

A young woman gives a rose to one of the military police officers standing outside the Democratic National Convention in Chicago.

Characters

Activist
David Dellinger } antiwar
Tom Hayden } protesters
Abbie Hoffman }
Richard Daley, Mayor of
Chicago
Reporters 1 & 2
Kennedy delegate
McCarthy delegate
Humphrey delegate
Police officers 1 & 2
Fred Turner, CBS technician
Crowd of demonstrators
Abraham Ribicoff, Democratic
Senator from Connecticut
Donald Peterson, delegate
from Wisconsin
Walter Cronkite, CBS anchor
Prologue Narrator
Narrators A–E
Epilogue Narrator

All named characters were real people.

CLASH IN CHICAGO

FORTY YEARS AGO, THE WORLD WATCHED AS A DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION CAME APART AT THE SEAMS

PROLOGUE

Prologue Narrator: It was a year marked by violence and frustration. No issue divided the American public in 1968 more than U.S. military involvement in the Vietnam War. That summer, presidential campaigns were in full swing. President Lyndon B. Johnson had announced that he would not run for re-election. Two popular antiwar candidates had challenged Johnson's Vice President, Hubert H. Humphrey, for the Democratic nomination. But Senator Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated in June,

and Senator Eugene McCarthy could not win the support of the party establishment. As the convention approached in late August, it became clear that most party leaders had already decided on Humphrey. Furious antiwar activists fixed their sights on the city of Chicago—where the convention would take place.

SCENE 1

Narrator A: As the convention approaches, antiwar activists disagree about whether to proceed with their long-planned demonstrations. Some are worried about possible violence—by police or even by other

Words to Know

- **Gestapo:** the brutal elite police force of Adolf Hitler's Germany.
- **Yippies:** an antiwar group that specialized in street theater and provocation of the police.

activists. Chicago authorities have repeatedly refused to grant permits for marches. Activist leaders meet to try to reach an agreement.

Activist: I don't see how we can do it. The city won't let us march or sleep in the parks. We're not going to get thousands of people there for five days without assuring them that they have a place to stay.

David Dellinger: Let's not give up yet. We should keep filing lawsuits demanding our right to protest. In the end, public opinion will make the authorities give in.

Tom Hayden: You're fooling yourself. Mayor Daley hates the very *existence* of protesters. We're never going to get permits from him. For that very reason, I say we *have* to go.

Activist: But what's the point? Kennedy's dead, and McCarthy

can't win. The Republicans have already nominated Richard Nixon. If either he or Humphrey wins, the war will still go on.

Hayden: Even so, we can't back down. We're not just protesting the war now. We have to fight

for the streets. We have to fight for our right to be there!

Narrator B: The decision is made—on to Chicago.

SCENE 2

Narrator C: Chicago Mayor Richard Daley is a powerful Democratic politician. No candidate can win Illinois without his backing. Daley also rules Chicago with a heavy hand. Although he privately questions the war, he has no intention of letting a bunch of outsiders make a mess of his city. On the eve of the convention, he holds a press conference.

Reporter 1: Mister Mayor, some people say that there are thousands

of demonstrators coming to the city to disrupt the convention. Do you foresee any problems?

Richard Daley: Let me tell you something. Chicago's police force is the finest in the world. Law and order are going to be upheld. We're going to have the greatest convention in the history of the Democratic Party, and no one is going to take over the streets of Chicago.

Narrator D: Meanwhile, some 5,000 young people have gathered in Lincoln Park near downtown Chicago. Prominent among them is Abbie Hoffman, one of the leaders of the **Yippies**. The class clown of the protest movement, he

Tom Hayden



Mayor Richard Daley



Abbie Hoffman



loves to make outrageous statements to the press.

Reporter 2: Abbie, is it true that you threatened to put LSD [an illegal drug] in the Chicago water system?

Abbie Hoffman: Hey, we've just come to Chicago to hold a Festival of Life here in the park. As opposed to

the Festival of Death the Democrats are holding. We are the second American Revolution.

Narrator E: The Chicago police have issued warnings that they will clear the park at 11 p.m. But when that hour comes, no one is prepared for their show of force. Police officers in blue helmets charge into the crowd, hitting youths with their nightsticks. Some protesters taunt the police by calling them "pigs," an insult that only makes the cops angrier. Convention week has gotten off to an ugly start.

SCENE 3

Narrator A: On Monday morning, the convention opens at the International Amphitheatre. The hall is six miles from downtown. But Mayor Daley is so concerned about protesters that he has had it surrounded with barbed-wire fencing. Before choosing a nominee, delegates must debate

the party platform. Most delegates are staying downtown at the Conrad Hilton Hotel. Some are anxious about what is happening on the streets outside.

