The Black Freedom Movement

I. Narrating Civil Rights
II. Civil Disobedience for Civil Rights
III. Tradition of Armed Self-Reliance
IV. Militant Demands for Civil Rights Reforms
V. Radical Critiques of America
Prevailing images of the civil rights movement? Key moments, figures, organizations?

Martin Luther King, Jr.
Selma, Sit-Ins
Bull Connor
Rosa Parks
Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955-56)
Ruby Bridges
March on Washington (1963)
Southern Christian Leadership Conference
CR Act (1964), Voting Rights Act (1965)
Dominant Narratives of the Civil Rights Movement

- It was a nonviolent movement that awakened the national conscience.
- The U.S. federal government responded by passing laws on civil rights and mobilizing against a racist South.
- The movement redeemed America’s promise for all.
Radicalism of the Black Freedom Movement

• Heterogeneity, flexibility.

• Embraced and exploited American nationalism to make demands as “Americans” for equal citizenship rights.

• Exposed and interrogated America’s limitations and contradictions.
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

Thurgood Marshall

Chief Justice Earl Warren

Brown v. Board of Education (1954)
“Separate but equal” was inherently unequal and unconstitutional.
Desegregation should proceed with “all deliberate speed.”
Ella Baker
Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)
Robert F. and Mabel Williams
“Armed Self-Reliance”
John Lewis, SNCC
Civil Rights Act of 1964

- Enforce the Fourteenth Amendment.
- Prohibit racial discrimination in hotels, restaurants, and “any place of public accommodation.”
- Prohibit discrimination in employment based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.
Freedom Summer
Mississippi, 1964
Voting Rights Act of 1965

- Enforce the Fifteenth Amendment.
- Replace local registrars with federal officials.
Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (organized in 1966)
Origins of the U.S. War in Vietnam

French colony since the nineteenth century.

Japanese invasion and occupation during World War II.

Ho Chi Minh and Viet Minh lead the struggle for national independence before, during, and after WWII.

France attempts to reclaim Indochina (1946-1954).


“Mere Gook Rule”
Martin Luther King, Jr. (1967)
Muhammad Ali