



YOUNG HONORARY
CIVIL RIGHTS
ARE PRESENT

1 X 114 HD

1964



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1964 was the year The Beatles came to America, Cassius Clay became Muhammad Ali, and three civil rights workers were murdered in Mississippi. It was the year when African Americans fought back against injustice in Harlem, New York, and Barry Goldwater's conservative revolution took over the Republican Party. Based in part on *The Last Innocent Year: America in 1964* by Jon Margolis, *1964* follows some of the most influential figures of the time—Lyndon Johnson, Barry Goldwater, and Betty Friedan—but also brings out from the shadows the stories of ordinary Americans whose principled stands would set the country onto a new and different course.

As champagne popped on December 31, 1963, America's optimism was tinged with a deep anxiety. Just five weeks earlier, President Kennedy had been assassinated, leaving Americans shaken and vulnerable. Eight days into the new year, the new president, Lyndon Johnson, gave his first State of the Union address, demanding an end to racial injustice and an "unconditional war on poverty in America." Only a few days earlier, Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater had announced his intention to seek the Republican nomination for president, igniting a conservative movement.

The arrival of The Beatles electrified teenagers across the country. One day after shocking the sports world by defeating Sonny Liston and becoming the heavyweight champion of the world, the young Cassius Clay announced he had become a Muslim. Awakened by Betty Friedan's bestseller *The Feminine Mystique*, millions of mostly middle-class women began to reject their conventional roles in society and embrace new identities and values, sparking a feminist movement that would transform American culture.

On the political front, seismic change could also be felt. President Johnson used his legendary powers of persuasion to engineer the passage of the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964. But even with the historic federal commitment to advance the cause of equality, racial unrest, in both the rural South and the cities of the North, would continue to fester.

In June, nearly 300 students and veteran civil rights activists joined together to launch Freedom Summer, a nonviolent campaign to challenge Mississippi's voter registration laws. Three of the young activists—two whites from the North and a local black volunteer—went missing. While the search for the men continued, the killing of a black youth by a white police officer in Harlem triggered an explosion of violence and looting that shocked the nation. For the first time, the racial violence that had defined the civil rights struggle in the South was consuming a northern city.

That November, Johnson was elected president by a landslide. But his fight for civil rights in the South transformed the previously democratic region into a formidable block for the emerging republican right. Out of the ashes of Goldwater's defeat, young republicans regrouped and finally made good on their conservative revolution. Young people increasingly embraced the growing counterculture and women, awakened by the ideas set forth in *The Feminine Mystique*, would go on to champion a revolution that forever changed the nature of American society.

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CREDITS

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