

Abbie Hoffman Interview

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August 1968

Yippie co-founder and activist Abbie Hoffman interviewed just days before the commencement of the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, Illinois. Filmed in Chicago, I think this is one of his more famous interviews.

Unsure of the date. It's definitely days before the start of the DNC, and the source stated its from August 20th but I have some doubt that this date is correct since this interview was merged with other unrelated footage.

The interviewer's name is Jim Burnes. Burnes would die only two years later in 1970 due to a heart attack at the age of 42.

INTERVIEWER: What are you really hoping to accomplish by these demonstrations here in the park next week?

ABBIE: Well, that's the kind of a difficult question. You're asking question in terms of goals, and I could say personally, but there will be 100,000 people here. And everyone has a different goal, essentially I think. What I would like to see is the development of an alternative Society of a model for an alternative society. That is, that people there'll be 100,000 people in this park. They'll be bikers over there. They'll be speed freaks over there. They'll be flower children there. They'll be veterans over there. Women over there, blacks over there. And people will all come together and share the. Food pull their money, help each other in case we have trouble from the police, we'll all stick together and fight the police fight for our right to stay in the park. We'll help each other build the stages and we'll we. We'll develop a. Community, it's the thing that's totally lacking in in American. Society, as we view it. That's why we we are not really here to protest, to make demands like the other groups we we consider demands of the Democratic Party as being waste of time. We're here to make our statement. That's why we're offering a pig as president.

INTERVIEWER: Why are you offering a pig as president?

ABBIE: Well, I think because they are too in a way, but also because we don't.

INTERVIEWER: What do you mean they are?

ABBIE: Well the Democrats, the Republicans, you know, they're all sort of pigs. We don't, maybe. We don't believe in the concept of President. You know, [that] there ought to be a president and that kind of centralization of power. So yeah, central government has a tremendous amount of power in this country, and it's very bureaucratic. And it's as much the bureaucracy of this country and the sterility of this country as much as its evilness, especially in terms of war in Vietnam and the way it treats poor people and black people that brings us to this park. So does that do it?

INTERVIEWER: For you, these are rather nebulous. Seems to me goals what. Are there any specific things that you would like to leave here? Say a week from now saying we accomplished this.

ABBIE: Well, I don't think it's it's when you're involved in the movement. You see, you don't have that. The concept of success and failure that you do it if you're involved in a business. I mean, this is called a festival of life and life just is. It's not. It's not based on success and failure. You do what you can and the way it comes out. That's groovy. Look, we try to levitate the Pentagon right. 300 feet in the air, you know? So it didn't.

INTERVIEWER: And apply to undertake in our daily out here.

ABBIE: Go up, you know. Now we're going to aim for the opposite direction. We are trying to sink them 300 feet down. But, uh, no. We're trying to turn them on actually. I mean, I really hope Mayor Daley will come out in the park. And, you know, be with us. Share our food. I mean, you see that's the aim. The draw is, you know, the concept of free stores. We'll have a free store right over there. Give away all kinds of things we don't sell anything we give away. The buttons our posters, you know our. Energy that that they'll say, yeah, that's groovy idea. Yeah, it's like when we went to Stock Exchange, throwing out the money, there was a tourist there in the balcony all of a sudden jumped into it, threw over his camera, threw out all his money and came. Up and said, I understand what you guys are doing.

I've been in here in New York for. Two weeks and all. I've been doing is throwing away money. This is a lot quicker and a lot more fun. I mean fun is is an essential ingredient. Fun has become subversive. But I don't think people should view it. Just fun in the American sense of fun, you know, fun can be storming the gates of the International Amphitheatre. That can be fun for some people. That can be life.

INTERVIEWER: You said go be anything like that. Go on and storm in the gates of the.

