

FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION QUESTIONS

Learning and Culminating Activities

ROAD TO FREEDOM: A. PHILIP RANDOLPH

Provide students with a FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION by asking them to consider the following questions while viewing the next segment: Write the questions on the board.

1. How did A. Philip Randolph win popularity with working-class Blacks? *According to Timuel D. Black, A. Philip Randolph was able to have an immediate social and economic impact without overturning anything. This was important because this posed an opportunity to receive benefits without necessarily guaranteeing for oneself any major personal threat.*
2. What was Executive Order 9981? *Order signed by Pres. Truman on 22 March 1948 ending discrimination in the armed forces of the United States.*
3. Why was desegregation of the armed forces a necessary E.O. rather than a Congressional law? *With the changing political climate, any desegregation laws would likely not be passed in the divided Congress.*
4. Why was E.O. 9981 seen as a “beacon of light”? *It was viewed that way because it demonstrated the “practicability of desegregation and integration”.*
5. What is the difference between desegregated and integrated? *Opinions may vary but desegregation implies that two groups formerly kept separate (segregated) would coexist. Integration implies that two coexistent groups would develop relationships of mutual interdependence.*
6. Was the fight to desegregate the military a unified struggle between the races? What evidence is there to support your claim? *No. In several of the still photographs presented in the video, demonstrators were Black and White. People of different races, likely economic classes and generations carried the slogan “Free Imprisoned War Objectors”.*
7. What is the “tactical bluff”? *James Farmer of the Congress of Racial Equality (C.O.R.E.) identifies that the tactical bluff was used strategically by Randolph to persuade presidents Roosevelt and Truman. It was called a bluff because grassroots workers did not believe that the March on Washington of 1941 would have been possible to organize but the administrations did not know that. Instead, neither administration could take the chance that their position with foreign allies would be compromised by the United States own un-democratic practices.*

Play tape. You will see the interview of Timuel D. Black, Chicago resident. The narrator will say, “there was an immediate effect...” Pause the tape when you see images of soldiers waving flags and African-American soldiers reuniting with their families. Provide students with a FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION by asking them to consider the statement, “[Blacks] felt a sense of loyalty to the country of their oppressor”. The narrator says, “...having served but been poorly served.” *Discuss student responses.*

Provide students with a FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION by asking them to raise their hand when they can identify the strategy used by Randolph to apply pressure to Pres. Truman concerning desegregation of the military. Play tape. You will see soldiers dressed in military paraphernalia. *Students should have their hands raised when A. Philip Randolph’s voice is heard stating, “Negro*

soldiers are in no mood to shoulder a gun again to fight for democracy abroad until we have democracy at home”.

Provide students with a FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION by asking the question: “was Bayard Rustin a White man or a Black man? What clues are provided in the video about his identity? *Upon initial viewing, the answer to the question is not clear because two men are shown when his assistant, Rachelle Horowitz, mentions his name. Because he has a Caucasian assistant, it might be assumed that he too is Caucasian. However, in the video segment, a fade in on the African-American man indicates that he is probably Black. Scrutiny of the supporting website verifies that he was African-American. (A. Philip Randolph Program Information” website; <http://www.pbs.org/weta/apr/aprprogram.html>)*

Stop tape when you see a fade-in of a picture of A. Philip Randolph. You will hear dramatic music after hearing narration about John Bracey’s comment, “it’s not clear what his future would be.”

Extension Activities

Develop a timeline of strategies used by Randolph between E.O. 8802 and E.O. 9981. How did a non-violent movement of the 40s with its principles of ‘civil disobedience’ grow to become the radical movement of the 70s? Trace the role of younger generations in securing civil rights for all Americans. The video describes a “new spirit, new hope, determination” among a group of “radical passivists” that included Bayard Rustin and it appears that it was an integrated initiative of young people. There is a logical progression in intensity as one follows the timeline between the two orders.

