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# Columbia University 1968

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## COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY 1968

Frank da Cruz

Columbia University 1966-2011

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April 1998

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The buttons above (and [others](#)) were on display in Columbia's [Rare Book and Manuscript Library](#) on the 6th floor of

Butler Library, Chang Room, March 17 - June 6, 2008, in an exhibition commemorating the 40th anniversary of the 1968 uprising. In July 2011, I donated them to their permanent collection. Click the buttons to see more.

**Personal recollections of the 1968 student uprising at Columbia University.** I was an active participant, but not a member of any particular faction (the only organization I belonged to was Veterans Against the War). I wrote this article for publication in the "Columbia Librarian" at the request of Columbia's Vice President for Information Services and University Librarian, Elaine Sloan (then my boss's boss), on the 30th anniversary of the student rebellion. In 1968 I was an [Army veteran](#) working my way through a Columbia degree with a "part-time" student job in the library; when I first wrote this in 1998 I worked in Academic Information Systems (the academic half of what used to be called the [Computer Center](#)), which, after 1986, was part of the University Library; hence the library connection. Because this article was written for a Columbia audience, familiarity with the [Columbia campus](#) and setting are assumed. The article was placed on the Web and slightly updated in February 2001, with periodic updates after that. Pictures were added in June 2001, which could be viewed by following the links. May 31, 2011: This page and its sub-pages and images were moved from <http://www.columbia.edu/acis/history/> to <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/computinghistory/>. On July 1, 2011, I was laid off after 45 years at Columbia. April 16, 2018: This page converted to HTML5 and validated, all links verified, and all pages made "fluid", e.g. to fit on cell phone screens. **August 2019: Extensive revisions, new galleries, and inline images.**



*Me in the Army*

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## Prelude



1967 Anti military recruiting demo



1968 antiwar demonstration on Low Plaza

In 1968 there was a war going on, but unlike today there was also a military draft; between 1964 and 1973 about 2.2 million people were drafted, mostly during 1965-70. Prior to 1968, the University had routinely furnished class rank lists to the draft board so if you had low grades, off you went to kill or be

killed; this practice ended only after massive protests in 1967. Meanwhile there were ROTC drills on South Field, military and CIA recruiters on campus, and classified military and CIA research in the labs. The Civil Rights movement, still fresh in our minds, had become the Black Liberation movement and the [Black Panthers](#) – and [Soul music](#) – captured students' imaginations. [Dr. King](#) had just been killed and the cities were in flames — NYC less than others due to the calming influence of Mayor Lindsay. It was not a time for "business as usual".

Throughout the late 1960s and early 70s there was constant antiwar activity on campus – Sundial rallies against the war, confrontations with military recruiters, teach-ins on the war and on [Pentagon economics](#), demonstrations against class rank reporting; it was an era of bullhorns. Meanwhile the University was constructing a new gym in Morningside Park – the barrier separating Columbia from Harlem – with a "back door" on the Harlem side. One day in April some students went to Morningside Drive and tore down the gym construction fence, attempting to break into the construction site. They were restrained by police and some were arrested. The ensuing Sundial rally wandered into Hamilton Hall and stayed the night. The original idea was that the students would occupy Hamilton until the charges were dropped and some other demands were met. Various factions debated tactics and what the demands should be. Eventually [six demands](#) were formulated, of which the only two substantive ones were that Columbia cease all forms of support for the war and that it cancel the gym.



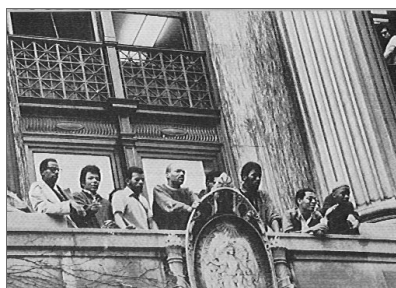
Morningside Park gym site April 23

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## The First Building Occupations



Hamilton lobby April 23



Black students in Hamilton Hall



Carmichael and Brown

Several hundred of us congregated in the Hamilton lobby while the leadership went upstairs to plan what to do next.

Many groups were involved but the primary ones were the white Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the black Students Afroamerican Society (SAS). The talks took all night, and although a few in the lobby went home, most stuck it out. About 6:00am it was announced that the Black students would stay in Hamilton and everybody else would leave and take another building. Soon the Black students were joined by [H. Rap Brown](#), [Stokely Carmichael](#), Charles 37X Kenyatta, and other well-known Black activists.



