Economic Protests of the Civil Rights Movement: An Historical Investigation

Museum Connection: Family and Community

Purpose: In this lesson students will analyze various primary and secondary resources illustrating the economic protest associated with the Civil Rights Movement to better understand the powerful impact of this form of protest.

Course: United States History

Time Frame: 1 – 2 class periods

Correlation to State Standards:

United States History

5.0 CONTENT STANDARD: HISTORY- Students will examine significant ideas, beliefs and themes; organize patterns and events; analyze how individuals and societies have changed over time in Maryland and the United States.

Expectation: 5.4: Students will demonstrate understanding of the cultural, economic, political, social and technological developments from 1946-1968.

3. Analyze the major developments, controversies and consequences of the Civil Rights Movement between 1946-1968 (5.4.3).

Objective:

a. Examine the battle for school desegregation, including Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas (1954) and the roles of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and Thurgood Marshall (PS, G)

Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards
Framework Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies

CCR Anchor Standard #1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textural evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
RH.11-12.1 Cite specific textural evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.
RH.11-12.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details.
RH.11-12.3 Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards
Framework Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies

CCR Anchor Standard #1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

WHST.11-12.1 Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.
   1a Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counter claims, reasons, and evidence.
   1b Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience’s knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.
   1e Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

Objective:
Analyze documents in order to evaluate the impact of economic protests on the success of the Civil Rights Movement

Vocabulary and Concepts:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Term</th>
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<tr>
<td>Boycott</td>
<td>an act of voluntarily abstaining from using, buying, or dealing with some other organization or business as an expression of protest.</td>
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<td>Segregation</td>
<td>the separation of or isolation of a race, class, or ethnic group from the rest of society.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sit-ins</td>
<td>when one or more people occupy an area as a protest and remain in that area until evicted or their requests have been</td>
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met in order to promote a social, political, or economic change.

Activist

a person who vigorously advocate for or against a cause or issue.

Materials:

For the Teacher:

Teacher Resource Sheet 1: Civil Rights Background Narrative

For the Students:

Student Resource Sheet 1: Student Sit-in at Woolworth’s Lunch Counter
Student Resource Sheet 2: Individual Analysis Graphic Organizer
Student Resource Sheet 3: “Pickets Hurt Trade”
Student Resource Sheet 4: Letter to Mr. and Mrs. Hollander
Student Resource Sheet 5: Picket Line at Ford’s Theatre
Student Resource Sheet 7: “The Montgomery Story”
Student Resource Sheet 8: “4-Hour Huddle”
Student Resource Sheet 9: Western Union Telegram
Student Resource Sheet 10: Tallahassee Democrat
Student Resource Sheet 11: Cartoon from Washington Post
Student Resource Sheet 12: Memories of John Lewis
Student Resource Sheet 13: Picture of sit-down strike in Greensboro, NC
Student Resource Sheet 14: Group Analysis Graphic Organizer

Resources:

Publication:


Web Site:

CivilRightsTeaching.Org website which focuses on teaching about the Civil Rights Movement www.civilrightsteaching.org
Historical Background:

During the Civil Rights Movement, African Americans and their non-black supporters used a variety of strategies to challenge the injustices they faced in American society. One of the most effective tactics was to exercise the collective economic power of the African American community. By boycotting, picketing, and holding sit-ins, African Americans forced the “city fathers” of major southern cities to the negotiating table to address their demands for justice. Harnessing the economic power of the community was not a new strategy; it had been used in various forms as a means of self reliance and defiance. In the 1910s, “Black Wall Street” in Oklahoma City was one example of black economic success. Flourishing black businesses, successful black professionals, and African Americans pooled their resources to create one of the wealthiest districts in the state of Oklahoma only to have it destroyed by a white mob during the 1921 Tulsa, Oklahoma race riot.

During the Reconstruction Era, Ida B. Wells encouraged African Americans in Memphis to leave and migrate north or west as a result of the racial injustices and violence in Memphis, Tennessee. When whole church communities took her advice and joined the “Exodusters,” white business owners were greatly impacted by the loss of revenue from their former African American customers. Similarly, thousands of African Americans left the southern planters and employers in pursuit of northern wartime employment, as part of the Great Migration. Consequently, by the time of the modern Civil Rights Movement there was a long legacy of using economic leverage by African Americans as a strategy to demand equality.

A major turning point in the modern Civil Rights Movement was the “Sit-in” movement which began in February of 1960 in Greensboro, North Carolina. When four African American students from North Carolina A&T University decided to sit at a lunch counter designated for whites only in a downtown Woolworth’s until they were served, a watershed of energy was released that spread like wild fire throughout the south. Students began sitting in all over the south. This reignited the Civil Rights Movement and its focus on challenging discrimination by targeting “Main Street” businesses.

