From Selma to Ferguson...
Nonviolence Resistance and Civil Disobedience

Pastor Cori Bush
Ferguson Activist/Kingdom Embassy International

Dr. Bernard Lafayette
Chairman, Southern Christian Leadership Conference

Dr. David Ragland, Visiting Professor Bucknell University,
Co-Director, The Truth Telling Project, St. Louis, MO

Barbara Wien, Faculty Member, The American University
Interactive National Map
Police Shootings 2000-2014

4,285 police killings nationwide

http://www.killedbycops.org/
The Rise of Warrior Cops and the Crisis of Police Brutality
Ten Reasons for Police Violence

- Lack of training in nonviolent solutions and skills
- Militarized with weapons from Iraq and Afghan wars
- Blacks and Latinos criminalized in public’s mind, unfairly stereotyped in media. Police succumb too
- 84% of police see widespread misconduct, but afraid to report fellow officers
- Definition of what is brutality varies widely (1985 & 1995 Supreme Court rulings gave wide discretion)
- No consequences when cops abuse; prosecutions rare
- Cost of misconduct law suits paid by taxpayers
- Fallout from Central American wars in 1980s give rise to gangs coming across border to U.S. cities.
- Police feel under siege from so many guns on U.S. streets. Domestic internal arms race
- Deflection of deeper responsibility about U.S. history
Nonviolent Strategies to Counter Police Brutality

- Discuss the legacy of slavery in the U.S. Acknowledge racism
- Nonviolence trainings to respond to conflict with skills
- Bias awareness across all institutions, particularly mass media
- Neighborhood dialogues/teach-ins examining White Privilege; “Courageous Conversations” to reverse bias in all of society
- Civil resistance training for defense of minority communities
- Truth telling hearings and speak-outs to document abuse
- Unified, national database of police misconduct
- No transfer of military equipment to domestic life
- Greater citizen oversight and review boards of police, including body cameras
- Abusive cops pay direct penalties and costs of law suits
- Define what constitutes brutality; close Supreme Court loop-holes
- Separate prosecutors from cozy relationship with cops
- Stronger gun laws to stop the spread of weapons on U.S. streets, so cops don’t feel so besieged and “out-gunned”
Two Americas

• Current Policing Practices Policing reflects the will of American Society
• Police conflate protesting with being anti-police
• Police protect citizens
• Police protect private property
• System of winners and losers
• Criminalized population justifies losing
Internal Logic of Policing/Militarism

• Goes beyond the desire of American Public
• American Police- resemble standing armies
• War on drugs/poverty – don’t do what it claims to do, i.e. reduce crime (Brennan Report on Prisons, 2014; Thompson, 2015)
• Is the role of policing to maintain its institution & reinforce status quo?
• Violence
A Growing Movement

- Vision of Protesters
- Demands
- Strategies
- Successes and Failures
- Road Map
- Maintaining Non-Violent Discipline
Protester Demands

Demand #1 -- Political Accountability for the Death of Michael Brown, Jr.

Demand #2 -- Special Prosecutor for All Deadly Force Cases

Demand #3 -- Police Held Accountable for Use of Deadly Force

Demand #4 -- End Over-policing and the Criminalization of Poverty

Demand #5 -- Representative Police Force and Intentional Officer Training

Demand #6 -- End Funding for Discriminatory Police Forces

Demand #7 -- Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Structural and Systemic Inequalities in Missouri

Demand #8 -- The Right to Protest

Demand #9 -- Pass the National "End Racial Profiling" Legislation
Strategies

- Non-Violent Occupations
- Turning One's Back
- Wearing of Symbols
- Leaflets
- Displays of Flags & Symbolic Colors
- Religious Processionals
- Marches
- Performances of Plays
- Protest Strikes
- Civil Disobedience
- Slogans
- Vigils
Successes: Boycotts

Ferguson Wal-Mart Boycott
- Reached over 100,000 people in one weekend
- Over 300 cars turned away
- An estimated 40% profit reportedly was lost

Black-Out Black Friday
- Projected Black Friday sales expected to be 3% over 2013 sales
- Sales plunged 11% compared to 2013, representing a dollar drop off of nearly $7 billion
Failures: No Study Preparation

- Did not make our own narrative
- Allowed media to exploit the people of Ferguson
- Allowed unsafe situations for protesters
- Initially unaware of infiltrators and provocateurs
- Didn’t hold fast to our agenda at all times
- Ignorant to available resources
Maintaining Non – Violent Discipline: Strategies

- Protester Meetings
- Protester Family Dinners
- Community Outreach- food pantries, clothing drives, voter registration drives, counseling services, youth programs
- Host Community Empowerment Events- economics workshops
- Offer Trainings on Understanding Your Government/Laws/Duties of Elected Officials
- Prayer Meetings- Understanding we are change
Not your parents movement
Continuation of the Movement: From Selma to Ferguson
50th Anniversary

- From Selma to St. Louis
- History of Selma
- Waging Nonviolent Civil Disobedience
- Selma Today
- Continuation of the Movement
Truth-telling

- Reconciliation not possible until
  - Resetting oppressive relationships
  - Structural change is underway
- Stories from the ground up have the possibility to direct change
- Acknowledgement of tragedy
- Healing
- Part of the Moral Inventory Necessary for Reconciliation (Scott, 2014)
- Community transformation
  - Ground up shifts toward from procedural/punitive toward restorative justice
  - All ethics and morality come from the lived experience (Aristotle, Ragland, 2012; Walzer, 1987)
- Self determination
Truth-telling

• Might lead to Legislative Fixes
  – Local ordinances changed based on human rights
    (Ford Foundation, 2005)
• Community Initiative development
• Connections with other communities
• Stories present history from the communities’ perspective
• Educational for emerging generation to see
• Work toward change is heal and self-empowering
• Reconciliation becomes more possible
Possibilities

• Relationship between Police and Community
  – Sao Paulo Brazil
  – Richmond, CA
  – Not Presidential Task Force on Policing/Sweet Tea
References


