

Creating CHAOS

Abbie Hoffman

1968

Editors' Note: The following is from Abbie's book *Revolution For the Hell of It*, to be published by Dial Press later this month, by the author "Free."

LIBERATION News Service — Perhaps the best way to begin to relate to Chicago is to clear your throat of the tear gas fumes, flex those muscles stiff from cop punches, write lying down, collapsing from fifteen solid days on no more than three hours sleep each night, mouth AUM, smile and then roll on the floor laughing hysterically. I can only relate to Chicago as a personal anarchist, a revolutionary artist. If it sounds egotistical, tough shit. My concept of reality comes from what I see, touch and feel. The rest, as far as I'm concerned, didn't happen. If it did, so what, then it happened. Great!

I am my own leader. I make my own rules. The revolution is wherever my boots hit the ground. If the left considers this adventurism, fuck 'em, they are a total bureaucratic bore. SDS came to Chicago to talk to the McCarthy kids. We came to have the McCarthy kids experience what we experience all the time—the experience of living in a police state and the beauty of struggle in a revolution. Today I stand on the corner of St. Marks Place and the headline reads POLICE INVADE MCCARTHY HEADQUARTERS AND CLUB CAMPAIGN WORKERS. It is the final scene in the Theatre of Cruelty played out in Chicago. Another week and we could have gotten the cops to assassinate Humphrey.

If it sounds egotistical, tough shit...

We had won the battle of Chicago. As I watched the acceptance speech of Hump Free I knew we had smashed the Democrats chances, and destroyed the two-party system in this country and perhaps electoral politics. Nixon-Agnew v. Humphrey-Muskie.

Four deuces. HA! HA! Losers ALL! (See McLuhan's brilliant article in recent *Saturday Evening Post* entitled "All the Candidates Are Asleep"). There was no doubt in my mind when I saw that acceptance speech that we had won. There would be a Pig in the White House in '69. I Went out for champagne, brought it up to the Mobe office and toasted the Revolution. Put on my dark glasses, tucked my hair under my hat, pasted on my mustache, and called my wife. Told her to ditch the Chicago police tailing us and pick me up. I checked my phony identification cards, checked my youth ticket. In half an hour we were at O'Hare airport, two hours later back on the Lower East Side.

All the way on the plane I kept wondering what the fuck we would have done if they had let us stay in Lincoln Park all night. It was the biggest joke of all. The concept of the Pig as our leader was truer than reality, It was the perfect symbol. Oink! Oink! Oink! Blank space. Involvement. We love the Pig (our candidate and leader). We hate the Pig! Daley, cops, authority... Everything is Pig.. Chicago is total garbage and the pigs are like politicians.

The pigs that attacked us in the park live in the zoo, housed in the Lincoln Cultural and Arts Center. The pig that killed Dean Johnson, a fifteen-year-old Indian brother from Sioux City, Iowa, our only martyr, was named Officer Manley. The liberal schmuck deputy mayor who stalled for four months on our permit application was named David Stahl. The federal judge who was to hear our law suit was named Lynch (although we whipped him by taking back the suit saying it didn't fit and remarking that we had as little faith in the judicial system of this country as we did in the political).

Symbols and myths is what it's all about. Headlines. NATIONAL GUARD VS. THE HIPPIES AT CONRAD HILTON. My god, the overground press looked like underground reporters. It was impossible to tell who was who. A perfect and total mess. The cops drove us out in the street each night, teaching us how to survive and fight. How could city Yippies totally unorganized (although very together) take on superior armed forces in unfamiliar territory resembling the countryside. We never retreated! Let us make that point crystal clear. We dispersed. We persisted in fighting for our right to stay in the park the total time we were in Chicago. In fact we were really fighting for our right to be in Grant Park which was our original intention (check out first articles as well as the original permit application filed on March 25). For it was Grant Park right across from the headquarters of the Chief Pigs, the Conrad Hitler Hotel, the largest hotel in the world, that was Circus Ring Number One.

Fifteen days ago I was left in Chicago by the other troublemakers who had things to put together in New York before heading back. I had a dollar in my pocket which I ceremoniously burned in the Seed office and said, "Now I am ready for the battle." I bummed a few bucks off Abe Peck and was off and running. I bought a little red book in Woolworth's, which incidentally fell apart, revealing scraps of Chinese newspapers, that I showed to police to prove conclusively that the Yippies were linked directly to Red China. By the time I was through I had the home phone numbers of the Chief of Police, Deputy Mayor, Hubert Humphrey's credit card number (also the address where he was really staying, the Astor Tower Motel, his office staff and aides stayed at the Hilton) and information on all the key people for Yippee, Mob, press, police and resource people (those who had trucks, food, banners, pigs, buttons). I had a lot of information.

