

## **Why did so many Americans oppose the Vietnam War?**

October 1969: Millions of people across America protested against the Vietnam war. But who were they and why did they do it?

Students for a Democratic Society was the bedrock of the protest movement. Throughout the 60s, university campuses were influenced by hippie culture - a belief in peace and love - and many students were angered by the deaths of Vietnamese civilians.

Male students faced being drafted into the army once their studies ended, and they didn't want to fight in a war they didn't believe in.

Black Americans were disproportionately drafted into the army. Combined with racial prejudice at home this angered the civil rights movement. In 1966 boxer Mohammad Ali was convicted after he refused the draft on religious grounds and in protest against racism.

In 1967 Martin Luther King Jr. condemned the war's impact on black Americans. Ali and King put black opposition to the war under a national spotlight.

In 1967 Vietnam Veterans Against the War was formed. They were disillusioned by their experiences of Vietnam and they lent credibility to the antiwar movement.

Then, in 1968, while campaigning for President, Richard Nixon promised...

...“an honorable end to the war.” This committed his government to withdrawal from Vietnam.

By Autumn 1969 mass protests drew people from all walks of life. Growing public opposition came from rising US military deaths - over 16,000 in 1968 - events like the My Lai massacre, and the shooting of protestors at home, such as Kent State in 1970.

The media amplified opposition, regularly broadcasting images of war and protest.

Together, these groups helped turn the tide of public opinion, leading to America's withdrawal from Vietnam in 1973.