ABBIE: Amphitheater I think everything is going to go on. This week I think we're in touch with many groups that are planning all kinds of activity. You see, when you have an alternative society, you organize people or you bring people together around the kinds of things they want to do. You never say no, you know, and it's difficult. I mean, some people want to go this way. Some people want to go this way and they say that those people are interfering with their thing, but somehow it works out. I mean everybody is allowed to do their thing. If some people storm the amphitheater, they storm the amphitheater. Some people want to swim naked in the lake. They swim naked in the lake. Other people want to smoke. Other people want to go and tell the cops want to come down and beat our heads. That's it. I mean, it's all conceived. As a total theater. With everyone becoming an actor, the Democrats. Humphrey, whatever his name is the other candidates I don't even know their names. I don't care me. I'm for Wallace.

Speaker 6: I got.

INTERVIEWER: Hoffman, why are the Yippies here Abby? Why are the Yippies here?

ABBIE: Well, that's since we're not a carefully structured organization. You'd have to ask each person that I mean, it's an individual, kind of.

INTERVIEWER: Decision why are you here?

ABBIE: Well, I'm here to because I believe in the concept of alternative society. I think American culture is sterile, boring, evil, corrupt and old and I think that our task is to build a new society based on new premises.

INTERVIEWER: What will you do here?

ABBIE: Well, we'll attempt to. Build that society we'll. There'll be people there'll be. For example, bikers, head hunters. Speed freaks potheads Old ladies, veterans people of all different shapes and sizes coming together 100,000 we hope and sharing their food, sharing their life experience and exchanging ideas and exchanging energy and. They'll be doing this essentially without the use of money. I mean all this is being done without money. We get any money we're going to burn it, and that's the kind of society we envision where people share things and we don't need money where you have the machines do the work for the people. A free society. That's really what it amounts to free society built on life. That's why we're calling it a festival of life. But life is not some Time magazine hippie version of fadom. Life is everything and life also includes death and people are coming here ready to risk their lives. Build that society.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think people will be risking their lives by coming here?

ABBIE: Yes, I do. I think many of them will, I think. Well, I think if people stay in the park, you know and play the role of the good, they'll be OK. They'll be, they'll be treated with respect by the police. In fact, they'll. Be held up as. The models of the ideal protesters, those people that. Those yippies that match in the Amphitheatre or go downtown or sit in restaurants or demand their rights. They'll be risking their life. That's right, these cops here are tough they. They kill you with a smile. Shoot to kill daily, you know. Well, so far the police around the park have been very friendly. People have been sleeping here in the park right along and we haven't got a permit and we don't expect to even get one. Although we're arguing it in court, they've been very friendly. I don't know if it's Deceptive, or if they're told to be friendly. I mean we don't know. I expect that. Wednesday night you see the nomination for different kind of scene to be here in Chicago than will be the first three or four. That's why we're preparing in the park. That's why we're having the training.

INTERVIEWER: Kind of training you're talking about.

ABBIE: Where we have. Karate training, snake dance training. Defense self-defense techniques for those people that are into defensive training. We have classes on. Defense against Mace first day classes. How to use Guerilla Theater as a defensive and an offensive weapon. Can be used both way. For example, one method we have is that people have a bag of blood plastic bag of blood, say policeman goes to hit him on the head and they take the bag of blood and smash it on their head before he hits them. Now that's an inch, you know, that's where my head's at in terms of defense. You know, like freak him out.

INTERVIEWER: Well, is it your purpose here to disrupt this this convention that you?

ABBIE: Hi ma.

INTERVIEWER: What is? Your purpose here to disrupt this convention.

ABBIE: Disruption is a strange word.

INTERVIEWER: You like to break. It up you like to close it them.

ABBIE: We are by a very existence we're disruptive. I mean, you commented before about how the parks officials you know regarded this whole little fantasy because of our long hair. Long hair is disruptive. Life is disruptive in America. Let's face it, if you believe in life, you're disruptive. You know, I don't want to go and fight in that damn war. You know that's a disruptive attitude. They're going to have to pull me. By my hair, right?

INTERVIEWER: What about the future of the Yippies? This is sort of the climactic hour for the movement.

ABBIE: And this this is the yippie orgasm. Well, at the end it will. Be over because. Yippies not where it's at any more than than Democrats. Where it's at people is where it's. At and the Yippie thing was solely created. Well, I don't know if I should give you all the secrets, but TV plays its role, you know? See people say to us how do? People come here.



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