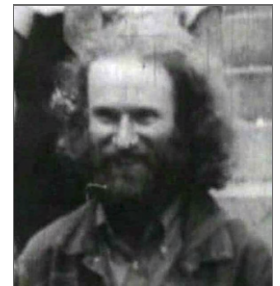
The march from Hamilton to Low

We marched in a large column straight across College Walk to the security entrance at the southeast corner of Low Library. The door was locked so people at the front (I assume they were the SDS leaders) picked up a bench and smashed it through the glass, reached around and opened the door, and hundreds of us marched past the security desk without incident. We walked upstairs to the President's suite and entered... I don't recall having to break in; I think the cleaners were at work inside, so it was open.

Over the next few days the various mostly-white factions branched out to other buildings — SDS to Math (which flew the splendid red flag featured on the cover of Spring 1968 [Columbia College Today](#)) and others to Fayerweather and Avery. In all, five buildings were occupied for a week. The history is written in various books, in the souvenir-bound editions of *Spectator*, and there is also a locally-produced film, [Columbia Revolt](#) shot in large part by the [legendary wall-scaling Melvin](#), that is trotted out on special occasions. When I took my son to see it at the 20th anniversary get-together in Earl Hall in 1988, it was already crumbling (this was a film projection and talk by Eric Foner; the film is now available on digital media in expurgated form; see [Links](#) below).



Red flag over Math



Melvin Morgulis



White students in Low



Me in Low Library (far right)

I spent the week in Low Library. There was a carnival atmosphere the first day, with press photographers and reporters from magazines, the local newspapers, etc; the *Post* was fair, the *News* was atrocious, but the *Times* was beyond belief — small wonder, [considering the connections](#). There was an unforgettable, Felliniesque visit from a [faculty member who swooped through the window in full academic regalia](#), Batmanlike, to "reason" with us. Security

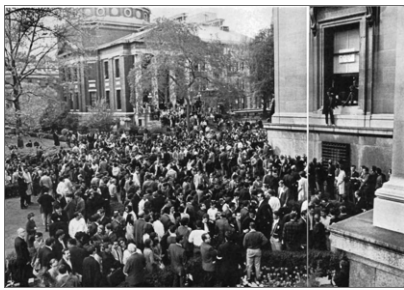
guards and office workers brought us snacks. *Life* magazine (May 10, 1968) ran a cover story featuring pictures taken in Low, including my favorite: a group of us seated on the carpet, each with a Grayson Kirk face, complete with pipe (from President Kirk's desk drawer, which was stocked with dozens of 8x10 glossy book-jacket poses).

After the first day, activities grew more structured, and thenceforth the occupation was one long meeting governed by Robert's Rules of Order, interpreted creatively ("Point of obfuscation!") and interspersed by housework. Contrary to press reports, the President's suite of offices was kept immaculate and orderly after the [chaotic first day](#). Cleanup detail included vacuuming, shaking out blankets, scrubbing the bathroom, etc. The administration's fears of vandalism (and their special concern for the Rembrandt hanging above President Kirk's desk) were poorly founded, at least in Low.



Shaking out blankets

Outside, a system of rings developed around Low Library. Opponents (called "jocks" although they weren't only jocks) formed the inner ring; student supporters (known, along with us, as "[pukes](#)") formed an outer ring, and later concerned faculty formed a buffer ring. Each group wore distinctive armbands, not that they were needed: jocks (Columbia light blue) looked like jocks; pukes (red) were scruffy; faculty (white) older and wore tweed with elbow patches. Black armbands came later, after the mass arrests. Beyond the rings were crowds of onlookers and press. The outside pukes would try to send food up to us, but the jocks intercepted most of it and made a great show of



The scene outside Low Library

wolfing it down as we looked on. Most food didn't throw well and fell short; what little got through was mainly oranges and baloney packets. One day a tall stranger with waist-length hair appeared at the distant fringe of the crowd (almost all the way to Earl Hall) and began to hurl five-pound bags of home-made fried chicken our way, one after another, with perfect aim, over the jocks' heads and right into our windows. I found out later that the chicken was cooked by Mrs. Gloria Sánchez of the Bronx, my mother-in-law-to-be's next-door neighbor, and it was delicious. As to the mysterious stranger...

. . . In June 2001 I had a call from Jerry Kisslinger of Columbia's Office of University Development and Alumni Relations, who recognized the waist-length hair and powerful arm of John Taylor, son of Nürnberg prosecutor and Columbia Law Professor [Telford Taylor](#) (who declined to lend his name to a statement signed by most other Law School faculty, which said the student protests exceeded the "allowable limits" of civil disobedience [New York Times, 24 May 1998]). Thanks to both John and his dad!

