

Revolution '67 – The Film and Curriculum

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The study of social movements in the United States, especially when guided by traditional textbooks, tends to develop a singular narrative that fails to recognize the complexity of history. The diversity of perspectives in society, and in high school classrooms, is frequently ignored. The award-winning, critically acclaimed documentary film *Revolution '67*, recognized by AHA and OAH prizes for outstanding film of American history, and its companion curriculum provide students and teachers with a variety of perspectives about the Civil Rights movement, both past and present.

Revolution '67 addresses the urban unrest that occurred in Newark, New Jersey, in the summer of 1967. Hundreds of American cities experienced unrest during the 60s, yet most of these events have been forgotten by textbooks and the American consciousness. The filmmakers of *Revolution '67*, Marylou Tibaldo-Bongiorno and Jerome Bongiorno, commented on their process of making the film: “We established the historical framework for the events in Newark during the Summer of 1967 - and the decades that preceded them - by consulting historical records, including the Kerner Report, and interviewing historians Dr. Clement Price, Dr. Kenneth Jackson, Dr. Nell Irvin Painter, and others. Then, we gathered balanced testimony from multiple points of view: the personal stories of activists, politicians, law enforcement, media, and the community, in what our curriculum reviewer, Dr. Margaret Crocco (Teachers College, Columbia University), described as “multiple pathways into examining the urban unrest in Newark.” The film uses no voiceover narration.

In researching the film, a primary question was: how is information communicated during a crisis? This led us to identify biases in the reporting and recording of that information by the media. Often, while making the film, we encountered information that was contradictory and, as was the case with the role of the alleged black snipers in the Newark Riots of 1967, largely inaccurate. National Guardsman Paul Zigo's interview in the film is one example of our process. The film presents his oral history and follows that with documentary footage that raises questions, for the audience and the interviewee himself, about his assumptions based on 40-year old memories of events. This example is one among many in the film that encourages students to ask, “What really happened?” “Why did it happen?” and “Did the media report it accurately?” We understand that to truly “know what happened,” you have to examine a situation from every possible angle. The *Revolution '67* curriculum was created to challenge students to accomplish this task.

The film provides multiple perspectives through the varied sources but also presents its own unique perspective (hinted at by its title). The curriculum was developed to aid teachers across the country in using the film in their classrooms to address the complexity of multiple perspectives and to critically examine how the media (including this film) presents ideas. The curriculum contains valuable exercises that guide students to view events through the lens of the various participants (including the media) in order to better understand bias.

The curriculum was developed by teachers and administrators from diverse areas of New Jersey in collaboration with the filmmakers and curriculum reviewers, Dr. Crocco and Dr. Price. The free curriculum is available at www.Revolution67.com. It contains four modules which teachers can use in whole or in part, separately, or in tandem with one another. If the amount of time a teacher is able to devote to the topic is limited, individual lessons can be selected to emphasize particular themes or skills. Each module – Governance and Civics, Economics and Geography, Community Action and Politics, and Media and the Newark Riots—provides a unique perspective on the film and varied opportunities to discuss multiple perspectives.