

# 1968 & 2018: Unite Against War & Police Violence

## Join us in a day of protest: August 25, 2018!

**Fifty years ago, in the summer of 1968, the country was in turmoil.** Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert F. Kennedy had been assassinated. While most laws officially endorsing racism had been abolished, de facto discrimination remained stubbornly entrenched. The war to ensure U.S. domination of Southeast Asia had been escalating.



In response, people of color began using more militant tactics to confront racist oppression and poverty, and young people increasingly began protesting our government's illegal and immoral war on Vietnam. State and city authorities in turn used police and National Guard troops to suppress protest and literally beat down people struggling for progress.

These conflicts came to a head in Chicago as it hosted the Democratic National Convention in late August 1968. The growing movement for peace was attacked by the Democratic Party leadership both inside and outside of the convention. Inside, although 80 percent of Democratic primary voters had voted for anti-war candidates Kennedy,

Eugene McCarthy, or George McGovern, the party-insider delegates selected pro-war candidate Hubert Humphrey on the first ballot and voted down a proposal to support peace in the party platform.

Outside, Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley called up 23,000 police and National Guard troops to suppress protestors. Police savagely beat and tear-gassed the thousands of anti-war protestors who came to the city to exercise their rights of free speech and assembly, in what was later aptly described as a "police riot." Journalists and other bystanders were also beaten and arrested, including residents who happened to live where demonstrations were occurring.

The corporate media will cover these events from 50 years ago. We can safely predict that they will cover the history we've just recited with a superficial gloss, a time for nostalgic reflection with no bearing on today's world. The talking heads will lament that there was so much "violence" back then; they'll downplay comparisons to the present and ignore the real issues of the day that drove millions into the streets.

Worse, they will try to persuade us that the U.S. has mostly outgrown issues of war, poverty, racism – and the brutal tactics used by leaders of both major parties, locally and nationally, to ensure these forms of domination. They will pretend that U.S. is not at war today, and that America's efforts at military domination of most of the world don't directly impact inequality and third-rate social services in every sphere here at home.

We call upon peace, anti-poverty, anti-racist, immigrant rights and other progressive organizations to reject this narrative. We must reject the American ruling class's attempt to whitewash its history and dismiss its current acts of criminal violence. **The truth must be told: As in 1968, the U.S. economic and political elites, and their military servants, are still committing horrific acts of war against the peoples of other nations. They use our tax dollars to fund these wars while ignoring pressing human needs at home. Their police continue to suppress dissent, and repress people of color and anyone else who dares to challenge their power.**

In most respects, conditions are worse than they were 50 years ago. Consider:



- In 1968, the U.S. government was engaged in one illegal war – and the news media-were covering it. Now the U.S. illegally bombs, drone-strikes and/or occupies at least seven Middle East, African and South Asian nations. It is responsible for millions of casualties, horrific devastation and suffering, and the displacement of millions of refugees. The media report on the refugees, but rarely mention the U.S. wars and support of brutal dictators that are causing the crisis.
- The U.S. has also been financing covert destabilization, “regime change” and support for repressive governments in much of Central and South America – and then it cruelly imprisons and punishes the hundreds of thousands of refugees who come to this country seeking safety and the opportunity to work.
- The Democratic Party leadership is every bit as supportive of illegal wars and interventions as it was in 1968. Its members in Congress regularly vote with their Republican colleagues to fund wars, a foreign policy solely motivated by domination, and unwavering support for Israel no matter how outrageous its crimes against Palestinians. As in 1968, its leaders stifle those who support more progressive candidates. The Party and its Chicago machine remain entrenched supporters of an unjust system, protecting corporate profits and power no less than their Republican counterparts.
- The Chicago police may not always attack demonstrators with the same ferocity as in 1968 – but, like police throughout the country, many now feel empowered to use lethal force on individuals, especially people of color, with near impunity. They remain agents of state repression and racist terror. They are one component of an unjust “criminal justice” system aimed especially at incarcerating people of color and exploiting prison labor. The U.S. today incarcerates people at more than four times the rate it did in 1968.
- Today, we are under the incessant threat of global annihilation – not only from nuclear war, but from the disaster of human-created climate chaos and other environmental devastation. The U.S. military is one of the world’s largest consumers of fossil fuels, and many of its wars are aimed at controlling the supplies of such fuels for continued use – ensuring that the profits of giant energy corporations and weapons manufacturers stay high and stable.



There is a direct connection between the oppression of people of color at home and the U.S. wars on people of color in other nations. There is a direct connection between the federal government spending trillions of dollars on wars and other means of foreign domination, including the maintenance of nearly 1,000 military bases in other countries, and working people and students being driven into poverty and debt while millions lack access to health care, decent schools, higher education, safe drinking water and other necessities. These policies all serve to benefit the U.S. ruling class, the wealthy owners of major corporations and banks.

There are positive lessons to be derived from the Chicago 1968 Democratic Convention. The 50th anniversary of that event offers a unique opportunity to drive home the lesson that it is possible to stop a war. Stopping the U.S. war on Vietnam required a combination of courageous resistance by the Vietnamese targets of U.S. domination, U.S. soldiers refusing to fight for empire, plus an anti-war movement in the streets – steadfastly independent of both major political parties. Its independence was steered by bitter experience--- Chicago police wielding batons and truncheons, the heads of demonstrators cracking under the onslaught while a Democratic Party mayor applauded, and other top Democratic leaders turned a blind eye.

At a time when Donald Trump’s open appeals to bigotry produce revulsion among people of good will around the world, we have a duty to remind each other that war, mass deportations and police violence are bipartisan problems that won’t be solved by the next election. Success will require a concerted struggle against a violent, class-ruled system – including political institutions like the corporate parties that help to maintain it.

A revived and unified, on-the-ground movement for peace and social justice, and against racism, poverty and police violence, is badly needed in the U.S. today. We call on peace, anti-poverty, anti-racist, immigrant rights and other progressive organizations, and all persons of conscience: **Please come to Chicago, on August 25, 2018, and help us send a strong message: No more war! No more police violence! Fund human needs, not destruction and death! Respect human rights at home and abroad!**

## **Rally at Noon, Richard J. Daley Plaza, 50 W. Washington Street, Chicago**

**March at 1 pm to Grant Park and the Gen. John Logan Statue, scene of the most iconic protest at the 1968 convention**

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