Kennedy delegate: Have you heard the demonstrations? It sounds like chaos out there. Even up on the 10th floor we can smell the teargas the cops are using on the protesters.

McCarthy delegate: The kids are angry, and so am I.

Humphrey delegate: Baloney! A lot of these so-called protesters would rather tear down the system than work within it. The worst of them, like that knucklehead Abbie Hoffman, only want trouble.

Continued on next page →

American History Play

McCarthy delegate: What *we* want is for this party to take a stand against the war. We're introducing a plank for the platform that says Vietnam is a mistake. If Humphrey has any guts, let him come out and agree with us.

Narrator B: The debate is long and heated. In the end, the McCarthy plank is voted down.

SCENE 4

Narrator C: On the streets, the mood is getting uglier. Each night, demonstrators and cops battle. On Wednesday, protesters hold a permitted rally in Grant Park, near the Hilton. They have been told that they won't be allowed to march from the park to the Amphitheatre. But . . .

Police Officer 1: We have the park ringed. Let them try to get away.

Police Officer 2: Look, Sergeant, they're trying it anyway.

Narrator D: The police charge ferociously into the crowd. Quickly,

the park is filled with teargas and wounded demonstrators.

Dellinger (to demonstrators): Don't fight back! Let the world see what is happening on the streets of Chicago.

Narrator E: Some demonstrators make it across Michigan Avenue, where they begin to gather in front of the Hilton. As night falls, the lights from TV and film cameras illuminate an eerie scene. CBS technician Fred Turner is watching from the fifth floor of the hotel as he tests a tape recorder.

Fred Turner (into the tape recorder): The cops are lined up three deep, marching right across Michigan Avenue. There are 2,000 or 3,000 demonstrators lining up. Now the cops are moving in, and they are really belting them. Sticks are flailing. People are lying on the ground. Oh, there are just piles of bodies on the street. You can hear the screams. This thing is beginning to turn my stomach.

Narrator A: The police are hitting everyone, including delegates and bystanders, demonstrators and reporters, young and elderly. So many people are pressed up against the hotel that a plate-glass window breaks. People stagger into the hotel, blood streaming from head wounds. Seeing the lights and cameras, the demonstrators chant.

Crowd: The whole world is watching! The whole world is watching!

SCENE 5

Narrator B: So far, Democrats at the International Amphitheatre have been unaware of the violence. But at about 9:30 p.m., the TV networks begin to broadcast footage of the riot. Delegates rush to TV sets. Then Senator Abraham Ribicoff of Connecticut takes the podium to make a last-minute nomination of antiwar Senator George McGovern of South Dakota.

Abraham Ribicoff: The youth of

'1968: A TUMULTUOUS YEAR

↓ JANUARY 31

In Vietnam, North Vietnamese forces launch coordinated attacks on U.S. and South Vietnamese positions. The Tet Offensive shocks many Americans, who begin to wonder whether the war can be won.



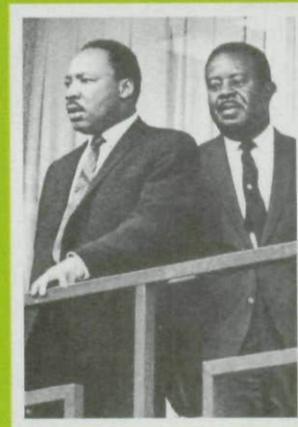
↑ MARCH 12

Antiwar presidential candidate Eugene McCarthy nearly defeats President Lyndon B. Johnson in the New Hampshire Democratic primary. On the 31st, Johnson withdraws from the race.



↓ APRIL 4

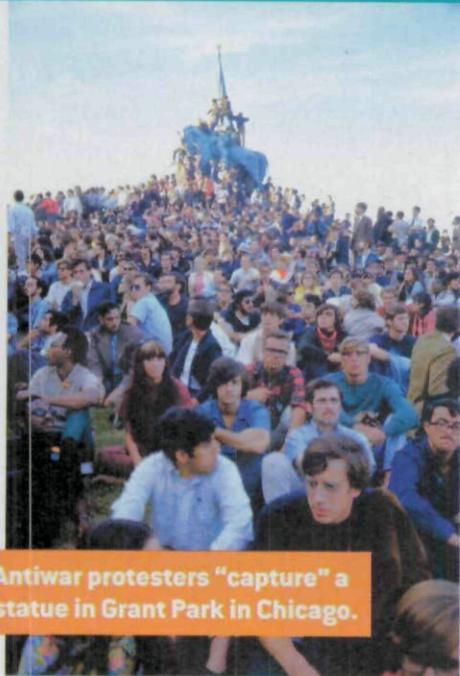
Martin Luther King Jr. is assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee. Riots break out in many cities.



