

# About This Project

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We're a collective project engaged in a collaborative update and rewrite of Abbie Hoffman's seminal work, *Steal This Book*, updating its guides for the modern day. As Abbie wrote:

The developing technology on both the rebel and Enforcer sides is a constant struggle. One side thrusts, the other parries. Then the other side thrusts back. You have to be in the battle constantly to beat them.

This wiki project was originally launched over 20 years ago and was restored on this domain more than two years ago.

The site functions like Wikipedia: anyone can submit new texts or propose edits to existing ones.

Final decisions about which texts are published are made by a small collective of archivists, but all decisions are open to debate in the live chat discussion spaces linked below.

## Discussion Spaces

On the discord and matrix live chat spaces you'll get:

- Updates on when new texts go live.
- Help with how to request rare documents from university archives.
- The chance to co-ordinate with others on copy typing up handwritten documents onto the website.
- The option to debate what new texts go up on the website.

## Ethical steps taken by this project

Anyone can join the debate on discord and matrix over the creation of new pages and how texts should be edited, obviously if you join just to troll or spam though, you will be removed.

A record will be kept of all texts that were rejected, whether for minor formatting reasons or deeply held political reasons.

A record will also be kept of controversial texts that were approved, where for example there was a sizable disagreement.

## Frequently asked questions

### Was Abbie Hoffman an anarchist?

Yes, we think so, although his desire and many of the hippies desire to resist fixed ideologies did come narrowly close to what Chesterton warned against when he said "Do not be so open-minded that your brains fall out":

Abbie Hoffman (1936–1989) and Jerry Rubin were active anarchists during the New Left era of the 1960s and 1970s. They were founders of the Youth International Party (Yippies), an anticapitalist, antiwar, and antigovernment group, whose chief weapons were mockery and ridicule. In 1968 the Yippies nominated a pig for President of the United States. Their aim, declared Hoffman, was to "win the election, declare victory, and eat the candidate."

Hoffman's books include *Revolution for the Hell of It* (1967), *Woodstock Nation* (1969), and *Steal This Book* (1971). Rubin, who abandoned anarchism and became a stock broker, is the author of *Do It* (1970), *We Are Everywhere* (1971), and *Growing Up at Thirty-Seven* (1976).<sup>1</sup>

Here is how Abbie Hoffman described first becoming friends with his partner in crime Jerry Rubin:

I told him I would support what he was doing in the national antiwar movement and give him access to the counterculture. I took him up to WBAI and interviewed him on Bob Pass's show—translating what he was saying for the hip audience, as he was still unfamiliar with making language and imagery fit the style of the times.

Although Jerry was familiar with the be-in style, having been a participant of the first one in San Francisco, his presentation was still too forceful and rhetorical. It didn't have a silly element and the appeal to the spirit. This was how I complemented Jerry. In turn, he was more versed than I in getting the cultural revolution incorporated into a broader structure. We were two people who sensed the opportunity of blending the political and the cultural revolutions. Jerry's forte was the political timing, mine dramatic. I trusted his political judgment more than anyone's in the country. We were anarchists, but even among anarchists there are not that many who can map out a strategy and lead. Some anarchists are just more equal than others in that ability. Stubborn, attentive to the ways of power and the universe, Jerry had the drive and the political instincts to ride the movement waves...<sup>2</sup>

Here Abbie describes his clashes in beliefs with communists and how he drew inspiration from European anarchists:

Although we were close, Mark considered freaks an interesting sideshow to the main event, your standard commie interpretation of anarchist history...

In Europe there were several anarcho groups working on similar tracks. From Berlin came word of Fritz Teufel, Karl Pawla, and Kommune # 1...<sup>3</sup>

Here is how Abbie described a University occupation protesting their universities connections to the Vietnam War:

The Motherfuckers, Jim Fouratt, Anita—the whole gang was there, all battle-wise veterans by the spring of '68. Our colors were anarchist black or yippie pink and purple. Not exactly the hippieflower motif of Avery Hall, not as severe as the SDS students in Administration nor practicing the military discipline of the blacks who held the fort in Hamilton Hall. Like the Paris uprising of the same year, there was little centralized leadership. We had walkie-talkie communication between buildings, but everything that went on was more or less spontaneous.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, here is how Abbie discussed their Yippie New Nation concept:

We shall not defeat Amerika by organizing a political party. We shall do it by building a new nation—a nation as rugged as the marijuana leaf.<sup>5</sup>

Begin now: resist oppression as you feel it. Organize and begin the word of mouth communication that is the basis of all conspiracies...

