

The Honorable Ronald V. Dellums
U.S. Representative of California (1971–1998)

Events: Civil Rights

Representing the 1960s

Representative Dellums discusses representing the diverse movements coming out of the Bay Area in the 1960s.

Interview recorded June 19, 2012

Because I think I came from a time when people—we didn't come to be politicians. We really were an extension, you know, of a movement. We really were the voice of a movement. Remember, many of us came here against the backdrop of a very tumultuous era of the '60s, okay? And all the movements that occurred in the '60s. I happened to come from a place where every movement of the '60s emerged in close proximity and in great simultaneity. Unlike some places where it was primarily the civil rights movement, or...But in Oakland, Berkeley, and the San Francisco, Oakland, Berkeley, Bay Area, every movement, you know? The civil rights movement, the nationalist movement, the Panther movement, the feminist movement, the gay liberation movement, the environmental movement, the peace movement, all of it, okay? We came along at a time and in a place where we had to hear each other's analysis and feel each other's pain and rage. So blacks heard whites, and whites heard Latinos, and Latinos heard Asians, the men heard women, the gays heard straights, and straights heard—you know, right across the board. So I maintained that a very interesting group of people emerged out of the Bay Area based on that particular experience. So, you know, remember when I won, it was "black radical from California wins election," right? So I came committed to express the concerns of all these folks, all right?