Lesson Development:

Motivation:

Have students examine the image in Student Resource Sheet 1 and answer the questions that follow.

Activities:

1. Read the narrative on Teacher Resource Sheet 1 to the class, stressing the focus question at the end.
2. Introduce the graphic organizer to the students (Student Resource Sheet 2). Instruct students that they will independently examine several documents (Student Resource Sheets 3-13) in order to answer the focus question. Note: Teachers may decide to use a limited number of primary source documents.

3. Have the students conduct the investigation.

4. After students have examined the documents, explain that they will get into small groups to discuss the documents and the focus question. Remind students that as they discuss their interpretations of the documents, they should cite evidence for their opinions. (Note: Multiple interpretations can emerge and may or may not be accepted by all.) Have students write their group’s responses in the appropriate section of the graphic organizer, “Group Analysis.” (Student Resource Sheet 14)

Note: As an alternative to having students complete two organizers for each source (one for individual analysis and one for group analysis), teachers may wish to have the students conduct their initial analysis of the sources in small group discussions, making sure that students understand that they are likely to develop a different perspective on each source than their peers. If this method is followed, provide each group of no more than 2-3 students with a single copy of the primary sources and each student with his/her own source analysis organizer.

Assessment:

After the group discussion, explain to students that once historians complete their research, they formulate a thesis that answers the focus question. Tell the students they will now do the same thing by writing a summary explaining their conclusions. Remind students that their summary should answer the focus question and be supported with details from the documents.

Closure:

- Students should explain the significance of economic protests to the success of the Civil Rights Movement.
- Teacher may select 3-5 different documents in students’ folders adding to an interesting mix of documents during the group discussion.

Thoughtful Application:

1. In a short essay, the students should answer the following prompt: What is an issue in today’s society that you feel strongly enough about that you would be willing to participate in an economic protest in order to express your opinion? What kind of protest would you choose? How would you motivate others to join you?

2. Make a list of five economic sacrifices you would be willing to make for a cause you believe in. Think about the sacrifices the participants in the economic protests of the Civil Rights Movement made. For instance, would you be willing to leave your
community and move to another state? Would you be willing to walk to work instead of riding the bus? Once students have compiled their list, engage the class in a discussion ranking them in order of what they would be most willing to sacrifice.

Lesson Extensions:

1. Research economic boycotts that the NAACP has launched in the last 25 years. (e.g. TV boycotts) Did these boycotts make any impact on current conditions?
2. Visit the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture. Examine displays that chronicle protests and the civil rights movement in Maryland. Identify issues that Maryland African Americans were protesting.
3. The Museum offers several school programs that connect to the curriculum lessons.
   - Journey in History Theater provides living history and theatrical performances which highlight African Americans in the museum’s gallery.
     - Take the theme tour, The Fight for Justice and examine the contributions made by Maryland African Americans in the battle for equality from Jim Crow through the Civil Rights Movement.
     - Contact group reservations for schedule updates.
4. Research the use of economic protests in Baltimore and the role students played (Northwood Shopping Movie Theater, Morgan State College students, White Tower Restaurants).
5. Create a timeline of boycott activities that took place in Maryland.
Civil Rights Background Narrative

Read the narrative to the class, stressing the focus question at the end.

The foundation of the modern Civil Rights movement can be found in the experience of African Americans during and immediately following World War Two. Despite oppressive social conditions, almost 1 million black men and women served in the United States Armed forces and nearly 2 million more worked in defense industries. Another 200,000 were employed in the Civil Service. Most of these workers migrated from the South to Northern and Western cities in order to benefit from those economic opportunities. Despite their increasing numbers in these fields, African Americans still suffered from unequal and racist conditions. But because of the emphasis on patriotism and unity during this time, large scale political movements for civil rights and social justice were suppressed.

Civil rights were brought to the national stage once again by the African Americans who had migrated north and gained significant political influence in cities like New York, Chicago, and Detroit. This influence was asserted through organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Urban League. The NAACP, founded in 1909, focused on winning civil rights through the justice system. That campaign is best exemplified by the Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka 1954*. The Brown decision declared that separate was not equal in regards to America’s public schools. Although enforcement of this decision was slow and spotty, it is considered one of the momentous events of the Civil Rights Movement.

African Americans, although initially excited about the Brown decision, soon came to realize that segregation was not over. Recognizing that the NAACP and its utilization of the legal system were not as successful or as quick as they wished, new groups with new methods of protest emerged. Although some groups, such as City-Wide Young People’s forum in Baltimore and the New Negro Alliance in Washington, D.C., had already tried economic methods of dismantling Jim Crow, the popularity of such methods didn’t soar until the infamous bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1955. Soon groups all across the South were boycotting and staging sit-ins at segregated facilities. It was with this combination of legal and economic protest that the Civil Rights Movement and its mission became undeniable.

