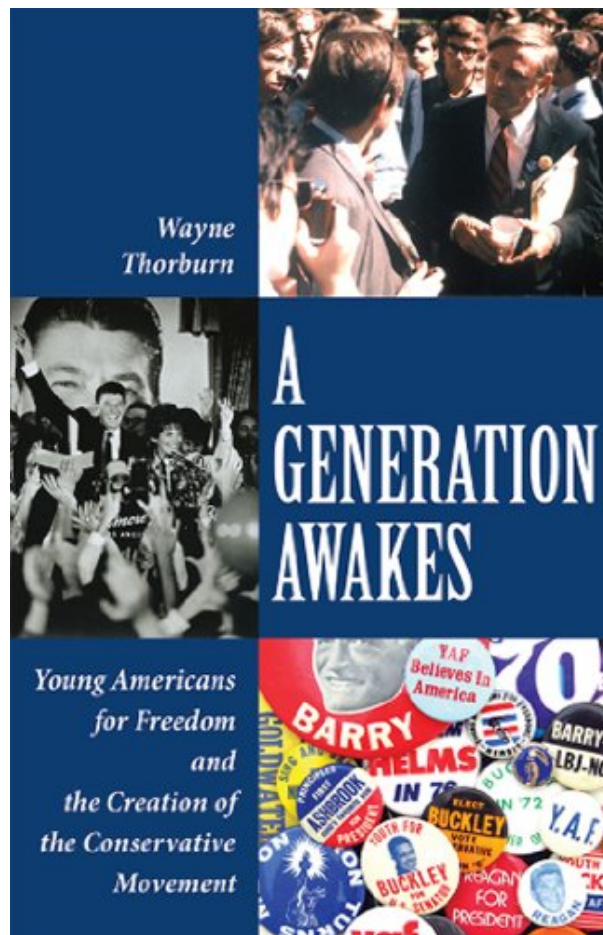
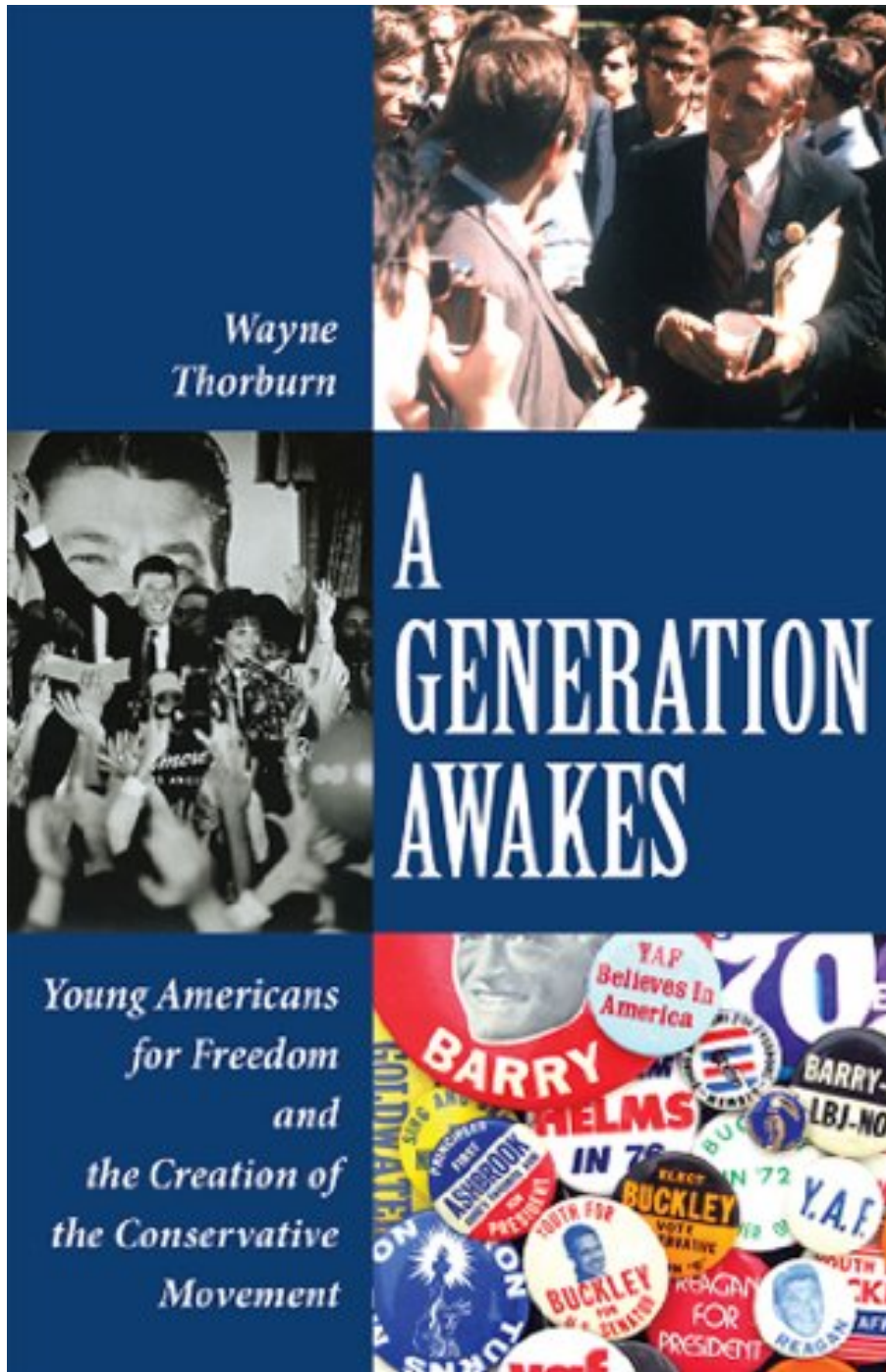


