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Van Gosse

Franklin and Marshall College

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Foreword

The Bedford Series in History and Culture is designed so that readers can study the past as historians do.

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Lynn Hunt
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Preface

The Movements of the New Left, 1950–1975, is a documentary history of New Left radicalism from its birth in the 1950s through its dispersion and institutionalization in the early 1970s. The book begins with the premise that to understand the multiple social movements of that period we have to recognize them collectively as the New Left. This conception departs from the commonplace definition of the New Left as the white student movement of the 1960s, placed between a civil rights movement beginning in the 1950s and the women's liberation movement cresting in the 1970s. An inclusive definition of the New Left is both more accurate and more useful in introducing students to the complex political dynamics of "the Sixties." Instead of learning about many separate strands of activism, students are encouraged to seek commonalities, to analyze how "the Movement" as a whole changed over time. In particular, I hope this book challenges students to think about the commitment shared by all of these movements to a radical understanding of democracy, and how that resonates in American history.

This book is therefore broad in coverage; no other collection of documents on the Sixties includes such a wide range of groups and individuals. In addition to the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Tom Hayden, Martin Luther King Jr., Betty Friedan, and Malcolm X, students will explore primary sources from the Mattachine Society, the Congressional Black Caucus, the Young Lords Party, Father Daniel Berrigan, and Congresswoman Bella Abzug. In addition to a wide variety of voices, students will encounter a broad range of source types, including manifestos, testimonies, speeches, newspaper advertisements, letters, and excerpts from books.

The organization of *The Movements of the New Left, 1950–1975*, combines chronological and thematic approaches. In the introduction to the documents each movement is examined in turn within a periodization of successive phases: first, the transition from the 1940s to

the cold war era, when the first hints of a new radicalism appeared; second, the dramatic upsurge in 1960–65, as the civil rights movement peaked, creating space for other movements; third, the confrontation with cold war liberalism in 1965–68, led by the antiwar movement; finally, the culminating phase during Nixon’s presidency, when many new movements emerged, and the larger Left dispersed.

The introduction is followed by forty-five documents, representing all parts of the New Left over a quarter century, from the earliest stirring of gay rights activism in 1950 through the consolidation of feminism and Black Power in the 1970s. Each document is introduced by a headnote that situates it historically and provides key information about its author. Footnotes clarify topical references within each document. The documents are followed by a chronology to help students trace the chain of causality between major events and various movements, questions for consideration to aid class discussion, and a selective bibliography for students who wish to pursue research on a particular movement or individual. Finally, the index lists all common acronyms—such as SNCC and SDS—for easy reference.

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Among many helpful colleagues, I want to thank several who made documents available or read individual chapters. Max Elbaum shared with me his encyclopedic knowledge of the late sixties and the New Communist Movement. Lise Vogel encouraged me to rethink the conventional narrative of women’s liberation. James Miller improved my understanding of Black Power, and is always a good friend. Jeffrey Escoffier pointed me at the right books to read on gay liberation. I owe a special debt to Ellen Schrecker, Yeshiva University, who originally inspired me to propose a Bedford book and has critiqued several versions of this manuscript. She and Nancy MacLean, Northwestern University; Robert O. Self, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee; R. War-

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This book is dedicated to a fellow activist and historian, Johanna O'Mahony Gosse, and to her wonderful mother and fellow historian, Eliza Jane Reilly. They are my best teachers.

Van Gosse

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