

Peace

By Katherine San Fratello
and the Chicago History Museum

Julia admired herself in the mirror. She and her little sister Lydia had made new purple and pink tie-dyed shirts. They had just pulled them out of the dryer and were modeling them for each other. Julia had graduated from high school and would soon be leaving home to go to college. She was trying to spend a lot of time with Lydia in an attempt to make the coming separation easier. Lydia, who was only 11, lost interest in their shirts as they entered Julia's room.

The posters on Julia's walls distracted Lydia from further preening. The posters of rock groups mesmerized her: the Beatles, The Doors, Neil Young, Bob Dylan, Jimi Hendrix. One poster declared, "Make Love, Not War." Then there were sort of cartoon-like posters. One poster had a drawing of a hippie wearing striped bell-bottoms and love beads. Out of his head came exploding rainbows, stars, and flowers. The

colors on this poster were psychedelic; the oranges, yellows, greens, and purples vibrated, pulsed, and jumped off the paper. There were also some buttons that Julia would let her borrow and wear on occasion. One was a black button with a peace sign emblazoned on it. Another showed a rifle with a soldier's helmet on top, which read "Out Now." Interspersed among the posters were newspapers. Not newspapers like the *Chicago Tribune*, but the kind you couldn't buy on a newsstand. Julia told Lydia these papers came from the underground press. Lydia was curious about them but had trouble reading the prose. She often asked Julia to read them to her.

Today Lydia noticed a new underground newspaper taped up which had a button stuck in it that said, "Yippie." She pleaded with her older

sister to start reading. “I won’t interrupt, I promise.”

Julia began reading out loud in a kind of breathless, stream-of-consciousness style: “Join us in Chicago in August for an international festival of youth, music, and theater. Rise up and abandon the creeping meatball!”

Lydia pretended to be eating spaghetti. Julia tried to ignore her and keep reading: “Come all you rebels, youth spirits, rock minstrels, truth seekers, peacock freaks, poets, barricade jumpers, dancers, lovers, and artists. It is summer. It is the last week in August and the NATIONAL DEATH PARTY meets to bless Johnson. We are making love in the parks. We are reading, singing, laughing, printing newspapers, groping, and making a mock convention and celebrating the birth of FREE AMERICA in our own time.”

Lydia was on a roll: she started waving her arms around while making a peace sign and dancing. Julia stifled a smile and continued: “New tribes will gather in Chicago. We will be completely open; everything will be free. Bring blankets, tents, draft cards, body paint, Mrs. O’Leary’s cow, food to share, music, eager skin and happiness. The threats of LBJ, Mayor Daley, and J Edgar Freako will not stop us. We are coming! We are coming from all over the world!”

Julia knew Lydia would be unable to resist the reference to “Mrs. O’Leary’s cow.” Sure enough, Lydia started to moo.

“The life of the American spirit is being torn asunder by the forces of violence, decay, and the napalm, cancer fiend. We demand the politics of ecstasy. We are the delicate spoors of the new fierceness that will change America. We will create our own reality; we are Free America. And we will not accept the false theatre of the Death

Convention. We will be in Chicago. Begin preparations now! Chicago is yours! Do it!"¹

Julia stopped abruptly and started to tickle her sister. "I knew you couldn't sit still."

Lydia stopped laughing and said, "I just don't get it. What is all that supposed to mean? I know the 'National Death Party' is the National Democratic Party and 'Death Convention' is the Democratic National Convention. But what's wrong with the Democrats holding a convention? What's 'Yippie?' What does 'creeping meatball' mean? I don't understand how dancing, making love, and body paint is going to change anything."

"Slow down," Julia said as she smiled at her excitable sister. "I'll explain. This is the Yippie Manifesto. The name Yippie was made up by

Abbie Hoffman and other members of the Yippie movement. Yippie is an acronym for Youth International Party. Their manifesto is a document that states what the Yippies are all about. You know, what they feel, what they believe, what they want to accomplish. The Yippie movement is about drawing attention to the anti-war effort *not* by sending out letters or asking for donations, but by doing strange, kooky things. What they do isn't supposed to make a lot of sense; it's supposed to attract attention.

"The Yippies (and a lot of other people)," Julia continued, "think the problem with the Democratic Convention is that the majority of the delegates there don't seem to be representing how a lot of people are feeling in this country right now about the Vietnam War. And you know it is at the Democratic Convention that the states' delegates choose who will run for president against the Republican's candidate."

“Do you really believe that Yippies doing crazy stuff will get people to change their minds?” Lydia asked.