References:


**Focus Question:** Determine the significance of economic protests to the success of the Civil Rights Movement.
Student Resource Sheet 1

Student Sit-in at Woolworth’s Lunch Counter in Jackson, Mississippi

For resource, go to the link below

http://hunterbear.org/Woolworth%20Sitin%20Jackson.htm

1. What is happening in this picture?

2. How would you respond if you were seated at the lunch counter?

3. What do you think the protestors were trying to accomplish and how successful do you think they were on a scale of 1 – 5 with 5 being the most successful?
Focus Question: HOW SIGNIFICANT WERE ECONOMIC PROTESTS TO THE SUCCESS OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT?

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A decrease of sixty per cent occurred in the volume of business done by the Tommy Tucker Five and Ten-cent store on Pennsylvania Avenue, during the picketing carried on by members of the “Buy-Where-You-Work” movement, according to the store’s management at the injunction hearing Wednesday in the circuit court.

***

According to court testimony of Robert Samuelson, white, manager of the store, business returns for Friday and Saturday, December 1 and 2 that were days before the picketing started, amounted to $1,328.67.

On the following Saturday, December 9, after the picketing had gone into effect, only $406.09 was reported for the weekend business.
Student Resource Sheet 4

March 4, 1949

Mr. & Mrs. Sidney Hollander, Sr.
2513 Talbot Road
City-16

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Hollander:

For the third successive season, the Baltimore branch of the NAACP has maintained a picket line at the Ford’s Theater, protesting the racially discriminatory policy of the management in restricting colored patrons to a few seats in the top balcony. This picket line was put into effect as a last resort after years of conferences, meetings, and correspondence proved on no avail.

This is part of a national effort being made by our organization in Kansas City, St. Louis, and Washington, D.C. to eliminate racial segregation in the legitimate theater. Certainly, the field of the arts should know no color line.

Here in Baltimore, the response of the Theater Guild subscribers, other patrons, actors, and the general public, has been most encouraging. Attendance at Ford’s Theater has definitely decreased. There are weeks in which no show is scheduled at the Theater. Fewer plays are appearing here than at any season before. Some of the best plays on the road today are refusing to come to Ford’s because of the segregation policy, as well be noted in the enclosed brochure. Two weeks ago, Mrs. Lillian Hellman, who wrote “The Little Foxes” and “Another Part of the Forest”, called this office to inquire concerning our picket line. She stated that in view of the fact that we are continuing our picket line, she would not open her new play here in Baltimore as she had originally planned.

This means that our community is becoming increasingly aware of its responsibility in a constitutional democracy to abolish superficial barriers against groups of its citizens based on race, color, creed, or national origin. Democracy not only carries privileges, but responsibilities as well.

Victory is imminent. We are, therefore, asking your continued cooperation in not crossing our picket line until this unjust practice at Ford’s theater is eliminated. We would also appreciate your sending letters to the person or organizations listed on the enclosed pamphlet, in support of a democratic policy at Ford’s. On request, we will be happy to send a representative to explain the status of this problem and answer any questions.

With gratitude for your support, we are

Very sincerely yours,

Milton P. Brown
Executive Secretary
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
Baltimore Branch

Bob Kaufman
Corresponding Secretary
Ford’s Theater Committee
Student Resource Sheet 5

Civil Rights Picket Line, Ford’s Theatre: Baltimore, c. 1951

Photographed by Paul Henderson

MHS Library, special Collections Department, Henderson Collection

For Resource, go to link below


Scroll down to page 4
Photograph under Civil Rights

And/or use resource below

http://followgram.me/baltimoresun/131178957976199664_14227903
Student Resource Sheet 6

Excerpts from:
Toward Equality: Baltimore’s Progress Report

Originally Published in 1960 by the Sydney Hollander Foundation

1952
Three years of picketing and boycott at Ford’s Theater came to an end on the last day of January, when the management of Baltimore’s only remaining legitimate theater announced that Negro patrons could sit anywhere, rather than just in the second balcony. Precipitated by the NAACP, the lengthy boycott had been supported by others in the community. Even those who had been willing to cross the picket line had been deprived of productions whose casts boycotted the city rather than play to Baltimore’s segregated audience.

1953
For the first time Negro shoppers in the downtown area were able to take a break for lunch, and eat it sitting down. The Committee for Racial Equality, an interracial action group known more familiarly as CORE, had successfully employed persuasion, picketing and “sit-in” demonstrations to overcome the resistance to Negro patrons at lunch counters in some of the chain variety and drug stores in the heart of the retail district.

