

Welcome the University of Manchester's Star Lecture

Civil Rights Movement
November 2011

Professor Emeritus Louis Kushnick, OBE.

Everything falls into place....

“Find out just what any people will quietly submit to and you have the exact measure of the injustice and wrong which will be imposed on them.”

Frederick Douglass

“Human beings make their own history but not under terms and conditions of their own choosing.”

Karl Marx

Everything falls into place....

Race-based slavery was major change in history of slavery– this creates two “racial” groups – Blacks who are fit subjects for enslavement and Whites who are defined as a racially superior group who are not fit for enslavement.

The South constructed a system of de jure segregation under the authority of the Federal Government and Supreme Court, as a way of keeping the majority of population, both White and Black, divided with Whites being provided with racial superiority rather than economic rights

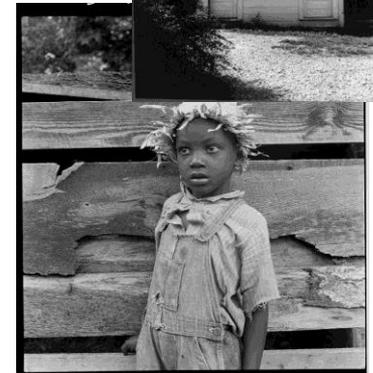
World War I changed this system with industrial expansion to supply Britain with material to fight Germany requiring additional labour. African-American labourers from the South were recruited, and given the opportunity to leave the oppressive de jure racist system of the South, to work in factories and stockyards in the North.

During World War 2, African-Americans and the Federal Government were well aware of how contradictory it was to have Blacks living as inferiors in the US, whilst demonising the Nazis for doing the same to Jews in Germany.

The African-American communities throughout the war and afterwards were calling for the end of DE JURE SEGREGATION. Their activities involved bus boycotts, demonstrations, protests and political campaigns.

These earlier campaigns did not achieve the successes gained by the later campaigns. This was not for lack of effort and courage, but as I indicated in the beginning of this lecture, human beings make their own history but not under the terms and conditions of their own choosing.

The context which was favourable involved the creation of a coalition of forces which provided space and legitimacy for some of the demands of African America.



Everything falls into place....

SOME KEY EVENTS TO REFERENCE

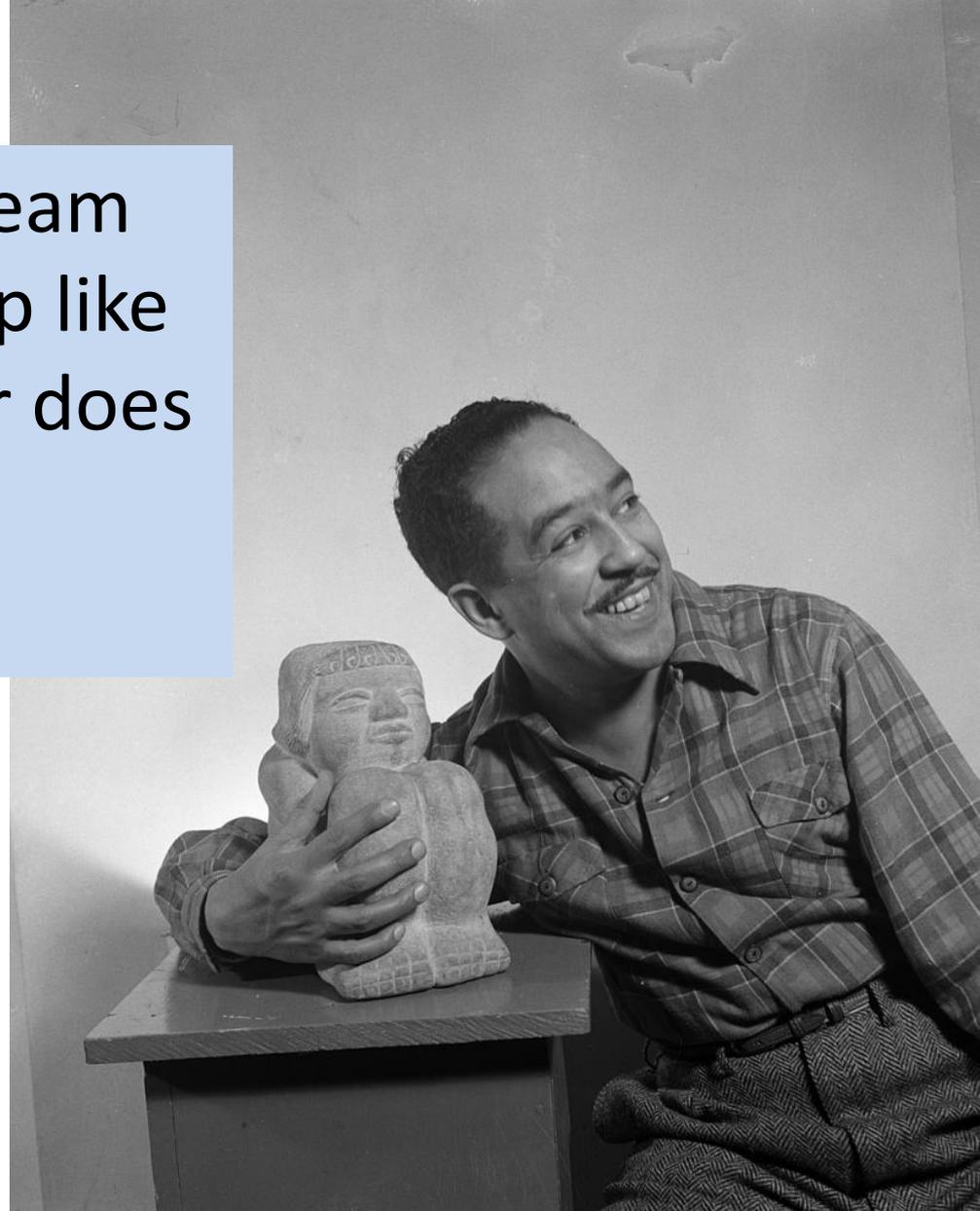
President Truman ordered the integration of the US military in 1948, following a report by a Commission he had established, which argued that treatment of African-Americans could be used by Soviets against the US in the world. Racial integration wasn't fully implemented by the military until the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 necessitated it, in terms of the need to get as many troops into Korea as quickly as possible.

