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March On, Milwaukee: A Digital History Series
















May, 2020











Produced by the Center for Urban Research, Teaching, and Outreach (CURTO) and the March On, Milwaukee 50th with special thanks to the Wisconsin Historical Society.






Date	Episode Title	Primary Participants	Clip #	Video description	Length	Link to video	Link to Edpuzzle/Google Form
May 6, 2020	200 Nights of Freedom: Teaching the Open Houses Marches	Dr. Robert Smith and Adam Carr		Entire webinar -- 200 Nights of Freedom: Teaching the Open Housing Marches -- link to Google Slideshow	1 hour, 17 min.	 	
			Segment Descriptions				
			1	<i>Framing the Long Black Freedom Struggle, part 1</i> -- Dr. Smith activates students' prior knowledge of the Civil Rights Movement and places Milwaukee's Marches for Open Housing in the larger context of the national Civil Rights Movement as a movement to change the law.	14:16	 	 
			2	<i>Framing the Long Black Freedom Struggle, part 2</i> -- Dr. Smith continues to frame the marches for Fair Housing with three additional points about the Long Black Freedom Struggle: it was a long movement for Black equality with varying lenses through which we can identify the origins of the Civil Rights Movement; it's been a movement of local movements; and youth play a central role in social change.	13:59	 	 
			3	<i>Introducing the Open Housing Marches</i> -- Adam Carr uses image analysis to introduce the context that necessitated a Civil Rights Movement in Milwaukee, including racially restrictive covenants, redlining, and segregation in organizations, schools, and housing. Viewers learn about the NAACP Youth Council, the Commandos, and Father Groppi in their campaigns, including marching for 200 consecutive nights for open housing. He emphasizes the leadership of youth in Milwaukee to push for social change.	15:15	 	 
			4	<i>March On, Milwaukee</i> -- Adam Carr and Dr. Robert Smith discuss Vel Phillips and her campaign for an open housing ordinance in Milwaukee. Viewers practice visual analysis to explore the NAACP Youth Council and Commandos' 200 nights of marching and the resistance they faced from racist white protesters who met the marchers with violence as they crossed to the south side to draw attention to the need for open housing. This segment includes primary source video footage of	24:25	 	 

				Vel Phillips, Commandos, and Father Groppi before and during the marches, as well as the burning of the Freedom House. Carr and Dr. Smith discuss how housing legislation was eventually passed and connect the marches for fair housing to Latinx activism at UW-Milwaukee and activism today.			
			1 & 2	<i>Framing the Long Black Freedom Struggle</i> -- This segment combines clips 1 and 2 above.	28:05		
May 13, 2020	Race, Migration, and the Roots of Resistance in the Cream City	Reggie Jackson, John Gurda, and Dr. Joseph Walzer with Dr. Robert Smith and Adam Carr	Full webinar -- Race, Migration, and the Roots of Resistance in the Cream City		1 hour, 26 min.	 	
			1	<i>Historical photographs and documents</i> -- After a five-minute introduction of the topic and panelists, Dr. Walzer and John Gurda discuss the various ethnic groups that are so important to understand Milwaukee's history, and how the broader category of identifying as white played a role in the resistance to calls for open housing in the 1960s.	16:43	 	
			2	<i>Milwaukee's history, continued</i> -- Reggie Jackson discusses the growth and geographic location of the Black population in Milwaukee and evaluates the success of the open housing marches. The panelists discuss the changing nature of north/west Milwaukee and discuss various narratives of Milwaukee as being a history of newcomers, diversity, progress, and contested space.	12:15	 	
			3	<i>The Researcher's Process and how to teach Milwaukee history</i> -- Panelists discuss their own work in relation to segregation and ethnic identity, emphasizing the importance of archival research and the role of other disciplines like geography in the study of history. They discuss how history can help us understand the present, and explore the idea of history as a puzzle in explaining the historian's role. This segment concludes with a discussion of how to help young people see themselves as a part of history.	19:43	 	
			4	<i>Question and answer session</i> -- The panelists suggest readings and archival/institutional resources for researching Milwaukee history. They discuss how some neighborhoods change, and the important goal of homeownership with the open housing marches. They finish this section with a fascinating discussion of how to navigate feelings of guilt/responsibility and the general messiness of history.	20:01	 	
			5	<i>Afterwards</i> -- After the webinar formally ended, the panelists continued to discuss how to teach these stories and the importance of recording elders' stories and preserving the histories of specific neighborhoods. The conversation included more archival resources, current grass-roots efforts to document oral histories in other areas such as deportation and mass incarceration, and the way people manifest culture through material items. Discussion ranged from Bronzeville to hats to	18:19	 	

