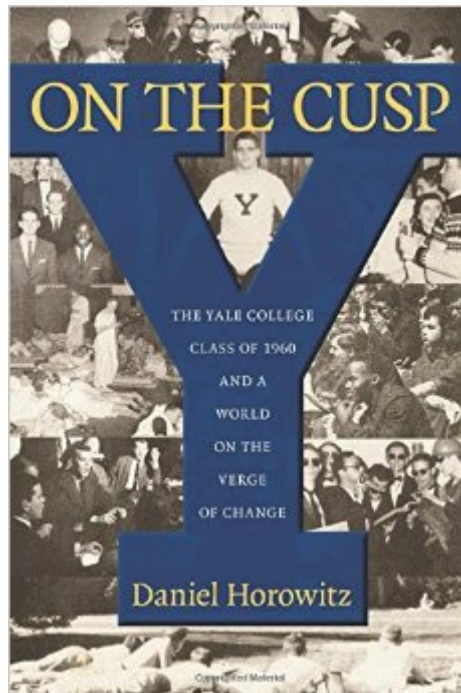


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On The Cusp: The Yale College Class Of 1960 And A World On The Verge Of Change



Synopsis

How did the 1950s become "The Sixties"? This is the question at the heart of Daniel Horowitz's *On the Cusp*. Part personal memoir, part collective biography, and part cultural history, the book illuminates the dynamics of social and political change through the experiences of a small, and admittedly privileged, generational cohort. A Jewish "townie" from New Haven when he entered Yale College in fall 1956, Horowitz reconstructs the undergraduate career of the class of 1960 and follows its story into the next decade. He begins by looking at curricular and extracurricular life on the all-male campus, then ranges beyond the confines of Yale to larger contexts, including the local drama of urban renewal, the lingering shadow of McCarthyism, and decolonization movements around the world. He ponders the role of the university in protecting the prerogatives of class while fostering social mobility, and examines the growing significance of race and gender in American politics and culture, spurred by a convergence of the personal and the political. Along the way he traces the political evolution of his classmates, left and right, as Cold War imperatives lose force and public attention shifts to the civil rights movement and the war in Vietnam. Throughout Horowitz draws on a broad range of sources, including personal interviews, writings by classmates, reunion books, issues of the Yale Daily News, and other undergraduate publications, as well as his own letters and college papers. The end product is a work consistent with much of Horowitz's previously published scholarship on postwar America, further exposing the undercurrent of discontent and dissent that ran just beneath the surface of the so-called Cold War consensus.

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Customer Reviews

Who comprised the silent generation and why were they silent? We who lived out our college years in the late 1950s were known by that epithet, but few of us understood why, or how we got that way. Daniel Horowitz, eminent historian and a member of the Yale College class of 1960, shook off the pall that plagued our generation, even as he lived it in his university years, and now comes forth with an incisive analysis of the political, social and cultural forces which even then were prompting major change, which only began to appear in the early 1960s. Using his own college years as a case study, the author places one hand-picked class of America's future leaders under a microscope. He examines the emerging impulse for change and the serious impetus of the pressing national and global issues of race, gender equality, sexual identity and turning America's attention from the Cold War to emerging nations, while attempting to free it from the grip of a powerful military industrial complex. He recounts how he joined a small but growing group of politically aware undergraduates, who planted their new agenda in the fertile soil of impatient, discontented thinkers among a vast majority of the politically apathetic — a hedonistic, self-satisfied and newly affluent college generation. He traces how they attracted the attention and participation of students from many of nation's leading colleges and universities and helped to coalesce a new movement. That the author should claim such a revolution had its roots at Yale may at first seem self-centered and unlikely, even odd.

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