

**And what they're saying about the revised, updated, expanded  
4-volume *Voices from the Underground* series**

Books such as Ken Wachsberger's *Voices from the Underground* are becoming increasingly important and valuable as more and more people become interested in 1960s and 70s history. Michigan is a leader in preserving that history and making it accessible to future generations of scholars and activists. In my opinion, this series is a very worthwhile contribution to that effort.

Judy Gumbo Albert, feminist activist scholar and original Yippie

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... an important project. That information needs to be available. I liked the list of GI newspapers and was not aware there were so many.

Country Joe McDonald, leader of Country Joe and the Fish

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In an era when events linger in popular memory for increasingly smaller increments of time, *Voices from the Underground* serves us all by bringing back to life those rebel shouts and rants, as well as the thoughtful critiques and criticism that marked the 1960s and 70s oppositional press. Without a world wide web or internet to connect and inform those who refused the official version of events, it fell to the intrepid youth of that period to create a lively media that unraveled lies, put forth a vision, and gave a clenched fist and a raised middle finger to power.

Peter Werbe, *Fifth Estate* staff member since 1966; Detroit radio broadcaster and talk show host

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The irresistible rise of the Sixties underground press is now being recognized by historians as a unique and remarkable chapter in the long and storied saga of journalism. Ken Wachsberger's *Voices from the Underground* tells our story in a special way, providing not only the facts but also the texture. These volumes vibrate with a range of voices—both raw and polished—that accurately reflect the spirit and the incredible diversity of an alternative media that spread across the land like a proliferation of magic mushrooms.

Thorne Dreyer, activist, writer, editor (The Rag Blog), and pioneering Sixties underground journalist (*The Rag*, Austin; Liberation News Service, New York; *Space City!*, Houston; Pacifica radio, Houston)

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Ken Wachsberger points out in his introduction to this fine collection that the present generation of bloggers – the new underground press? – seem to be unaware of historical precedent. This was

equally true when the first edition of this book was first published. Even then, historical perspective seemed largely the preserve of historians, not of activists and alternative journalists. These volumes offer a powerful corrective to that myopia and force us to consider alternative media as a continuum, as a process of continual reflexivity.

For those of us (like me) who were only children when the underground press emerged in the US, these volumes do much to dispel the mists of myth that surrounds its origins. The stories recounted here speak of far more than youthful idealism and rebellion: they invite us to consider the alternative press as work, as an activity located not in some mythical counterculture but in longstanding struggles over media ownership and media representation – in the struggle to make so many voices heard above the din of an increasingly banal corporate media.

This collection offers us a rich history of a crucial period of American life. It presents a compelling set of narratives that bring to life the development of the alternative press. Above all, the collection emphasises the vital connectedness of alternative journalism with everyday life.

This is an important collection. I do not say that lightly.

Chris Atton, Professor of Media and Culture, Edinburgh Napier University, Scotland

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The Sixties—perpetually referenced, rarely understood—is mostly myth and symbol now, a Rorschach test for how folks choose to live their lives today. Nobody actually counts his days in ten-year cycles, of course, no generation has a monopoly on hope and courage and daring to dream, and no decade has cornered the capacity for confusion and catastrophe. *Voices from the Underground* helps to rescue that iconic moment from its entanglements and its discontents, and from the lazy haze of nostalgia,

With this extraordinary book Ken Wachsberger has accomplished a deep and finely calibrated examination of an alternative media exploding onto the scene in the midst of an exuberant and turbulent uproar, voices that came alive in the service of peace and justice. Every social movement invents a means of communication that somehow embodies its challenges and aspirations, its limitations and its imaginative horizons. Different times demand different responses, but what Wachsberger captures perfectly is the spirit and the dispositions of mind that drove a talented and creative group of happy warriors to open every door they could find, to mount every barricade with love in their hearts and pens in their hands, to change forever the mediated landscape. Those lessons are eternal.

Bill Ayers, Distinguished Professor of Education and Senior University Scholar, University of Illinois at Chicago, author of *Race Course: Against White Supremacy* (with Bernardine Dohrn) and *Fugitive Days: A Memoir*, national officer of Students for a Democratic Society, and co-founder of Weather Underground

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These are excellent primary sources for researchers and story-tellers engaged in the battle over memory of the Sixties and the era's legacy today. Those who wish to forget the sixties already are rejecting its lessons, from the quagmire in Afghanistan to the drug wars on our border. The new generation who helped elect Barack Obama will need these lessons for what lies ahead.

Tom Hayden, director of the Peace and Justice Resource Center, co-founder of SDS (Students for a Democratic Society), former California State Senator, and author of [\*The Long Sixties: From 1960 to Barack Obama\*](#)

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A somewhat Gonzo testimonial for *Voices from the Underground*

Skype and Wiki's High School assignment, circa 2036

Skype: "Tell me, Grandpa, how did your people, way back when, communicate radical ideas before blogs?"

Gramps: Well, that is a good story. Long ago, after airplanes were invented but before bots, the internet, cell phones, or personal computers, young people believed that the news media were hiding the truth about the issues that were affecting their lives—like the war in Vietnam, racism, and the third world liberation struggle and their political leaders. So they created a "counter-culture" and that counter-culture created their own "news" media to report on news stories that were not being reported elsewhere, personal accounts of struggles, and heavy editorial content. With only a "mimeograph machine" or "ink-roller printer"

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mimeograph>, we would create, sometimes overnight, a mini-medium to express our ideas and to organize for social change. Few of our papers became mass media. Their strength lay not in numbers, but in the notion that anyone could adapt the technologies for their own use—so thousands of these underground papers circulated around the country, waging war against the forces that were waging war against us. Your ole Gramps, when he was just 14, started an underground paper that addressed the dress code, "narcs" at the school, and other issues important to us back then. We were inspired by many of the publications you can see in *Voices from the Underground*, still the best reference "book"

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book> on the subject. And that is how we stopped the War in Vietnam, fought to achieve racial justice in America, supported the liberation struggle of the people of the third world, and did a lot of other things that you kids ought to pay more attention to, instead of burying your lives in a keyboard and ....

