Group Concept: Resistance

Subject/Course: US History--10th Grade OR Black Freedom Struggle Elective

Lesson Title: What makes good resistance? The lessons of Albany and Birmingham


Narrative:

This lesson will be part of a unit on resistance strategies within the Black Freedom Struggle/Civil Rights Movement. At the end of the unit, students will be asked to write an essay arguing which form or forms of resistance are most effective. They will be asked to describe how they could apply one or more of these strategies to resist oppression or to support a campaign for change today.

In November of 1961, protesters from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee began a campaign to end segregation in the town of Albany, GA. They used nonviolent strategies, such as sit-ins, boycotts, and mass demonstrations, among others. Laurie Pritchett, the chief of police of Albany, used mass arrests to break up the demonstrations and to prevent further demonstrations. Despite the assistance of Dr. King, the Albany Campaign failed to end segregation there, ending in defeat. Two years later, Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth began a campaign to end segregation in Birmingham, AL. Much like the Albany Campaign, it involved sit-
ins, boycotts, and mass demonstrations. Dr. King was also invited by Shuttlesworth to come and assist in the campaign, dubbed Project-C, for “Confrontation.” After about a month of protests, sit-ins, and boycotts, the city had not given in to any of the demands of the campaign. Finally, on May 2, the leaders reluctantly decided to allow children to participate in large groups in the mass demonstrations. During the next several days, more than 1,000 children (aged 8-18) were arrested, assaulted with powerful fire hoses, beaten, and attacked with police dogs. This was all caught on news cameras and aired on national television. On May 10, 1963, the city of Birmingham agreed to begin desegregation (even though they did not agree to any specifics about what and when). This campaign is widely considered to be one of the biggest successes of the Civil Rights Movement.

In this lesson, students will be analyzing these two campaigns to evaluate why one failed and the other succeeded. They will determine the criteria for what makes a campaign successful (drawing on what they already learned about previous campaigns, such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott). The students will read about each campaign and watch the Teaching Tolerance video about the Birmingham Children’s March. Finally, the students will use their analysis of each campaign to evaluate what strategies and methods make a resistance movement succeed, supporting their evaluation with evidence from the texts and videos. The end of the unit will ask the students to write about an issue/example of oppression that they would like to resist today and describe what strategies they will use to fight for that issue or against that oppression.

**Guiding Questions:**
- What are the criteria for a successful resistance movement?
- What are the best strategies for resisting oppression?
- What roles did strong leaders play in the Albany and Birmingham movements?
- What was the role of the media in the success/failure of the Albany and Birmingham movements?

**Learning Objectives:**
Explain the different strategies used to resist white supremacy and what other factors played a role in Albany, Georgia and in Birmingham, Alabama.

Evaluate what resistance strategies are most successful and what other factors are most needed to successfully resist oppression.

**Class Periods Needed:**
Approximately 2 or 3 one hour classes.

**Lesson Plan Details**

**Standards:**
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.1
Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2
Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.2.B
Develop the topic with well-chosen, relevant, and sufficient facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.C
Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.

**Preparation:**
The opening reflection should be done as a think/jot/pair/share:

Based on what you have already learned about resistance campaigns, such as the *Brown v Board of Education* case, Montgomery Bus Boycott, the lunch counter Sit-Ins, and the Freedom Riders, what are some criteria for a successful resistance campaign? What strategies were most useful or successful in the campaigns you have already learned about?

**Debrief:**
3 then me:
Teacher calls on at least three students to share without commenting. Then teacher summarizes what they heard and clears up any misconceptions.

**Lesson Activities:**
1. In Power Point, introduce the beginnings of the Albany Movement, providing some overview, but not explaining whether it was successful. (see Powerpoint linked in this document). (Show where Albany is, photos of the protest, main people involved)
2. In Power Point, introduce the beginnings of Project C in Birmingham, providing some overview, but not explaining whether it was successful. (Show where Birmingham is, Bombingham, Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth, Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights, photos of the protest).
3. Reading Albany Movement--Talk Back to the Text (note catcher)
4. Reading Project C-Birmingham--Talk Back to the Text (note catcher)
5. Class discussion about what made Albany fail and Project C succeed. Pitch discussion (students call on the next student to talk). Teacher charts ideas on anchor chart, pauses to clear up misunderstandings.
6. Exit ticket--writing for thinking (end of day 1) how are you feeling?
7. Day 2--Begin with Do Now--as a young person, would you have participated in the Children’s March? What would your parents have said? What would your teachers have said? What would your friends, church, mosque, or other members of your community have said? Share with a partner.
10. Exit ticket--What strategies made the Birmingham Campaign successful? What else contributed to the success of the Birmingham Movement? What did it result in?

