



# Community and Organization in the New Left, 1962-1968: The Great Refusal

*Wini Breines*

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## **Community and Organization in the New Left, 1962-1968: The Great Refusal** Wini Breines

Did New Left activists have an opportunity to start a revolution that they simply could not bring off? Was their rejection of conventional forms of political organization a fatal flaw or were the apparent weaknesses of the movement -- the lack of central authority, the distrust of politics -- actually hidden strengths?

Wini Breines traces the evolution of the New Left movement through the Free Speech Movement, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), and SDS's community organization projects. For Breines, the movement's goal of participatory decision-making, even when it was not achieved, made up for its failure to take practical and direct action. By the late 1960s, antiwar activism contributed to the decline of the New Left, as the movement was flooded with new participants who did not share the founding generation's political experiences or values.

Originally published in 1982, Wini Breines's classic work now includes a new preface in which she reassesses, and for the most part affirms, her initial views of the movement. She argues that the movement remains effective in the midst of radical changes in activist movements. Breines also summarizes and evaluates the new and growing scholarship on the 1960s. Her provocative analysis of the New Left remains important today.

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