Aside from the meetings and work details, a concerted effort was made to break into and rifle through President Kirk's many file cabinets and turn up evidence of covert links with the war machine and defense contractors, large corporations planning to divide up the spoils in Viet Nam, etc, all of which were to be found in abundance. These were photocopied and later published in the East Village underground newspaper, [Rat](#). Some items were picked up by the mainstream press, resulting in some embarrassment among the rich and powerful, which quickly passed. Because we broke the file cabinets, we were charged with Malicious Mischief, a felony, in addition to the two standard felonies, Criminal Trespass and Resisting Arrest. Plus a misdemeanor, Disorderly Conduct.



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## The First Bust

On Tuesday, April 30th, leather-clad NYC motorcycle police muscled through the crowd and the rings to form a new inner ring just below our feet as we congregated on the ledges and windowsills. We fortified the entrances to the building, especially through the tunnels, against the expected assault that came about a day later. After a final warning at 2:00am to vacate or be arrested, we discussed (still observing proper parliamentary procedure) whether to resist or go peacefully. Opinion was divided and many variations were proposed. Consensus converged on civil-rights-movement-style passive resistance; we would go limp and the police would have to carry us out.



Low Library Window



Head wound

We devoted the final moments to preparations – the Defense Committee piled furniture up against the door while the rest of us picked up trash, vacuumed, and scrubbed so the President's suite would be left in pristine condition, better than we had found it, except for tape criss-crossed on the window glass and the jimmed file-cabinet locks. Those with pierced earrings took them off – a routine precaution in those days of police actions – and then we formed a 100-person, 10,000-pound clump singing "We Shall Not Be Moved", knowing that we would.

Soon axes were crashing through the door, the barricade was breached, and the Tactical Police Force (TPF) piled in, first prying apart the singing clump of us, then forming a gauntlet to pass our limp bodies down the corridors, whacking our heads with big metal flashlights along the way, and dragging us by our feet down the marble steps so our heads bounced. Head wounds bleed a lot and journalists got some striking photos of us on our way to the paddy wagons waiting on College Walk.

As I recall, my group was taken to a police precinct in lower Manhattan first for booking, then transferred to the Tombs [the jail and criminal court building at [100 Centre Street](#)]. I was in a cell with six others including [Tom Hayden](#). Later, students from the other buildings began to arrive, much bloodier than we were. The students in Math (some of whom later went on to the [Democratic convention](#) in Chicago, and then formed the [Weather Underground](#)) received less gentle treatment – one student was thrown from a second-story window and landed on a professor ([Jim Shenton](#)), breaking the professor's arm.



Melee at Math building



Tom Hayden



Frank Gucciardi

*In December 2001 I received the following email from Thomas Gucciardi: "My dad, [Frank Gucciardi](#), was a cop during the riots. He was paralyzed from the waist down for 3 years. (A student jumped off a building into the crowd) He has had a miraculous recovery & still enjoys a fairly active life. I just found your site & commend you on it. My dad till this day loved his job & he does understand the students uprising. He holds no grudges at all for what the students did to him at 34 years of age & having 3 children. Thank you for your website." Later Thomas sent copies of newspaper clippings that told how Patrolman Gucciardi had been injured and of the operations on his spine over the next several years. A series of articles by columnist Martin Gershen in the NY Times, the Long Island Press, and other papers, followed his progress and gained national attention. Also injured was Officer Bernard Wease.*

*While an article in the LA Times, 9 September 1969, quotes Mayor Lindsay as acknowledging that some police used "excessive force" and states that "news reports quoted witnesses as having seen nonuniformed policemen punching and kicking both male and female students... one blond girl was said to have been beaten unconscious on the sidewalk in front of Avery Hall... a boy left writhing in front of Ferris Booth Hall with his nose smashed...", the only two injuries serious enough to require prolonged hospitalization were to Officers Gucciardi and Wease.*

Many of the later arrivals to the Tombs were bystanders. All hell had broken loose after we left, with mounted police charging through the crowds on South Field, swinging their "batons" at all nearby heads like rampaging Cossacks and arresting people at random. Subsequent investigative commissions called it a "police riot." The combat spilled out to Broadway and down the side streets towards Riverside Park, horses galloping after fleeing pedestrians – it must have been quite a sight, and it was a "radicalizing experience" for many former sideliners. Ed Kent (UTS BD 1959, Columbia PhD 1965, currently professor of moral / political / legal philosophy at Brooklyn College, CUNY) recalls:



Police riot on campus

*I made sure that I put on a coat and tie – it was about 1 a.m. and I had been alerted by a colleague at Hunter who had heard the bust was imminent. I then joined the cop assigned to the gate who was entirely sympathetic to the students and we watched with horror as the cops beat up kids that had come out of their dorms to find out what all the ruckus was about (Those occupying buildings had been taken out through the tunnels earlier.). I will never forget one small sized student being chased by a group of cops with clubs intent on beating him up – he finally took refuge on top of a car where he tried to avoid their swings. They finally knocked him off and pounced with their clubs. The next day many faculty and students were treated for head and other injuries – all of them innocent of any connection with the actual building occupations. Incidentally at the Cox hearings I heard the dean [Henry Coleman](#) who had supposedly been imprisoned by the students in Hamilton admit in response to a question by Anthony Amsterdam that he had in fact been ordered by the President to remain in his office and had been treated with entire courtesy by the students throughout and could have unlocked his office door (and relocked it to protect student records) and left at any time. This was given as the excuse for the police action and Sidney Hook refused to take it out of his book account (I got his*

galleys to pre-view) although I personally drew his attention to his mis-reporting there. Hook had become very right wing by then.