Assessment:
On demand writing assignment (could be given as homework): Based on your analysis of the Albany and Birmingham campaigns, what strategies, methods, and or other factors make a resistance movement succeed? Support your evaluation with evidence from the texts and videos.

Lesson Extensions:
“Letter from Birmingham Jail” by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., 1963
“A Call for Unity” by Alabama Clergy, 1963
Excerpts from Birmingham Racial Segregation Codes, 1951
Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights Pledge
Fred Shuttlesworth
Ralph Abernathy
John F. Kennedy’s Civil Rights Address video and text, June 11, 1963
Birmingham Truce Agreement, May 1963
Bull Connor
George Wallace

References:
● Film questions http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/kits/Childrens_March_Teachers_Guide_web_0.pdf
Do Now

- Based on what you have already learned about resistance campaigns, such as the Brown v Board of Education case, Montgomery Bus Boycott, the lunch counter Sit-Ins, and the Freedom Riders, what are some criteria for a successful resistance campaign? What strategies were most useful or successful in the campaigns you have already learned about? Talk to your partner after you have written some ideas down.
The Albany Movement
(Adapted from The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr. "Chapter 16: The Albany Movement" and "The Albany Movement" from the Stanford King Encyclopedia)

Section 1
In late 1961, Albany, Georgia, was a distillation of the tensions and conflicts straining the social fabric of the South. On one side were the segregationists. On the other side were African Americans marching forward utilizing nonviolence. Discrimination of all kinds had been ongoing: school segregation, denial of voting rights, segregation in parks, libraries, restaurants, and buses. African Americans of Albany suffered in quiet silence.

Formed on 17 November, 1961, by representatives from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Ministerial Alliance, the Federation of Women's Clubs, and the Negro Voters League, the Albany Movement conducted a broad campaign in Albany, Georgia, that challenged all forms of segregation and discrimination there. Martin Luther King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) later joined the coalition, attracting national publicity to Albany. Although the Albany Movement was successful in mobilizing massive protests during December 1961 and the following summer, it secured few concrete gains.

Before the Movement began, SNCC members Charles Sherrod and Cordell Reagon traveled to Albany in October, 1961, to galvanize the black community into direct action protests against institutionalized segregation. Albany had experienced little protest activity prior to SNCC’s arrival; however, black residents were dissatisfied with the city commission’s failure to address the community’s grievances. Sherrod and Reagon led workshops on nonviolent tactics for Albany residents in anticipation of a showdown with local police. On 1 November, the Interstate Commerce Commission’s (ICC) ban of racial segregation in interstate bus terminals (as a result of the previous summer’s Freedom Rides) went into effect, but the city of Albany had not complied. This was an opportune time for Sherrod and Reagon to test segregation policies in the city. They sent nine students from Albany State College to conduct a sit-in at the bus terminal. Although none of them were arrested, their actions inspired local black leaders to found the Albany Movement. William G. Anderson, a local doctor, and Slater King, a realtor, were elected president and vice president, respectively.

The Albany Movement aimed to end all forms of racial segregation in the city, focusing initially on desegregating travel facilities, forming a permanent biracial committee to discuss further desegregation, and the release of those jailed in segregation protests. Through the course of the campaign, Albany protesters utilized various methods of nonviolence, including mass demonstrations, jail-ins, sit-ins, boycotts, and litigation.

Section 2
The city of Albany’s police chief, Laurie Pritchett, had studied how to react to nonviolent protests, and he responded to the demonstrations with mass arrests, but refrained from public brutality or violence, and thereby minimized negative publicity from
By December 1961 more than 500 protesters were jailed, and negotiations with city officials began. Anderson called on Martin Luther King to help reinvigorate the movement. King arrived in Albany on 15 December and spoke at a mass meeting at Shiloh Baptist Church. The following day King, Anderson, and Ralph Abernathy joined hundreds of black citizens behind bars on charges of parading without a permit and obstructing the sidewalk. King’s involvement attracted national media attention and inspired more members of the black community to join the protests. This did not go unnoticed by Albany’s city government, and soon after King’s arrest, city officials and Albany Movement leaders came to an agreement: if King left Albany the city would comply with the ICC ruling, and release jailed protesters on bail. However, after King left Albany the city failed to uphold the agreement, and protests and subsequent arrests continued into 1962. News reports across the country portrayed the failure of early Albany protests as “one of the most stunning defeats” in King’s career (Miller, “A Loss for Dr. King”).

