U R G E N T (Please deliver immediately)

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Here are some points that would make for a good discussion of the changing legacy on the 1960s, based on the new edition of my book Gates of Eden: American Culture in the Sixties (Harvard):

1) Our outlook is changing: Once the sixties seemed like a revolutionary break. Now they look to us like the last phase of the buoyant, optimistic postwar culture--so unlike the culture of limits and economic strains that crash-landed in the 70s. In retrospect, even the famous sexual revolution of the 60s now seems like a offshoot of the postwar consumer culture--I want it ALL, NOW--combined with the new technology of the Pill.

2) Confrontations: 1998 marks the 30th anniversary of many defining moments of the sixties: the Tet offensive, the King assassination, the Columbia student uprising (which set the pattern for years of campus takeovers), the French student and worker uprising, Robert Kennedy's assassination, the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, the bloody battles at the Chicago convention, and the election of Nixon. In a sense this marks the breaking point, the year the 60s really "happened."

3) CULTURE: The culture of the sixties is what my book is mainly about: On the one hand, with Ginsberg and Burroughs dying in the same year, it's fading into history. On the other hand, it never goes away, and the Beats, for example, seems more talked about than ever. Why have the icons of the 60s, like Bob Dylan, the Beatles, and the Stones, proved so enduring? Even the writers who dominated the scene, like Mailer, Pynchon, Vonnegut, Roth, and Tom Wolfe, have been the long-distance runners, still in there. What's kept them going? What do they still have to say to us?

4) Sorting it all out: When it comes down to it, what do we mean by the 60s? Do we mean the Warren court, the civil rights movement, LBJ, the Yippies, the political battles in Congress, the culture of sex, drugs, and rock'n'roll, the campus protest movements, the new black nationalism, the new media scene? All these need to be sorted out. Which of them had the most lasting impact? Did they give rise to today's identity politics, including feminism, gay liberation, and ethnic pride? To political correctness? To decades of drug abuse? To a 30-year conservative backlash? To the Vietnam syndrome? To the environmental movement? Did they kill the Left for the next generation, making even liberalism a dirty word? How did the same period manage to produce Bill Clinton and Newt Gingrich?

5) Utopia, Ltd.: Could something like the 60s ever happen again? Where are they now, that student generation? (In power, some would say.) What do today's students think of them? How much of the agenda of the sixties has been realized, how much forgotten? I think all this would make quite a good conversation.