

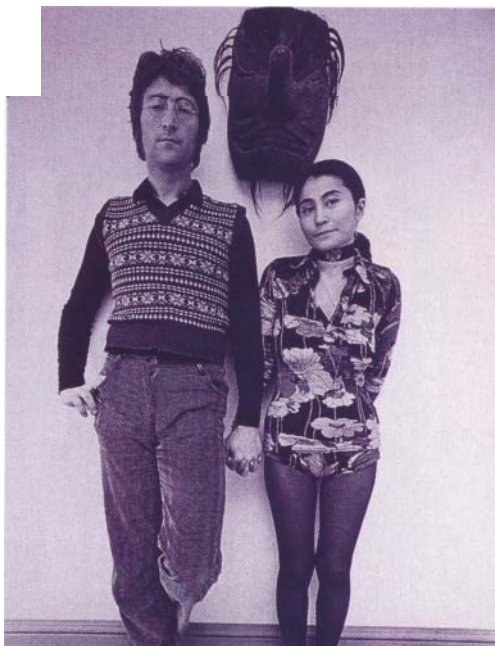
All at once, Lennon became a mouthpiece for a whole cluster of radical causes. The darkening of the late '60s mood had occurred as early as 1968, when the peace and love of both the Flower Power movement, the anti-Vietnam demonstrators and the civil rights protest led by Dr Martin Luther King were disrupted by King's assassination, the May '68 riots and, in Britain, the events of "Bloody Sunday" when 13 civilians were mown down by British soldiers. kaftans and paisley had been replaced by combat fatigues; a determined strain of militancy had taken the place of pacifism. This would become an awkward point for Lennon, who professed a sympathy for the IRA and, the FBI suggested, donated money to them, though Yoko denies this.

Lennon had been involved in activism before -

as well as citing the war in Biafra as one of the reasons for returning his MBE in 1969, he involved himself in the campaign for a posthumous pardon for James Hamatty, hanged for the A6 murders on what many considered flimsy witness evidence, as well as supporting black British-based civil rights activist Michael X, who would himself subsequently hang. He now threw himself back into the fray. Regarding the Irish question, Lennon tapped into the New York wing of the Troops Out! movement with more energy than acumen.

Among other causes he espoused was that of Angela Davis, fired from UCLA for being a member of the Communist Party and charged with supplying the guns for an unsuccessful attempt to free three Black Panther members at Marin County Courthouse which left four dead. One of the Panthers, George Jackson, was also later killed, supposedly while attempting to escape from custody. Angela Davis, meanwhile, faced prison herself as an accessory to murder. Lennon regarded Davis as a political prisoner.

Moreover, in September 1971, at Attica Correctional Facility in upstate New York, 1,200 mostly black inmates rioted and took a number of hostages. They sought by these desperate means an improvement in their dire conditions-including demands for greater religious freedom, better medical conditions and more fresh fruit. Negotiations stuck on the question of amnesty for prisoners accused of harming guards »



Imagine no possessions: the Lennons at home in their Tittenhurst Park mansion in Ascot (main pic and left)