Meanwhile, back in jail... Escorting a group of incoming wounded was a fellow worker of mine from Butler Library, now wearing a badge. In Butler, posing as a student library assistant, he had been trying to recruit us to "blow stuff up", an episode that served well for many years in discussions of leftist paranoia. The librarians, to their credit, were shocked to learn they had hired an agent provocateur and fired him immediately. In those days, librarians also refused to turn over circulation records to the FBI, amazing but true.



Low vandalism... we didn't do it!

Some 700 people were arrested that night, a logistical nightmare, involving at least 20 precincts and various modes of transportation. We were arraigned and released over the next day or two, with court dates set that would stretch for years into the future, a story in itself. Back on campus... what a mess! The morning's newspapers were full of it. The *Times* ran a front-page story with a photo of a police officer standing in the President's Office, which was a total wreck (graffiti sprayed on the walls, bookshelves toppled, etc), gesturing sorrowfully towards a mound of mangled books, a forlorn tear in his eye: "The world's knowledge was in those books...".\* Ironical because [it was not us who made the mess or sprayed the graffiti!](#)

Later, we caught the author (Sylvan Fox) of the story on campus and asked why he had written that when he had seen what really happened – he recommended we take it up with his boss (a Columbia trustee). To be clear: the President's office was in pristine shape before the police entered except for the furniture piled up against the door. I can also tell you that, contrary to what you might have read in the *New York Daily News* ("the police were met with curses, kicks from every direction, were spit on, punched and hit with furniture", May 1, 1968; "Police were punched, bitten and kicked, with many attempts to kick policemen in the groin. A pattern was seen in the use of females to bite and kick policemen", 8 May 1968) nobody in Low lifted a finger against the police; both women and men in Low were beaten, dragged down the marble steps by their feet, and had their clothing ripped.

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\* I can't find this in the NYT archive, but I remember it clearly. In those days, daily newspapers came out in several editions per day, and I suspect the *Times* only archived one edition for each day.

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## The Strike

In the following weeks, regular classes were replaced by "Liberation classes" on the lawns. There were no grades that year. [Picket lines were thrown up in front of every building](#). The [Grateful Dead](#) played on Ferris Booth terrace. A student battalion [marched up Amsterdam Avenue to City College](#) to make noise and "link up". Organizers for



Picket line



Liberation class



The Grateful Dead

progressive labor unions began circulating pledge cards among supporting staff (this cost me my Butler Library job). [A contingent from the French student/worker uprising](#) handed out those famous posters (unfortunately printed on cheap paper, now disintegrated) from the "Ex-École des Beaux Arts", and we also had visits from student representatives of many of the other universities that followed Columbia's lead that year, who raised clenched fists and gave rousing speeches. Later some of us visited other student uprisings in progress, notably in [Mexico City](#), where [police and military actions](#) made the Columbia arrests look like a lovefest; others went to cut cane in Cuba.

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## The Second Bust

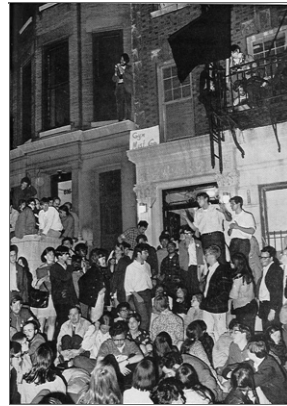
Community issues loomed large. A [Single-Room Occupancy tenement on West 114th Street was the scene of a second occupation](#) a couple weeks later, in which some veterans from the first bust plus newly radicalized onlookers from South Field took part and were promptly arrested. The issue was that Columbia was taking over a building previously occupied by poor people to convert to Columbia housing. Thomas William Hamilton recalls (January 3, 2018):

The May arrests at the Columbia owned building at 618 West 114 Street does not mention that only 113 of the 117 people arrested were actually in 618. Four of us were in the lobby of 622 W 114, not owned by Columbia. Two lived in 622, Mai Ling Rogoff (a pre med student at Columbia), and myself, a 1960 Columbia alumnus. The other two were Mai Ling's boy friend (name long forgotten by me), and a classmate of mine, Jay Russek.