The unanimous decision by the US Supreme Court in 1954 in the case of *Brown vs The Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, that segregation in public schools is unconstitutional, ruling that “separate educational facilities are inherently unequal”.

Everything falls into place....

“What happens to a dream deferred? Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun? .. Or does it explode?”

Langston Hughes



Everything falls into place....

This time, the demands for change among African-Americans in Montgomery were reinforced by activism in other towns and cities.

The struggle to integrate schools and later universities faced massive resistance from the political leaders in the Southern States.

The courage of these young people and those who participated in the bus boycott and other actions designed to overturn Jim Crow became a model and challenge to other groups of African-Americans and members of other groups opposed to segregation.

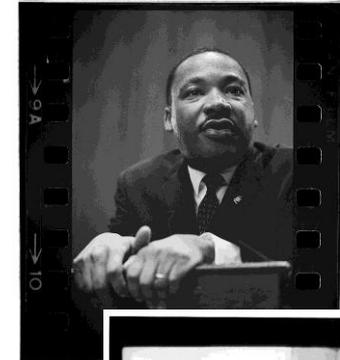
In 1960, the civil rights sit-in movement was born in Greensboro, North Carolina when four Black students from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College began a sit-in at a segregated Woolworth's lunch counter.

In 1961 student volunteers took part in 'freedom rides' throughout the South to test out new laws that banned racial discrimination in public transportation throughout the South. They also faced violence.

These people came from all geographic and ethnic sections of the US. They were met with violence, attacks by police dogs, water hoses, and mass arrests. There were assassinations of individual local leaders such as Medgar Evers in Jackson, Mississippi and murders of civil rights volunteers such as Violet Liuzzo, and Rev. James Reeb.

The 1963 March on Washington and Dr King's "I Have a Dream" speech provided an important impetus in convincing the Kennedy administration of the necessity of legislating to outlaw legal racial segregation. The other major strand of Black mobilisation and activism at the time was associated with the leadership of Malcolm X.

These forces came together, particularly after President Kennedy's assassination, to create sufficient political pressure under President Lyndon Johnson to ensure passage.



EQUALITY IS HERE?

The key legislative changes affecting civil rights followed increasing militancy among African-Americans and their allies and the view of the national political leaders of the DEMOCRATIC PARTY, and other establishment parts of the Civil Rights Coalition, that some legislation was necessary to head off more militant movements and demands and to incorporate the majority of African-Americans into the existing political system.

THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964 was first proposed by President Kennedy in a speech on 11 June 1963. He asked for legislation “giving all Americans the right to be served in facilities which are open to the public - hotels, restaurants, theatres, retail stores and similar establishments” as well as “greater protection for the right to vote”.



The voter protection section of the 1964 CIVIL RIGHTS ACT was not sufficient to ensure the ability of African-Americans in Southern States to participate in the democratic process by voting.