				churches negotiating a changing environment to thrift stores.			
			1 & 2	<i>Historical photographs and documents</i> -- This segment combines clips 1 and 2, above.	28:48		
				<i>History as a puzzle</i> -- this segment is excerpted from segment 3, above, in which John Gurda, Reggie Jackson, and Adam Carr use the analogy of a puzzle to explain the historian's work.	2:04	 	
May 20, 2020	The Open Housing Marches: A Scholarly Roundtable	Dr. Erica Metcalfe, Dr. Patrick Jones, Adam Carr, and Dr. Robert Smith	Full webinar -- The Open Housing Marches: A Scholarly Roundtable		1 hour, 24 min.	 	
			1	The scholars discuss patriotism and the struggle to force the US to live up to its ideals through examining photographs of the NAACP Youth Council members and Commandos. They discuss the need for the larger narrative of the struggle for Civil Rights to be recast to include Milwaukee and other northern movements. They also discuss the massive resistance to northern Civil Rights efforts, including police opposition to the Commandos in Milwaukee.	17:35	 	
			2	Dr. Metcalfe and Dr. Jones explore how Milwaukee combined elements of the traditional Civil Rights Movement in the South with the Black Power Movement. They further discuss the Commandos' vision of Black Power that included an integrated membership as well as the role of women and why it's important to understand the complexity of the story in Milwaukee. They also discuss how previous experience with campaigns in the South influenced the NAACP Youth Council, Commandos, and Father Groppi as well as the participation of people from other areas in Milwaukee's open housing marches.	9:52	 	
			3	The scholars discuss how they learned about the Open Housing Marches and their research, and listeners gain insight into the impact of their work on individuals and the larger historical narrative. Panelists discuss the wealth of resources and oral histories/stories available to research this history in Milwaukee, as well as the challenges of finding resources/stories from white supremacists.	12:57	 	
			4	<i>Audience Q and A</i> -- Discussion includes the role of gangs in Chicago and their criticism of the Commandos and Youth Council Members as well as the role of veterans in the Civil Rights Movement in Milwaukee. Panelists provide an overview of migration to Milwaukee and discuss the implications for both past and present that resulted in African Americans being confined to living in the "inner core" and the policies/practices that led to only 3% of African American owning homes. Panelists conclude with exploration of the lessons we can learn from the Open Housing Marches and how these stories, while complex, can explain how we got to where we are now.	19:04	 	

			5	After the Facebook Live feed ends, participants and panelists explore images of Vel Phillips to discuss insights into her personality, the resistance she faced, breaking class and gender barriers, and her relationship with the Commandos and Youth Council Members. Panelists also discuss the persistence of centering Father Groppi in the narrative of the Open Housing Marches, and conclude with discussion of how Martin Luther King, Jr.'s telegram to Father Groppi underscores the national importance of Milwaukee's marches in showing how nonviolent action could be applied in the North in a militant way.	25:17	 	
			1&2	This segment combines clips 1 and 2 above.	27:17		
May 27, 2020	Democracy in Troubled Times: The Movement Continues	Sharlen Moore, Amanda Buchanan, Camille Mays, Ronda Davis in conversation with Dr. Robert Smith and Adam Carr		Full webinar -- Democracy in Troubled Times: The Movement Continues	1 hour, 14 min.	 	
			1	Adam Carr uses image analysis to introduce the Open Housing Marches in Milwaukee and the struggle against personal and structural racism in Milwaukee. The panelists discuss the role of Father Groppi, youth, and the importance of the marches for individuals and groups in Milwaukee. The panelists also discuss how the fight continues for some of the same issues, both in terms of the individuals who continue to discriminate in other roles and the way that the segregation the marchers were struggling against is still "baked into the infrastructure." This segment concludes with a discussion of past and continued state violence on Black bodies and the importance of bringing activists into classrooms today..	19:05	 	
			2	Through image analysis, panelists discuss Alderwoman Vel Phillips and her relationship with the Youth Council Members as well as the lasting influence of racist counter-protesters today. The panelists then discuss current activism in Milwaukee. They discuss why it's important for groups to be connected to their identity and work together in unity to move forward out of complacency. The panelists also talk about the importance of educating students about what matters amid the distractions of life, as well as how to harness the energy of young people and involve them in community building. The panelists discuss the importance of giving young people the ability to become civically engaged and urge all of us to think of ourselves as activists who are part of these movements rather than sitting on the sidelines, and also stress the importance of learning from youth and making space for their activism and culture.	27:01	 	
			3	Rev. Baring, who was a Commando in the 1960s, discussed the continued need for, and limitations of, marching. He addresses some of the continuing problems we face today and the need for students of color to engage their white friends to take responsibility for what's being done. Panelists also talk about how to ensure that students can relate and feel connected, and creating brave spaces for dialogue to take place about our past and present. Panelists offer tips for white educators who may feel nervous about teaching these topics, including utilizing visual literacy skills, becoming	16:20	 	

