



Winter 2023

Civic Engagement



Courtesy: Enid Gort

Building a Bridge: The Legacy of Franklin Williams and Racial Equity in New York's Courts

Active Dissent: Vietnam-Era Campus Protests in New York State

All educational materials align with the NYS Learning Standards. For specific connections to the learning standards and additional resources please visit our Educator Notes page by clicking the QR code on the right.



From key players in the courts to college protestors, New York's archives are filled with stories of civic engagement and activism. The Winter 2023 issue of *New York Archives Magazine* gives readers a glimpse into the worlds of organized legal action and civic protest throughout the 20th century.

"Building a Bridge," by Enid Gort and John M. Caher, details the life and legacy of a lesser-known figure in the Civil Rights Movement. Franklin Williams worked tirelessly to advance the rights of African Americans in both the United States and New York courts. He led a judicial commission responsible for exposing the bias and discrimination in the courts which continues to ensure racial equity in New York's courts today.

"Active Dissent," by Seth Kershner, discusses the 1972 campus protests at New York colleges and universities against the United States government's actions in Vietnam. The document analysis section of this educator guide uses flyers distributed by the students of SUNY New Paltz and collected as evidence by the New York State Division of State Police Non-Criminal Investigation Files. Through these documents, students will learn about declining public confidence in government as seen through student protests.

Connections to NYS Social Studies Framework

11.9 COLD WAR (1945 – 1990): In the period following World War II, the United States entered into an extended era of international conflict called the Cold War which influenced foreign and domestic policy for more than 40 years.

(Standards: 1, 2, 3; Themes: TCC, GOV, ECON)

11.9a After World War II, ideological differences led to political tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union. In an attempt to halt the spread of Soviet influence, the United States pursued a policy of containment.

- Students will examine reasons for declining public confidence in government, including America's involvement in Vietnam, student protests, the growing antiwar movement, and the Watergate affair.

11.10 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGE/DOMESTIC ISSUES (1945 – present): Racial, gender, and socioeconomic inequalities were addressed by individuals, groups, and organizations. Varying political philosophies prompted debates over the role of the federal government in regulating the economy and providing a social safety net.

(Standards: 1, 4, 5; Themes: ID, TCC, SOC, GOV, CIV, ECO)

11.10a After World War II, long-term demands for equality by African Americans led to the civil rights movement. The efforts of individuals, groups, and institutions helped to redefine African American civil rights, though numerous issues remain unresolved.

- Students will examine the roles and impact of individuals such as Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., Stokely Carmichael, Fannie Lou Hamer, and Malcolm X on the movement and their perspectives on change.

Guided Reading Questions for "Building a Bridge"

How do the authors describe "bridge figures?"

How do the authors describe Williams' early life? How do you think this impacted his perspective as he grew into an adult?

How were Franklin Williams and Thurgood Marshall different in their approaches to making change?

What is the legacy of Franklin Williams in New York and the Civil Rights Movement?



Courtesy: Enid Gort

Guided Reading Questions for "Active Dissent"

What were the students protesting at SUNY New Paltz in 1972? How did they protest?

What was the BCI and why were they so interested in campus protests?

What techniques did the BCI use against student protests?

What other issues did college students protest during this time and why do you think these issues were important to them?

What was the preferred mode of militant action on college campuses? Why do you think this was their preferred method?

What did BCI officers do in response to the New Paltz protests and do you think this was necessary?

What did students encourage the people stuck in the protest traffic to do? Do you think this was effective?

What other strategies did college students use to protest?

What happened to the protestors? What did these protests accomplish?

Document Analysis for Active Dissent: Document 1

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WHERE WILL ESCALATION STOP?

Two years ago Richard Nixon extended the ground war.

A year later he extended the air war.

First he went into Cambodia and then Laos.

Then he bombed Vietnam, North as well as South.

Now Richard Nixon has descended to new depths.

He is taking us under the sea.

He has dropped mines in Haiphong harbor.

This raises the distinct possibility of retaliation by Russia, as Russian ships are being directly threatened.

How does escalation lead to conflict?

WHERE WILL THIS ESCALATION STOP?

We are appealing to the United Nations to submit Richard Nixon's actions to judgment by the whole world.

THESE ACTIONS ARE CONTRARY TO THE UNITED NATIONS CHARTER.

Asian, African, and other countries are raising this issue in the United Nations right now.

We are here to support them. We back the efforts to bring reason and sanity back to an explosive (literally explosive) situation.

JOIN US!

SPEAK OUT AGAINST ESCALATION††

WIRE YOUR CONGRESSMEN AND SENATORS.

WIRE SENATOR FULBRIGHT AND THE WHITE HOUSE.

Document Analysis for Active Dissent: Document 2

STRIKE!