1961
Among the solid accomplishments in the restaurant field were the changes of policy attained by a small committee of Route 40 restaurateurs headed by Tony Knostant, of Aberdeen. After the persuasive efforts of President Kennedy, Governor Tawes, State Department representatives and others failed to produce immediate results, and a massive “freedom ride” was scheduled for November 11 by the Congress of Racial Equality, the Knostant committeeemen convinced enough of their fellow restaurateurs to serve Negroes to have the ride called off. By December it was believed that roughly 40 out of 75 Maryland eating-places on Route 40 were open to all.

Second Edition Published by the Maryland Historical Society, 2003
Student Resource Sheet 7

The Montgomery Story

Martin Luther King, Jr.
Address before the NAACP Convention, June 27, 1956

For resource, go to the link below

Bus Boycott Conference Fails To Find Solution

By TOM JOHNSON

Montgomery Negroes will continue to boycott city buses until a “satisfactory” seating arrangement is devised, a spokesman told officials of City Bus Lines yesterday.

The Rev. M. L. King, speaking for a delegation that conferred with bus lines officials four hours, proposed that bus patrons be seated on a “first come—first served” basis with no sections reserved for either race.

Negroes would continue to sit from the rear and whites from the front, he said, but there would be no reassignment of seats once the buses were loaded.

2 OTHER CONDITIONS

He laid down two other conditions sought by Negroes: More courteous treatment and the hiring of Negro drivers on routes “predominantly” Negro.

On all but the “courtesy” proposal, Atty. Jack Crenshaw, counsel for the bus lines, demurred.

He said it would be impossible to accept the proposed seating arrangement “in view of the segregation law” and, he added, the company has no intentions of hiring Negro drivers.

“We do not contemplate and have no intentions of hiring Negro drivers,” said Crenshaw. “The time is not right in Montgomery, but who can say what will happen in 10 years.”

One of the delegation replied: “We don’t mean 10 years, we mean this year.”

King, who is pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, emphasized the group was not trying to change the segregation law.

BETTER ACCOMMODATIONS

“We are merely trying to peacefully obtain better accommodations for Negroes,” he said.

Commenting on reports of violence, King said most of his race deplores such acts as much as anyone and promised to report “anyone we know to be guilty.”

But, he added, the boycott will continue “until something is done.”

J. H. Bagley, manager of the bus line, was asked if this statement would cause the company to reduce its service immediately.

He replied: “We will continue to provide service adequate to the public needs.”

He added that service has already been curtailed on some routes but declined to name them.

A Negro attorney, Fred D. Gray, questioned whether the state law applied to city bus lines and urged that a ruling be obtained from the attorney general.

Mayor W. A. Gayle later said the City Commission had not decided whether to seek the ruling.

Crenshaw told the protesting delegation the bus company would do everything possible to serve its passengers but could not “change the law.”

He said the company would mark every other bus “special” on the Washington Park-South Jackson Street runs and transport only Negroes. They could still use the regular buses which run at seven and one-half minute intervals.

The boycott grew out of the arrest last week of Rosa Parks a seamstress who refused to move to the rear of a crowded city bus. She was fined $1 in Recorder’s Court.

Several instances of violence have been reported.

Four city buses have been fired on. But Police Chief G. J. Ruppenthal said there was “no evidence to date” of any connection between the incidents and the boycott.

Two Negro houses including the home of Policeman A. G. Worthy were hit by shotgun blasts Wednesday night but no one was reported hurt.

http://digital.archives.alabama.gov/cdm4/results.php?CISOOP1=exact&CISOBOX1=Montgomery+bus+boycott&CISOFIELD1=subj&CISOROOT=/voices&t=s
http://digital.archives.alabama.gov/cdm4/results.php?CISOOP1=exact&CISOBOX1=Montgomery+bus+boycott&CISOFIELD1=subject&CISOROOT=/voices&t=s
“Tote dat barge! Lift dat Boycott! Ride dat bus!”

Washington Post
March 25, 1956

http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/swann/herblock/fruits.html
Student Resource Sheet 11

Boycott Against Nashville Stores, 1960

Memories of John Lewis

For resource, go to the link below

http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Walking+With+the+Wind%3A+A+Memoir+of+the+Movement.-a020588853

Source:
HAP02020h-2/2/50-GREENSBORO,N.C: A group of Negro students from North Carolina A&T College, who were refused service at a luncheon counter reserved for white customers, staged a sit-down strike at the F.W. Woolworth store in Greensboro 2/2. Ronald Martin, Robert Patterson and Mark Martin are shown as they stayed seated throughout the day. The white women at left came to the counter for lunch but decided not to sit down. UPI TELEPHOTO fwb

http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/odyssey/archive/09/0909001r.jpg
Student Resource Sheet 13

Stand-ins at Nashville Movie Theaters, 1961

Memories of John Lewis

For resource, go to the link below

http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Walking+With+the+Wind%3A+A+Memoir+of+the+Movement.-a020588853

Source:
Student Resource Sheet 14
Group Analysis

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