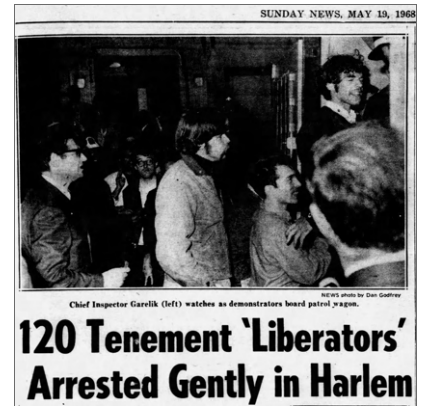
A police sergeant (Last name Healy) opened the lobby door during the police invasion of 618 and screamed "Stay inside." Stupid me replied "We are inside." I saw his face flush and he grabbed Mai Ling and Jay, who were in front of me, pushed them out the door, and grabbed me. At some point the boy friend went also.

We were all charged with trespassing in 618. In court some CU creep testified yes, CU owns 618, and no, CU did not authorize our presence there. As he let the witness stand he had to walk by me, and I said in a low tone "Filthy liar." No one but my fellow criminal, Sam Melville, and the creep heard me, so when he screamed "What! What did you say?" his reaction seemed totally unmotivated. The judge stared, and the assistant D.A. rushed over and tried to calm him down, finally escorting him from the room. Melville kept a poker face, but nudged me.

[Sam Melville](#) was killed in the assault on Attica in 1971.



SRO occupation



SRO arrests

## The Third Bust



Hamilton II



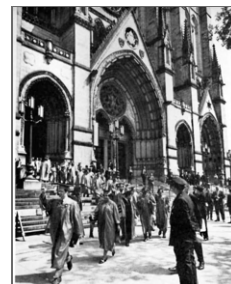
Flaming Barricades

On May 22nd, sensing no movement in the administration on the issues of the strike, we went back into Hamilton; *déjà vu* was the rallying cry. This time the police were summoned onto campus without hesitation, and back we all went to jail. By now it was like commuting. Again, campus erupted after we left – this time, [barricades were erected](#) at the main gates and set ablaze, windows were smashed, cars

crushed, crowds surged back and forth, and many heads were bashed – most of them attached to innocent bystanders. As in the first bust, the police again did a fair amount of mischief aimed at discrediting the strikers.

## Commencement and Beyond

The year ended with most of the Class of 1968 walking out of graduation, which was at [Saint John's](#) that year, on a prearranged signal – students carried radios under their gowns and walked out when WKCR played "The Times They Are A'Changin'" – to a [countercommencement on Low Plaza](#), and from there to Morningside Park – [where it all started](#) – for a big picnic that marked a coming together of the estranged Black and white protestors as well as the elites from the Acropolis with the people of



Harlem. I remember good food, live jazz, and good feelings.

Walking out

Going to the picnic

At Columbia, classified war research was halted, the gym was canceled, ROTC left campus, military and CIA recruiting stopped, and (not that anybody asked for it) the University Senate was established. Robert Kennedy, the antiwar presidential candidate, was killed in June 1968, and later that month the French uprising was "voted away" in a national referendum. Mexican students and supporters and bystanders were slaughtered wholesale in October, in [La Noche de Tlatelolco](#). Columbia antiwar rallies continued, and large Columbia contingents chartered buses for the [huge demonstrations in Washington](#), of which there were to be far too many – the war dragged on for another seven years. To this day, I don't know if all the antiwar activities combined had as much affect as the Vietnamese figuring out how to shoot down the [American B-52s](#) that were carpet-bombing their cities.

The [Cox commission produced a report](#) on the disturbances. Springtime building occupations continued for the next few years, but eventually were replaced by disco. Then came the 80s and 90s: the rich became richer at the expense of everyone else; organized labor was squashed; most real jobs were exported; drugs and greed ruled; student activism was replaced by ambition, and real work by sitting in front of a PC clicking on investments.

After a semester's suspension and dozens of court appearances (but no hard time – *thanks* [National Lawyers Guild!](#)), I received my BA in 1970, held a number of odd jobs (taxi driver, etc; nobody pays you to save the world), and eventually wound up back at Columbia getting a graduate degree in electrical engineering and computer science and working in what was called the [Computer Center](#) until I was laid off 2011, raising my kids in the Columbia area while the once diverse and affordable neighborhood was "[cleansed](#)" of all poor and working-class families and the mom-and-pop stores they (and we) depended on, as rents went into the stratosphere. Goodbye Columbia, hello [Bronx](#)!