Blacks were excluded from the voting booth by a variety of ‘legal’ means and massive racial violence, including lynchings, home and church burnings, and economic terrorism.

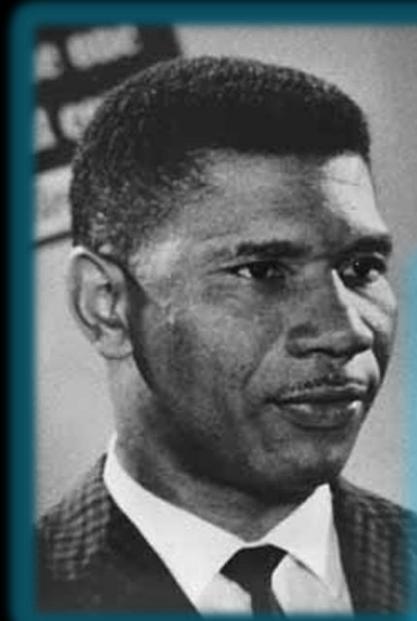
EQUALITY IS HERE?

After the 1964 election, a wide range of civil rights organisations came together to demand legislation which would finally enfranchise African-Americans.

This campaign included the famous voting rights protests in MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM SUMMER, in Selma, Alabama and the Selma to Montgomery marches.

During the summer of 1963, 37 Black churches and 30 Black homes and businesses were firebombed or burned that summer. 1000 Black and White activists were arrested, and least 80 were beaten by White mobs or racist police officers.

The most infamous act of violence was the brutal murder of three young civil rights workers, a Black volunteer, JAMES CHANEY, and his White co-workers, ANDREW GOODMAN AND MICHAEL SCHWERNER.



MISSING CALL FBI

THE FBI IS SEEKING INFORMATION CONCERNING THE DISAPPEARANCE AT PHILADELPHIA, MISSISSIPPI OF THESE THREE INDIVIDUALS ON JUNE 21, 1963. EXTENSIVE INVESTIGATION IS BEING CONDUCTED TO LOCATE GOODMAN, CHANEY, AND SCHWERNER, WHO ARE DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS:

ANDREW GOODMAN	JAMES EARL CHANEY	MICHAEL HENRY SCHWERNER
HAIR: White	Hair: Black	Hair: Black
SEX: Male	SEX: Male	SEX: Male
DOB: November 23, 1942	DOB: May 20, 1942	DOB: November 4, 1937
POB: New York City	POB: Meriden, Wisconsin	POB: New York City
AGE: 21 years	AGE: 21 years	AGE: 26 years
WEIGHT: 175	WEIGHT: 175	WEIGHT: 170 to 175
HEIGHT: 5'10"	HEIGHT: 5'10 to 5'11"	HEIGHT: 5'10 to 5'11"
HAIR: Dark brown; wavy	HAIR: Black	HAIR: Black
COMPLEXION: Fair	COMPLEXION: Dark	COMPLEXION: Light skin
TEETH: Good - none missing	TEETH: Good - none missing	TEETH: Good - none missing
SCARS AND MARKS: 1 inch cut on forehead above left eye	SCARS AND MARKS: 1 inch cut on forehead above left eye	SCARS AND MARKS: 1 inch cut on forehead above left eye

SHOULD YOU HAVE OR IN THE FUTURE RECEIVE ANY INFORMATION CONCERNING THE WHEREABOUTS OF THESE INDIVIDUALS, YOU ARE REQUESTED TO NOTIFY ME OR THE NEAREST OFFICE OF THE FBI. TELEPHONE NUMBER IS LISTED BELOW.



EQUALITY IS HERE?

President Johnson, in one of his most famous speeches, called on a joint session of Congress to enact a strong voting rights bill, designed to enforce the 14TH AND 15TH AMENDMENTS and to eliminate previously legal strategies to prevent Blacks and other minorities from voting. He signed the Act into law on 6 August 1965, with DR MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR and ROSA PARKS present along with other civil rights leaders.

Alongside these legislative gains, there were throughout the years 1965-1968 over 200 urban uprisings throughout the country, particularly in the major cities in the north and west of the nation. Five days after President Johnson signed the VOTING RIGHTS ACT into law, six days of riots erupted in the Watts area of Los Angeles.



What more do you want?

The history of the United States since 1968 has significantly been shaped by political and ideological responses to the CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT and its gains, and the consequent weakening and in many cases dismantling of many of the gains discussed above, and by the continuation of the structural bases of inequality.

