

How Far Have We Come?

A historical information game exploring liberation movements and subsequent state repression.

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/>

Purpose:

To develop a comparative understanding of state repression against liberation movements in the United States over time, so as to illustrate political and social similarities and differences between historical moments.

Age Group: High school/college

Goals: Participants learn about historical events in the history of social justice movements in the US and build an understanding of how the government has suppressed political dissent seeks to maintain social control over oppressed nationalities, the working class, gender, and people of non-dominant sexual orientation. This should help participants contextualize the case of the SF 8 in this historical moment, as well as realize that similar forms of repression have occurred throughout the history of this country. In the context of the Freedom Archives film, COINTELPRO 101, it not only provides some specific examples of acts of repression during the time period of the film, but can also serve to give students a sense of the ongoing relevance of the film to the present and future.

Overview: Participants are given cards with short descriptions of various historical events that do not contain dated material or any names of those involved in them. Based on the historical description, students should attempt to place the event in history. They will be given the option of placing the event into six sections on a timeline: Pre-1865, 1865–1945, 1945–1965, 1966–1980, 1981–2001, 2001–Present. Each era can of course be marked by various major events, which can be placed on the timeline (Emancipation Proclamation, End of WWII, Civil Rights Bill Passed, Reagan elected, George W. Bush elected, Obama elected, etc.). After trying to guess the correct placement of the historical event, participants may also try to guess who was involved in the event, if applicable. (There are 31 cards at present; you could add more or substitute.)

Procedure:

1. Instructors/Facilitators may split the group into teams (each team should have at least three students)
2. The facilitator /teacher will put up a timeline on the board as described above and introduce the task for participants.
3. Facilitators then pass out various historical event cards to each team.
4. After discussion, teams should send a representative up to the larger timeline and post where they think the event falls in time.
5. At the end of the exercise, a discussion should follow about why the students chose to put the event at a particular location.

If you think it would be helpful for student involvement, you could design this as a game played by two or more teams. If one team places an event on the timeline and another disagrees, they could challenge the first team. Scoring is optional.

Teacher's Reference Sheets, Includes Dates and Events/People *(more/others can be added):*

How Far Have We Come?

What year/time period did the following take place?

More than 20,000 undocumented immigrants are incarcerated solely for their immigration status and over 200,000 are deported from the United States (2008).

More than one in 100 adults in the United States is in jail or prison, with more than 2.3 Million behind bars (2008).

One in nine black men ages 20 to 34 is behind bars (2008).

A Chicana woman from San Diego who serves a seven to life sentence for conspiracy to commit murder against a man who abused and stalked her for over five years. When her abuser threatened to take their child away, she confided in a male friend. The friend then confronted her abuser and shot him five times in the legs. Although her abuser sustained no permanent injuries, she was convicted on a first degree murder charge. (Teresa Cruz, 1990s)

Six Black teens are convicted of beating a white teenager after nooses are placed under a "white-only" tree at the local high school (Jena Six, 2000s)

A team of undercover cops, two of which are Black, shoot 50 bullets at two unarmed Latino men and one unarmed Black man, killing the Black man on his wedding day. All cops were found not guilty of any criminal action (Sean Bell, 2006-2008).

Four police officers beat an unarmed Black man, while many others look on. All of the officers are acquitted from excessive force charges, and a city erupts in anger (Rodney King, 1991-1992)

Two Black men are killed in an ambush by Chicago police and the FBI after being drugged and set up by an informant. One of the men was instrumental in forming alliances between street "gangs" and also worked to provide free breakfast to youth in his community (Fred Hampton, 1969).

An unarmed Black teenager is ambushed and killed by a squad of Oakland police. (Little Bobby Hutton, Black Panther Party, 1968)

9 Black youth are falsely accused of raping two white women, and are convicted by all white juries to extensive sentences. After doing extensive time, all are set free. (Scottsboro Boys, 1930s)

A Black leader is accused and convicted of murdering a white woman and spends 27 years in prison before his conviction is thrown out after it is shown that a key witness was actually an FBI and LAPD informant. (Geronimo Ji Jaga, 1972 - 1997)

A law is passed that makes it illegal to make statements that intend to interfere with the success of the US military, as well as interfere with military recruitment. Many publications are censored and labor leaders imprisoned. (Espionage Act of 1917)

A law is passed that makes it easier for the government to search personal communications for the purpose of fighting terrorism. It also makes it easier to detain and deport immigrants suspected as terrorists and regulates transfer of funds across borders to terrorist organizations (Patriot Act, 2001).

Over 110,000 Japanese Americans are sent to detention camps throughout the West Coast because it was thought they would commit espionage. Many were held for many years. (1940s)

Under a state of government terror, two U.S. marshals are murdered on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in North Dakota, and one man is convicted of the murder without one witness or proper ballistics evidence. (Leonard Peltier, Mid 70s)

An environmentalist is injured in a car-bomb that the FBI claims she created and attempts to frame her for the crime. They also use it as an opportunity to illegally smear her and her organization. She (although deceased, and a fellow activist who was with her in the car) are later awarded millions of dollars for false arrest and first amendment violations (Judi Bari, 1990 – 2002)

There are 11,212 women incarcerated in U.S. federal and state prisons. (1977)

There are over 100,000 women incarcerated in U.S. federal and state prisons (2008).