Information is the key to survival

Information is the key to survival. Information is what the struggle is all about. As long as I knew what I was doing better than the people I encountered knew what they were doing I would survive. If not, I would die. I had no doubts about that. I had 25 death threats and one night a guy with a loaded pistol was pulled off the doorstep of my hideout apartment. As I said to the cops Wednesday who came to arrest me as I was sitting in the Lincoln Hotel restaurant waiting for breakfast, The first duty of a revolutionist is to get away with it.

"The second duty is to finish breakfast. I ain't going." It was a bit written by a Hollywood screen writer. I had painted the word FUCK on my forehead as part of my costume. I didn't feel like having my picture in the mass media that day and that is the only way to do it and still be able to do what you want. My hat was drawn low over the word because I didn't feel like pissing off the waitress (we had already played out a number of theatre pieces in that restaurant). Two cops came in and said "We have a tip you have something under your hat, will you please remove it." (Information a phony cop. A real cop never says please; information: he won't be rough on you.)

"I'm going to eat. Want to join us?"

They had a conference.

"You guys better call Commander Brash" (Information: cops are only afraid of losing their jobs, always call for their superior, it shakes the shit out of them. I had noticed they were from the 18th Precinct.) They left. Soon they return with six other cops. Outside were four patrol cars. Out came their guns "Take off your hat." I lifted the gray ranger hat, one of the hundred different disguises I had used that week and shouted "BANG, BANG." Krassner went hysterical, even my wife, who usually worries, was smiling. The cops reached over and pulled me out across the table with me clutching a slice of bacon (oink!). dragged me out of the restaurant, slammed me against a car, handcuffed me, and took me in.

I was kept incommunicado for thirteen hours with no phone calls, no lawyers, no food (five hours without water), I was transported from precinct house to precinct house while fat dumb cops beat the shit out of me. One cop, Officer Henley, no. 238, showed me a gold bullet that he said had my name on it. I fired back, "I had his name on a silver bullet and I was the Lone Ranger."

Throughout the beatings I kept laughing hysterically. "We whipped you fucking pigs, we whipped your asses. You cocksuckers are afraid to lose your jobs and we ain't afraid to die." The courtroom scene was a shambles. I swore at the ACLU lawyer and told him to get his liberal lawyers up here for a sit-in and forget about defending me. I was sick and tired of fighting his revolution. In the hall I ripped up the arrest papers with all the charges. It was

all Catch-22 bullshit anyway. I was really mad though because they had succeeded in keeping me out of the battle of Michigan Avenue.

Actually I had worked out a perfect plan not to get caught and still do my thing. At midnight the night before a girl was supposed to run into the Lincoln Park area with a brown cowboy hat I had worn covered with blood, and blood all over her, screaming that I had been killed. It would have worked too. Lincoln Park at midnight just before the tear gas hit was the best place in the country to begin that sort of spook story. It was the hour of paranoid's delight (I remember hearing a kid scream "the cops are coming" as he stared into a vacant field with only trees. "Cops and blue, kid, and they come in large numbers. Don't fire 'til you see the whites of their eyes").

Anyway, the girl didn't do it. Later she told me it was one of the toughest decisions she ever made. She, more than most, realized the power of myth. Anyway the next day I really was flying. It was the best. I rapped in Lincoln Park thanking Ho Chi Minh for bringing the medical supplies, thanking Bob Dylan for playing in the park, thanked Chairman Mao for the secret plans ("Always have three plans—two from column A and one from column B." Stage note—when the actor says two he holds up two fingers in the sign or the V; when he exclaims "one" he jams one finger into the air making the "up your ass." sign). I thanked Marshall McLuhan for bringing his television set, I thanked the Chicago cops and Mayor Daley, the founder of the hippies for without their help, none of this would have been possible.

I rapped about how leaders were full of shit, how the Mob marshals were all cops and how the politicians, McCarthy included, who came to the park to speak were false prophets.

There never were any YIPPIE! and that exclamation point was what it was all about. It was the biggest put-on of all time. If you believe hippies existed you are nothing but sheep. The Brothers and Sisters who came and fought and made love weren't busted. Everyone's Chicago came true. You know how I knew? Nobody was disappointed Bob Dylan didn't show up. You know he did, though it was just that the fucking Pigs wouldn't let him play in the park. I saw him. Sunday night we sat up in a tree near the Church of the Free Spirit in Lincoln Park smoking pot. If you don't believe me, ask him.

fifth Estate

Abbie Hoffman
Creating CHAOS
1968

<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/65-october-31-november-13-1968/creating-chaos>
Fifth Estate #65, October 31-November 13, 1968

fifthestate.anarchistlibraries.net