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John Carlos talks about his iconic 1968 Black Power stand

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When something is wrong with society, a protest is never far behind. Non-violent protest can be an effective way to accomplish social change. Protesting increases awareness to a certain cause.

In modern times, the Civil Rights Movement may be the standard bearer of protests, but things have changed. It has become easier to organize events due to computers, smart phones and social networking, making it easier to communicate messages, spread news and post events.

“Mass protests serve a purpose,” said community activist Khalid Samad.

“It exposes an issue that’s important to the people who are demonstrating. It also gives those in power the opportunity to hear the issues of non-violent protesters without armed conflict.”

While we saw major protests around the world affect change like the “Arab Spring” in the Middle East,Americanow has its own movement just waiting to see if it can get similar results.

The Occupy Movement, born Sept. 17, 2011, as “Occupy Wall Street,” has become global a phenomenon. What started inNew Yorkit has grown to become a sea of protesters in several different countries.

However, unlike the Civil Rights movement there doesn’t seem to be a clear cut goal. There is still agreement on the message for better jobs, better distribution of income and less profits for banks. The economy is the reason for the Occupy movement, but what are the expected results? Even still, the “Occupiers” have been considered a threat by the FBI according to various documents. Even before Occupy Wall Street set up shop inNew York’sZucottiPark, agents were in close communication with law enforcement agencies, businesses and universities in the area.

Unlike the Civil Rights Movement and the following Black Power era the Occupy Movement was not initiated by students. They are mostly young people between the ages of 25 and 35 who probably have $75,000 in student loans and can’t find a descent job.

Occupy also lacks color. There are Blacks involved but not many. The tradition of protests runs deep in the Black community. However there seems to be a sense that Blacks are supposed to join every protest for injustice.

For Blacks, there is a hesitance to join these movements based on past memory and the history of Black struggles. Blacks have protested, sat-in, and boycotted for civic/social injustice and are still weary from those events. But as of late, have come out in numbers in the case of the Jena Six and the Trayvon Martin case.

In the case of theJenaSix thousands of chanting protesters took to the streets ofJena,Louisianain support of six Black teens charged with attempted murder of a White classmate. They were charged a few months after three White teens hung nooses in a tree at their school. The White teens only received suspension with no charges filed.

Thousands are continuing to protest the deadly shooting of 17-year-old Travon Martin. Martin was shot to death by a White neighborhood watch volunteer while walking through an upscale community inFlorida. The shooter George Zimmerman claims self defense but Martin was unarmed. Protesters are demanding that Zimmerman go to prison for murder.

A major moment in Black protests during the ‘60s came in the form of a two-man show at the 1968 Olympics inMexico City. Tommie Smith and John Carlos threw up the Black Power fist while on the stand bearing their medals during the playing of the National anthem.

“I had a moral obligation to step up,” said John Carlos author of the “John Carlos Story.”

“Morality was a far greater force than the rules and regulation they had.”

This is one of the most iconic images of protest in American history. If you don’t know John Carlos or Tommie Smith you remember the Black Power fist.

“It was necessary to do something provoking, irritating and defiant to let them know that ‘hey, you’re going the wrong way and you can no longer grab my neck and lead me the way you want to,’” said Carlos.

“Now it’s a beacon for society, for all ethnicities around the world, I don’t care what you back ground is, we all face some sort of oppression.”