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## Afterword

Much can be said (and has been) about the strike's effects on Columbia University. Of course it hurt the University in many ways – applications, endowment, contracts & grants, gifts, and so on. It took at least 20 years to fully recover. Perhaps it strengthened the University in other ways, who knows.

Most press accounts of the time focus on the strike leaders, their affiliations and temperaments and hairstyles, but honestly, I don't recall them being a major force, except on the first night when they decided the white students should leave Hamilton Hall. They certainly didn't choreograph the events after that. Actions were either taken spontaneously, or discussed to death by EVERYBODY until consensus was reached. In Low library, leadership meant nothing more than fairly moderating the open discussion and applying Robert's Rules – a process not nearly as interesting to the media as sound bites from high-profile personalities.

In the end, it was a case of students doing the best they could in the place where they were to stop the war in Viet Nam and fight racism at home, just as they hoped others would do in other places: in the streets, factories, offices, other universities, the military itself, the court of world opinion, and finally in the seats of government. Whether this was the best way to do it is debatable, but it is clear that the more [polite methods of previous years](#) were not working, and every DAY that passed cost 2000 lives in Southeast Asia. So to the extent that the Columbia strike hastened the end of the war, it was worthwhile. As to institutional racism and community relations, I'd say it was a total flop.

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## After-Afterword

### [Don't Trust Anyone Under 50!](#)

Students had legitimate grievances and tried repeatedly to get through to the administration with no success. The University was complicit in the Viet Nam war (e.g. in the "automated battlefield" from which the Vietnamese



continue to suffer to this day), and its behavior towards its neighbors was arrogant, patronizing, and bellicose. The University administration never appreciated its African-American, Dominican, and Puerto Rican neighbors in Harlem and Manhattan Valley. The administration's door was closed and in the end, students were placed on probation for trying to get in to speak with President Kirk about these issues.

By 2010 or so, Columbia had prevailed in every way over its critics. The surrounding neighborhoods are gentrified to the extent that only hedge-fund managers can afford to live in them. Harlem as we knew it is vanishing; Columbia bought up the buildings and either raised the rents or turned buildings into luxury condominiums and then gave low-interest loans to Columbia faculty to buy them. Industrial West Harlem ("Manhattanville") has been flattened to make way for a new Columbia campus. Today, students enter Columbia to become Masters of the Universe, not to learn about real life and then leave equipped to make the world a better place.

Sometimes I wonder why I wasn't more involved in SDS; if I had been, my life would have been quite different after nearly everybody I knew went off to Chicago in 1968 and then underground. I noticed recently that Wikipedia pages have appeared about many of my friends from those days: [Ted Gold](#), [JJ](#), and others I won't name because they are still alive. Reading them, it suddenly dawns on me after all these years: as a returning veteran putting myself through college, often working 60 hours a week in addition to taking a full course load, I simply never had the free time for all the meetings. Teddy and JJ and many others, on the other hand, probably didn't have to work.



John Jacobs (JJ)



Ted Gold

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## **Fifty Years On and the Death of Morality**

For most of us the Columbia strike of 1968 was about moral issues: the Vietnam War, racism at home, and Columbia's role in each. We were right, everybody else was wrong. 50 years later, everybody else is still wrong. The United States is indisputably the most destructive nation on earth since Nazi Germany. Morality is a forgotten concept; there are no moral leaders in this country. The USA is guilty of too many crimes to list here, but foremost among them is the endless killing of people and toppling of governments all over world to further "American interests".

The last moral leader the USA knew was Martin Luther King. When he began to speak openly about the Vietnam war and of social and economic justice (right next door at Riverside Church just a year before the Columbia strike) he was killed. Since then nobody has stood up to take his place. In fact, every prominent leader who posed a serious threat to the Vietnam War was assassinated: JFK (when he tried to stop the war and make peace with the USSR and Cuba[24]), Malcolm X (the first Black leader to speak out against the war), MLK, and finally Robert Kennedy.

This country and the planet itself are spiraling into Armageddon. Can we stop it? The kinds of mass movements and open rebellion that made some difference in the 1960s don't happen any more, or if they do, they have no affect. American government at every level as well as the two-party system are utterly corrupt, the electoral system nonfunctional, the population torn by hatred, depression, despair, and addiction. Even if elections were fair, open, and honest, at least 40% of the electorate is openly racist. And of the other 60%, probably most feel threatened by "radical Islamic terrorism" and favor the wars, the security state, the drones, and all the rest. The best hope we had for meaningful change, [Bernie Sanders' 2016 campaign](#), was squashed like a bug. Fifty years ago, I could never have predicted a world like this. In 1968 and the years that followed we tried to fix things and the world has been engulfed in the backlash — to 1968 as well as to the Civil Rights movement and FDR's New Deal — ever since. I don't know what else to say, except to recall what we were taught as children: *Do unto others as you would have them do unto you*. A simple rule, what became of it?

