

The Sixties

I'm [Adam Klugman](#) and you are listening to [AM 620 KPOJ](#), Portland's only Progressive Talk Station. The numbers here are 1-866-452-060, (503) 248-0620 or #620 on your AT&T wireless phone.

I'm your host Adam Klugman and I want to say that we've got another fantastic show for you today, and we do, but I hesitate to call it a show because that implies that what we do here is all about entertainment.

And don't get me wrong, I do want to be entertaining or why bother listening, right?

But I don't want what happens here to be about entertainment. Because we've already got so much of that in our culture that it drives us to distraction. I mean, it's become an obsessive compulsive disorder for us: movies, reality TV, video games, talk shows, technology, gadgetry, the latest cell phone, software update, iPad, celebrity gossip...my God we're like mainline drug addicts who just can't get enough of what doesn't satisfy.

And so I don't want to get up on my little microphone and pretend to be [Bob Hope](#) while Rome burns. And Rome is burning, folks. I don't know if you noticed but the American people are under attack.

Our democracy is hanging by a thread because the very wealthiest among us have succeeded in deliberately breaking the moral and financial backbone of this country.

So that now, after bankrupting the country with five wars and a decade of tax cuts for tax cuts the rich, tell us we can't afford good government anymore. We can't afford to educate our children. We can't afford to pay our teachers. We can't afford to provide a safety net for our seniors. We can't afford to take care of our sick. And now we can't even afford to take care of victims of natural disasters.

But we can afford tax breaks for the wealthiest two percent of us. We can afford to fight five wars and maintain 800 military bases around the world and give over a hundred billion dollars in tax subsidies to oil companies and spend \$4 billion on presidential elections, none of which does a damn thing to help the very interest this democracy was initiated to serve: *the people*.

We are living let 'em eat cake moment but we're so buried in the distractions, so completely neutralized by the hypnotic trance of the American Circus that we can't wake up! And [Marie Antoinette](#) just rides off into the sunset eating truffles while I stare into my iPad! Well, I say...off with her head! And I guarantee you, there's no app. for that!

I mean, as I was preparing for the show this week I kept looking around for stories to bring on, I found myself getting Mad as Hell. And not because there wasn't enough to choose from but because there was way too much to choose from and none it seemed to matter. Should I talk about [Anthony Weiner's](#) twittered Weiner? Should I talk about the absurdity of [Rand Paul](#) taking a stand against the [Patriot Act](#) while [Harry Reid](#) gets up on the Senate Floor and says anyone who votes against it is aiding the terrorists? Should I take an hour to talk about [Governor Christy](#), the New Jersey Fat Cat of Fiscal Responsibility, taking a police helicopter to his son's baseball game? Or should I take a more compassionate stand and talk about the heartbreak of [Joplin](#), or the non-global warming Tornadoes hitting Mass. on opening day of Hurricane season? I mean, where does it get us? Round and round we go, talking about the same old crap every day, on the same old shows, with the same old villains and the same old victims, and all we get is a wet, sticky feeling that reminds us we

are helpless. That we are no longer in control of our own fate. That our country has been stolen by a radical gang of corporate thugs who rub our noses every day in the apathy and powerlessness that has become all of us.

So I don't want to talk about the political gossip of the day. I don't want to dignify anyone with my airtime who wants to give seniors health coupons to seniors and let them die in the streets like forgotten dogs. And I definitely don't want to talk about anyone's twittered wiener.

I want to talk about revolution.

I want to talk about Mad as Hell until we're rising up in the streets to let the people who have seized our beloved country understand that we will not take it anymore. And the last time I remember that happening in this country was the [1960's](#). That's right.

I want to talk about the 1960's. Were you there? I was. Kind of. I was only a boy at the time of the [1968 Democratic Convention](#) in Chicago, but I remember seeing it on TV. And I got the drift.

There were young people in this country who were Mad as Hell, who felt that something had gone terribly wrong and they were willing to risk their lives to change it.