Every man a revolution! Every small group a revolutionary center!<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Anarchist Voices

<sup>2</sup> Soon to be a major motion picture: Soon to be a Major Motion Picture

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Abbie Hoffman, *Woodstock Nation*, back cover. Vintage Books, 1969.

<sup>6</sup> Yippie Manifesto

Well the Democrats, the Republicans, you know, they're all sort of pigs. We don't, maybe. We don't believe in the concept of President. You know, [that] there ought to be a president and that kind of centralization of power. So yeah, central government has a tremendous amount of power in this country, and it's very bureaucratic. And it's as much the bureaucracy of this country and the sterility of this country as much as its evilness, especially in terms of war in Vietnam and the way it treats poor people and black people that brings us to this park. So does that do it?<sup>7</sup>

## What was the Yippies New Nation concept?

Quoting Wikipedia:

The Yippie “New Nation” concept called for the creation of alternative, counterculture institutions: food co-ops; underground newspapers and zines; free clinics and support groups; artist collectives; potlatches, “swap-meets” and free stores; organic farming/permaculture; pirate radio, bootleg recording and public-access television; squatting; free schools; etc. Yippies believed these cooperative institutions and a radicalized hippie culture would spread until they supplanted the existing system. Many of these ideas/practices came from other (overlapping and intermingling) counter-cultural groups such as the Diggers, the San Francisco Mime Troupe, the Merry Pranksters/Deadheads, the Hog Farm, the Rainbow Family, the Esalen Institute, the Peace and Freedom Party, the White Panther Party and The Farm. There was much overlap, social interaction and cross-pollination within these groups and the Yippies, so there was much crossover membership, as well as similar influences and intentions.

“We are a people. We are a new nation,” YIP’s New Nation Statement said of the burgeoning hippie movement. “We want everyone to control their own life and to care for one another ... We cannot tolerate attitudes, institutions, and machines whose purpose is the destruction of life, the accumulation of profit.” ...

The Youth International Party quickly spread beyond Rubin, Hoffman and the other founders. YIP had chapters all over the US and in other countries, with particularly active groups in New York City, Vancouver, Washington, D.C., Detroit, Milwaukee, Los Angeles, Tucson, Houston, Austin, Columbus, Dayton, Chicago, Berkeley, San Francisco and Madison. There were YIP conferences through the 1970s, beginning with a “New Nation Conference” in Madison, Wisconsin in 1971.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, quoting an article on *The Real Abbie Hoffman*:

I like Abbie Hoffman because he knew how to, in his words, “make outrage contagious.” He pissed people off, but he did it in the name of values worth defending. When he wore his American flag shirt on the Merv Griffin show, the network censors were so horrified that they turned the entire screen blue for the duration of his appearance. In retrospect, it seems incredible that this could ever have been controversial, but the counterculture had not yet won. This was a time when people were roughed up and arrested for having long hair, before the right to abortion had been secured. America had to be liberated from the reactionaries and squares, and the hippies and yippies were a vital part of it.

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<sup>7</sup> The Real Abbie Hoffman

<sup>8</sup> Wikipedia – Youth International Party

When Hoffman spoke, he said, he “never tried to play on the audience’s guilt, and instead appeal to feelings of liberation, a sense of comradeship, and a call to make history. I played all authority as if it were a deranged lumbering bull and the daring matador.” This gleeful “fuck you” anarchist spirit is valuable.<sup>9</sup>

## **How easy was the website to set up?**

We just bought the domain then asked the Anarchist Libraries Network to set up the Amuse Wiki software. They did it all for us for free, had it running virtually right away and have helped answer any questions.

If you’d like to set up your own anarchist library with this software you can get the same help by following the steps described here.

There’s also multiple IRC channels you can find if you’re curious to live chat to them: [www.web.libera.chat/#amusewiki](http://www.web.libera.chat/#amusewiki)

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<sup>9</sup> The Real Abbie Hoffman

Steal This Wiki

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**stealthiswiki.com**