

What Would You Do? (Activity)

“What would you do?” is an instructional tool for further understanding the climate of repression against liberation movements in the late 1960s and 1970s and today. Some of the scenarios are mentioned in the film; all are related to its content. *Note: This activity was modified and adapted from a curriculum project originated in conjunction with the case of the San Francisco 8 by Javad Jahi and Tony Marks-Block. The San Francisco 8 are former Black Panthers who were targets of intense FBI repressive actions, including outright torture, so their case fits directly into the content conveyed by the Cointelpro 101 film. For more on the SF 8, see <http://freethesf8.org/>*

Directions:

1. Divide the repressive scenarios among groups of students.
2. Have the students read through the assigned scenario.
3. Have students choose one of the options presented as to how they would respond to the given scenario, discuss their reasons why, and be prepared to present their position to the class.

For your information in the discussion, here are the scenarios with brief information on what actually resulted. You may already have or wish to do some additional research to provide students with more detailed historical depictions of what took place. A separate list of the scenarios without the actual outcome follows.

1-What Would You Do? MOVE Organization infant killed by police.

The Humanitarian and Social Justice organization known as MOVE, was often terrorized by the Philadelphia police and the city government.

On March 28th 1976 Janine Africa was attempting to stop the police from beating on her husband Phil Africa. A cop beat on Janine Africa while she was holding her 3-week old baby, Life Africa. The police beating resulted in the baby’s skull being crushed.

As MOVE, what would you do?

- A) Sue the Police Department
- B) Defend yourself against the police attack
- C) Expose the murder to the community where Life Africa’s skull was crushed

What Happened: The day after the killing, MOVE invited the media, community and local council members to see the body of Life Africa and murder evidence of the police man’s nightstick and hat. The police arrested the MOVE member who showed the evidence. MOVE continued with a Media campaign of the police murder. No cop was ever convicted of the crime.

2- What would you do? Chicano Moratorium.

Masses of Chicanos protest against the Vietnam War. This march would later inspire other marches including the contemporary Anti war rallies regarding Iraq.

On August 29, 1970 approximately 30,000 Chicano people hit the streets of Los Angeles to peacefully protest against the Vietnam War.

If you were the Los Angeles Police, what would you do?

- A) Assist the marchers to make sure there protest was a productive and safe experience
- B) Attempt to stop 30,000 citizens by beating them
- C) Support the marchers right to freedom of speech and peacefully observe
- D) Other

What Happened: The police brutalize the crowd, killing Ruben Salazar (LA Times News Reporter), along with citizens Angel Diaz and Lynn Ward who lost their lives as well.

3-What would you do? The New Bethel Incident.

In 1969 The Provisional Government of the Republic of New Afrika, celebrated it's first nation day celebration after the Black Nation Conference of 1968 where 500 people came to Detroit to unify around the need for an independent black nation.

In March of 1969, the Detroit Police attacked New Bethel Church where a Nation Day Celebration promoting New Afrikan Self-determination was occurring. The police opened fire on a building with hundreds of innocent people.

If you were the Black Legion Security Force for the event, what would you have done?

- A) Encouraged everyone to pray and hope for the best.
- B) Shoot back in self-defense to protect children and everyone in the church.
- C) Surrender with your hands-up not knowing what the police would do.
- D) Other

What Happened: The Black Legion (Security Force) shot back in a response of self defense. 1 police officer died as a result of this incident. The Detroit Police arrested more then 150 people in the church that day. Attorney Ken Cockrel, Sr. worked to get almost of the churchgoing people released with no apologies from the Detroit police department.

4- What would you do? Oscar Grant

On New Year's Day, 2009 a young Black father named Oscar Grant is detained by BART Police on the Fruitvale station platform and is murdered by police officer Johannes Mehserle.

If you were at the BART station that day, what would you have done?

- A) Hide under the BART chairs until the incident is over.
- B) Pull out your cell-phone camera and film the incident
- C) Encourage people to leave the BART train to defend Oscar Grant and his friends from police brutality.
- D) Other

What Happened: Dozens of BART passengers recorded the incident on their cell phones and shared their footage with the mass media. This outcry resulted in the police officer to be arrested on murder charges.

5- What would you do? Jesús Gutiérrez

On April 29, 2009, Jesús Gutiérrez, a custodian at UC Berkeley, is arrested by UCPD for supposedly using someone else's social security number to work. UCPD would not let Jesús have union representation, and they quickly turned his case over to ICE, who intend to deport him.