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## Chronology

23 April 1968	Assault on gym site, occupation of Hamilton Hall
24 April 1968	Occupation of Low Library
26-28 April 1968	Occupation of Math, Avery, Fayerweather
30 April 1968	712 building occupiers and bystanders arrested
6 May 1968	University reopened, students boycott classes
17 May 1968	117 arrested at 114th Street SRO
21 May 1968	138 arrested in "Hamilton II" + bystanders
4 June 1968	Counter-commencement on Low Plaza.

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## Legend

BPP	Black Panther Party
CORE	Congress Of Racial Equality ( <i>then</i> ); Columbia Organization of Rising Entrepreneurs ( <i>now</i> )
IDA	Institute for Defense Analyses
PL (PLP)	Progressive Labor Party
ROTC	Reserve Officers Training Corps
SAS	Students Afro-American Society
SDS	Students for a Democratic Society
SNCC	Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
SRO	Single Room Occupancy
SWP	Socialist Workers Party
TPF	Tactical Police Force
WKCR	The Columbia student-run radio station
YAWF	Youth Against War and Fascism
YCL	Young Communist League
YSA	Young Socialist Alliance

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## Notes

- a. Publication of the *Columbia Librarian* issue, Volume XXVII Numbers 1-2, was delayed until Fall-Winter 1999.
- b. Big demonstrations and other actions in 1967 persuaded Columbia's administration to stop turning over class rank lists to Selective Service, in defiance of US policy, if not law. Fast forward 35 years to when Columbia announced plans to send regular reports about each foreign student to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (not just residence and visa status but also detailed academic information) and not a peep was heard from anybody. In the intervening years Columbia had often refused to provide information such as students' reading preferences to the FBI as a matter of principle, even without student prodding.
- c. These things are not *intrinsically* bad; you have to take them in context. For example, see the 1940s section of my [Computing at Columbia Timeline](#). It's one thing to fight Fascism and genocide (if that's what we were doing) but Viet Nam was something else again, and Columbia was tied to the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA) which conducted classified war and weapons research for the Pentagon, e.g. on the "automated battlefield" and defoliation, from which the Vietnamese (not to mention American veterans and other field personnel) are still suffering today, as will be the case with depleted uranium and burn pits in Iraq and Afghanistan. Six weeks prior to the Columbia strike, a petition bearing nearly 2000 signatures calling on Columbia to cease classified war research was brought to the President's office; the University responded by placing the students who presented it on disciplinary probation.
- d. The *Times* managing editors were also Columbia Trustees.
- e. Press and photographers were allowed into the President's office the first day, when it was messy, and this was

the only view the public had (most famously from the May 10th *Life* issue). The mainstream press was barred after that because of their fixation on silliness, like the [student who was smoking the President's cigars](#), rather than the issues of the strike.

- f. In retrospect, perhaps the leather-clad police were not TPF after all, but a detachment of motorcycle police brought in temporarily until the TPF arrived.
- g. Nothing lasts forever. In [2005](#), academic computing was again severed from the Libraries and rejoined to administrative computing.
- h. The Young Lords.... My mind might be a little fuzzy about this because I read today (16 July 2009) in *El Diaro* that Summer 2009 is the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Young Lords, so it would seem they were not on campus (or, rather, like the Black Panthers, in front of the main gate on Broadway) in the prelude to the 1968 strike, at least not formally. (The article is *Reflexiones sobre 40 años de los Young Lords* by Iris Morales, one the founders. By the way, I recommend that everybody who cares about reading world and local news that has not been censored and sanitized by the corporate media, and that treats Latin America and its new progressive governments with respect instead of dirision, learn Spanish; you'll be surprised and amazed. Print journalism is not dead, just the anglo version.) (Update June 2014: *El Diario* was just snapped up by a group that characterized it as a "ghetto newspaper" that needed to "elevate its standards and pursue more highly educated readers".)

