

The Harvard Crimson

Film Spurs Racial Discourse

Harvard Law School screens documentary on black community

By [CHARLES BEARELL](#), CRIMSON STAFF WRITER October 3, 2008

A screening and discussion of the documentary film “Revolution ’67” at Harvard Law School last night explored issues of protest and community organization with an audience from throughout Harvard’s schools and the local community.

The film, a documentary originally produced for and shown on PBS in 2007, portrays the black community’s violent riots in Newark, New Jersey, in the summer of 1967.

It goes on to discuss how “the plight of the poor is forgotten” in the history of the ’60s and in important modern policy decisions.

A panel of current organizers in Harvard’s black community and in Newark discussed these issues after the film.

The organized urban violence of the 1960s was most often a response to both civil discrimination and poverty in the black community, the panelists said.

According to Walter C. Carrington ’52, the first student member on the board of directors of the NAACP and a former U.S. ambassador to Nigeria, “the film showed what the Civil Rights Movement did not have time to accomplish—solving economic problems in the black community, especially poverty.”

Similarly, Lawrence Hamm, leader of the Newark-based People’s Organization for Progress and a speaker on the panel, said, “We have changed the political structure, but we have not changed the fundamental condition of the people.”

The presentation was part of a series of talks based on a variety of media—authors’ readings, lawyers’ conversations, and other film screenings.

In screening the film, the Law School's Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice hoped to spark debate within the school on these issues, said Houston Institute Communications and Events Director Colin M. Ovitsky.

Last night, that dialogue included a discussion of current student activism at Harvard.

April Yvonne Garrett, moderator of the event's panel discussion and the president of Civic Frame, an organization that frames issues of civic awareness through films and other media, said that "today's college students don't know how to organize."

Hamm concurred, saying that in part, students don't have enough time to plan protests.

But for Chiaki Nishijima, an anthropology student in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, part of the problem is exposure.

"I'm glad we had this event," said Nishijima, who has worked as a community organizer in Newark. "At Harvard we don't talk enough about community organizing and things that are happening on the ground. We need to get out of the ivory tower."

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