# A GENERATION AWAKES: YOUNG AMERICANS FOR FREEDOM AND THE CREATION OF THE CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT BY WAYNE THORBURN



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## About the Author

Wayne Thorburn joined YAF in 1961 and held nearly every position in the organization, including serving as executive director from 1971-73. Formerly a political science faculty member at three universities, he held appointments in the Reagan and George H.W. Bush administrations. He lives in Austin, Texas with his wife Judith, also a former YAF activist.

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The education/political action organization Young Americans for Freedom, founded in 1960, helped forge the growing conservative movement into a political force that seized control of a party, elected one of their own to the presidency and, in the process, changed the world. This is the first comprehensive history of YAF, from which also came 27 members of Congress, eight U.S. Circuit Court judges, a Vice President of the United States, governors, numerous media figures and journalists, college presidents and professors, authors and many of the leaders of the major conservative organizations in the United States today. Following its founding fifty years ago, hundreds of thousands of students were first influenced by YAF in high schools and on college campuses, next leading to their involvement in the 1964 Goldwater campaign, the successful U.S. Senate campaign of James Buckley in New York, and eventually the 1980 presidential campaign and administration of Ronald Reagan. Praised by prominent historians and journalists, this book will come to be regarded as an essential resource for an understanding of 20th Century American politics.

- Sales Rank: #2002803 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Jameson Books, Inc.
- Published on: 2010-11-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.50" h x 6.75" w x 1.75" l, 2.16 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 576 pages

## Features

- Used Book in Good Condition

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### Monumental Achievement

By DOCKone

Wayne Thorburn's "A Generation Awakes" is a singular achievement. Others have tried writing about this subject, but mirroring their own views and biases. This is the first accurate history of America's young conservative Movement which grew out of the 1960s.

I can vouch for Dr. Thorburn's accuracy up to and including the year 1975. After that, I was genuinely retired from Movement "politics." I joined with Marvin Liebman in occasionally and quietly advising the late and incomparable William F. Buckley, Jr. to whom Marvin and I individually revered and owed so much. The larger point is not missed, though, in Thorburn's work: The Buckley brothers were and are the intellectual alpha and omega of a generation, analogous to the impact of the John Adams dynasty on American idealists in an earlier millennium.

The work YAF set in motion is today upgraded and flourishing in The Heritage Foundation (Washington, D.C.); The Intercollegiate Studies Institute (Wilmington, Delaware); the Heartland Institute (Chicago); the Federalist Society (D.C.); and the Buckley Communications Foundation (Camden, South Carolina). Fortunate are we all if one day a history is written of this next phase of American conservatism by a historian of the brilliance, diligence and dedication of Dr. Wayne Thorburn, assuming this is possible.

