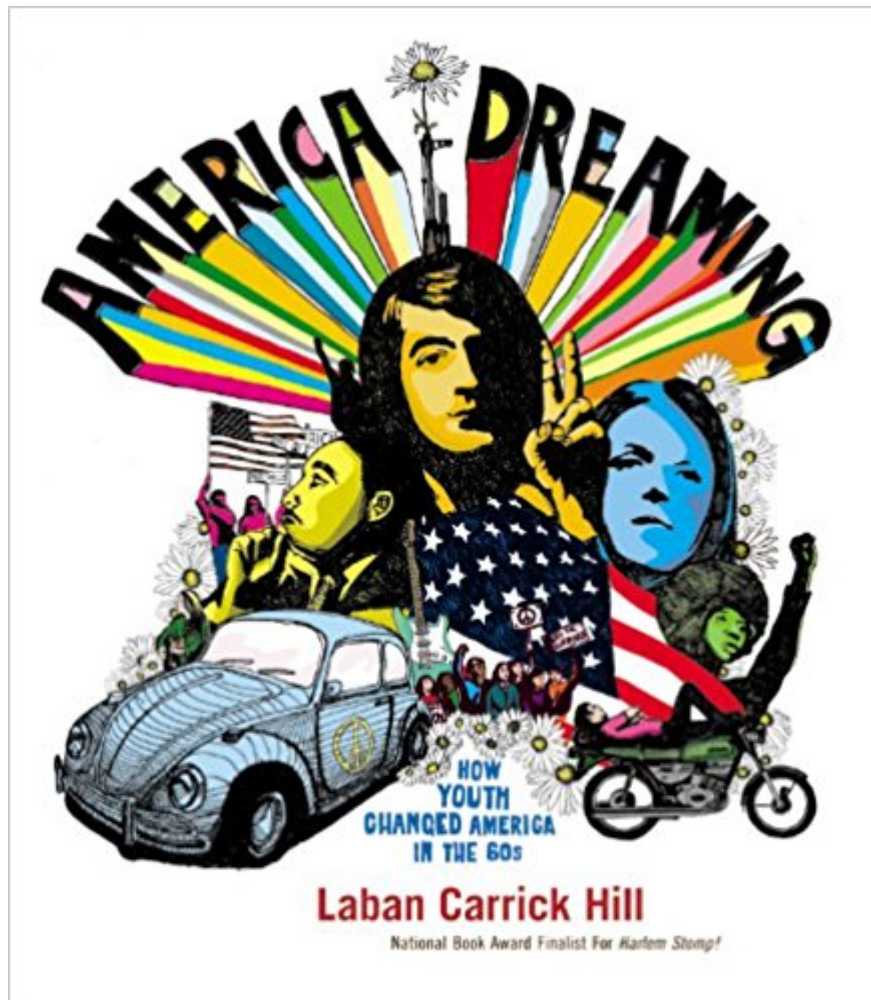




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America Dreaming: How Youth Changed America In The 60's



Synopsis

Laban Hill, author of the acclaimed *Harlem Stomp*, is back with an in-depth exploration of America in the 1960's and the young people who built a new world around them and changed our society significantly. Like *Harlem Stomp*, *America Dreaming* is an educational and visual look into a time of energy and influence. Covering subjects such as the civil rights movement, hippie culture, black nationalism, and the feminist movement, Hill paints a sprawling picture of life in the '60's and shows how teenagers were on the forefront of the societal changes that occurred during this grand decade.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

An extensively researched and extraordinary piece of work : an essential resource for children and adults of all ages. * - Howard Zim, author of *A People's History of the United States* *

Laban Carrick Hill is the author of National Book Award finalist *Harlem Stomp*! The author of more than 25 books, his young adult novel *Casa Azul* was a 2005 New York Public Library Best Book for the Teen Age selection. His most recent young adult novel is *A Brush with Napoleon*. Hill is currently teaching writing and literature at Vermont College and is part of the core faculty at Pine Manor College, MFA Program in Creative Writing.

In an amazingly clear and concise 175 pages or so the history and influence of the Boomer generation is laid out for a young adult audience. Starting with the post-war population boom and

suburban expansion, the book focuses on the various key elements and movements that brought about the most sweeping changes in the way America and Americans defined themselves, for better or worse, and how young adults were at the forefront. The opening chapter sets the stage as 1950's Americans flooded to the pre-fab development communities of Levittown, as television and rock-and-roll took the cultural stage, as the Cold War began to heat up. Then chapter by chapter another piece to the puzzle is added -- the race for space, the Kennedy Camelot including the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Beatles and psychedelia and free love, the Civil Rights Movement. All tried and true subjects, but what makes this fascinating are the chapters on the Black Power Movement (including the full text of the Black Panther Party's Ten-Point Plan), the Chicano and Native American movements, the radical anti-war protests (not just Kent State but the Weathermen), the feminists and, as the boomers reached the 1970's, the gay rights movement with a bit of coverage on the Stonewall riots. Hill doesn't shy away from messier topics like drugs or abortion rights, covering the material in an even-handed tone that gives readers a chance to draw their own conclusions and make their own connections. The chapters move in a mostly forward progression but they also stand alone in examining their subjects. History isn't presented here as a liner parade of facts and dates and places, but as ideas shaped by time and place, growing organically out of what came before without the tidiness or need for perfect order. Chaotic times call for a different narrative. The book flows at its own pace, to its internal rhythms. Readers might be surprised to learn just how politically and socially radical their parent's and grandparent's once were. If nothing more, the material gives plenty of ammunition for conversations about what things were like "back in the day." Presentation goes a long way. The book's larger size -- approximately 10 by 12 inches -- allow for large blocks of text to be accompanied by full-page images and sidebars filled with details and tidbits. Archival photos and period ephemera make this a triumph for the designers as well; the book feels fresh without veering into forced hipness, even if the subject matter is a few decades older than its intended audience. It also makes the book half as many pages as if presented as straight text, making it feel more accessible. My only quibble, and it is minor, is that the book really is more of a portrait of the boomer generation than a pure examination of the 1960's. At the end of the book there is a year-by-year summary of major events that starts in 1946 and ends at 1975, pretty much the formative years of the boomer generation. I doubt that anyone is really ready to present the boomers as a worthy subject of study for middle grade and young adult, but that's essentially what the 60's are about. That aside, this really is a fine introductory study for the third quarter of the 20th century. Now we need something exactly like this for the final quarter to explain how the gen-x generation brought us to where we are today.

America Dreaming is a great picture of the 60s for anyone. The layout is fabulous. The pictures, captions, and text (font, color and size) present each topic perfectly. I used this with middle school students who read carefully and completely. At times they mentioned they wished there was more information about a particular topic. Their discussions and responses showed an understanding of the subjects and times, and it led some to choose their research topics from the book. I wish there was more nonfiction for this age group that would engage students the way this book did.

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