

## Kyler Hudson

**Title:** “Parallel Resistance: Protestors and Delegates at the 1968 Democratic Convention”

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**Kyler Hudson** is a junior at IPFW, majoring in history and political science. His historical interests include WWI, presidential politics, and the Supreme Court. He plans on completing his undergraduate degrees next spring and is currently contemplating law school. He hopes to remain in the Fort Wayne area, ideally finding a position at a law office or local television station.

### **Abstract**

The 1968 Democratic Nominating Convention in Chicago was the most chaotic that the party had ever seen. Delegates at the convention disrupted the proceedings, while protesters on the streets carried out demonstrations that turned violent with the Chicago police. The pandemonium in the city was transmitted across the country via nightly television news programs and daily newspapers. Protestors and convention delegates both opposed the Democrats’ nominating process and the party’s policy regarding Vietnam. The two groups expressed their condemnation in similar ways; both carried out nonviolent protests, supported symbolic candidates, lobbied for an open convention, and earned attention from the press.

Like many of their compatriots on the streets of Chicago, convention delegates opposed to the nomination process had been supporters of Robert Kennedy during the primaries. After his assassination in June, Kennedy supporters backed fringe candidates like Lester Maddox, George McGovern, and Channing E Phillips, who had little chance of capturing the nomination. Likewise, protesters at Civic Center Plaza symbolically nominated their own candidate: a pig named “Pigasus.” Additionally, both groups lobbied for an open convention, so that representatives could “vote their conscience.” Delegates worked to abolish the unit rule at the convention, while protesters created the Coalition for an Open Convention. Both groups disapproved of the likely nominee, Hubert Humphrey, and used the established rules in an attempt to nominate a different candidate.

Convention delegates and protesters were also opposed to the Democratic Party’s stance on Vietnam, and voiced their disapproval similarly. Both groups protested nonviolently and used television and newspaper coverage to draw attention to their cause. Like the opposition to the nomination process, many anti-war supporters were former followers of Robert Kennedy and disliked Hubert Humphrey. The two groups also faced similar responses from authority figures. Richard Daley, Mayor of Chicago and host of the convention, used his power to try and silence both the opposition delegates and the street protesters. He manipulated the schedule of the convention to minimize the attention delegates received from the press and used the convention band to drown out protest songs and chants. As mayor of the city, Daley also wielded power over the demonstrators on the streets. He ensured that protesters could not demonstrate near the convention hall and allowed the Chicago police to beat protesters into submission.

During the 1968 Democratic Nominating Convention, delegates and street demonstrators opposed the Party's nominating process and its Vietnam policy. The two groups expressed their displeasure in similar ways: participating in nonviolent protests, supporting symbolic candidates, pursuing an open convention, and using the press to generate attention. In addition, the two groups faced similar responses from authority, particularly Mayor Daley. These aspects demonstrate the parallel opposition expressed by convention delegates and street protestors.

### **Bibliographical Note**

This research paper employed a number of primary and secondary sources. Contemporary newspaper articles, particularly from the *Chicago Tribune*, were used to present specific situations that supported the main argument. Additionally, *The Presidential Nominating Conventions 1968*, published by the Congressional Quarterly Service, included primary documents along with commentary that provided context for the speeches, letters, memos, etc. Secondary sources, such as *Election Year 1968* by Dennis Wainstock, were used to present a broad timeline of events and background information that was not directly related to the August Nominating Convention, such as Robert Kennedy's assassination and the spring primaries.