Chicago Democratic Convention: 40-Years Ago

Welcome Democrats ...

- Delegates arrived in Chicago the last week of August 1968 for the 35th Democratic National Convention
Chicago Democratic Convention: 40-Years Ago

In 1968, the Democrats were the party in power.

And it was a Republican promising to turn the page.
**Chicago Democratic Convention: 40-Years Ago**

**1968**

**Chicago Convention**  
**Turmoil**  
**Aftermath**

**Besides Vietnam, major events that marked a tumultuous year leading up to the convention:**

- On college campuses and in cities around the U.S. that year, demonstrations were held to protest the war and to advocate for other race- and labor-related issues.

- January 1968: North Vietnamese forces launched the Tet offensive.

- April 1968: Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in Memphis.

- June 2008: Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated after winning the California Primary.
Chicago Democratic Convention: 40-Years Ago

Under the backdrop of the war in Vietnam

- Protesters were a hybrid group-radicals, hippies, yippies, moderates-representing myriad issues and a wide range of philosophies, but they were united behind an encompassing cause: ending the long war in Vietnam.
- Vietnam War was the key source of turmoil in the period leading up to the convention.
- Between 1961 and late November 1967, more than 15,000 U.S. troops had been killed, and the war was costing an estimated $25 billion per year.
Chicago Democratic Convention: 40-Years Ago

Chicago Convention

1968

Turmoil

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Chicago: The Tinderbox

- The weather was oppressively hot and humid.
- The air conditioning, the elevators and the phones were operating erratically.
- Taxi drivers had called a strike before the convention began.
- The National Guard had been mobilized and ordered to shoot to kill, if necessary.
- An army of protesters from across the country flowed into the city, camping in parks and filling churches, coffee shops, homes and storefront offices.
- The worst of the violence broke out on the third day of the convention.
Inside the International Amphitheatre, there were clamorous debates over competing versions of the party’s war platform and disputes over the seating of delegates.

Outside, between 10,000 and 15,000 demonstrators were arrayed against 12,000 police and 6,000 National Guard troops.
Dan Rather, then a floor reporter for CBS News, had a rather famous run-in with security while trying to get an interview.

Rather was grabbed and punched in front of cameras by Daley's bodyguards. “Dan, it looks like there's a bunch of thugs down there,” CBS News anchor Walter Cronkite said. CBS newsman Mike Wallace was also punched.
Chicago Democratic Convention: 40-Years Ago

At the end of convention week, police announced that 589 persons had been arrested and more than 119 police and 100 demonstrators injured.

Despite having won no primaries, the DNC nominated Hubert H. Humphrey for President – a move that angered many democrats.

Humphrey supported U.S. involvement in Vietnam, although he promised during the campaign to reevaluate the situation.

Weeks before the convention, Senator George S. McGovern (South Dakota), also an opponent of the war, announced his candidacy as well.

In November, Humphrey was narrowly defeated by Richard M. Nixon.

Some have attributed Humphrey’s loss, at least in part, to the police response to the demonstrations.