Behind the scenes, reports of organizational conflict between SCLC and SNCC may have caused problems in the campaign. A New York Times article published two days after King’s 16 December arrest claimed that the growing break between SCLC and SNCC was due to “competition for financial support and power,” and that this would have “important implications for the future of the civil rights movement throughout the South” (Sitton, “Negro Groups Split”). Another article noted that King’s organization “took steps that seemed to indicate they were assuming control. But the student group moved immediately to recapture its dominant position on the scene.” The article predicted “tragic consequences” if the differences between the organizations were not curbed (Sitton, “Rivalries Beset Integration Campaigns”). Responding to the reports of disunity in the campaign, King said, “If there was an indication of division, it grew out of a breakdown of communications. The unity is far greater than our inevitable points of disagreement” (“Dr. King Is Freed”).

Six months later, on 10 July 1962, King and Abernathy were found guilty of having paraded without a permit in December 1961. They were ordered to pay $178 or serve 45 days in jail. They chose to serve the time. As King explained from jail, “We chose to serve our time because we feel so deeply about the plight of more than 700 others who have yet to be tried…. We have experienced the racist tactics of attempting to bankrupt the movement in the South through excessive bail and extended court fights. The time has now come when we must practice civil disobedience in a true sense or delay our freedom thrust for long years” (King, “A Message from Jail”). With King in jail, demonstrations and arrests increased. On 12 July, Chief Pritchett notified King and Abernathy that their fine had been paid by an unidentified black man, and they were released. (Many theorize that it was actually Pritchett who arranged for the fine to be paid, so bad publicity would be avoided).

Following his third Albany arrest on 27 July, King agreed on 10 August, 1962, to leave Albany and announce a halt to demonstrations, effectively ending his involvement in the Albany Movement. Although local efforts continued in conjunction with SNCC, the ultimate goals of the Movement were not met by the time of King’s departure. King blamed much of the failure on the campaign’s wide scope, stating in a 1965 interview, “The mistake I made there was to protest against segregation generally rather than against a single and distinct facet of it. Our protest was so vague that we got nothing,
and the people were left very depressed and in despair” (“Martin Luther King: A Candid Conversation”). The experiences in Albany, however, helped inform the strategy for the Birmingham Campaign that followed less than a year later. King acknowledged that “what we learned from our mistakes in Albany helped our later campaigns in other cities to be more effective” (“Martin Luther King: A Candid Conversation”).

Footnotes
Branch, Parting the Waters, 1988.
Carson, In Struggle, 1981.
Lewis, King, 1970.

Project C and the Children’s March in Birmingham, Alabama
(Adapted from Mighty Times: The Children’s March Teacher’s Guide and “Birmingham Campaign” from the Stanford King Encyclopedia)

Section 1--Background
In 1963, Birmingham was not only Alabama’s biggest city, but its most segregated city—probably the most segregated city in America.

From 1957 to 1963, there had been 18 bombings of African American leaders’ houses and churches in Birmingham—but no arrests. In 1956, the Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth’s home was bombed. In 1957, he was brutally beaten with chains and pipes by a crowd of white supremacists because he attempted to enroll his children into an all-white school. His wife was stabbed in the hip. Again, there were no arrests. In 1961, a black man was dragged from the streets by a crowd of white people to a shack, brutally beaten, and then castrated. There were no arrests. Freedom riders were almost beaten to death in 1961 when they entered Birmingham. But there were no arrests.

The black children of Birmingham felt oppressed at every turn, and in the spring of 1963 they played a vital role in restoring humanity to themselves and to a race-divided America. William Glasser, author and educator, believes that students are driven by six basic needs: survival, power, love, belonging, freedom and fun. The word “power” has many negative connotations in our culture. Maria Harris, author of Teaching and Religious Imagination, re-envisions the negative concept of power and instead writes about “the grace of power.” The grace of power is present when people discover their own power and then exercise it. When people discover their power, they move toward a second kind of power, the power to rebel. Rebellion is the expression of feeling that comes when people name those injustices and sufferings that are not to be tolerated.
Engaging in rebellion means claiming the right to say that injustice is wrong. In naming injustice, people keep alive the human feeling of protest. When people name injustice, they are led to a third power, the power to resist. Resistance is active opposition toward injustice. Resistance is refusal to accept the way things are because things can be different. The power to rebel and the power to resist must always be present with the power to love. If the end is not love, people revert back to a negative construct of power; they revert back to being oppressors.