				comfortable with discomfort and more organic, student-led classroom experiences, and inviting in community members. There are plenty of resources out there to help teachers not just drop in these conversations in February, but embed them throughout our educational system and have these conversations the entire year. The segment concludes with a discussion of building a more collective conversation across communities.			
			4	<p>Audience questions address festivals as a way to create shared culture and bring people together to address cross-racial issues. This segment addresses several issues of importance to teachers and of interest to students, including the importance of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centering the NAACP Youth Council Members and Comandos rather than overcentering Father Groppi How to help youth mobilize and get involved by inviting and tapping into their anger and moving them to positive action in solution-based change movements Using pop culture, particularly meme-making, to engage students (at the 5-minute mark) Democratizing the classroom and not being afraid to allow this work to disrupt hierarchical classrooms <p>NOTE: The screen is blank during a few portions of this segment, but voices can still be heard.</p>	12:30	 	
May 29, 2020	Table Talk: Teaching Race and Equality	Educators and activists in conversation with Dr. Robert Smith and Adam Carr		Full webinar -- Table Talk: Teaching Race and Equality	1 hour, 2 min.	 	
			1	This first segment of the after-hours “table talk” consists of educators introducing themselves and discussing the reasons for a conversation about teaching race and equity.	14:05	 	
			2	Educators discuss what methods have been successful in their classrooms and how they engage students about these difficult topics. Participants discuss meme-making, using primary source documents to help tell the story, project-based learning to allow student choice, and the importance of engaging in the arts. Educators also stressed the value of relying on local expertise as a window to broader historical topics. This segment of the conversation concluded with a discussion of challenges of teaching these topics in predominantly white classrooms, as well as how our identity as educators impacts the classroom. Educators shared resources/strategies and discussed ways to allow students to express their creativity in exploring issues of race and how they see themselves and connect with their classmates.	21:00	 	
			3	<i>Knowledge and history</i> -- Educators discuss the importance of acknowledging racism in the North when teaching. They discuss various examples of historical fiction within the theme of present meeting the past that can help students sort out similarities and differences in various time periods,	12:23		

			as well as help highlight the role of Black servicemen. Educators discuss resisting “great man” history and instead emphasize centering the voices of nameless people, especially the young people who were so central to the success of the Open Housing Marches and other movements to locate the power of the story where it actually happened and allow young people to see themselves in the narrative as agents of social change. Educators discussed the need to help students find their voices, even though empowering young people can--and always has--ruffled feathers and caused tensions.			
		4	Discussion included the following questions: How do we judge historical actors given what we know today? Does letting students use the word “racist” or we/they categories shut down critical thinking? How can we help students understand the <i>why</i> and try to put events into perspective from the view of people in the past, not ours today? How can we leverage documents in teaching and interrogate what is missing from the archives? How can we structure debates, interrogate our city’s street names as a way to enter into thinking about the past, and help students think about what the future needs to look like?	16:56	 	
			<i>This short portion of Segment of 3 about youth in history</i> -- Educators discuss resisting “great man” history and instead emphasize centering the voices of nameless people, especially the young people who were so central to the success of the Open Housing Marches and other movements to locate the power of the story where it actually happened and allow young people to see themselves in the narrative as agents of social change.	5:46	 	

