



Speak Out Now

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The Civil Rights Movement: When Ordinary People Did Extraordinary Things

The Civil Rights Movement during the 1950s -1970s was one of the most significant social movements in U.S. history. It involved millions of people. It was a grassroots movement often organized locally. It involved elementary school children in Selma, Alabama and the elderly, registering a man to vote for the first time in Lowndes County, Alabama, who was over 100 years old. It appealed to the consciences of hundreds of northern white students who came to participate in the Mississippi Freedom Summer of 1964. A whole generation of local leaders emerged, people like Robert F. Williams, a machinist from Monroe, North Carolina, and women leaders like Rosa Parks, a seamstress from Montgomery, Alabama, and Fannie Lou Hamer, a Mississippi sharecropper.

It was a movement filled with ingenuity and imagination. There was certainly violence and danger, but it was also joyful, full of singing and defiant celebration – a festival of the oppressed. Consciousness changed overnight and what started out as acts of conscience by a few quickly mushroomed into a massive social movement. The U.S. apartheid system, in place for hundreds of years, was overturned in a decade of action.

The Civil Rights Movement was launched in 1955 with the Montgomery Bus Boycott and followed in 1957 by the fight to desegregate Little Rock Central High School in Arkansas. Then, in 1960, a few courageous Black first-year students from a local state university sat in at the segregated Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina. The student movement quickly spread. Within two weeks there were demonstrations in 15 cities in five southern states, and it kept growing. Then, in 1961, the Freedom Rides challenged the federal government to defend the right of all of its citizens to ride on interstate transit. By September of 1961, there were actions in more than 100 cities in 20 states, with more than 70,000 participants and 3,600 arrests, with 58 faculty expelled for participating in the movement.

The movement spread with voter registration drives and community organizing on multiple issues. In 1963, there were 1,412 demonstrations in just the first three months of the year. And the March on Washington that summer brought one quarter of a million people to the Capitol. Millions of people were active in small and large ways. Thousands of activists gained valuable experience and a new order was born.

Young college students and other youth were the spark of the movement, but it was made up primarily of working-class and poor people. Members of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters were often the backbone of the movement, bringing their organizing experience to bear. The energy and activism of the Civil Rights Movement went on to contribute to every other important U.S. social movement of the 1960s and 1970s. And the Movement had an international impact, linked to the struggles going on all over the world as people fought to liberate themselves from colonialism. Many activists of the Civil Rights Movement helped build the movement against the war in Vietnam.

It is important this February to remember and honor the struggles of the past. And today when we are facing multiple crises – unending racist police violence, growing inequality (which is even worse since COVID-19), conflict and war, and climate change that threatens the very life on our planet – it is especially necessary to remember the lessons of the past; for they hold the key to our future. Consciousness can change quickly and social movements can be born, like the Civil Rights Movement. In recent years we've seen Black Lives Matter, the climate catastrophe movement, and the fight against genocide in Gaza. It remains to be seen where all this will go. But when ordinary people decide to stop being treated as victims and instead to be actors on the stage of history – extraordinary things have happened. And they can happen again, led by a few daring people.

Taxes:

Wasting our Hard-Earned Money

Tax season is upon on, reminding us of how undemocratic the capitalist system is. We get no say on how our money is collected and spent. While most of us living paycheck to paycheck have to pay taxes, major corporations and the rich have enormous loopholes to avoid taxation. We are told that we pay taxes to fund essential public services and social programs. In reality, almost half of our tax dollars go to military spending, much of which goes back into corporate pockets.

The spending of our tax dollars on the military and corporate kickbacks is just part of the obscene waste of capitalism. None of these address the real needs of people. If we lived in an economy that was democratically managed by us, the workers, we would get to decide how our hard-earned money is used.

Another Huge Data Leak:

Who Pays?

In late January, a huge data breach took place. Over 26 billions records were leaked from more than 20 companies including LinkedIn, DropBox, Twitter, Venmo, and Adobe, as well as data from the U.S. government. With this stolen data, we will see rises in identity theft, scams, and cyberattacks.

Big tech companies are the ones to blame. Their businesses live off collecting our data but will face few consequences. Even after this leak, we will have to continue to use their services regardless of how insecure they are. There are no other options. We are the ones who will suffer from this even though we never wanted our personal data to be collected in the first place.



A Worsening Child Care Crisis in 2024

Parents across the country faced increasing child care costs in 2023. Many, especially women, had to leave their jobs because these costs became too expensive on top of rent, the usual bills, and other paid necessities. The challenge of finding accessible and affordable child care is not going to disappear this year.

Federal relief funding created during the pandemic to support more than 200,000 child care programs expired in September. As a result, thousands of preschools and child care centers across the country are projected to close this year. Many already shut their doors, leaving countless parents scrambling for alternatives.

Child care should be guaranteed, but corporations and their politicians make it clear that they prefer us emptying our pockets for such services. We can't rely on them. It's up to us to organize ourselves and demand a world where care for our children is not up for debate.

EXPOSING THE LIES OF ISRAEL'S WAR MACHINE

Sat. Feb. 24 at 4pm

Tali Shapiro, Israeli anti-zionist activist and researcher whose work has exposed the lies spread by the Israeli state will be speaking live from Ramallah, Palestine.

Join us for a presentation and discussion!

Niebyl-Proctor Library

6501 Telegraph Ave, Oakland, CA 94609

Can't join in person? Join on Zoom:
tinyurl.com/FEB-TH-24

We live in the wealthiest country in the world, and it is our labor that has created all of this wealth. We aren't the ones who benefit from this. The super rich – the bosses of the big corporations and banks – keep the wealth and make all the decisions. Working people do the work that makes society run, and we can organize to unite our forces. When we do, we have enormous power to change things and make a better world.

***Get in touch with us to fight
for a better world!***



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