↑ APRIL 23

Protesting the war and other issues, students at Columbia University in New York City seize campus buildings, starting a weeklong sit-in.

TIMELINE: TIM PAGE/CORBIS; BETTMANN/CORBIS (SENATOR EUGENE MCCARTHY); AP IMAGES (MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.); BETTMANN/CORBIS (COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY); STEVE SCHAPIRO/CORBIS (SENATOR ROBERT KENNEDY); AP IMAGES (OLYMPICS); BETTMANN/CORBIS (WOMAN READING NEWSPAPER); AP IMAGES (RICHARD NIXON)



Antiwar protesters "capture" a statue in Grant Park in Chicago.

America rally to the [principles] of a man like George McGovern, as they did to those of John F. Kennedy and Robert Kennedy. With George McGovern as President of the United States, we wouldn't have to have **Gestapo** tactics in the streets of Chicago.

Narrator C: The convention floor

erupts in anger. TV cameras catch Daley shouting in rage at Ribicoff.

Ribicoff: How hard it is to accept the truth when we know the problems facing our nation.

Narrator D: In the midst of this turmoil, the convention turns to its climax: nominating Hubert Humphrey. But as the roll of states is called, one speaker after another condemns the chaos outside.

Donald Peterson: Mr. Chairman, thousands of young people are being beaten in the streets of Chicago.

I move that this convention be adjourned for two weeks and reconvened in another city.

Narrator E: A steady stream of boos infuriates Daley, who finally storms out of the hall. Inevitably, Humphrey is nominated. But his victory has left a bitter taste. From his booth atop the convention floor, CBS anchor Walter Cronkite sums up the mood of many witnesses.

Walter Cronkite: I want to just turn off our cameras, pack up our micro-

phones and our typewriters, and get the devil out of this town and leave the Democrats to their agony.

EPILOGUE

Epilogue Narrator: The "agony" of Chicago continued to plague Democrats. Partly in disgust over the convention, voters narrowly elected Republican Richard M. Nixon in November. Abbie Hoffman, Tom Hayden, David Dellinger, and four other protesters were tried for inciting a riot. (The "Chicago 7" were first convicted, then cleared on appeal.) "Nobody who was there or watched it came out of it the same," one journalist later said. "It was one of those scarring events that branded you." But some good did result from Chicago. Furious at Daley and other party bosses' control of the nomination process, voters demanded to have more direct participation through reformed primaries and caucuses—and got it.

—Bryan Brown

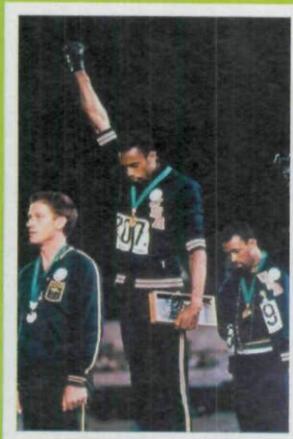
↓ JUNE 5

Senator Robert F. Kennedy is slain by a gunman on the night he wins the Democratic Party's California primary.



AUGUST 28

Hubert Humphrey wins the Democratic Party's nomination for President at a bitterly divided convention in Chicago.

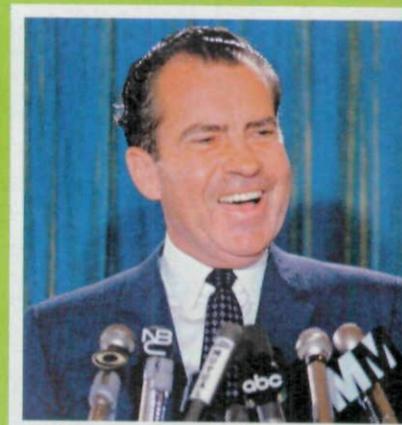


↑ OCTOBER 16

Two African-American athletes protest racism in the U.S. by making "black power" salutes during a victory ceremony at the Olympic Games in Mexico City.

↓ OCTOBER 31

President Johnson announces a halt to U.S. bombing of North Vietnam, hoping to give an election boost to Humphrey.



↑ NOVEMBER 6

Humphrey goes down to defeat as Republican Richard M. Nixon is elected the 37th President of the United States.