use to gain attention for their cause?
5. What is a conscientious objector?
6. Describe the riots that took place on campus beginning on April 29, 1970. How were these events similar to what happened at other campuses, particularly Kent State?
7. What was the purpose of Comfest? How did it reflect the counterculture movement?

## Extension Activities

Have students create a multimedia presentation showing the characteristics of 1960s counterculture. The presentations should both images and music from the decade. Students can use PowerPoint, Prezi, MovieMaker or other digital media tools to create and present their projects.

Have students create an original protest poem or song that reflects the counterculture spirit of the 1960s.

## Additional Resources

Timeline of the 1960s - <http://history1900s.about.com/od/timelines/tp/1960timeline.htm>

Ohio History Central: Vietnam War Protestors -  
<http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/entry.php?rec=1674>

Ohio History Central: Kent State Shootings -  
<http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/entry.php?rec=1595>

Funding provided by:

