

**Billy Clubs and Barricades: Madison's
Vietnam War Protesters Break the Barriers
of Fear and Blind Obedience**

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Group Website

Word Count: 499

We were determined to find a pivotal moment in Wisconsin history to research for our project. By choosing a topic based in Wisconsin, we were able to develop a deep connection to the subject. After finding David Maraniss' book, *They Marched into Sunlight*, we knew the Dow Protests would be perfect. Despite being Madisonians, we had not heard of the Dow Riot. Because of the topic's complexity, we had completed a significant amount of research in order to understand the main barriers that the protesters broke. Aidan's participation in the climate movement and Simon's interest in the Vietnam War made the process of creating our project more meaningful. It was fascinating to uncover Madison's history of protests and how they have made Madison, Wisconsin a city of change.

We began our research on the Dow Chemical Protests by reading articles and watching films, then looking through the Wisconsin Historical Society's archives for primary sources. There, we found pamphlets, news clippings, and images, furthering our understanding of the stigma around the anti-war movement. Looking through those original documents inspired us to dive deeper and to create our own connections among protests, the public's perspective, and the national anti-war movement. Since our topic took place in the 1960s, we were fortunate enough to hear the stories of six experts on our topic, ranging from reporters to government officials. With every interview we went back to research, exploring new ideas that arose. After getting feedback from judges at the state level, we continued our research to balance our project, starting by interviewing a Vietnam War veteran. Additionally, we found footage from the archives in order to better root our project in the historical moment.

The website format allows us to combine interviews, primary source documents, images, and writing together to create a cohesive message. Furthermore, since we go to different schools, the platform allowed us to collaborate remotely. Additionally, Aidan enjoys and has experience in graphic design. We spent the majority of our time writing the content. Eventually, we designed our website, inserting quotes, images, and videos to help involve our reader.

During the Dow Chemical Protests, students overcome the psychological barriers of fear and blind obedience. In 1967, UW-Madison issued a warning to the students that they could face punishments if they participated in the Dow Protest. Despite the warning, students broke through fear instilled by the University by risking their future to fight for their beliefs. By protesting the University's involvement in the war, they were also risking expulsion and facing the likelihood of being drafted. Additionally, they overcame the barrier of blind obedience to the US government by expanding patriotism's definition to encompass freedom of speech. Instead of blindly following the US to war, the students believed that the most patriotic action was to protest. Although the UW-Madison protest alone did not end the war, it helped change the mindset of citizens in Wisconsin, played a significant role in the national anti-war movement, and changed the future of Madison.