Learning Objectives:

1. Apply the historical thinking skills of sourcing, close reading, contextualizing, and corroborating to a contemporary situation with historical roots.
2. Describe historical strategies used in the African American freedom struggle, and evaluate their potential effectiveness for contemporary social change movements.
3. Describe significant differences and similarities between particular moments in the historical past and today.
4. Apply knowledge about these similarities and differences to formulate contemporary versions of historical strategies for social change.

Assignments:

Discussion Forum 20 Due by 12/12, 11:59 PM Discussion Forum 1,2,3,4

Organizing Strategy Briefs Peer Review N/A Due by 12/12, 11:59 PM Discussion Forum 1,2,3,4

Organizing Strategy Briefs up to 30 points extra credit Due by 12/12, 11:59 PM Assignments 1,2,3,4

Read:

Media Strategy & Protest in the Civil Rights Movement

Browse:

Resources for thinking about Ferguson historically

Discussion Forum:

This discussion forum is designed to prepare you for the extra-credit writing assignments by helping you answer an important question: **Which strategies used by the Black American freedom movement since 1865 are most relevant for organizers today in Ferguson, Missouri, and elsewhere in the US?**

**For your first post,** explain an aspect of the Black American freedom movement that you learned more about from exploring this week’s readings, and answer these two questions:

* How did what you learned change your perspective on civil rights organizing or on strategies for making social change?
* How do you think this aspect of history applies to the political organizing that has happened since the killing of Michael Brown, Jr.?

Give your post a descriptive title which includes one of the following categories:

* Building community organizations
* Economic activism
* Non-violent direct action (public protests and demonstrations)
* Media and public relations
* Working through formal government (voting; litigation to challenge unjust laws)

*(For example: “Economic activism: Don’t Buy Where You Can’t Work”)*

**For your second and third posts,** reply to your classmates according to the following prompts. Be as specific and detailed as possible.

* Historically, why did this strategy work or not work for achieving its goals?
* What would a contemporary version of this same strategy look like? If you know of examples, provide clickable links to news stories or other media about this strategy in action.

**As the discussion evolves,** ask your classmates questions which will help them clarify their ideas. Some bigger questions you may want to explore include:

* In what ways is the current situation in Ferguson, Missouri and other American places a product of history?
* Based on what you know about the civil rights activists of the 1960s, the resistance they faced, and the strategies that worked, what should the #BlackLivesMatter activists do? How does the existence of social media change the publicity and organizing strategies that these activists should use?
* What should they do to build a movement that can be successful over the long run?
* *Responding to the ideas of Mary Dudziak:* Is civil rights protest in the US fundamentally different now because the Cold War is over? Was the threat of global Communism actually good for African-American civil rights?

Media Strategy & Protest in Civil Rights

Civil rights protesters of the 1950s and 1960s used the growing international reach of television to publicize their cause. In her book *Cold War Civil Rights*, legal historian Mary Dudziak has described this trend.

TODO

Basically, at the time that the US was fighting a global Cold War, arguing that its economic system of capitalism and its political system of democracy created the best conditions for freedom in the world, news stories started running that looked like this:

[TODO YOUTUBE VIDEO]

Police dogs

The major mass media of the 1950s and 1960s, in terms of news, were television, radio, daily newspapers, and weekly magazines (LIFE, Time, and such.) Television networks were generally nationally owned, and they were all broadcast; there was no cable TV. Much more than now, newspapers in smaller cities tended to be locally-owned, although syndication networks did exist. Home internet access was not widely available in the US until after 1992, and the World Wide Web was invented in 1994. Cellphones with internet access have only become widely available since the mid-2000s.

What has changed about the ownership of newspapers, television stations, and other media since the 1960s? How does that affect news coverage? How do social media websites (Twitter, Facebook, etc) change news coverage of protests?

How did the bus boycott activists in Montgomery organize their actions and communicate their messages to a wider community?

What opposition did they face?

What did picketing protests look like? How effective were they in person? How effective were they as a media strategy?

Consider what you’ve learned about the role of careful organization, leadership, historical context, and media strategy for the African-American civil rights movement between 1940 and 1970. (In addition to the work you did for the paper, consider the following concepts and people:

1. African-American churches
2. African-American veterans’ clubs and gun clubs
3. Populism (1890s) and Farmers’ Alliances
4. Anti-lynching movement
5. Double V Movement
6. Emmett Till / Mamie Till Mobley
   1. *The Murder of Emmett Till*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-X4is9jMYk> (documentary, about an hour)
7. Deacons for Defense
   1. Example: this article in Ebony
8. Black Power (body and soul)
   1. Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton, “The 10-Point Platform” (1966), <http://www.pbs.org/hueypnewton/actions/actions_platform.html>
   2. (More generally on Huey P. Newton, see the PBS website for the film *A Huey P. Newton Story,* <http://www.pbs.org/hueypnewton/index.html>
9. Malcolm X and his ideas
10. Urban renewal (TODO CHECK)
11. Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party / Fannie Lou Hamer
12. King’s Riverside Church speech
    1. TODO LINK
13. Die-ins as a protest tactic:
    1. Anti-Vietnam
    2. Anti-nuclear
    3. ACT-UP

In between, a few things happened:

* The modern conservative coalition (sometimes called the “New Right”)
* The “law and order” backlash to the major social changes of the 1960s
* Neoliberal economics
* Expansion of global human rights law outside the United States
* Widespread global internet access
* Cellular phones, especially smartphones with Internet access
* The end of Cold War and the threat of global communism
* The US as the single global superpower since 1989
* Expansion of US policing, including police use of military equipment, since 2001

Ferguson protesters and #HandsUpDontShoot have an interpretation of history. They see at least three major trends:

* Militarization of police (where the US Department of Defense sells surplus military gear to police departments for pennies on the dollar), in the wake of perceived terrorist threats since September 11, 2001
* Racially discriminatory policing and criminal enforcement (which they call a “prison-industrial complex”); when tied together with inadequate public schools, they refer to this as a “school-to-prison pipeline”
* Economic decay of heavily-minority areas; the suburbanization of poverty; public disinvestment and privatization

UN criticism, overseas coverage of protests

Discussion forum:

* Use a blend of specific evidence about the strategies of the long black freedom movement.

Extra-credit paper: Ferguson Strategy Briefs

* If you need to bring up your paper average, write a paper of 800-1500 words on this topic. Grading criteria will be similar to those on the other papers:

Which strategies used by the Black American freedom movement since 1865 are most relevant for organizers today in Ferguson, Missouri? As you’re thinking, consider strategies that fall into the following categories:

* Building community institutions and organizations
* Economic activism
* Non-violent direct action (public protests and demonstrations)
* Media and public relations
* Working through formal government (voting; litigation to challenge unjust laws)

Identify three specific examples. For each example, write a strategy brief to the Ferguson organizers.

* Describe the strategy, and give it a memorable name. (Marketing is important.)
* Who used it, when, in what context? Why did it succeed or fail in the past?
* How is our contemporary context different than the historical contexts in which this strategy was first used?
* What are the risks and challenges of using this strategy?
* What specific actions will Ferguson organizers need to take to make this strategy work?
* How long will it take for this strategy to be successful? Why?