Julia responded, “The Yippies are just getting people to look, and maybe think. I put the manifesto up because I dig the way Abbie Hoffman talks and writes. He’s a political activist and he’s one of the founders of the movement. He’s cool. I personally think the way to change things is by marching peacefully, you know that. That’s why I am going to go to Grant Park to hear David Dellinger speak. He’s really cool too. He’s one of my heroes. He has been a political activist for years. He believes in pacifism. He spent three years in jail during World War II because he refused to register for the draft way back then! Anyway, I want to hear him talk and I want to march on the Amphitheater where they are holding the Democratic Convention.”²

Lydia raised her eyebrows in surprise. She was taken aback at the thought of her sister in a protest march. She had already heard her parents talking about clashes between protesters and police in Lincoln Park.³ She didn’t want to think of her sister in harm’s way. She was also not looking forward to Julia bringing up the topic with their parents at dinner that evening.

Lydia put the thought of her sister going to Grant Park out of her mind. “You still haven’t explained what ‘creeping meatball’ is,” she said mischievously.

“I think it means it’s time for dinner,” Julia replied, throwing a pillow at Lydia as she ran out of the room.

At the dinner table the talk turned to current events as it often did. Lydia’s and Julia’s parents

didn't like Julia's choice of music, or the multiple strands of love beads she wore, or the tie-dye t-shirts, or that she read underground newspapers, but to their credit, they didn't ignore Julia's ideas just because she was a teenager. Lydia noted that Julia and her parents seemed to clash and clash more often as Julia got closer to going to college. Her opinions were stronger than they had been; she was also more forceful in stating them. Tonight the talk was about the convention and the television coverage.

Julia was saying, "I know the city doesn't want to show people protesting the convention. But you can't tell me what is going on inside the Amphitheater is representative of how people are feeling in this country about the war. If enough people gather in Grant Park to go protest the Democratic Convention, then it will get covered on television."

Lydia stopped eating. She noticed Julia pause; she knew what was coming next. Julia calmly stated, "I am going to join the anti-war demonstrators in Grant Park tomorrow."

Their mother put down her fork. Their father looked at Julia with a very serious face and said, "I knew you were bound to bring up this idea. I know you and I disagree about our country's presence in Vietnam, and I respect your choice to protest the war, but I really do not want you to go to Grant Park. You know that the protesters do not have permits to march on the Amphitheater. There are already police in riot gear. There is talk that the mayor is going to call in the National Guard. There has already been rioting..."

Lydia winced because she knew Julia's exasperated look would be followed by a shriller tone. "You know, Dad, if I were going to go down

to Grant Park to show my support of the Vietnam War, you'd let me go."

Their mother interjected, "Calm down, Julia. Remember that you were only a baby during the Cold War. We lived through it."

"I know, Mom," Julia said in a slightly less shrill tone.

Her mother continued, "We feel that communism is still a very real threat to our national interests. Let's try and have a discussion. Shall we?"

Julia took a deep breath. Looking down at her plate she said, "Sorry, Dad. I just really want to go. You know I believe in protesting peacefully."

Their father looked thoughtfully at Julia. "I know you have every intention of protesting peacefully. It's not you I don't trust. There are going to be all sorts of wackos there."

Julia quickly interjected, "Mark is going, too." Julia prayed to herself that this might calm her father. She knew, however, that if her father was aware Mark would not hesitate a second before burning his draft card, he wouldn't let her out the door.

"I guess that makes me feel slightly better," her father conceded. There was silence at the table. Her father continued in a less admonishing tone.

"Look Julia, I am having a hard time swallowing the fact that you are not a little girl anymore and that in a few months you won't be living under my roof. I know you have to make your own decisions; I can't stop you from going to Grant Park. I just don't ever want to see you get hurt. Can you assure me that you and Mark will stick together?"

Feeling a little sorry that she had started to give her father a hard time, Julia nodded silently,

then said, “All I can tell you is that I am going there to march peacefully.”

“If you feel at any time that the situation is getting out of hand I want you two to come home as quickly as possible. Take a cab if it seems to be the best way.”

The next day was August 28. In the afternoon Julia walked under the overarching trees of her quiet Lincoln Park neighborhood to the Fullerton “L” station. As she approached the station she saw Mark immediately. With his auburn hair, she could have picked him out of any crowd.

Julia and Mark had grown up together. They had climbed every tree in the schoolyard, played in each other’s homes all through grade school, and helped each other with algebra. They

had even shared a first kiss when they were in ninth grade, although they never “went out.” They hadn’t even talked about the kiss, but they remained friends, which Julia thought was almost more important. It was great to have a guy be such a close friend.