They didn't talk like the grown ups around me and they definitely didn't look like them, but somehow, even at my young age, I sensed they were right. And as I grew up, I emulated them. I grew my long hair, I started saying “man” and “far out” I wrote words like *love* and *peace* on my school notebooks and learned a reflexive mistrust of the establishment. I mimicked the righteous indignation around me until I understood what was going on for myself, until I had to watch heroes like [Martin Luther King](#) and [Bobby Kennedy](#) get murdered on national television...and suddenly I knew in my guts what everyone was so upset about. And then I learned about [John Kennedy](#) and [Malcolm X](#) and the [Chicago Seven](#) and it started to make sense as part of pattern. We were under attack, some of us were being strategically removed, others targeted for assassination, and all of us traumatized into submission.

I couldn't wait to get older so I could join them, but by the time I was a teenager it was pretty much over. It was the mid-seventies and most of what was left were the excesses of drugs and the confusion of narcissistic, alcoholic family dysfunction that made it all seem like some kind of terrible mistake. I was crushed. In my mind, it seemed that in spite of all I had been assured was true, that love did not find a way.

Many years later, I saw an interview with [Claude Brown](#), author of [Manchild in the Promised Land](#), who said that after [Bobby Kennedy](#) was shot, there was no hope left to give to the next generation.

That was my generation.

Because even then, it seemed to me that what had just happened, what ended just five minutes before I got there, was something important, something unprecedented, that a last chance gust of human potential had blown through the world that could have changed everything. I saw it as a wave of love and cooperation that required an unrelenting fierceness.

And I saw that fierceness in the faces and voices of people like [Abbie Hoffman](#), [Jerry Rubin](#), [Bobby Seale](#). And even though these men frightened me, I admired them. They were brave. They were bold. They were provocative and dangerous.

Because they cared enough to risk their own comfort for what they believed. But as quickly as it had come, it was gone. And as I grew into a young man, I kept peeking back in the rearview mirror, to see what went wrong. For years, and even right now, I keep looking back, like a bad car accident. I can't look, but I can't look away.

Then [Reagan](#) came into office and it was definitely over. He told Americans they could be proud of their ignorance again, that it was what made them great and powerful. The solar panels come off White House roof, everyone cut their hair, my friends starting voting republican and those of who once believed in the possibility of real, peaceful transformation of our society were supposed to be ashamed of what we had just been.

But I don't think there's anything to be ashamed of. I think what happened in the 1960's needs to happen again. Because it was a revolution that never got finished. It was a truncated revolution, interrupted by wars for profit and obliterated by violent assassinations that drove us into cynicism and fear and shame and unrepentant materialism.

And I'm not holding myself above it. I fell into it. I'm still in it, trying to find a way to live in a world that mocks the values I hold most dear. Because the people running our government have no interest in the people they were elected to serve. They have become immoral, from spying, to torture, to assassination, to wars of choice, to the rapacious exploitation of the earth. And the kind of people we used to call fascists, people like [Richard Nixon](#) to [Dick Cheney](#) to [Rupert Murdoch](#) to the office of the Presidency itself, represent exactly that - the unholy alliance between business and government, rallying against the interests of the people.

So help me figure it out. What happened to the 1960's? What happened to our convictions? Our optimism? Our fierceness? And how do we get it back? I'm not talking about bringing back the style or the form, because I really don't want to grow my hair out again, I'm talking about the spirit, the content and the political courage willing to confront the most powerful government in the world and challenge it to its core. Because I gotta tell you, watching the [Rachel Maddow](#) Show is getting old.

We need a national movement of millions and millions to shift the balance of power away from those who have spent the last thirty-five years trying to destroy us, and back towards where it belongs - *the people*.

That's right. I said it. And I'll say it again. And I'll keep saying until there are enough of us saying it that we cannot be denied.

Power to the People. Power to the People. Power to the People....

We'll be right back.

You're listening to "Mad as Hell in America," with [Adam Klugman](#) on [KPOJ](#).

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