Explore the glorious history of the cultural celebration of soldiers. Time 100: Heroes and Icons website, <http://www.time.com/time/time100/heroes/profile/gi01.html> In June of 1999, Time magazine published a list of “twenty people who articulate the longings of the last 100 years, exemplifying courage, selflessness, exuberance, superhuman ability and amazing grace.” The American G.I. was on the list. The descriptor “G.I.” was derived from the phrase “government issue” and is commonly used to describe members of the military. In the video, John Hope Franklin reveals that American soldiers were “a very important sector of American society” and that point has been materialized with the manufacture of toys like “G.I. Joe” and movies like “G.I. Jane”. Use the Time website to examine photo essays and periodical archives online that help to sustain this iconic view of the American soldier.

COLIN POWELL SPEECH: 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF E.O. #9981

[50th Anniversary of E.O. 9981—Colin Powell \(1998\), <http://www.npr.org/ramfiles/980731.news.01.ram>](http://www.npr.org/ramfiles/980731.news.01.ram) Load Real Player plug-in. Log onto the NPR site. Fast forward to 17:30/52:14. You will hear Gen. Powell say, “he became first president of the US to address the NAACP”. To fast forward, hit play (green triangle then move cursor over the progression slide, note changing time on the bottom of the player pop-up window). Play the audio file. Pause play by clicking on the double parallel bar at 22:35/52:14, you will hear Gen. Powell say, “we don’t hear enough of that here in Washington today, applause”.

1. “Do the right thing” –A. Philip Randolph had political power, what was his role in influencing Truman toward action? (*Cross reference video*) Randolph was one of the major influences among Black people from the 1940s through the 1960s. He succeeded in organizing (in word)

several strikes and/or demonstrations that would potentially threaten the political life of FDR and Truman and jeopardize the security of American foreign policy abroad.

2. “Principle, pressure and pragmatism all came to bear”—provide an example of each from the standpoint of Truman
 - a) *Principle: Black servicemen and their families were subject to torture and possibly death by racists in the U.S. upon their return*
 - b) *Pressure: Black leaders like A. Philip Randolph were demanding that the military be desegregated.*
 - c) *Pragmatism: Universal training and reciprocated loyalty were sensible, plausible attainments to Black soldiers and their families.*

Fast forward to 28:55/52:14. You will hear Gen. Powell say, “a month after I joined the ROTC...” Play audio file to 34:00/52:14; you will hear Gen. Powell say, “to show I could do it, thank you”...applause.

3. Why were African-Americans motivated to join the armed forces? *It was the only institution in America where the color of your guts, the color of your blood, was more important than the color of your skin. Cross reference “Ball of Confusion”, line 3-4*
4. Gen. Powell quotes the words of Frederick Douglass—no power on earth could deny him the full rights of citizenship—what dynamic event, according to the words of Frederick Douglass, would lead to this statement? *Placing a Black man in a navy [blue] uniform with brass buttons stamped U.S.*
5. Compare this statement to that made in the video about the role of the soldier in American society. *Responses should link directly to John Hope Franklin’s statement about soldiers being an important sector of American society.*
6. How were programs like equal opportunity and affirmative action products of war? *Soldiers were often lauded for their contributions and achievements during war and in other countries; their failure to be recognized in the US was problematic. Servicemen and women often demanded fair treatment upon their return.*
7. “A level playing field doesn’t come by declaring it, it comes from building it”, explain this statement. *This statement alludes to the difference between ideality and reality. In order to make sure that equity exists, those seeking it must prove equal. It also points to the need to create environments where equity can grow as a result of several people contributing to the change.*
8. Colin Powell and others faced resistance after returning from war; explain what he means by “Exec Order 9981 was the sign of the 2nd period of reconstruction” in American history. *Societal reconstruction is a product of war. The first period of reconstruction in the USA happened after the Civil War. This second period of reconstruction, after WWII, helped to give impetus and lend credence to the Civil Rights movement and integration of Blacks into their roles of active citizenship at home and at war. Guided by principles purported by A. Philip Randolph like “civil disobedience”, Blacks could be viewed as trustworthy, competent contributors to the American dream.*