Wiki: Thanks, Gramps. Gotta go upload. We'll come by again next week. You can show us how to roll one-paper joints with one hand and other fabulous tricks from back then.....

Ron Kuby, civil rights and criminal defense lawyer, publisher of the *Raven*, Roosevelt Jr. High, Cleveland, Ohio, circa 1970-71

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What a boon to historians! Ken Wachsberger's *Voices from the Underground* is crucial to an understanding of the literary and political history of the 1960s counterculture movement. This valuable resource must stay in print, if only for academics who wish to study the amazing phenomenon of the alternative newspapers, put together by amateurs, that sprang up across the country in those fervent years. Wachsberger's material, largely in the form of "how we did it" memoirs, is rich in personal histories and anecdotal details that are collected nowhere else.

Susan Brownmiller, feminist historian, author of [\*Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape\*](#) and [\*In Our Time: Memoir of a Revolution\*](#)

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*Voices from the Underground* shows that the rebellions of the 1960s came from a broad cross-section of society, including millions of workers who were sick and tired of corporate exploitation. Paul Krehbiel's article, "New Age: Worker Organizing from the Bottom Up," does an excellent job of showing the commitment, understanding, creativity, and militancy of workers' protests of that era. Most important, *New Age* was one of the very few progressive publications that linked workers' struggles in one union with those in other unions and other industries, and with the social justice issues of the day. It spoke the language that workers understood, and as a result, it helped to build real rank-and-file solidarity in many unions and industries. Paul's article brings back memories of our own battles in Pittsburgh.

Kudos to *Voices from the Underground* for preserving this important history!"

Kent Buchholz, former chief steward and organizer, United Electrical Workers (UE),  
Local 610, Pittsburgh

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*Voices from the Underground* takes us inside the 1960s to a world of vibrant ideas and actions about war, life, work, justice, and equality. The astounding breadth of alternative journalism that grew from those political challenges fueled a life-changing movement. Gems abound, and certainly remarkable about *Voices* is the reminder just how large the working-class and class struggle loomed. One such gem is Paul Krehbiel's account of *New Age*, a rank-and-file workers' newspaper in heavily working-class Buffalo, New York. Paul's chronicle highlights the remarkable efforts of a group of young progressive workers to radicalize their co-workers and build unity between them and the movements for social justice and peace in Vietnam. For anyone interested in the real history of the 60s, *Voices from the Underground* is a must read, and a fun read, too!

Howard Kling, Executive Council, International Labor Communications Association; and  
Director, Labor Education Services, University of Minnesota

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I am impressed by this collection: the contributors describe their underground newspaper work in a way that's honest, informative, but grounded in the personal, sans polemics! The forewords

and prefaces put the era itself into perspective. I'd been chagrined that our activism in the 70s and 80s hadn't changed everything. We thought we could stop wars, reverse the arms race, end the "isms." We didn't. But this collection reclaims my respect for our efforts, which fueled our long-term commitment to working for justice in each sphere of our lives.

Barbara Beckwith, National Writers Union-Boston Chapter co-chair, author of [\*What Was I Thinking? Reflections on Everyday Racism\*](#)

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Let me say from the start that this is the most thorough and comprehensive book in print about the underground newspapers of the 1960s. Ken Wachsberger, the editor of the volume, sees the papers of the Vietnam Era as the forerunners of today's radical blogs and so he means his book to be relevant for the current generation and it is indeed greatly relevant to today....

All of the essays in Wachsberger's volume are immersed in history and are intellectually vigorous. Reading them feels like being thrown back into the 1960s itself. Suddenly an essay will take one back to June 1967, or August 1969, and so the book as a whole feels vivid, immediate, and intense. It's a real case of *déjà vu*....

Wachsberger's wonderfully alive and lively book is scheduled to be followed by three more volumes about the underground press, and so the series as a whole promises to be the definitive work on the subject of the underground press, at least for our time.

Jonah Raskin, [The Rag Blog](#)

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The collected excerpts can be looked at simply as a record of the writings of the era. However, with the five introductory essays by individuals besides Wachsberger who were leaders, activists, writers, and publishers during the era, the introductory material to the excerpts of each specific publication giving origins, background, and the course of it, the "select" bibliography more than 15 pages with annotations that are like short essays, and the detailed, 15-page, index, the content exceeds considerably the excerpts to put these in the context of the contentions and passions of the time (the 1960s and early 1970s mainly) and also enable the reader to realize the time's legacy which continues to shape political issues and activity.... The underground presses included evidence the panoply of ethnic groups, political activists, social issues, literary and artistic ventures, and alternative journalist services of the restive 1960s.... In addition to text, there are illustrations of covers or inside pages of some periodicals displaying the imaginative art work appearing with the new political ideas and social aims.... The diversity of underground publications prefigured the multicultural society of the following decades now taken for granted and presaged its political and social issues. Understanding of today's political contests, gender issues, conflicted image of women, attitudes toward drugs and sex, and media criticisms requires awareness of their roots in the 1960s. With its liberal excerpts, surrounding comments, and plentiful references, this volume--as the others in the series--not only recalls the many elements

of the turbulence of the '60s, but also sheds much light on the present.

Henry Berry, [Henry's Watch](#), Midwest Book Review 11:4 (April 2011)