Section 2--The start of Project C

In 1956, The Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth founded the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR) after the state of Alabama outlawed the NAACP, which up to that point had been the leading voice in the struggle for equality in Alabama. Over the next seven years, Rev. Shuttlesworth led the ACMHR in several protests to attempt to desegregate Birmingham. In March of 1963, Shuttlesworth and other local leaders started Project C. The “C” stood for “confrontation,” and this was to be Birmingham’s biggest mass protest against segregation yet. In an attempt to gain more notoriety and media attention, Shuttlesworth invited Dr. King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) to join with Birmingham’s existing local movement, in the massive direct action campaign to attack the city’s segregation system. The plan was to put pressure on Birmingham’s merchants during the Easter season, the second biggest shopping season of the year. As ACMHR founder Fred Shuttlesworth stated in the group's “Birmingham Manifesto,” the campaign was “a moral witness to give our community a chance to survive” (ACMHR, 3 April 1963).

On 3 April, the desegregation campaign was launched with a series of mass meetings, direct actions, lunch counter sit-ins, marches on City Hall, and a boycott of downtown businesses. King and Shuttlesworth insisted that black citizens take an oath to uphold the philosophy of nonviolence and its methods at the end of the mass meetings held in churches every Monday night. With the number of volunteers increasing daily, actions soon expanded to kneel-ins at churches, sit-ins at the library, and a march on the county building to register voters. Hundreds were arrested.

On 10 April the city government obtained a state circuit court injunction against the protests. After heavy debate, campaign leaders decided to disobey the court order. King declared: “We cannot in all good conscience obey such an injunction which is an unjust, undemocratic and unconstitutional misuse of the legal process” (ACMHR, 11 April 1963). On Good Friday, 12 April, King was arrested in Birmingham after violating the anti-protest injunction and was kept in solitary confinement. During this time King penned the “Letter from Birmingham Jail” on the margins of the Birmingham News, in reaction to a statement published in that newspaper by eight Birmingham clergymen condemning the protests. He was eventually released on bail on 20 April, 1963.
**Section 3--The Children’s March**

Despite the mass protests that had continued for more than three weeks, the campaign was beginning to falter. The national media had paid little attention, hundreds sat in jail, and the city of Birmingham had not met any of the protestors’ demands. In order to rejuvenate the campaign, SCLC organizer, Rev. James Bevel proposed using children in demonstrations. Bevel’s rationale for the Children’s Crusade was that young people represented an untapped source of freedom fighters without the responsibilities that had been stopping older activists, such as jobs. On 2 May, called D-Day by the protestors, more than 1,000 African American students skipped school and attempted to march into downtown Birmingham, and hundreds were arrested. The youngest was eight years old. When hundreds more gathered the following day, called Double D-Day, segregationist Commissioner of Public Safety, Eugene “Bull” Connor ordered local police and fire departments to use brutal violence to halt the demonstrations. King, Shuttlesworth, and the other organizers made sure that the news media knew when the protests would start each day, and they made sure to start early enough for the film to be flown back to New York in time for that night’s prime time news programs. During the next few days images of children being blasted by high-pressure fire hoses, clubbed by police officers, and attacked by police dogs appeared on television and in newspapers, triggering national and international outrage. While leading a group of child marchers, Shuttlesworth himself was hit with the full force of a fire hose and had to be hospitalized.

In the meantime, the white business structure was weakening under the pressure of the negative publicity and the decline in business due to the boycott, but many business owners and city officials were reluctant to negotiate with the protesters. With national pressure on the White House also mounting, Attorney General Robert Kennedy sent Burke Marshall, his chief civil rights assistant, to jumpstart negotiations between prominent black citizens and representatives of Birmingham’s Senior Citizens’ Council, the city’s business leadership.

The Senior Citizens’ Council sought an end of street protests as an act of good faith before any final settlement was declared, and Marshall encouraged campaign leaders to halt demonstrations, accept a compromise that would provide partial success, and negotiate the rest of their demands afterward. Some black negotiators were open to the idea, although the hospitalized Shuttlesworth was not present at the negotiations. On 8 May, King told the negotiators he would accept the compromise and call the demonstrations to a halt.

When Shuttlesworth learned that King intended to stop protests, he was furious—about both the decision to ease pressure off white business owners and the fact that he, as the acknowledged leader of the local movement, had not been consulted. Feeling betrayed, Shuttlesworth reminded King that he could not legitimately speak for the black population of Birmingham on his own. King made the announcement anyway, but
indicated that demonstrations might be resumed if negotiations did not resolve the situation shortly.