What would you do to defend Jesús?

- A) Organize a rally and demand that the University defend Jesús in his pending ICE case.
- B) March on the ICE detention center/County Jail where Jesús is being held and don't leave until he is freed.
- C) Organize a community police watch that patrols the police in action, holding them accountable to the people.
- D) Other.

What Happened: A broad coalition of Jesús's labor union and student organizations rally and call on UC Berkeley to defend Jesús. Jesús still sits in Santa Rita jail...the future has yet to be written.

6- What would you do? Black Panther Party (Selling of alcohol and drugs)

In the late 1960s in the Black and Brown community there were many people selling drugs on the block because there were few better ways to make money if you were poor and were not given educational opportunities. Also, the only stores in the community were liquor stores, much like today, causing addiction, high incidences of violence and premature death.

If you could do something to stop the selling of drugs and alcohol in the community, what would you do?

- A) Open up alternative stores where people can buy fresh foods.
- B) Organize a group of people who are armed to prevent drug dealers from selling on your block and who force liquor stores to stop selling liquor.
- C) Try your best to get an education and move out of the neighborhood once you get a better paying job.
- D) Other.

What Happened: In the late sixties the Black Panther Party and the Brown Berets forced drug dealers and liquor stores to leave the community or close through armed confrontation and with their political and moral high-ground and support from the community.

7- Wounded Knee

In 1973 the American Indian Movement (AIM) and members of the Lakota nation reclaimed the village of Wounded Knee on the Pine Ridge reservation in protest of the US government backed tribal government that was violently harassing Lakota who did not want the tribe to sell off ancestral lands for mining, and who did not support full recognition of broken treaties. In response to the organized takeover of land to resist the selling off of Indian land and traditions, the US government and sent in hundreds of US marshals and surrounded the resistance.

What would you do to protect the hundreds of families who were surrounded by US Marshals?

- A) Surrender, and fight for land rights and self-determination in US courts.
- B) Give up your ancestral lands and way of life and move to a major US city to build a native community there.
- C) Fight back and hold off the US Marshals for as long as possible to ensure that the families had a right to their land, by any means necessary.
- D) Other.

What Happened: The AIM and Lakota warriors held Wounded Knee for 71 days, preventing US Marshals from taking over their reclaimed land. Unfortunately two warriors, Frank Clearwater and Buddy Lamont were killed. Although they lived free on ancestral land for 71 days, the US government began an open reign of terror and a secret COINTELPRO attack against AIM after they took back Wounded Knee. These are the events that eventually led to the flawed trial and spurious conviction of Leonard Peltier. Although he was convicted, two other AIM members, charged with the same crime, were earlier acquitted when a jury found their actions had been taken in self-defense. Peltier, whose trial was delayed because he had fled to Canada and a legal battle was waged against his extradition, was convicted under the exact same circumstances.

8- Atenco

The People's Front in the Defense of Land (PFDL) is a Mexican organization in Atenco, Mexico that has been defending flower sellers and campesinos in the region. They have been in battle with the Mexican government over land for years.

In May of 2006 Mexican police raid the flower market in the town of Atenco with extreme brutality. The police beat, kidnap, and rape many people and leaders, and two young men are murdered.

As the PFDL, what would you do?

- A) Refuse to leave the land and resist police attack non-violently.
- B) Kidnap police officers and use them to bargain for the release of those arrested by the police.
- C) Retreat from the land and take land in a new location to begin a new flower market, if possible.
- D) Other

What Happened: Many members of the PFDL and the community were arrested indiscriminately. Many resisted the police violence with their own kidnappings and by using Molotov cocktails and blockades to protect their land. In further retaliation, the police and Mexican government arrest and sentence twelve people from Atenco (many not even in the PFDL) to 31 year prison sentences for the resistance to the police.

Participant Scenarios (for distribution to student groups)

1-What Would You Do? Move Organization infant killed by police.

The Humanitarian and Social Justice organization known as MOVE, was often terrorized by the Philadelphia police and the city government.

On March 28th 1976 Janine Africa was attempting to stop the police from beating on her husband Phil Africa. A cop beat on Janine Africa while she was holding her 3-week old baby, Life Africa. The police beating resulted in the baby's skull being crushed.

As MOVE, what would you do?

- A) Sue the Police Department
 - B) Defend yourself against the police attack
 - C) Expose the murder of the baby to the community
-

2- What would you do? Chicano Moratorium.