Extension Activities

- I. Research the lives of the Triple Nickel, Tuskegee Airmen, Buffalo Soldiers or Golden 13. Stage group characterizations of the men as class biography projects. Use resources available online for historical, organizational information and personal accounts.
- Triple Nickel (555) First African-American Army paratroopers (December, 1943)*
<http://www.triplenickle.com/> and <http://www.thedropzone.org/scrapbook/555photo.html>
- Tuskegee Airmen: African-American fighter pilots (March, 1941)*
<http://www.wpafb.af.mil/museum/history/prewwii/ta.htm> and
<http://www.geocities.com/Pentagon/Quarters/1350/>
- Buffalo Soldiers: First African-American unit formed during peacetime*
<http://www.imh.org/imh/buf/buf1.html>
- Golden 13: First commissioned Navy officers (February, 1944)*
<http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/prs-tpic/af-amer/afa-g-13.htm> and
<http://www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/aframerwar/index.html>
- II. Research the life and times of Josephine Baker, James Baldwin, W.E.B. DuBois, and Black POWs in France, Japan or Vietnam. How might rejected servicemen and artists assimilate into other countries after war?
- Many frustrated soldiers and artists who through benefaction or vocation traveled abroad knew of greater liberties granted to Blacks in other countries. For many of them, life in Europe and Asia (Japan, Vietnam) offered more security than life in the United States. There is also evidence to suggest that Japanese military used Black POWs as tools of propaganda to promote the communist cause*

POW-MIA FLAG HISTORY WEBSITE

<http://www.campvishus.org/POWMIAFlagHistory.htm>

Provide students with a FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION by polling class to find out if any student has ever seen the POW-MIA flag. Ask them to identify which military conflict prompted the need for this socio-cultural recognition? *The flag is in honor of the Vietnam War. It is now commonly used for any military conflict where American servicemembers are taken hostage.*

Provide students with a FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION by asking them to find official calendar dates when the flag will be flown at the White House. *Armed Forces Day (the third Saturday in May), Memorial Day (the last Monday in May), Flag Day (June 14), Independence Day (July 4), National POW/MIA Recognition Day (third Friday of September) and Veterans Day (November 11)*

Direct students to use information from the website to answer questions related to the flag.

1. What do POW and MIA stand for? *POW—Prisoners of War, MIA—Missing in Action*
2. The POW-MIA Flag has come to represent four principles. What are they? *Honor, bravery, loyalty, and sacrifice*
3. When did the U.S. government, as an important symbol of commitment, officially adopt the flag? *“On August 10, 1990, the 101st Congress passed U.S. Public Law 101-355, which recognized the League's POW/MIA flag and designated it "as the symbol of our Nation's concern and commitment to resolving as fully as possible the fates of Americans still prisoner, missing and unaccounted for in Southeast Asia, thus ending the uncertainty for their families and the nation".*

4. What symbols may be found on the POW-MIA flag? Offer an explanation for their significance. *“The flag is black, bearing in the center, in black and white, the emblem of the [National League of Families]. The emblem is a white disk bearing in black silhouette the bust of a man, watch tower with a guard holding a rifle, and a strand of barbed wire; above the disk are the white letters POW and MIA framing a white 5-pointed star; below the disk is a black and white wreath above the white motto YOU ARE NOT FORGOTTEN.” The color is significant because it represents the unity that must exist between black and white in times of war. Black and white is also associated with things that clear and explicit. A black flag raised is in direct opposition to a white flag, the symbol of surrender. To have white emphasis in the body of a black flag might suggest that there is always a delicate balance between declaration and surrender when there are men and women unaccounted for. The watch tower is significant because it represents vigilance and does the guard. The strand of barbed wire is a symbol of imprisonment, lack of freedom. The star is universally recognized as a symbol of hope. The wreath is a symbol of peace and unity.*