By 10 May, negotiators had reached an agreement, and despite his falling out with King, Shuttlesworth joined him and Rev. Ralph Abernathy to read the prepared statement that detailed the compromise: the removal of “Whites Only” and “Blacks Only” signs in restrooms and on drinking fountains, a plan to desegregate lunch counters, an ongoing “program of upgrading Negro employment,” the formation of a biracial committee to monitor the progress of the agreement, and the release of jailed protesters on bond (“The Birmingham Truce Agreement,” 10 May 1963).

Birmingham segregationists responded to the agreement with a series of violent attacks. That night an explosive went off near the black-owned A. G. Gaston Motel room where King had been staying, and the next day the home of King’s brother, the Rev. A. D. King was bombed.

The violent response to the protests and the media attention they garnered, led to pressure on the federal government to act on civil rights. On 6 June, 1963, President John F. Kennedy gave a speech on national TV, where he made the case to the country that civil rights legislation was needed to outlaw segregation and provide equal opportunity for all Americans. Although Kennedy would be assassinated before the bill was passed, Congress finally passed the landmark Civil Rights Act one year later in June of 1964, outlawing segregation.

However, three months after Kennedy’s speech, on 15 September, Ku Klux Klan members bombed Birmingham’s Sixteenth Street Baptist Church--which had been the headquarters of the Children’s March, killing Addie Mae Collins (14), Denise McNair (11), Cynthia Wesley (14), and Carole Robertson (14). King delivered the eulogy at the 18 September joint funeral of three of the victims, preaching that the girls were “the martyred heroines of a holy crusade for freedom and human dignity” (King, “Eulogy for the Martyred Children,” 18 September 1963).

Footnotes
Hampton and Fayer, with Flynn, Voices of Freedom, 1990.
King, Address delivered at mass meeting, 6 May 1963, FRC-DSI-FC.
King, Shuttlesworth, and Abernathy, Statement, “For engaging in peaceful desegregation demonstrations,” 11 April 1963, BWOF-AB.
King, Why We Can’t Wait, 1964.
Mighty Times: The Children's March

1. What was Birmingham’s nickname and why?

2. Have you ever seen a white tank anywhere before? What might a white tank symbolize to white people? What might it symbolize to black people?

3. The film states, “Under Bull Connor, Birmingham was the closest thing in America to a police state.” What is a police state?

4. Why couldn’t the parents or adults protest? What would happen to them if they did protest?

5. What does it mean to “meet violence with nonviolence”? What would it look like?

6. Dr. King said in a strategy session that “the only way we’re going to break Birmingham is to fill the jails.” What do you think a strategy session is? Why is it important?

7. Why do you think that Dr. King said “no,” at first, to kids going to jail?

8. Shelley “The Playboy” told the kids that “there’s going to be a party in the park today.” What did he mean?
9. What did the children’s teacher, Mrs. Goree, do to help them go to the march?

10. Kelly Ingram Park was the big green buffer between black Birmingham and the white downtown. Do buffers exist between groups in your community? What are they?

11. Gwen Webb says, “A lot of people thought the kids were going to get hurt, but the reality was that we were born black in Alabama and we were going to get hurt if we didn’t do something.” What did she mean by this?

12. The children left the church in “waves of 50.” How is that a strategy? What do you think it accomplished?

13. The police thought the kids would be frightened to be arrested. Instead, they were happy and singing. Why do you think the kids were full of joy to be arrested?

14. Why were the kids told to say that they were 15 years old when they were arrested? Did it work?

15. How many men did it take to hold the fire hoses steady?

16. There were 10 kids still standing after everyone else had been knocked down or dispersed by the fire hoses. What were they singing?

17. What did President Kennedy think of the photographs he saw of children being hosed on the second day of the march?
18. What were the conditions in the jails? Were they clean? What did the children get to eat? How long were they kept in jail?

19. What did the kids do in jail?

20. How old was the youngest child who got arrested and put in jail?

21. Dr. King told the parents, “Don’t worry about your children. They are going to be all right. Don’t hold them back if they want to go to jail for they are doing a job for all of America and for all mankind.” What job were they doing?

22. The white detective said that in the end there “was no way to hold a lid on this because the fear was gone.” What is significant about people losing fear?

23. On May 10th Dr. King said that “we have come today to the climax of the long struggle for justice and human dignity.” Had they?

24. On June 11th President Kennedy said “This is the end of segregation.” Was it?