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

Excellent Resource

By Frank

I bought "A Generation Awakes" directly from the Author, with some hesitation and skepticism. I am a former YAF member and conservative youth activist from the Goldwater era who feels that the modern conservative movement has left the real world for an evil and dangerous world of ideological and theological fantasy. I half expected the book to be a right-wing political tirade, or a poorly written memoir, or both. I was absolutely delighted to have been totally mistaken!

Wayne Thorburn has written a masterful, well researched and extremely interesting history of YAF from its inception to its demise. The quality of the research and the writing is 100% professional. The book is a serious scholarly reference and also an enjoyable read, especially for those of us who were involved with YAF. It refreshed memories that had grown dim with time, and explained things I did not understand back when they occurred. I highly recommend it to anyone who was part of, or is interested in, the conservative side of the political youth movements of the 1960s era.

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

Conservative student activists finally get their own story told!

By Lawrence J. King

Young Americans for Freedom, the pre-eminent conservative group on college campuses for the past fifty years, is not a household name like its left-wing counterpart Students for a Democratic Society. Dozens of books have been written on SDS, and very few on YAF. Yet the impact of YAF on American conservative politics has been immense. YAF was an essential part of the Goldwater campaign in 1964, and was the most reliable backer of Ronald Reagan during his gubernatorial and presidential campaigns. Protests and rallies by YAF members forced Firestone to abandon its plans to build a rubber plant in communist Romania in 1965, and compelled Mack Truck to cancel a billion-dollar truck plant in the Soviet Union in 1971. Many YAF veterans have gone on to become Congressmen and state legislators. In 1981, the Reagan Administration hired so many YAF alumni that liberal columnist Molly Ivins whined, "The government has been taken over by YAFers."

In "A Generation Awakes", Wayne Thorburn tells the story of Young Americans for Freedom from its founding on the estate of William F. Buckley in 1960 until the present day. He describes the activities of YAF members on college campuses, at loud protests and demonstrations, and the path that many YAF alumni took after leaving college.

Although Young Americans for Freedom is now fifty years old, there have only been three book-length historical studies of it until now: one by John Andrews which covered the period from 1960 to 1964, one by

Gregory Schneider which covered only up to 1986, and one by Rebecca Klatch which compared the demographics of YAF and SDS in the 1960's. Thorburn's book is much longer and more in-depth than any of these previous works. He describes the founding of YAF, its role in the Goldwater campaign, the confrontation between YAFers and left-wing student activists in the late 60's and early 70's, the increase of YAF's institutional and financial clout in the late 70's which led to a fundraising boom and the founding of CPAC (but also to legal troubles and shady financial dealings on the part of certain YAF leaders), YAF's resurgence on college campuses in the late 80's, its implosion in the early 90's, and the surprising resurgence of YAF since the election of Barack Obama as President.

Thorburn's book also describes the infighting between different ideological factions within YAF -- traditional conservatives, libertarians, Ayn Rand devotees, John Birch Society members, neo-isolationists, and many others -- and the many "purges" that resulted from these fights. YAF, like SDS, had a tumultuous convention in 1969 with bitter fighting between ideological factions. The traditionalist conservatives defeated the libertarian caucus at the convention, and some of the disaffected libertarians went on to found the Libertarian Party in 1971.

"A Generation Awakes" reveals many important historical facts for the first time. Thorburn has uncovered correspondence between California Governor Ronald Reagan and William F. Buckley discussing the turmoil within YAF after the 1969 convention. He documents Reagan's direct involvement in the reorganization of the California YAF leadership in late 1969. Reagan was concerned that YAF continue to organize conservative students to combat leftists on college campuses, and also hoped that YAF would help him with his 1970 re-election. Of course, YAF went on to provide thousands of foot-soldiers for Reagan's presidential campaigns in 1976 and 1980.

This book is extremely readable, because Thorburn balances the political content with hundreds of anecdotes about young conservatives students "fighting the good fight" on college campuses. It is a must-read for anyone who wants to learn the history of the conservative movement. Indeed, anyone who enjoys American history will find this book exciting and surprisingly fun to read.

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