A lawyer passes information from her client (who is a convicted “terrorist” under U.S. courts) to people in his “terrorist” organization. She is convicted of conspiracy and of providing material support to terrorists. (Lynne Stewart, 2005)

A man and his wife are executed due to allegedly passing on bomb secrets to the Soviet Union (The Rosenbergs, 1953).

Youth who do not have access to healthy food are given free breakfast by volunteer community members (1970s, Black Panther Party, Brown Berets, AIM etc.)

Youth who do not have access to healthy food are given free breakfast in school (Current, School Districts).

Asian, Black, Latino and White students unite at SF State and UC Berkeley go on strike demanding ethnic studies programs and more faculty of color. Police are sent in and beat strikers (Third World Liberation Strike, 1969)

Thousands of Raza, Black and Asian high school students walk-out of school demanding increased funding for bilingual education and decreased funding for policing in and out of school (1998).

Chicano students in East Los Angeles walkout of school protesting education funding disparities and racism within the school system. Many are beaten bloody by police. (1968, Brown Berets).

A Taiwanese-born American citizen is tried for espionage for the transfer of nuclear secrets to China. He sits in solitary confinement for 9 months, and is eventually released without being charged. (Wen Ho Lee, 1999).

Millions take to the streets and strike to protest proposed laws that would make it a felony to reside in the U.S. illegally and current U.S. immigration laws. (2006, Day without an immigrant)

Out of protest toward government oppression toward Native Americans across the U.S., American Indians occupy Alcatraz Island for 19 months in defense of their treaty rights to all lands under U.S. occupation (1969 – 1971).

After a decades long struggle, eleven Puerto Rican Independista prisoners are granted clemency because their sentences did not match the severity of their convictions. (1999)

After confronting and beating seven immigrant youth in San Francisco's Mission District, a police officer is killed and the seven youth's are taken to trial for murder. Eventually they are all acquitted of the crime (Los Siete de la Raza, 1969).

The Panther 21, in New York City were arrested in a pre-dawn raid on April 2, 1969 and charged with conspiracy to blow up the New York Botanical Gardens, department stores, etc. On May 13, 1971, after the longest political trial in New York's history, all 21 New York Panthers are acquitted of all charges in just 45 minutes of jury deliberation. (1969–71)

Participant/Group Cards to be distributed and placed on the timeline:

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What year/time period did the following take place?

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What year/time period did the following take place?

One in nine black men ages 20 to 34 is behind bars.

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What year/time period did the following take place?

Six Black teens are convicted of beating a white teenager after nooses are placed under a “white-only” tree at the local high school.

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What year/time period did the following take place?

A team of undercover cops, two of which are Black, shoot 50 bullets at two unarmed Latino men and one unarmed Black man, killing the Black man on his wedding day. All cops were found not guilty of any criminal action.

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What year/time period did the following take place?

A Chicana woman from San Diego who serves a seven to life sentence for conspiracy to commit murder against a man who abused and stalked her for over five years. When her abuser threatened to take their child away, she confided in a male friend. The friend then confronted her abuser and shot him five times in the legs. Although her abuser sustained no permanent injuries, she was convicted on a first degree murder charge.

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Four police officers beat an unarmed Black man, while many others look on. All of the officers are acquitted from excessive force charges, and a city erupts in anger.

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Two Black men are killed in an ambush by Chicago police and the FBI after being drugged and set up by an informant. One of the men was instrumental in forming alliances between street “gangs” and also worked to provide free breakfast to youth in his community.

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What year/time period did the following take place?

An unarmed Black teenager is ambushed and killed by a squad of Oakland police.

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What year/time period did the following take place?

Nine Black youth are falsely accused of raping two white women, and are convicted by all white juries to extensive sentences. After doing extensive time, all are set free.

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What year/time period did the following take place?

A Black leader is accused and convicted of murdering a white woman and spends 27 years in prison before his conviction is thrown out after it is shown that a key witness was actually an FBI and LAPD informant.

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A law is passed that makes it illegal to make statements that intend to interfere with the success of the US military, as well as interfere with military recruitment. Many publications are censored and labor leaders imprisoned. (Espionage Act of 1917)

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Under a state of government terror, two U.S. marshals are murdered on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in North Dakota, and one man is convicted of the murder without one witness or proper ballistics evidence.

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A man and his wife are executed due to allegedly passing on bomb secrets to the Soviet Union.

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A lawyer passes information from her client (who is a convicted terrorist under U.S. courts) to people in his “terrorist” organization. She is convicted of conspiracy and of providing material support to terrorists.

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Youth who do not have access to healthy food are given free breakfast in school.

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Chicano students in East Los Angeles walkout of school protesting education funding disparities and racism within the school system. Many are beaten bloody by police.

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A Taiwanese-born American citizen is tried for espionage for the transfer of nuclear secrets to China. He sits in solitary confinement for 9 months, and is eventually released without being charged.

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Millions take to the streets and strike to protest proposed laws that would make it a felony to reside in the U.S. illegally and current U.S. immigration laws.

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After confronting and beating seven immigrant youth in San Francisco’s Mission District, a police officer is killed and the seven youth’s are taken to trial for murder. Eventually they are all acquitted of the crime.



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After a decades long struggle, eleven Puerto Rican Independista prisoners are granted clemency because their sentences did not match the severity of their convictions.



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Thousands of Raza, Black, and Asian high school students walk-out of school demanding increased funding for bilingual education and decreased funding for policing in and out of school.



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Twenty-one members of an African-American organization are arrested by police and charged with allegedly plotting to bomb a botanical garden. Two years later they were all acquitted.