Online Interactive Resources

- [Curriculum website](#) with resources to teach the Marches for Open Housing in Milwaukee
- [UW-Milwaukee's "March on Milwaukee Civil Rights History Project"](#)
 - For the 40th anniversary, the efforts of the March On Milwaukee committee resulted in the creation of [a digital archive housed by the UW-Milwaukee library](#). It contains many resources to explore, including a [timeline](#) of events, a [map](#) of Milwaukee with key locations, and [an extensive bibliography](#) with suggestions for many more books, articles, and other resources.
- Wisconsin Historical Society's [March on Milwaukee](#) profile of Commando Fred Reed, "A look at the circumstances of and one man's experiences during the fair housing marches and protests in 1967 and 1968 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin"
- American Geographical Society Library's [Spatial Profiling: Milwaukee](#)
- [The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel's 50 Year Ache project](#) looks back at the Civil Rights Movement in Milwaukee and provides resources for Milwaukeeans to evaluate how far we have (or haven't) come since the 1960s.
- [Map of sites](#) from Dr. Shirley R. Butler-Derge's Milwaukee 1960s NAACP Youth Council: Tour Guide (South Milwaukee, WI: Nzingha Publishing Company, 2011), pp. 13-14. To purchase a copy of this book, please email butlershirley78@yahoo.com.

Articles for Further Reading

- [March On Milwaukee](#) by Peggy Rozga was written for the 40th anniversary of Milwaukee’s Open Housing Marches by one of the NAACP Youth Council Members. It was published in the summer 2007 Wisconsin Magazine of History.
- [Commanding A Movement](#) by Erica Metcalfe, published in the winter 2014-2015 Wisconsin Magazine of History:
- [Future Political Actors](#) by Erica Metcalfe, published in the autumn 2011 Wisconsin Magazine of History:
- Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service published a series of stories on Milwaukee's Open Housing Marches, including feature articles and interviews with marchers. [Click here to see the series](#) and [download the book](#) featuring those stories, titled Long March to Freedom.
- Cohen, Carol. [“Vel Phillips: Making History in Milwaukee.” Wisconsin Magazine of History 99, no. 2 \(winter 2015-2016\): 42-53.](#)
- Jones, Patrick, [“Selma of the North.” OAH Magazine of History, Vol. 26, No. 1.](#)

- [“African Americans Lead in Milwaukee: The Making of Milwaukee Stories”](#)
- See some of the locations of these events today in this [USA Today story](#) about the effort to put up historical markers in Milwaukee to commemorate these events.

Books for Further Reading

- Michael Edmonds, [Tools for Teaching Civil Rights in Milwaukee and the Nation Lesson Plans](#)
- Dr. Shirley Butler-Derge’s [Milwaukee 1960’s NAACP Youth Council Tour Guide](#) (see map above)
- Patrick D. Jones’ [The Selma of the North](#)
- Frank Aukofer’s [City with a Chance](#)
- Barbara Miner’s [Lessons from the Heartland](#)
- Dr. Shirley Butler-Derge’s [Asante Sana, ‘Thank You’ Father James E. Groppi](#)
- Dr. Margaret Rozga’s [200 Nights and One Day](#)
- Justice for All: Selected Writings of Lloyd A. Barbee

Videos

- [Black Nouveau: Crossing the Bridge](#)
- [Black Nouveau: Freedom Walkers for Milwaukee](#)
- March on Milwaukee: Where are we Now?,” 4th Street Forum at Turner Hall, Milwaukee MPTV 2007
- [Bill Weir: States of Change](#), CNN
- [Vel Phillips: Dream Big Dreams](#), MPTV, (with lesson materials at MPTV)
- [Vel Phillips and Father Groppi: The Fight for Fair Housing](#), PBS Wisconsin
- [City within a City: When Pretty Soon Runs Out](#) -- This remarkable 1968 documentary from PBS Wisconsin focuses on families displaced by highway construction and was filmed during the Open Housing Marches.
- [BBC Clip: “What’s Changed in America’s Most Segregated City?”](#) (2018)
- Dr. Charles Taylor’s [“A Decade of Discontent: A Film on the Milwaukee Civil Rights Movement”](#), Find more information [here](#).

Oral Histories

- Prentice McKinney, Fred Reed, and Dr. Shirley Butler [interviewed](#) by Simone Lewis and Pilar Sharp from YouthRise. (text)
- Dr. Shirley Butler [interviewed](#) by Amanda Wynne. (audio)
- Dr. Shirley Butler-Derge [discusses her tour at UW Milwaukee](#)
- [Oral Histories in the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee March on Milwaukee collection](#)