He turned to greet her as she approached him. “Hey, Gandhi! Are you ready to make some waves?” He wore a plain white t-shirt with the slogan “Hell No! We Won’t Go!” printed boldly in black.

“My father is freaked out about me going to Grant Park,” Julia said.

“That’s no surprise,” Mark responded. “My parents didn’t have much to say about it. I think they’ll be glad when I’m out of the house; I know I will be,” he grinned.

They climbed the stairs and waited on the platform for the train to take them the seven stops to the Van Buren Street station downtown.

On the platform there were a lot of other people their age. Many had peace sign buttons. A young woman had a Yippie button on her blue and green tie-dyed t-shirt. She also had a necklace of flowers around her neck and a wreath of flowers around her head.

As they waited for the train, they fell into the conversation that they never seemed to resolve. “Julia, you can’t honestly tell me that you think marching peacefully is actually going to change anything about the war and the way the Democratic Party is handling this nomination process.”

Julia responded, “Yes I do. Gandhi changed India with peaceful protest. Martin Luther King believed in peaceful protest and he had a profound impact on civil rights. I think that if thousands of people march peacefully on the Amphitheater, there is no way our point won’t get

across. There’s already too much violence happening in Vietnam.”

Mark shook his head at her in disbelief. “Have you really seen what the war looks like? The bombs and napalm are falling like rain on the Vietnamese. We have to disrupt the war machine; we have to take direct action. To me the government of the United States is just one big bureaucratic war machine. They want to draft me to become a trained killer, since they think it’s O.K. to kill innocent civilians if I’m wearing a military uniform. If a draft card comes in the mail that has my name on it, I’m burning it. This is the time to take action! If that means using force to disrupt the status quo, then I am all for it.”

Julia looked at him and said softly, “I can’t bear to think of you being drafted. I don’t want there to be any violence anywhere. I just believe with my whole heart that if everyone made the

decision to be peaceful, then things could really change.”

Mark shook his head. “It’s a good thing we’ve known each for so long, or I don’t think we would even be able to speak to each other.”

The whole train car cleared out at the Van Buren Street exit. Julia and Mark put their arms around each other’s waists and followed the crowd east towards Michigan Avenue.

Once at the corner of Michigan and Van Buren, they surveyed the scene. Everything in Grant Park seemed peaceful. There were groups of people milling about. Some people were sunbathing. Some people had guitars. There were, however, lots of policeman there as well. There were even some people in suits and ties. They headed east into Grant Park toward the

band shell. There were already thousands of people in front of the shell. Julia and Mark were surprised to see the presence of hundreds of police in Grant Park.

They found seats several hundred yards away from the stage and surveyed the scene. Some people were wearing helmets and were carrying rocks. They were both taken aback when they saw that there were police or National Guardsmen on top of the Field Museum. Julia thought to herself that it was as if many people felt the way Mark did, and wanted something to happen.

Julia looked at her watch, then up at the stage. It was 3:00 p.m. David Dellinger was supposed to start the rally soon. Suddenly a man held out a leaflet for them to take. The person next to them said, “Yeah, I already got one of those. That guy is a pig in plainclothes.” Julia was slightly taken aback at his vehement

reference to a policeman as “pig.” Julia read the pamphlet as Mark looked over her shoulder. It was a warning that anyone attempting to march on the Amphitheater would be arrested.

As the rally got started they suddenly noticed that a teenage boy was climbing the flagpole near the stage. The climber reached the top and began to take down the flag. Then police rushed to the flagpole. People in the crowd were yelling, “They’re beating him!” People started to throw rocks, bottles, and food in the direction of the flagpole.⁴ More police joined the foray and Julia could see masses of people pushing towards the fight. She then noticed that David Dellinger and another anti-war activist, Tom Hayden, were on the stage and at the microphone. Dellinger urged everyone to calm down and stop throwing rocks. Hayden, however, seemed furious.

“The city and the military machinery it has aimed at us won’t permit us to protest,” he began. “Therefore we must move out of this park in groups and throughout the city and turn this excited, overheated military machine against itself. Let us make sure. If blood is going to flow, let it flow all over this city.”

Hayden’s voice was as loud and strong as his rhetoric. He delivered his words in such an unabashed way that Julia was taken aback.

