

**President's Statement on Disruption of Speeches**

**December 5, 1968**

**To: The New York University Community**

**From: President James M. Hester**

The disruption of speeches by Nguyen Huu Chi, the permanent observer for South Vietnam at the United Nations, and James Reston, executive editor of The New York Times, at the Loeb Student Center last night was a crude and revolting violation of the most basic principles of the University. Violent interference with the rights of others to speak and to be heard demonstrates gross insensitivity to the requirements of membership in the University. It is appalling to find that some of our own students were among last night's demonstrators. Such unprincipled disregard of the fundamental human courtesy on which the life of the academic community is built cannot be tolerated.

New York University is deeply embarrassed that visitors invited by University organizations to speak here and the members of the audiences who came to hear them were subjected to such barbaric rudeness. This wanton behavior presents a serious threat to the continued exercise of the privileges we enjoy in the University. Free speech is fundamental to our deepest purpose, the pursuit of knowledge. It is essential that all resources and procedures available to us be used to protect the academic community from further degradations of this kind.

I am visiting Nguyen Huu Chi and James Reston to express the apology of the University for the extraordinary discourtesy they experienced here. Student participants in the demonstration who can be identified will be immediately suspended and disciplinary proceedings will be instituted in accordance with the regulations of the University Senate. Non-students who can be identified will be charged before the civil authorities.

Signed James M. Hester