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- 2. *Who Rules Columbia?*, North American Congress on Latin America, 475 Riverside Drive, NYC (1970). "If you depended on major media, all you knew about Columbia University in 1968 was that Mark Rudd, SDS, and some long-haired students became spontaneously restless. In fact, a major study of Columbia's role in the community and in the world was produced by these students. This is NACLA's reprint of the original 1968 edition. 'Strawberry Statement' is cute, but here's the beef." ([NameBase, A Cumulative Index of Books and Clippings](#)) [*Sorry, as of April 2018 this one comes up blank; can't find it anywhere else.*]
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- 6. Rudd, Mark, *Underground: My Life with SDS and the Weathermen*, William Morrow (2010).
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16. George Jackson, [Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson](#), Lawrence Hill Books (1994).
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19. [Tlatelolco massacre](#), Wikipedia, accessed 10 August 2019.
20. Poniatowska, Elena, [La noche de Tlatelolco: Testimonios de historia oral](#), Ediciones Era, S.A. de C.V., México D.F., 1971, 1998.
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## Links (Verified April 2018 - defunct links removed)

- Dohrn, Bernadine, [“How the Anti-War Movement Won the Hearts and Minds of the Public”](#), [In These Times](#), 11 September 2013. Not about Columbia 1968 exactly, but a glimmer of hope in these dark, depressing times from an ex-neighbor.
- [1968: Columbia in Crisis](#), a major online exhibit by Jocelyn Wilk of the Columbia Archive, with a wealth of photos and documents (2011). Use the menu on the left to see the different parts.
- [Columbia Daily Spectator](#) issues, April 24 - May 8, 1968.
- [Columbia College Today](#), Spring 1968 issue, in some kind of “book reader” format. 100 pages. Liable to disappear at any time. Paper copies available in the Columbia Archive.
- [Columbia Forty Years After the Strike: A Multiracial Community "Cleansed" of a Working Class Presence](#), Mark Naison, Fordham University, 2008-04-25.
- [How High School Students Helped Save the Columbia Strike - And Why the Gentrification of Manhattan Bodes Ill for the Success of Future Protests](#), Mark Naison, Fordham University, 2008-04-26.
- [30 April 1975](#), Billy Kelly, [Tuổi Trẻ](#), 2008-04-30.
- [Third World Newsreel](#) (TWN), [Columbia Revolt](#) (1968, film, 50 minutes): [ [Part I](#) ] [ [Part II](#) ] [ [From TWN](#) ] [ [Roz Payne's Newsreel Archives](#) ]

([SEE SCREENSHOT GALLERY](#)) I'm in it a lot, e.g. catching food on the Low Library ledge, occupying the Hamilton lobby. The scene of Teddy Gold and me sharing a gallon jug of apple juice has been cut from the film. The film is also included on a CD, *Vintage 1950s-1960s New York City Film Collection*, which can be [ordered from Amazon.com](#).

- Dohrn, Bernadine,  
[Letter to Young Activists: Beware Sixties Nostalgia](#),  
[Monthly Review](#): [MR Zine](#), 27 July 2005.
- "[Bloody Minds](#)", 1967 song about IDA written in Furnald Hall, sung by Bob Feldman, Youtube video.
- Rudd, Mark,  
His [website](#).
- Gillies, Kevin,  
[The Last Radical](#)  
Vancouver Magazine, November 1998. A retrospective of the life of "JJ", [John Jacobs](#), who died in 1997. This article disappeared from their website some years ago and I had not had the sense to archive it locally. In June 2013, it was located and scanned by Jennifer Giesbrecht, Assistant Editor of Vancouver magazine, and sent to me for this site. The PDF is not OCR'd, just a visual scan, but it's perfectly readable if you magnify it. The accompanying photos can't be made out. If the original online text and photos can be located, they will be posted. (I have the text of "Part 1" [HERE](#) but without the pictures and of course the "Read more" link doesn't go anywhere, nor do any of the others.) Meanwhile, you can also read some things about JJ in [Mark Rudd's website](#), and much more in [this Wikipedia page](#).)
- [Christiane Collins, Scholar Who Fought a Columbia Gym, Dies at 92](#), *New York Times*, 8 May 2018.
- Branch, James "Plunky", [Personal Random Ramblings on My Columbia 1968 + 40 Weekend Experience](#), [Columbia1968.com](#), 2008.
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- "[How It All Began: Origins and History of the National Caucus of Labor Committees in New York and Philadelphia \(1966-1971\)](#)", a detailed history of some of the factions involved in the Columbia uprising, with special attention to the role of the SDS Labor Committee, by an anonymous author affiliated with [this group](#). [Chapter 2](#) focuses on the Columbia strike.
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[Mayo del 68, o cómo una revolución se quedó en nada](#), Junio del 2007.
- Auerbach, Shane,  
[The Little Generation That Could, and Did](#),  
Jul-Aug 2004 (PDF).
- [Columbiana 1968 Photo Gallery](#).

- [Columbia University protests of 1968](#), Columbia Wiki.
- [Columbia University protests of 1968](#), Wikipedia.
- David Cortright, [Antiwar resistance within the military during the Vietnam war](#), vietnamfulldisclosure.org, accessed 15 March 2018. There was massive opposition to the war in the US Army, Navy, and Air Force. We knew this in the 1960s and 70s, I knew it myself as a recent veteran.

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### Translations of this page courtesy of...

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