# Columbia University Student Protest of 1968: A Stand Against Injustice



On April 30, 1968, at Columbia University in New York, students formed a human chain between demonstrators and police officers during a significant protest. This event was part of a series of student-led actions on the campus in response to various societal and institutional issues that peaked in the 1960s. Influenced by the broader anti-Vietnam War movement and civil rights activism, Columbia University students notably protested against the university's plans to construct a gymnasium in Morningside Park, which was opposed by both students and the local Harlem community for perceived racial injustices associated with the project.

The tension escalated following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on April 4, 1968, leading to a major student strike and building occupations in late April. The administration's attempt to suppress these protests included banning demonstrations within campus buildings and threatening disciplinary actions against participants. Despite these measures, the protests grew, culminating in a violent clash when police were called to clear the occupied buildings, resulting in over 700 arrests and numerous injuries.

The academic year concluded with a disrupted commencement ceremony on June 4, where then-university president Grayson Kirk refrained from speaking. Instead, history professor Richard Hofstadter addressed the attendees in a ceremony moved to the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine. Significant changes followed the protests, including the abandonment of the Morningside gym project and the creation of a University Senate involving faculty, students, and administrators to discuss university-wide concerns.