

Module 05: 1968 — A Generation in Revolt?

Evidence 25: Davis-Hayden Paper: Plans for the Protest in Chicago

A

Introduction

The following excerpt comes from a position paper written by Rennie Davis and Tom Hayden and presented at a national conference in Lake Villa, Illinois (March 22-24, 1968). Rennie Davis, Tom Hayden, and David Dellinger were the principle coordinators of the Chicago protests, and a meeting had been called to prepare for the mobilization around the 1968 Democratic National Convention. Davis and Hayden were previously involved in the civil rights movement and the radical Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), while Dellinger, a generation older, came from the peace movement.

Document

What we want to create is a greater consciousness that organizations of protest, resistance, and independent politics, under the control of the actual people with grievances are more important than casting a vote or working for the "better" of two conventional candidates.

We must be arguing that the Democratic Party and the limits of the electoral system itself are what we oppose ... our strategy is to build political organizations of our own rather than to "reform" the Democratic Party.

Any national demonstration in Chicago should come out of a program that has stresses local organizing during the spring and summer and can support community base-building in the fall.

The summer would be capped by three days of sustained, organized protests at the Democratic National Convention, clogging the streets of Chicago with people demanding peace, justice, and self-determination for all people. The Chicago challenge must convey a broad but concrete critique of the Democratic Party and its failure to meet the crisis of our cities and the war. It must say to the world that Johnson represents wealth, the military and the politically corrupt of America, not ordinary people. It must

attempt to delegitimize the Democratic Party while building support for an independent people's movement during the 1968 elections.

The campaign should not plan violence and disruption against the Democratic National Convention. It should be nonviolent and legal.

Source:

Daniel Walker, "The Gathering Forces: A Prelude to Convention Week," *Rights in Conflict: Chicago's 7 Brutal Days*, a report submitted by Daniel Walker, Director of the Chicago Study Team, to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, Publishers, 1968), 9-10.