“If gas is going to be used, let that gas come down all over Chicago and not just all over us in the park. If the police are going to run wild, let them run wild all over the city and not over us. If we are going to be disrupted and violated, let this whole stinking city be disrupted and violated... Don’t get trapped in some kind of large march which can be surrounded. Begin to find your way out of here. I’ll see you in the streets.”⁵

Most people around Julia and Mark were shouting in support of Hayden's call to action. Mark had started to shout and was pumping his fist in the air like others near them in the crowd. Others, like Julia, were quieter. Then Dellinger grabbed the microphone. Julia prayed he would attempt to settle the crowd down. Dellinger calmly tried to explain the three options for the protesters: 1) line up for a nonviolent march to the Amphitheater; 2) leave and reassemble across from the Conrad Hilton on Michigan Avenue where the delegates were staying; or 3) stay in the park to avoid confrontation.⁶

Julia was confused about what to do. The people on the stage seemed confused; all were advocating different tactics. The people around her and the National Guardsmen, however, were definitely not confused.

As masses of people started pushing their way out of the park, National Guardsmen with M-1 rifles, grenade launchers, bayonets, gas dispensers, and machine guns moved into the park. They began stationing themselves at the bridges that led from the park into the Loop.⁷ Julia became more nervous as the crowd became more agitated and belligerent in their shouts of "Pigs!" Julia kept screaming "Peace now!" Mark was pumping his fist up and down in the air; he joined others in the crowd in their chants of "Hell no, we won't go!"

Julia wasn't sure what to do. The atmosphere contributed to her feeling increasingly agitated and belligerent herself. She knew what her rights were, but wasn't sure if she was willing to be a part of a riot for them. Seeing the belligerence on the part of the city made her increasingly angry, though.

Through a bullhorn Dellinger again tried to urge people to march peacefully. Then, through another bullhorn, police informed the demonstrators that they were part of an illegal assemblage and would be arrested.⁸ The crowd was informed that negotiations on part of the marchers were taking place with the police. The results however, were disappointing. The police had no intention of letting the demonstrators leave the park and march towards the Amphitheater. It seemed that the march was breaking up.

Julia and Mark joined the throng leaving Grant Park. Thousands of demonstrators tried to join a peaceful march on Michigan Avenue that was already occurring. It turned out these demonstrators, sponsored by the Southern Christian Leadership Council, had a permit.

Julia took Mark by the hand and tried to convince him to join in the peaceful march. "The

Amphitheater is on 47th Street. It's going to take hours to get there. But look, there are TV cameras in front of the Hilton. The more people that are here, the more the television cameras will want to film the anti-war protest."

Mark acquiesced. "I'll join you for awhile, then maybe I'll take the train south toward the Amphitheater."

As they joined the demonstrators, swarms of policemen surrounded the march. Suddenly Mark was shoved in the back with such force he fell to the ground. Julia turned in horror to see who had done it. Her mouth opened in disbelief as she saw that it was a policeman in full riot gear, holding a wooden club and yelling at Mark: "You're the pig! You are a sissy not to want to go to Vietnam and do what is right!" Then he kicked Mark several times in the stomach.

Julia started to scream at him, "Hey! You can't do that! He has the right to express his

opinion..." The policeman shoved her in the stomach, and she fell to the ground next to Mark.

Julia tried to talk to Mark, but the only thing she could hear on top of the screaming was demonstrators yelling and chanting, "Dump the Hump!" "**** the pigs!" "**** you LBJ!" Julia began to yell "Peace Now!" "Peace Now!" over and over.

People started to throw rocks, bottles, and garbage at the police. More police arrived in riot gear. They were determined to clear Michigan Avenue and get the demonstrators away from the television cameras. Suddenly Mark vomited and Julia felt sick to her stomach. There was tear gas in the air.

As they lay on the ground, they covered their faces for fear of being trampled. As soon as she was able, Julia helped Mark to his feet. Then she noticed lights flickering on and off in the Hilton's windows. Guests, and maybe even some

delegates, were showing their solidarity with the protesters.

"We're getting out of here," she commanded. They stumbled toward Van Buren and walked west to State Street to catch the train.

As they sat on the bench waiting for the distant rumble of the train coming from the south that would take them home, Julia put her face in her hands and began to sob. She didn't know what to feel. A well of emotions surged inside her. She felt angry, upset, disillusioned, and sick all at once. She wiped the tears from her face and turned her attention towards Mark.

Mark was someone who always meant what he said; his actions always spoke as clearly as his words. But she had never seen such a look in his eyes. She realized it was fear. Had he changed his mind?

She pulled Mark's head towards her shoulder and stroked his hair. "Maybe he's right," she thought to herself. "Maybe peaceful protest won't help end the war."

Sources

1 Farber, David. *Chicago '68*. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1988, p.17

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., pp. 166-176.

4 Ibid., p.195

5 Ibid., pp. 196-197

6 Ibid., p.197

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.