Masses of Chicanos protest against the Vietnam War. This march would later inspire other marches including the contemporary Anti war rallies regarding Iraq.

On August 29, 1970 approximately 30,000 Chicano people hit the streets of Los Angeles to peacefully protest against the Vietnam War.

If you were the Los Angeles Police, what would you do?

- A) Assist the marchers to make sure there protest was a productive and safe experience
 - B) Attempt to stop 30,000 citizens by beating them
 - C) Support the marchers right to freedom of speech and peacefully observe
 - D) Other
-

3-What would you do? The New Bethel Incident.

In 1969 The Provisional Government of the Republic of New Afrika, celebrated it's first nation day celebration after the Black Nation Conference of 1968 where 500 people came to Detroit to unify around the need for an independent black nation.

In March of 1969, the Detroit Police attacked New Bethel Church where a Nation Day Celebration promoting New Afrikan Self-determination was occurring. The police opened fire on a building with hundreds of innocent people.

If you were the Black Legion Security Force for the event, what would you have done?

- A) Encouraged everyone to pray and hope for the best.
- B) Shoot back in self-defense to protect children and everyone in the church.
- C) Surrender with your hands-up not knowing what the police would do.
- D) Other

4- What would you do? Oscar Grant

On New Year's Day, 2009 a young Black father named Oscar Grant is detained by BART Police on the Fruitvale station platform and is murdered by police officer Johannes Mehserle.

If you were at the BART station that day, what would you have done?

- A) Hide under the BART chairs until the incident is over.
- B) Pull out your cell-phone camera and film the incident
- C) Encourage people to leave the BART train to defend Oscar Grant and his friends from police brutality.
- D) Other

5- What would you do? Jesús Gutiérrez

On April 29, 2009, Jesús Gutiérrez, a custodian at UC Berkeley, is arrested by UCPD for supposedly using someone else's social security number to work. UCPD would not let Jesús have union representation, and they quickly turned his case over to ICE, who intend to deport him.

What would you do to defend Jesús?

- A) Organize a rally and demand that the University defend Jesús in his pending ICE case.
 - B) March on the ICE detention center/County Jail where Jesús is being held and don't leave until he is freed.
 - C) Organize a community police watch that patrols the police in action, holding them accountable to the people.
 - D) Other.
-

6- What would you do? Black Panther Party (Selling of alcohol and drugs)

In the late 1960s in the Black and Brown community there were many people selling drugs on the block because there were few better ways to make money if you were poor and were not given educational opportunities. Also, the only stores in the community were liquor stores, much like today, causing addiction, high incidences of violence and premature death.

If you could do something to stop the selling of drugs and alcohol in the community, what would you do?

- A) Open up alternative stores where people can buy fresh foods.
 - B) Organize a group of people who are armed to prevent drug dealers from selling on your block and who force liquor stores to stop selling liquor.
 - C) Try your best to get an education and move out of the neighborhood once you get a better paying job.
 - D) Other.
-

7- Wounded Knee

In 1973 the American Indian Movement (AIM) and members of the Lakota nation reclaimed the village of Wounded Knee on the Pine Ridge reservation in protest of the US government backed tribal government that was violently harassing Lakota who did not want the tribe to sell off ancestral lands for mining, and who did not support full recognition of broken treaties. In response to the organized takeover of land to resist the selling off of Indian land and traditions, the US government and sent in hundreds of US marshals and surrounded the resistance.

What would you do to protect the hundreds of families who were surrounded by US Marshals?

- A) Surrender, and fight for land rights and self-determination in US courts.
- B) Give up your ancestral lands and way of life and move to a major US city to build a native community there.
- C) Fight back and hold off the US Marshals for as long as possible to ensure that the families had a right to their land, by any means necessary.
- D) Other.

8- Atenco

The People's Front in the Defense of Land (PFDL) is a Mexican organization in Atenco, Mexico that has been defending flower sellers and campesinos in the region. They have been in battle with the Mexican government over land for years.

In May of 2006 Mexican police raid the flower market in the town of Atenco with extreme brutality. The police beat, kidnap, and rape many people and leaders, and two young men are murdered.

As the PFDL, what would you do?

- A) Refuse to leave the land and resist police attack non-violently.
- B) Kidnap police officers and use them to bargain for the release of those arrested by the police.
- C) Retreat from the land and take land in a new location to begin a new flower market, if possible.
- D) Other
