



# Letters to a Young Activist

*Todd Gitlin*

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## Letters to a Young Activist Todd Gitlin

"Be original. See what happens." So Todd Gitlin advises the young mind burning to take action to right the wrongs of the world but also looking for bearings, understanding, direction, and practical examples. In *Letters to a Young Activist*, Todd Gitlin looks back at his eventful life, recalling his experience as president of the formidable Students for a Democratic Society in the '60s, contemplating the spirit of activism, and arriving at some principles of action to guide the passion and energy of those wishing to do good. He considers the three complementary motives of duty, love, and adventure, and reflects on the changing nature of idealism and how righteous action requires realistic as well as idealistic thinking. And he looks forward to an uncertain future that is nevertheless full of possibility, a future where patriotism and intelligent skepticism are not mutually exclusive. Gitlin invites the young activist to enter imaginatively into some of the dilemmas, moral and practical, of being a modern citizen--the dilemmas that affect not only the problems of what to think but also the problems of what to love and how to live.

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