

Multimedia Primary Source Discussion Set

Student Protests in the 1960s

URL: https://americanarchive.org/primary_source_sets/student-protests

Teaching Tips

This source set includes a series of audio and video clips detailing various aspects of the protest movements that roiled college campuses and high schools during the 1960s. The sources provide opportunities to explore what motivated protestors, how students sought to effect change, and the interconnections between movements. These suggested activities ask students to consider relationships among different sources.

Background Information

Before engaging with this resource set, students should be familiar with the following:

- The African American Civil Rights Movement
- The Vietnam War
- Counterculture in the United States in the 1960s

Essential Question

Why did students protest in the 1960s?

General Discussion Questions

- What did students protest against?
- How were the protest movements related?
- What protest strategies did student activists use?
- How did authorities respond to the protests? What might have motivated their responses?
- How were protests on college campuses related to other social and political events in the United States in the 1960s?

Classroom Activities

- 1) Ask students to watch/listen to the following sources:

[Bobby Seale Speaking at University of California, Berkeley Rally](#) (1968)

[Interview With Civil Rights Activist Adrienne Manns-Israel](#) (1988)

According to the speakers in each of these sources, how were different protest movements connected? How were the connections Seale and Manns-Israel described similar or different? Students should note the ways in which the speakers linked the goals of the Civil Rights movement, anti-draft activists, and opposition to the Vietnam War.

- 2) Ask students to watch/listen to the following sources:

[College Professor Discusses Causes of Student Protests](#) (1969)

[Documentary Excerpt Featuring Mario Savio](#) (1968)

[Documentary Excerpt Featuring Stokely Carmichael](#) (1968)

According to the speakers in each of these sources, what motivated activists to protest? How do the explanations differ? Savio and Carmichael identify injustice and racism as prime motivating factors. In contrast, the professor provides a laundry list of possible contributing factors, such as changes in music, dress, and mass media. How might the backgrounds of each of the speakers have influenced what they said? Students should consider how the differences in the backgrounds of the speakers (activists vs. someone who works for a university) might have contributed to their differing views on what motivated activists to protest.