PRESIDENT RICHARD NIXON'S victory in 1968 was based on a mobilisation of fear and anger over the violence of those years and also, crucially, by what was called his "SOUTHERN STRATEGY" by identifying the REPUBLICAN PARTY as the party of Whites in the South.

The massive cuts in FEDERAL GOVERNMENT spending brought in by Reagan combined with tax cuts for the rich and continued and increased spending on the military. The programs he cut were disproportionately those staffed by and used by urban African-Americans and other urban people of colour.

During the GREAT DEPRESSION the NEW DEAL brought together White ethnic working class people, Blacks, reformers and White Southerners. Because the latter were so important in positions of power in both houses of Congress, and because racism was such an accepted part of the popular culture as well as of the political and economic system, PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT refused to support legislation to outlaw lynching.

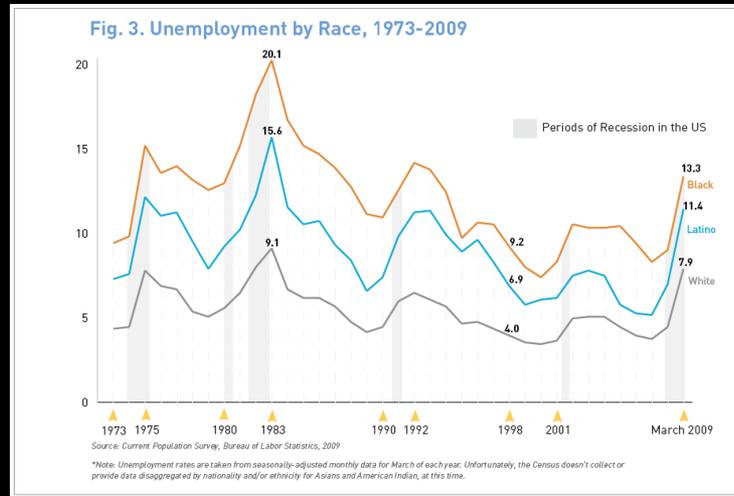
Although he did more than any previous administration to include African-Americans as beneficiaries of government programs, this inclusion was still racially constructed. THE WAGNER ACT - which created the framework of union rights, workers rights to social insurance, maximum hours and minimum wage laws - excluded two sectors of the economy, agriculture and domestic service, from the legislation.

The other crucial example I would like to point to at this time was the role played by the FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, its agencies, and by state and local governments, and private sector institutions such as banks, insurance companies, estate agents, construction companies in the creation of GHETTOS.

These material consequences of gross inequalities in virtually all arenas of life for African-Americans, in particular, and consequently in maintaining the system of increasingly oligopolistic political and economic power have been identified.

What more do you want?

1. Lower income/educated/skilled Whites better off than Better educated/skilled Black workers [p.13].
2. Blacks with H.S. education or some College had higher unemployment rates that Whites without H.S. Diploma [p.14] 2005.
3. White Women Median earning greater than Black men 2009 \$666-\$595.
4. Past 15 years, Black unemployment rates at least 2x those of Whites in all but 4 years.
5. Black unemployment was at least 2x that of Whites for all but 5 of last 37 years [p.14].
6. Unemployment for young workers – between 1977-2009 the highest rate of unemployment for young White adults –13.9% in 1983-does not reach the lowest rate for young Black adults –14.3



Conclusions...

These material consequences of gross inequalities in virtually all arenas of life for African-Americans, in particular, and consequently in maintaining the system of increasingly oligopolistic political and economic power have been identified.

When Civil Rights leaders went beyond the bounds of legitimate discourse, by raising questions about the Vietnam war or structural inequality, they were condemned as being crypto-Communists, extremists, racists in reverse. The withdrawal of media legitimacy, combined with the changing priorities of the political elites reinforced the willingness of many Black leaders to accept the structural status quo, which had made a place for them, and to attack those whose activities might rebound negatively upon them.

However, I do not want to leave you with the view that the struggles and sacrifices of these people before, during and since the period of the Civil Rights Movement have been wasted. The United States is a more humane society in many ways than it was before the Movement. The overthrow of legal barriers to equality of other groups in society was encouraged and expedited by the experiences of the CRM. These changes have helped many millions of people live freer and more fulfilling lives. They have, however, challenged powerful individuals and groups and the ways in which this minority has held power over the majority. It fundamentally has challenged what I have called “the politics of atleastness” - at least I am a male, at least I am white, at least I am heterosexual, at least I am a University Professor The fate of the United States as a democratic society, and of other societies facing the same challenges, will be determined by the outcome of these conflicts. The outcome is not predetermined and will depend on the actions of all of us.