Out now! No classes Wednesday.

MARCH TO IBM, POUGHKEEPSIE
WEDNESDAY 9 AM

Assembly point for the March: Outside Lecture Center,
beginning 8:30 a.m. tomorrow (Wednesday). March at 9:00 a.m.
IBM is in Poughkeepsie, about 10 or 12 miles from New Paltz.

As Nixon's "Vietnamization" goes on and the American ground troops are withdrawn, the United States is in a new kind of warfare, the "automated air war," and the "electronic battlefield." Computers form the brains of the system, with the key contracts going to IBM.

Thousands of sensors, scattered by air throughout Indochina, forward coded electronic signals to the infiltration surveillance center. There, IBM computers interpret the data, analyze the best means of retaliation, and send strike orders to a squadron of Air Force B-52's. This electronic system is not human: it defines anything that moves as an "enemy." Unsuspecting civilians (men, women, children) along with countless animals are struck with bombs. IBM has even developed and produced automated bomb navigation systems to release bombs at the "proper" moment without the intervention of human hands or brains. IBM is also a contractor for Seek Data II, a complex computer system designed to preplan Vietnam airstrikes and airlifts, and many other classified defense projects. IBM executives will tell you that IBM is not primarily a defense contractor, but without IBM the war could not go on in its present automated form.

We feel that the time has come for all of us, corporations included, to act in a conscientious manner and cease being a part of institutionalized murder, murder so impersonal that it allows the individuals who serve the system to do so without conscience and without qualms. We must appeal to these people to put human life before profits.

Our goal is to confront IBM's complicity with the war, on the area in front of the IBM plant on the South Road in Poughkeepsie. We should arrive there shortly after noon, after a 2½ to 3 hour march. Bring a sandwich if you wish, as the action could last all afternoon, with vigiling, leafletting of passersby and IBM workers. Those with cars can park them in the shopping plaza near IBM, as we will need transportation for the return journey and for those who need a rest on the march over. If you can bring a car, call the strike headquarters, GUEST HOUSE, 255-R 1625.

Come to the Lecture now for further info and discussion.

What does
"Vietnamization"
mean?

WE ARE MARCHING FROM NEW PALTZ TO THE IBM PLANT IN POUGHKEEPSIE

TO PROTEST THE AUTOMATED AIR WAR! JOIN US!

As Nixon's "Vietnamization" goes on and the American ground troops are withdrawn, the United States is in a new kind of war, the "automated air war," and the "electronic battlefield." Computers form the brains of the system with the key contracts going to IBM.

Thousands of sensors, scattered by air throughout Indochina forward coded electronic signals to the infiltration surveillance center. There, IBM computers interpret the data, analyze the best means of retaliation, and send strike orders to a squadron of bombers. This electronic system is not human: it defines anything that moves as an "enemy." Unsuspecting civilians (men, women, children) along with countless animals are struck with bombs. IBM has even developed and produced automated bomb navigation systems to release bombs at the "proper" moment without the intervention of human hands or brains. IBM is also a contractor for Seek Data II, a complex computer system designed to preplan Vietnam airstrikes and airlifts, and many other classified defense projects. IBM executives will tell you that IBM is not primarily a defense contractor, but without IBM the war could not go on in its present automated form.

We feel that the time has come for all of us, corporations included, to act in a conscientious manner and cease being a part of institutionalized murder, murder so impersonal that it allows the individuals who work the system to do so without conscience and without qualms, because no one person seems "responsible." We must appeal to these people to put human life before profits.

What you can do:

Join our march now.

Go to the massive rally at the United Nations Plaza at noon Thursday May 11 to protest the war escalation.

Telegraph your senators and Senator Fullbright

And The White House. Tell them stop the war now!

Document Analysis: Comparison and Contextualization

The following questions will help you compare and contrast the two flyers above and analyze the techniques used by student protestors in the 1970s.

In document 1, what are the authors asking the reader to do?

What do they mean by "escalation"?

What do they say President Nixon has done?

What is the perspective of the authors?

What is the tone of the authors?

In document 2, what are the authors asking the reader to do?

Why do they start the document with the word "STRIKE!"?

What do they say IBM and other corporations have done?

What is the perspective of the authors?

What is the tone of the authors?

Comparison

What differences and similarities in technique, perspective, and tone do you see between these two documents?

Which of these documents do you think was more effective? Why?

Discussion Questions

How did Americans react to the United States' involvement in the Vietnam War?

What impact can corporations have on military conflicts?

Why did many Americans disagree with Nixon's actions?

Reflection Questions

If American citizens want to make changes in their society and government, what are some actions they can take?

How can protests bring about change?

What modern protests have you witnessed? What were the protestors trying to achieve?

Is there a change you think should be made in your community? What are some possible actions you could take?